

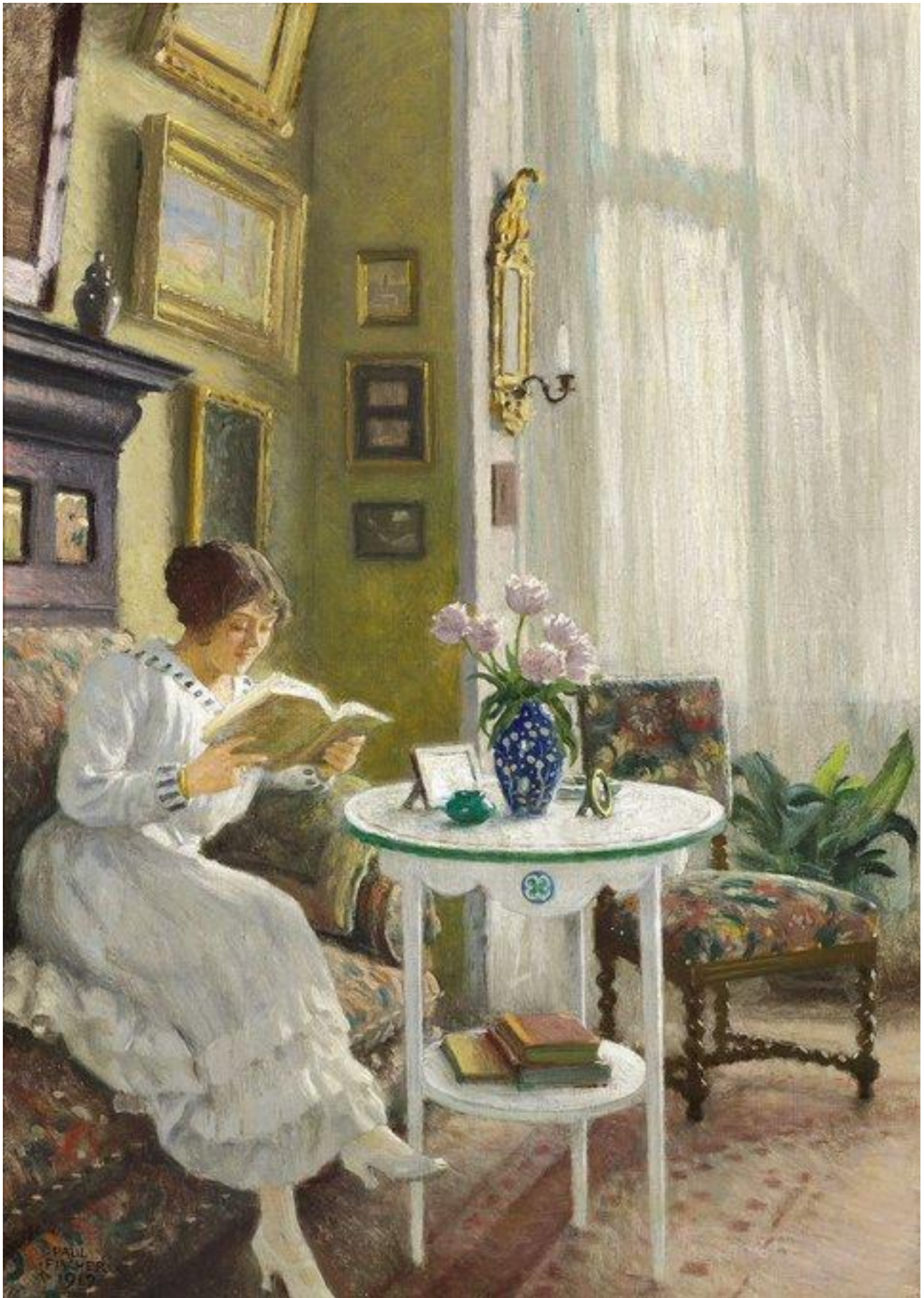
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The Secret MT White Reader No.35 Paul Fischer

ETERNAL RETURN



By
MT White

The teak box of photos. Deep. The desired photo—where is it? Alyssa, Alyssa, where are you? Then! There it is! Is this it?...no. But feels closer. Alyssa is somewhere in here. The beach...the shores of Galveston...there's Gil in that one photo in front of Hooter's on the pier...destroyed by Hurricane Ike three years later.

Still no Alyssa.

The next photo however...

Alyssa!

There she stands on the shores of Galveston. Hands up, ankle deep in the Gulf, the horizon behind her seeming endless. "Look at the Gulf of Mexico," dad said when driving through Galveston the first time. "Doesn't it look like the world ends on that horizon?" Yes, one could confuse the world for flat while looking at the Gulf, and there stood Alyssa in front of it. Her khaki shorts loose, her shirt looser, her

curly brown hair hitting her shoulders, her Ray-Ban's hiding her hazel eyes...

Remembering the first time...looking in to those hazel eyes...

Remembering, remembering...

Why this memory? Why this memory of a memory?

Madison's perfume. Bulgari of some sort.

"I just went to Fashion Show Mall with Laurie. Bought this. It's Bulgari." She holds up her wrist. "What do you think?"

"Nice."

What was Alyssa's perfume? Hard to even remember her smell. Jessica wore Chanel No.5...if she ever wore perfume. She said it more than once. An *Eau de toilette* specifically. Her laugh when asked the difference between Eau de Toilette and Eau de Parfum. Loud and amused. Her correction after the question asked and laughter following: "It's *parfoom* not perfume."

"It looked like *perfume*."

Jessica...always dismissive. But always there.

"What are you reading?" she'd ask, moving from kitchen to living room.

"Kierkegaard."

"More philosop—you've been on a bit of a philosophy kick, huh?"

"I guess."

"Why?"

A shrug of the shoulders the only answer. How to explain Kierkegaard to someone who really doesn't care? Jessica didn't care.

Kierkegaard wrote of repetition. When considering the tragedy that befell Job, he concluded that Job's family and fortune restored to him after his plea to God were a restorative repeat, a repetition. The same applied to Abraham. After taking Isaac to be sacrificed...though the angel stopped him before the knife fell on his only son...in a way, God restored Isaac to Abraham (the writer of *Hebrews* clearly stated this). Another repetition.

That time in Houston. A weekend break from the mission trip in Galveston, driving by the newly built Lakewood Church, formerly the Compaq Center, formerly The Summit. Walking around the River Oaks shopping center to find Wong Kar-wai's latest film, *2046*, playing at The Landmark. In the film, Tony Leung plays Chow Mo-wan, a writer and playboy living in late 1960s Hong Kong. While in Singapore, he meets Sun Li-zhen, played by Gong Li. The drama of the film is framed by Chow's relationship with Sun Li-zhen, a Mandarin pronunciation of the Cantonese name So Lai-chen, the

name of another woman he secretly loved. In a way, it served as a repetition. Despite the women being completely different, So Lai-chen is restored to Chow, even if both relationships end in heartbreak, making him unable to fully love Bai Ling (Zhang Ziyi). But for director Wong, love is a sickness, something that ails and nags like a cold or allergies.

Alyssa was open to watching *2046* but it didn't happen. Had to wait for DVD. And the River Oaks Landmark was shut down.

"You still watch DVDs?" Alice asks laughing.

"Yeah, I mean...actually, not really. I mostly stream. I just..."

Holding *Chungking Express* on Blu-ray. Remembering watching the original Miramax VHS while packing VHS tapes of a dance recital for Ron's Video Production. Remembering Jessica's friend Ling all those years ago entering the apartment...scanning the VHS collection...saying, "I remember these things." Remembering Jessica laughing.

All the tapes disappeared over time...all gone by the divorce. All in to the trash or eBay. But the DVDs and Blu-rays remained. Like tokens of a bad (?) memory. Some memories weren't bad...because the movies were good.

"You're my movie guru," Alice says.

Later she talks about her potential Hawaiian dream vacation.

"Don't forget to bring your guru."

"I won't, of course," she replies.

Of course, of course...Thinking of the Oahu shores...the shores of Galveston...Alyssa...Alice...

Alice hasn't seen *Days of Being Wild*, *Chungking Express*, *Fallen Angels*, *In the Mood for Love* or *2046*...or really anything that isn't produced outside of Hollywood or isn't animated.

"You're such a nerd," Jessica would say.

A particular anecdote: "Remember when Ling said you've seen more Chinese films than Chinese?"

"Hong Kong."

"What?"

"Hong Kong films. Not Chinese. There's a difference."

"See. There you go nerd."

Jessica (or Ling for that matter) didn't understand—or know—the gift of the Mei Ah Entertainment DVD edition of *In the Mood for Love*, in its blue shell case, an import from Hong Kong bought with credit card debt. Bought before Jessica. Before Alyssa. Before all of them. Revisiting...Tony Leung's Chow Mo-wan and So

Lai-chen act out various scenarios, playing the roles of their respective spouses, where the performance, the repetition of performance, begins taking on its own reality, creating a new reality. At film conclusion, Chow whispers a secret in to a Buddhist monument in Cambodia. The secret is obvious.

Jessica's constant negging. No secret there either. Felt like a repetition—at least, repetitive.

“Does knowing all this philosophical shit help you?” Madison asked. A question towards the end of the affair. Her anger, or rather, the anger rooted in helplessness, exploded. “Has it helped you?”

An attempt not to answer resulting in a stumble: “I, uh, I don't know.”

“One thing you don't know! Amazing!”

A long sigh.

Madison again: “I'm sorry...it's just...” Her voice cracking up. A crack in the final break...hating the sense of finality...always hating the sense of finality. With the future on the horizon, there was always a sense of possibility. Kierkegaard thought Regine Olsen could be restored to him. But Madison restored? Jessica? Not now, if ever.

Did Jessica care about restoration, or life when talking about the dangers of the COVID vaccine? She certainly hated arguments. Tears. Always tears on pushback.

“I...” *sniffle, sniffle, sniffle*, “I...just thought you were smarter than this...that you would see and understand...”

“I see...I—” what now? Point of no return. “I see how you can cherry pick information and confuse the trees from the forest.”

“Fuck you!”

More tears. More sobbing. “I feel so alone. Just—you're no help. I've been doing all this reading, researching and stuff and...” *sniffle, sniffle*, “You don't care.”

Jessica. Jessica. Jessica. Of all the girls to marry...Then again, her options were just as limited. She too was overweight. And the chemistry was there. But the reservations were there too. Meeting on Yahoo! Date, then talking on Yahoo! Chat. She talked about going to bars and Mass with her mom. That first meeting at I.H.O.P. near campus. Late, with coffee the only thing ordered. “So, you're not Catholic?”

“Southern Baptist.”

“My ex was Southern Baptist. I told him we could always just let the kids decide what they wanted to be.”

And a few dates later, after a movie and sex at her house. In bed: “You won’t convert?”

Thinking of veneration of Mary, came the reply: “No...you? Will you get baptized in a Baptist church?”

“No.”

No resolution arrived at. Just resolved to have sex again. “Let things happen as they happen,” she said.

She conceded a lot at the beginning. Gave up bar trips with friends, even attended a Baptist service. Her constant description of her love being, “I just felt so comfortable with you. You were so nice to me.”

It felt comfortable being with her...maybe it was her agreeableness. A relief after the failure of Alyssa. When Alyssa sent the email with “I miss talking to you,” in the body, it felt good to dismiss her casually. “I’m currently seeing someone else now.”

Alyssa, with her hand-written letters. No romance indicated. Just eloquently expressed admonitions written in the surety of youth. Like that note she wrote in Galveston: “I enjoyed our time in Houston. Shame we didn’t get to see that Chinese movie! I hope it comes out on video soon. I just think it’s great how, even with all our commitments this summer, there’s still time to relax and see the city (and believe me, being a girl from a town like Monahans, Houston is THE big city). Anyway, when reflecting upon your frustrations regarding unity in the church (or lack thereof), I thought this passage might serve as encouragement...”

She acted the small-town girl part but the affectation pointed to the pretense of it all. An only child, her dad, a Baylor graduate, was the pastor at First Baptist Church in Monahans, Texas. Her parents encouraged her to read, learn music. She knew Ingalls Wilder, Alcott, preferred *Gone with the Wind* the novel over *Gone with the Wind* the film, and knew how to play the piano. Remembering...remembering her being pressed by Gil, another teammate from Dallas, grilling her about the racism and romanticized vision of the Antebellum South, and remembering her backtracking, saying it all “troubled” her, stressing her favorite novel was *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

“What type of music do you like?” she asked that summer. The first girl to show any interest.

“Duran Duran.”

The answer threw her. Was she expecting Caedmon’s Call or Jars of Clay? But it was no use explaining about the cassette of *Decade*, played constantly on the yellow Sony Walkman, as dad drove the

length of the Gulf that dreaded summer he was laid off. An attempt of his to relax but being constantly angry, his radio selection limited to the Oldies and talk radio, with the tracks like *The Reflex*, *A View to a Kill* and *Skin Trade*, blasting on the Walkman, being respite. But this wouldn't have been much of an answer anyway. And she talked to others about music...like Gil from Dallas.

Listening to Gil discuss the horrors of atheistic thinking, or evils of media, the girls from the mission team surrounding him, his voice authoritative: "Freud, Nietzsche, Stalin, Hitler," he would say, "these are the ones who've determined our times—all atheist." But...

"Hitler wasn't an atheist." It just came out while he talked. The girl's heads switching direction...Alyssa looking over...might as well go for it: "He evoked God in many of his speeches."

"I'm sure it was just playing to the crowd—"

"Then, how can we trust anyone who evokes God's name? Isn't that the definition of using his name in vain?"

The girls joined in to defend him. "Are you defending Hitler?" being the overarching theme, with "No, I'm a history major" being the overarching defense. No use in arguing. Just sulk off to the balcony.

"Are you okay?" Alyssa asked afterwards, hand on shoulder.

"I'm fine. I've actually read *Beyond Good and Evil*, unlike Gil who just read what someone told him."

"Who wrote that? Hitler?"

"No, Nietzsche."

"You've read Nietzsche?"

"For school, yeah. It was—he's interesting."

"You like philosophy?"

"Yeah, I do."

What an error mailing Alyssa a copy of Augustine's *Confessions* for Christmas that same year, expecting her to remember this conversation. Included a hand-written note, hoping the sexual undercurrent of the book might lead to some more passionate discussion on Yahoo! Chat. But just received an email saying, "thanks." Last of Augustine in any email exchanges.

The bigger error: Sending an email confessing absolute affection for her.

Her reply to it all: "I suggest we pray about this." Then a longer email a few days later talking about how she's not good enough, how she needs to focus on Him and how "God has the right woman for you out there." Then, later, on her MySpace page: A photo of her with Gil,

their heads touching with caption about how “God brings the right person in to your life if you just focus on Him.”

“I like Duran Duran,” Jessica said in that first online chat.

“Which songs?”

“*Ordinary World*.”

“Great song.”

“I listen to it when I’m feeling down.”

While driving, Jessica didn’t mind listening to their Greatest Hits album. Upon divorce, she posted the lyrics to *Ordinary World* on her Facebook page. Almost daily, she posted lyrics from different songs.

Never discussed Duran Duran with Madison. Never came up. She loved to talk about her music though. Mainly, 90s stuff like Garbage and Jimmy Eat World and a particular obsession with Peter Ashcroft.

Alice has tastes even more recent. She didn’t know Depeche Mode. “What song of theirs do you recommend?”

Where do you start with Depeche Mode? Mom and Dad were never asked to explain The Beach Boys or The Beatles. Their songs were just on constant rotation on those road trips, as dad drove, mom always looking for an oldies station.

“Depends on what you like. The first line-up, with Vince Clarke, was more poppie while the next line-up, with Martin Gore writing the songs, with the addition of Alan Wilder took a darker turn—actually, just start with *Enjoy the Silence*.”

“Why do you know all this stuff?”

“I don’t know. I just like to learn all about the things I like.”

That drive home after a workout. Thinking of Madison. Thinking of calling her. Then a text from Alice: “I really liked *Enjoy the Silence*.”

There was no silence to enjoy in the bedroom, late at night, seeing Jessica upset in the bathroom, complaining about her back, or her fatigue, or how hard a work week it was, then sitting in the darkness of the bedroom, looking at the iPad screen, trying to find something to watch on Netflix or Amazon or HBO or YouTube, while she muttered something about annoying clients, and her never reaching out, physically or emotionally, asking if everything’s okay, or saying, “You’ve had a rough day, come here,” leaning in for a kiss, or...clueless it was all missing. And silence. Cold, condemning silence, save for her snoring. She didn’t seem to care about the three years of no sex, before the tumor was discovered, before the revelation that

testosterone—and sex drive by extension—had been put on hold. She seemed content moving in the partitioned worlds of husband and wife, no need for sex unless it was asked for.

The silence it produced.

And that feeling. Or lack of feeling. A feeling of negation. Never feeling the love of another, like a true love, another being completely enamored, wanting, desiring to be together, wanting their world enveloped and overtaken by their beloved. Never being wanted. Never having anyone fight for the services or skills or even bid for them. Just rejection in seeking love and better employment. And if there was ever a semblance of that time, the other in question just had selfish ends to meet. A harsh truth...or maybe low self-esteem talking. Destroying one's soul involves destroying their hope. Hope seemed to drift away, the more she delved in to politics, as COVID ramped up, joining Telegram groups, watching YouTube—or just always being on her phone in general, perpetually outraged. After having to work through a pandemic and her never even acknowledging the six-day work weeks or even the pandemic itself, calling it a “plandemic” or “scamdemic” until she got distracted with the election, blaming the “mainstream media”, ignoring that her husband worked for same.

Then Tahoe. A trip to Tahoe to clear the mind. An attempt to get things right as a couple. Right the ship after the stress of it all. Looking at the mountains, the deep lake, sitting on the porch of the rental house, enjoying the quiet, reading Plotinus. “Philosophy again?” Jessica asked. “Nerd.” Lake Silvaplana is where Eternal Return revealed itself to Nietzsche. Any point in mentioning that Jessica? No, no.

Jessica stuck around for the long-planned vacation...she stayed together just to go to Tahoe...She seemed relaxed for the first time in ages. “How do you feel...after the tumor?” she asked for the first time in a long time, enjoying lunch in Reno.

But then Kings Beach on the north side of Tahoe. Staring. Just staring at the water but also a Chinese family of three, with grandmother. Mother wearing long denim dress. Father playing with boy in the shores of the beach. Both wear glasses, speaking thick Beijing style Mandarin—did they like Wong Kar-wai movies? And the water, the blue water... “Something wrong?” Jessica asked. She asked it a bunch that trip. Her concern bringing warmth, but in retrospect, it was just a pretext, maybe an egging on to start a fight, to give her an excuse to leave, hence her disappointment at the reply of “I’m fine”.

Since the testosterone was in full swing—first time in ages, yet Jessica didn't want to have sex in a rental...or really anywhere. Going to the gym had paid dividends, but the new physique didn't register. But the gradual change didn't register.

Madison. Every morning in Tahoe seeing her behind the counter at the small café near the beach. Nothing more than a five-minute drive away. A line out the door daily, tourists round the clock. What attracted her? The question even broached the first time in bed: "What attracted you to me? I mean all those people..."

"I don't work there all year. Nobody does. Just during tourist season and..."

"And?"

"It was temporary."

"The attraction was temporary?"

A slap on the arm from her. "No, silly. The job was temporary. A favor, remember?"

Yes, yes, a favor for a friend who owned the place—*Renaissance* being the name of the place—and her having trouble getting workers for tourist season post-Lockdowns and Madison needing some extra income as single mom.

But what attracted her? She never really said. Or maybe she said several times over several conversations: "You're funny." "You're smart." "You're gorgeous." "You're so authentic." And "You're so patient and loving." All remembered in retrospect, in the shadow of her tears.

In Wong Kar-wai's *Fallen Angels*, Wong Chi-ming (Leon Lai), a hitman, seems to have no memory. It makes him passive and he even admits to being lazy, forgetting former classmates and lovers, the latter (Karen Mok), who wears a blonde wig to be unforgettable after being hurt by him. The lack of memory seemed to make him inhumane and hurt everyone around him...

Every day a trip to *Renaissance*. It wasn't just because of Madison at first but on day two, her tilt of the head and adjustment of glasses upon entrance, her asking "Back again, eh?" as she played with the scunci holding her pony tail—it all started to take on a force of its own.

"I'm back. You must have put something in the coffee to make me return."

"I might have," she said with a grin.

"If you keep doing it, I might be coming all this week then..."

"I'd like that."

Every day, only a brief interaction. But always smiles, laughter, and leaving only feeling warmth. To only come back to the rental and Jessica; a house full of tension and lifelessness despite spending the rest of the day with her, the tension escalating at a place like King's Beach, where it's close to impossible to park on a Saturday, screaming at one another, or just passive aggressive asides, as she's dropped off at the beach in lieu of parking spot.

Kind of like those last days on the phone with Madison.

"Is that all you have to say?"

"What?"

"Is that all?! Is that what was really going on here?"

"Mad—"

"I need the truth! Just tell me the truth!"

But the next morning, the morning after King's Beach, leaving Jessica at the beach to find a parking spot a half mile away, parking behind the library, Madison asked: "How was the beach?"

"Rough. Got in to an argument. The sand was hot. I drove all the way to park while letting her off at the beach and I didn't even get a smile when I caught up with her."

"Poor thing." Madison gave a tight hug after that. Why did it feel so good, so affirming? A sign of something better.

The last day: "I'm going back to Vegas, um, later today."

"Oh," she said with disappointment. Was it disappointment?

"Where are you going to get your coffee now?"

"I have, uh, I have a place there."

"Better than here?"

"I don't—no, it isn't."

"Good answer."

Then...the phone, just given to her. "If you're ever in town, let me know. I'll take you there."

"Awww..." she says. But she typed in her number.

"I mean, I know how Reno people feel about Vegas..."

"I'm from California, not Reno. And my friend, Lauren, lives there, so I may just visit."

"Great."

Never expected her to visit. Just like there was always an expectation Alyssa would send an email one day, wanting to catch up, admit her mistakes. Jessica too. Never expected that text from Alice either, when deep in thought about calling Madison, that text that read, "The way you finished your workout today, even after the lesson

was over, was inspiring.” But such are the disappointments and surprises.

In Wong Kar-wai’s film *Chungking Express*, the character of He Qiwu (Takeshi Kaneshiro) buys a can of pineapples with the date of May 1st, a date important because it marks a month passed that his girlfriend broke up with him, the ritual taking its own repetitive power, seemingly leading him to another woman (Brigitte Lin).

That day—or a couple of days—no, a few (?) after finally talking about divorce with Jessica, a text from Madison, “Hey, I’m coming to Vegas in a couple of weeks. Alone. My ex is watching my daughter.” Of course, there were texts before that. Trickles. But now the flood.

That time in her hotel room...after coffee, after a walk, after talking about Jessica and listening to her empathizing...looking in to her eyes, her smile, her head tilt as she bites her bottom lip, the smell of her Bulgari perfume. “Lauren was just an excuse to see me, huh?”

“Guilty.”

A kiss, followed by an even deeper kiss, the skin trembling from the excitement. It all a daze. The roughness and sweat, hair pulling and biting, a raw energy never experienced.

But the collapse was a daze too. Even before the hotel, at coffee where she said, “I get really concerned about you drinking coffee with heavy cream. It’s really bad for you.” And having trouble agreeing on a place to eat after the hotel, just something to order in because of her diet restrictions.

But more overpowering: The last day she was in Vegas, after sex and a shower, in the bathroom shaving only to walk in to the main room and see Madison on the floor. A sniffing...then a rush to her side.

“Madison...”

Grabbing her hand. Looking in to her eyes. Noticing the vibration of her foot.

“Madison...”

“It...it...” more sniffles.

“What?”

“It...” even more sniffles “It wasn’t supposed to happen like this...”

“What wasn’t?”

“This...”

“What?”

Her abrupt sitting up. Her adjusting her towel, breasts momentarily exposed.

“I...”

“What Maddy?”

“I...” her about to burst out crying...

“What?”

“I love you. I—I love you. It wasn’t supposed to happen. I just came here thinking we’d have some fun and...but...I’ve fallen in love with you.”

Grabbing her hands. Squeezing them. “It’s okay.”

“It is?”

“Yeah.”

“Why?”

“Because I love you too.”

“You love me?”

“Yeah, I do.”

Then the kisses, tears streaming down her face, the deep kiss and embrace feeling more intense than the sex earlier. The tears never stopped that day. Until she was seen off at the airport.

“Don’t you know I love you?” Jessica said, crying on the phone a few days later, asking to reconsider divorce.

“Your Facebook posts say different, between your likes of anti-vaxx articles and COVID and election conspiracies.”

“Those were just written out of frustration. It’s a frustration of love. I love you.”

“I...”

What was there to say?

A text from Jessica later, explaining herself, ending with, “I just want to go to Galveston one more time with you...”

At dad’s funeral, Galveston was mentioned to mom. “I remember when we visited there. Dad said if you look in to the Gulf, it looks like the end of the world. Do you remember that trip?”

“No.” Mom’s reply. Said in sorrow at the forgotten memory. “You always remember so much. It annoyed your dad.”

“It did huh?”

“It’s a good thing Jessica isn’t here. He didn’t like her either.”

“I know.”

But constant messages from Jessica. From Madison. Ones about divorce, others about when there could be another meet-up. “I know you’ve been cheating on me,” one said. “Are you serious about this relationship?” the other asked.

“I found another person,” finalized all divorce talk. Led to a rage of anger and tears from Jessica, creating a doubt—no, a remorse—for letting it all crumble...poisoning everything in its wake.

“I’m not sure about this...” Said to Madison, followed by a scream on the phone and a rush urging not to end it.

Feeling nothing but lousy. Where had life gone? Left with a silent one-bedroom apartment with high rent, only the sound of the dishwasher and partiers upstairs the only companion. It all felt so bright and optimistic, those summer vacation days in Galveston on “mission”. With Alyssa. Finding her photo an urge to recall it. Then searching for her on Instagram and finding her, then following her and posting the photo with her tagged, hoping she would reply.

But the malaise...ever it lingers...

“You’re killing it,” Alice said after a set of box jumps. Stuck together as partners. At end of class, a hesitant hug. “Great job today,” she said. The compliments felt hollow after Madison...so soon. But yet, going to the gym every day. The only constant.

On the phone that last time...trying to explain to Madison about love, and the medieval origins of romantic love...and just her response: “Does knowing all this philosophical shit help you?” followed by, “How does it help us? What’s wrong with love?”

Talking her down and ending the call, saying “I’ll call back tomorrow. You deserve better.”

“No, we deserve better. Us.”

“Right.”

Then blocking her afterwards.

And questioning the decision since.

Nietzsche wrote that life itself told him the secret that life is “that which must always overcome itself.” Somehow, submitting to eternal return via *amor fati*, is the key in to all this. *Does knowing all this philosophical shit help you?*

The question lingering. Especially after being called an egoist. Maybe Madison was right. Is ego, as Gilles Deleuze theorized, really just a byproduct of the “pure and empty form of time, separated from its content”?

Time is certainly important.

In Wong Kar-wai’s *Days of Being Wild*, the playboy character of Yuddy (Leslie Cheung) meets So Lai-chen (Maggie Cheung), the same So Lai-chen who haunts Wong’s succeeding films. Yuddy is haunted by the minute of when he first met her, a minute that stays fixed in his

mind, and never leaves, a memory he can't seem to remove, striking him at his moment of death.

Time is commonly held in the modern, scientific world to be a technical, linear function. But even the early Christians, who described time as linear to defend their faith, understood that time was just encapsulated in a greater plan, an imperfect form contained in God's great domain and control. Time would be constantly broken in to by eternity, with the appearance of Christ Himself, revealing his identity in the Transfiguration but also the Resurrection (with many believing even earlier in the fiery furnace with Daniel and even in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve before the Fall). The traditional view of time, with both Christian and Pagan agreeing it was more like a spiral than circle or straight line. Familiar rhythms in different guises always presenting themselves, difference always being a key, but taking familiar motions. A traditional notion that struck modern Protestants like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as a revelation. Things never move in linear fashion...even for mortals. Moments, memories, break in of their will, being no respecter of continuity.

But time moves on regardless, the present trying to overcome the past, enabling "that which must always overcome itself."

Maybe.

Going to bed. Thinking of calling Madison the next morning. The weight of it all...followed by a dream: Standing in an all-red bathroom stall with black trim. Whitney Houston's version of "I Will Always Love You" playing over the PA. Then a thought in the middle of the dream: "Why can't someone love me like that?" Then a reply: "She loved you like that." Waking up feeling a need to call Madison. But then laying there...the need slowly drifting away. Skipping the gym, going for a walk at the park, and listening to "I Will Always Love You," realizing the song is about a woman letting a man go despite her love for him. Immediate relaxation upon realization. Then, Chris Issacs' "Wicked Game" came up next in the queue. A song about a man upset a woman he slept with gave him undesired feelings. Then, a reply from Alyssa on Instagram. "How's it going? Been such a long time!" Then, just an hour in chatting DMs, catching up. Then later that evening, a text from Alice. "Where were u 2day?" The day had taken over. Move on, move on. And yet, Madison lingers as does Jessica. But there's no anger or passion, just sorrow and pity. Maybe this feeling will pass too. Or maybe it won't. But time will move on, and heal wounds.

The End



SOHO

**Eroticism & Jealousy in
End of the Century London**

1998-1999

‘An English *A Rebours*’

by

ERNST GRAF

CHAPTER 11

I AM WEDEKIND

I am Wedekind. The provoker!

I like being the centre of attention, obsessed over. I am Priapus. I live in the opera; I live in *Semele*. I can do exactly what I want. I prefer the bordello life. I am an ARTIST. "I think he likes daring people!" I do; to see who the stupid ones are. I'm just living my own life, quietly & privately. It is because they desire me. They envy me for my freedom, and my still resolute refusal to be social. Black stockings Wanda was nice last night, as was the big blonde Sandra, but not much else. Boulevard seems naughtier now, blacker, more anonymous. The pleasure I am getting away with. The fact I didn't receive any insults this morning is quite insulting. When you've got a couple of drinks inside you and you're racing around from place to place you really don't notice anything much. I believe in rampancy. Letting yourself go. It is driving them into a frenzy. I am Wedekind, shocking the bourgeoisie. They're going to have to keep it up. Hostility takes more out of them. While I keep up my pleasure. I am daring them. I am deliberately fighting for my right to be strange. The thrill of doing something you shouldn't; the power that gives you. Their fear, that their attacks are having no adverse effect on me whatsoever. The absolute consuming nightmare for them, that I am serenely prospering from it. I need to flirt with danger, and flirt with disaster, for the rich sweet bloody juices it gives me, rich in nutrients. I just cannot help myself. It is people's weaknesses that make them interesting. It is people's vices that make them attractive. What do I think of the people of —? Rich material! Sweet and juicy. I insist on my complete freedom. Sumptuous and sensual.



“I am FEEDING off them. I am laughing at them. The more they throw at me the more serenity I find. The most vicious, nasty abuse of my life has led to me finding my greatest ever serenity. They have given me total freedom now. I am determined to set myself against people. Complete liberation. One should never worry about being thought NOTORIOUS! I'm so strong and powerful I can do what I want: so sexually rampant. Wild! Violent! Mad! Drama! Passion! I just potter about, being as ECCENTRIC as I want to be. How it infuriates them that I am so relaxed. I am Wedekind. I enjoy shocking the bourgeoisie. A pretty, helpful smile: ‘I'm just collecting my material, and writing my little books!’ I am stirring up their repressed desires into a hysterical frenzy. By living wildly! I am getting under their skin. I am successfully PROVOKING.”

“Yet it has unleashed a war against you, sir!”

“Good, I choose war on them! I am having fun. So fantastic to be the centre of so much attention, and I've got a cocky, cheerful grin on my face. And you know what? I discover it does not destroy me! And you know what? I discover I love it! And you know what? I discover I can play them like a piano! And you know what? I

discover I can pull all their strings like a puppet, and I discover I can loom over them like Fantomas looming over Paris! I discover they are filling me up with power. I discover I am starting to come into my own and be who I was always meant to be. I discover this pressure has begun the metamorphosis I was always waiting for so I can emerge as beautiful butterfly. I discover I am starting to bloom and blossom, and shoot up so I am towering above them, and leave them cowering and withering in my shade for lack of light.”

“I choose to be in a state of war with them, my bordello life of pleasure is my decadent way of attacking them, it provokes them, and stirs them, and gets under their skin so much. I have stirred them up and what riches I am mining now. I like fun and naughtiness. If it’s not dirty & illicit, then it’s no good to me. I must get what is good for me. I prefer the bordello life. I choose the bordello life. I am a sexual adventurer. I am Wedekind: devoted to pointing out the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie. I feel only EXCITEMENT. Exhilaration. The joys of Spring. Ever since I was a baby, I’ve had complete withering contempt for them, and now they are beginning to see how much contempt for them I have. I like pushing people and pushing people, and I can’t help it. I cannot resist annoying the stupid people. I’m sorry.”

They are trying to hurt you, trying to make you unhappy—so be happy! I love everything I’ve ever done, because I did it for pleasure. You think that society should tell me what they think I’m allowed to do or not to do? The trouble is if this fails, then there’s really nowhere else they can go then. There is nothing worse they can hit me with. This must be a very worrying time for them. “He’s still coming smiling contentedly through even this! He’s still prospering from even this!” They are doing what I want, Fantomas is pulling their strings.

It’s no good them trying desperately to hurt me now, I have chosen my preferred bordello life, and it doesn’t include them.

“I am viciously intelligent, and I’m having a viciously rampant dirty sex life: that is unbearable for them! I’m going to rub it in their faces more and more; and still smilingly serenely enjoy my cultural life, and my weekly treats.”

It is wealth to be content, and what wealth it is. The riches they are giving me on top of that! I've not got money worries, my life is very easy. The freedom of my life far outweighs its disadvantages. I plunge into bordello life.

"Why is he getting more smug and serene?" Be irritatingly and flamboyantly ECCENTRIC. To show that great people can do that. I am Wedekind, and I can still move wherever I want to move. I insist on my right to step over the line. I am autistic, and I insist on my right to shuffle around like Kaspar Hauser, and to go to my bordellos. I am Wedekind, I prefer the bordello life. Even discovery has had no effect on me, that is how suited to the bordello life I had become, how at ease in the bordello world I am, how that must infuriate them—I'm becoming smugger and cockier and more serene than ever.

I'm glad people talk about me! They can talk about me going to the *Gross Indecency* Oscar Wilde play, to the opera *Orpheus & Eurydice*, *Mephistopheles*, *Salome*, *Semele*, to the bookshop for Nietzsche.

"He's off the end of every scale you care to mention!" I'm proud and pleased. I insist on being off the end of the scale.

They resent me for the pleasures of my life—what a beautiful position to be in! I like my life, so that's all that matters really, isn't it. I'm having a very enjoyable time. It means the resentful people are still resentful of me; it gives me a real injection of electricity to know that. I shrugged and grinned, "They've got nothing else!" I'm weird, and I like it, and going to bother them more & more now with my rampancy, my flamboyancy, going to *Salome*, *Gross Indecency*, the Chandos. I want to see who I am annoying by still walking wherever I want; the more I annoy the more of a thrill I get from it. The pleasure I have had. The exquisiteness. Sylvia Kristel in *Emmanuelle III*. I threw a stone into the pond, and watched how it sent the pond life into a frenzy; like Boot visiting the crab-pool every summer. I see it all as fun, a joke, to wind people up.

Throw all you can, and I just come bouncing back for more. I want to be NASTY, and that is why I go to the bordellos. I want to be VICIOUS, and SADISTIC.



“The more they attack me, the happier I become. The more people attack me so rancidly, the more calm, & self-assured, & cocky I become; because now I know: I have got you in my pocket. Because now I know: I can play you like a piano. Because I belong to that class of people for whom it is true to say: When you attack me, then I’ve got you exactly where I want you. When you attack me, then you have made your fatal mistake. I have got such extreme sensual exquisite pleasure to remember and draw on. They try so hard to knock my life, and I still enjoy my Oscar Wilde theatre, my cinema, my opera. I push them, and I push them: I lead a very free life. I am here to teach them. They have made my book proceed apace at last—a very uncomfortable fact for them to deal with. They’re helping me, they’re helping me—with every word they say they advance my book a little bit more. I do it because I shouldn’t do it. I’m FLAUNTING it, I’m FLAUNTING it! I’m teasing them with it. Flamboyantly, like Wedekind. I am driving them into a frenzy.”

NEXT WEEK—MEPHISTOPHELES

RAMPANT ROGER

The Priapic Prime Minister

By T. Francis

Chapter-11

Roger was in the Queen Anne, next to the flyover in Canning Town, where he often came to relax and get away from prying eyes. And there were a lot of eyes prying right now.

Roger's dramatic U-turn (as the left-wing media were calling it) on the Tower Blocks issue had whipped up a medium-sized tsunami; but it was nothing next to the news that came through shortly afterwards that he'd won the vote of no confidence and would therefore continue to lead his party and serve as Prime Minister.

Yes, Roger's 'doing the right thing' on the Tower Blocks issue had helped convince a decent number of 'The Hardcore' that he remained the right person to be in Number 10.

For now.

Were there WhatsApp messages on his phone he would prefer not to read just yet? Yes, there were. A message from Emily, that began something like 'Roger, I am truly disappointed...'

But he had not opened it to see the rest, quickly archiving it instead.

A message from Mycroft: ‘Congratulations,’ it said. ‘Half a century in and you’ve finally learnt something.’

To this, Roger merely responded with a thumbs-up emoji.

Well, he couldn’t hold a grudge against Mycroft, could he? They were family, and blood was thicker than water and all that. Plus, inadvertently, Mycroft had saved his career. If it hadn’t been for his intervention, Roger may very well have been weak enough to act on principle, and where would that have got him?

Expelled from Number Ten.

If Roger had learned one thing this past week it was never to act on something as fundamentally unsound as *principle* ever again.

A third message, from Caprice. ‘You did fantastically at work today, darling—WELL DONE! (Not bad for an oldie – JOKE!!) Xoxoxoxo. By the way, I’ve commissioned gilt cornicing for the drawing room. Xxxx See you later! Xxxx’

Another message, this one from Phyllis. He was about to click on it, and then he didn’t, and he archived it instead. He would read it at some later date, a long, long time away, in the future, if such a time ever materialised, when the pain had lessened. When calm and rational introspection was possible. When he could bear it.

And presently, three long sips into his third pint of craft beer, a time long ago when he and Phyllis had travelled to Hydra, the Greek island, together, emerged, unbidden, from his memory.

It had been in the early days of their relationship. Just after University—or maybe during the holidays? They were twenty, twenty-one? The newness, then, of being away together, just the two of them—*a couple!*—when the *idea* of them as a couple was still new: and Roger would watch in secret delight as Phyllis neatly unpacked their things in the guest house they’d rented, hung up their clothes, made the place nice for the two of them.

It was true that his university life had been characterised by what the Chaplain had memorably referred to as ‘preposterous debauching’ in several of his sermons; but it seemed there was a part of his soul that craved the domestic, nevertheless, and the way that Phyllis had prettily gone about her tasks had seemed so... alien. Special. He was being *cared for* in a way he hadn’t really known since before boarding school.

The holiday had been one of long bicycle rides down windy roads, trips to pebbled beaches, and hikes through the rugged

countryside. And sunsets—the orange of the sun bleeding out into the dimming blue sky like an egg cracked in a pan, with her hand in his.

And one day a boat trip! To the mysterious island of Dokos, where only fifty people lived permanently, and where the oldest shipwreck in the Mediterranean was hidden. Roger had jumped down into the boat, pulling Phyliss in after him, Roger sitting down first, and she on his lap, the blazing sun hot on their limbs, heading through the glistening turquoise waters for their destination of white rocks and wild countryside.

‘Rog!’ said an abrupt voice, interrupting this reverie. ‘Small world mate, small world!’

Roger looked up and saw Tully standing there before him.

‘Small world...’ Tully repeated, trailing off, smiling but nervous, as though he were unsure how he would be received.

‘Tully!’ said Roger, rising to embrace his old friend. ‘I’ve missed you! Where the hell have you been?’

‘Oh, you know, keeping a low profile and all that,’ Tully said. ‘Ere, mind if I take a seat?’

‘Sure,’ said Roger, and he held out a hand invitingly. It was nearing the end of the day, and a creeping sentimentality induced by the beer, plus genuine affection for Tully, made it important for him to make amends. They shook hands and then embraced.

‘Listen Tully, old chap,’ he said. ‘The fact is... well, the fact is I owe you an apology. I was a little hasty last week. I got it into my head—don’t ask me how—that you had something to do with that nasty business with the two women. Stupid of me, I confess. And now of course I know you had nothing whatsoever to do with it.’

‘That’s alright mate,’ said Tully, his clear, guileless eyes looking up at Roger’s. ‘Don’t worry about it. We’ve known each other a long time. I knew you’d come round in the end.’

‘Thank you, Tully,’ said Roger. ‘Let me get you a drink. Barman! Another pint of your excellent beer please!’

When Tully’s drink was served Roger raised his glass, and Tully clinked.

‘Looks like you got what you wanted,’ Tully said. ‘I saw it all on TV. You won the vote. Another term as PM likely. The support of all those Zrikhazhastani oligarchs, dripping with money. The respect of your party: well, the Hardcore wankers, anyway. You’re the most powerful man in the country again. What more could you want?’

Roger smiled thinly.

What more could he want?

‘On the surface it all looks good, but... I suppose it’s just that I’ve had to sacrifice certain things along the way, Tully’ he said.

‘Well, that goes with the territory,’ said Tully. ‘Here, you ‘aven’t got a spare cig, ‘ave you?’

Roger shook his head, then fished in his jacket pocket, pulled out a twenty and handed it to Tully.

‘Go and get us a pack, there’s a good chap. Marlborough, Winston’s—whatever you want. It’s on me.’

‘Cheers, Rog,’ said Tully, grasping at the proffered note with an eager hand. And then, on his way out, he paused. ‘You know what, Rog, I heard a funny thing yesterday. Those two women whose flat we went to? The Zrikhazhastani birds? The blackmailers? Well, everyone was saying they was dead. Run over. But apparently, they’re not dead at all. They’re doing fine. Living it up in the East End like before. Odd, innit?’

Roger just smiled.

‘That is rather odd, I suppose,’ he said.

But he wasn’t thinking about the women. He wasn’t thinking about Marat, or Mycroft, or Harry Hart, or Bill, or Emily and Alex, or promises broken, ethics discarded, (and what use were ethics, anyway? Mycroft had taught him well!) a compromise too far, a soul tarnished, a life derailed, a crueller, narrower path ahead. He wasn’t even thinking of his children. He couldn’t—not yet.

After an hour or so on the boat Phyllis had begun to feel seasick, so he’d held her close and tried to comfort her. He’d sung to her, that song they’d both loved, like a lullaby: *you spray the magic world about you, you paint the heavens blue*. It was late afternoon by now. She, on his lap, her arm around his shoulder, her head resting on her arm, her breath on his neck, her long hair straying at times into his mouth, the paltry, precious weight of her on his lap, the smell of her perfume, of her skin, the salt in the air, the sound of the waves all around, the sunshine above, the sun a fiery golden disk of awe sinking slowly in the sky.

You spray the magic world about you, you paint the heavens blue. You, Phyllis, always you, only you.

And she clung to him like no one had ever clung to him before or since.

‘Yes,’ he said to himself, as he took another sip of his drink. ‘I have made sacrifices along the way.’

THE END



**“Women want danger & excitement, fortunately
for me.”
Marquis de X, Paris, 1923**



Bruce Chardon's Gastric Emptying aka The End of All Things by Maximilian Pirner (1887).

AM I GOING TO HELL FOR TWEETING?

by Bruce Chardon

Am I going to hell for tweeting?

Well, the answer may surprise you.

As a shitposter (and a Christian) – maybe I should reverse the order of those statements? The chicken and the egg. Which cums first?

As a Christian (and shitposter) – okay, there we go...

I often wonder... Will sending scuzzy tweets send me to hell?

Truly, I don't think about it that deeply – or fearfully.

One old story makes it quite simple:

A Samurai kicks down the door of a Zen monastery and shouts at a Zen master, who is sitting in meditation. Okay, maybe he did get a little scared of the door being kicked in (only human after all) and shit his pants a little. Shitting meditation, if you will.

So the Samurai shouts, "Prepare to die, old man!"

He draws his sharp, shiny, silvery katana...

"Enter hell," the Zen mastoor says.

The Samurai feels a deep quease in his gut... he gulps and loosens his grip on the katana, letting it glide back down into the sheathe like a greasy peanus into a warm, welcoming vagina.

“Enter heaven,” the old man says, grinning wryly... smiling coolly...

And so it is, heaven and hell can be quite a simple choice made perpetually in the present moment... Sometimes... the conscience works in mysterious ways. Anyways, this just goes to show that I do not truly fear damnation to hell, as I am saved by Jesus Christ (the mechanics of salvation are seemingly simple, yet mysterious, and I do not aim to understand them). However, I just wanted to show that we can create a heaven or hell on earth, depending on our choices...

So, back to the matter of tweeting: you’re about to send a tweet. But where is that tweet about to send you and those who have eyes to read it, in this very moment? Hell? Heaven?

But I have begun to wonder lately: are my shitposts leading myself and others astray?

How can one read the book of James about taming thy tongue and then turn around and poast about a schmorgasbord of shit piss farts and cum anonymously on twittoor?

The way I look at it, with common sense, is a question of harm.

Are you making someone the BUTT of your joke?

Are your words malicious?

Yes, in this age of identity politics and victim olympics, there is no shortage of people willing to jump on a hurty words grenade just to tank the explosion and go out in a blaze of gory glory to show just how marginalized and abused they are. However, there's no need to give them the opportunity.

Basically, a tweet that may even intend to be humorous could have hellish vibes if the butt of the joke is made on behalf of someone who has a physical or mental defect.

Some of those tweets are quite funny as well.

Likewise, some of the cliché platitudes that aim to be uplifting are so bland as to be untruthful or, simply put – boring as hell!

Often, I refrain from posting either kind of such tweets... maybe a few have slipped by, though.

Now – everybody shits.

But not everybody shitposts.

Is a fart joke on steroids really going to send you to hell?

Probably not.

Especially since most people's "office hours" or time logged on twitter is when they are spending time logging (pooping / shidding on the toilet) it seems to be fair game to make shit into an artform. A "shartform," if you will.

So, some vulgarity, carries with it the weight of truth. Are you really gonna shame someone for shitting and then embellishing the stinky truth a little bit? I hope you took a shit today. I really do. If not, you might have some deeper seated problems (get it?) than what some silly anon is posting on twitter.

So, shitposting is all about the intent.

If your intent is to entertain and have some fun, just make sure you're not doing it at someone else's expense.

Oh, no! I, Bruce Chardon, have become a finger wagging schoolmarm!

Those are just my thoughts. My code of conduct.

Alas, though, my journey is many things – including spiritual. I don't know where shitposting will lead me. I don't know why my mind is often set to shitpost. But I suppose it's better to let it out, rather than to hold it in. We don't need creative constipation.

I haven't quoted scripture here. This is just a stream of consciousness post about the goods and ills of shitposting.

For now, have fun.

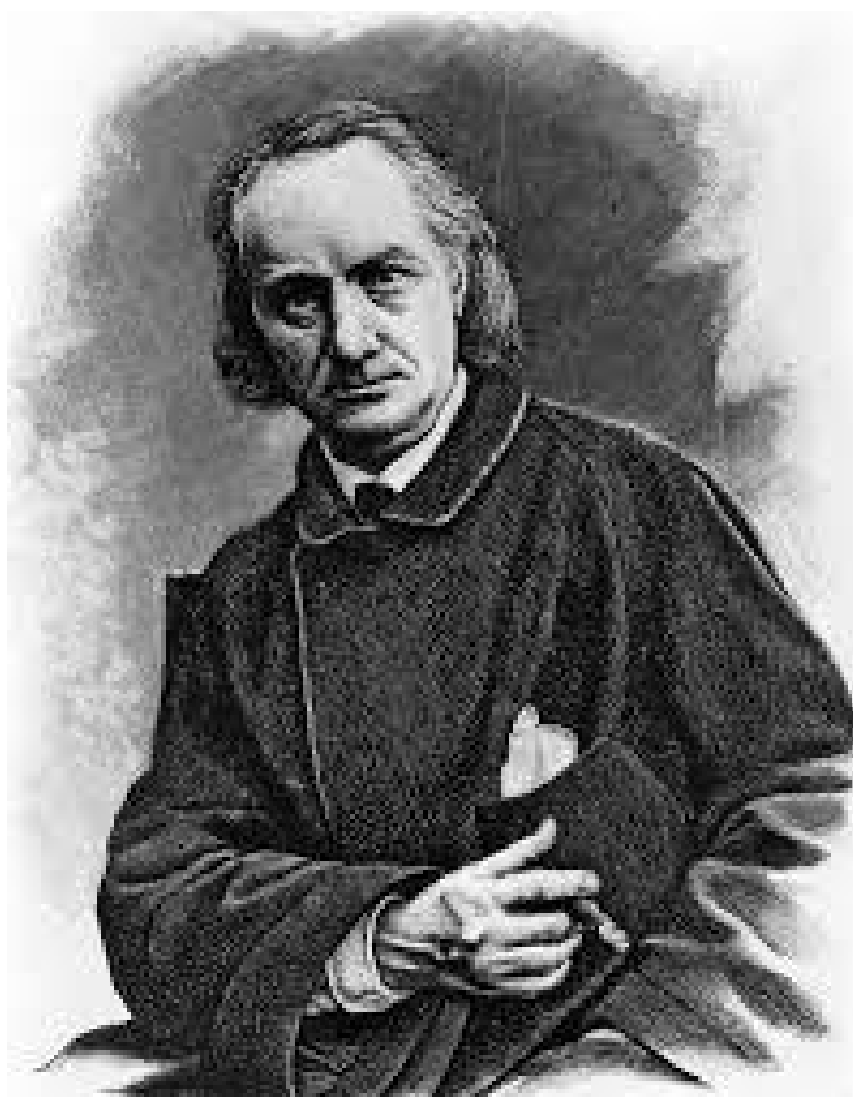
Just refrain from farting in someone else's face.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

A STUDY

BY

ARTHUR SYMONS



BAUDELAIRE: A STUDY

III

V

Les paradis artificiels: opium et haschisch (1860), which I have before me, is the most wonderful book that Baudelaire ever wrote. It has that astonishing logic which he possessed supremely, which unravels, with infinite precautions, every spider's web of this seductive drug, which enslaves the imagination, which changes the will, which turns sounds into colours, colours into sounds; which annihilates space and time; and, often at its crises, even one's own individuality. To Baudelaire, as to me, it has, and had, the divinity of a sorceress, a dangerous, an insidious mistress. It produces morbid effects on one's senses; wakens mysterious visions in our half-closed eyes. And this, like every form of intoxication, is mysterious, malign, satanical, diabolical. And, subjugated by it, part of oneself is dominated, so that, in Baudelaire's words: *// a vouloir faire l'ange, il est devenu une bête.*

With some this poison carries them to the verge of the abyss, over which one looks fascinated by the abrupt horror of the void. In some their ideas congeal: even to the point of imagining oneself "a fragment of thinking ice." One sits, as in a theatre, seeing a drama acted on the stage, where one's senses perceive subtle impressions, but vague, unreal, ghost-like; where at moments one's eyes envisage the infinite. "Then," says Baudelaire, "the grammar, the arid grammar itself, becomes something like an evoked sorcery, the words are alive again in flesh and in blood, the substantive, in

its substantial majesty, the adjective, a transparent vestment that clothes it and colours it like a glacié, and the verb, angel of movement, that gives the swing to the phrase."

With the hallucinations all exterior forms take on singular aspects; are deformed and transformed. Then come the transpositions of ideas, with unaccountable analogies that penetrate the spirit. Even music, heard or unheard, can seem voluptuous and sensual. It is Baudelaire who speaks now, evokes an enchantment: "The idea of an evaporation, slow, successive, eternal, takes hold of your spirit, and you soon apply this idea to your proper thoughts, to your way of thinking. By a singular equivocation, by a kind of transportation, or of an intellectual *quid pro quo*, you find yourself evaporating, and you attribute to your pipe (in which you feel yourself crouching and heaped together like tobacco) the strange faculty of *smoking yourself*." The instant becomes eternity; one is lucid at intervals; the hallucination is sudden, perfect, and fatal. One feels an excessive thirst; one subsides into that strange state that the Orientals call *Kief*.

Certainly haschisch has a more vehement effect on one than opium; it is more troubling, more ecstatic, more malign, malignant, insinuating, more evocative, more visionary, more unseizable; it lifts one across infinite horizons, it carries us passionately over the passionate waves of seas in storms—of unknown storms on unseen seas—into not even eternities, nor into chaos, nor into Heaven nor into Hell (though these may whirl before one's vision), but into incredible existences, over which no magician rules, over which no witch presides. It can separate ourselves from ourselves; change our very shapes into shapeless images; drown us in the

deep depths of annihilation, out of which we slowly emerge; bury us under the oldest roots of the earth; give us death in life and life in death; give us sleep that is not sleep, and waking dreams that are not waking dreams. There is nothing, human or inhuman, moral or immoral, that this drug cannot give us.

Yet, all the time, we know not what it takes from us; nor what deadly exchange we may have to give; nor what intoxication can be produced beyond its intoxication; nor if, as with Coleridge, who took opium, it might not become "almost a habit of the Soul."

Imagine a universe in disorder, peopled by strange beings, that have no relation with each other, whose speech one supposes is jargon; where such houses as there are are built in different ways—none with straight lines, many in triangles; where the animals are unlike ours, some smaller than ants; where there are no churches, no apparent streets; but innumerable brothels. When one sees fires the smoke goes downward; flames leap out of the soil and turn into living serpents. Now one sees a serpent return into his proper flame. There seem to be no gods, nor idols nor priests nor shrines.

The seas storm the skies and swallow up Hell; and all that lives and all that dies seems indistinguishable. Suppose that—in an opium dream—Satan turns God. The soil might wither at his touch; Lesbians lament the loss of Lesbianism; and the word of God be abolished.

I have used the word vehement in regard to Haschisch. It violates the imagination, ravishes the senses; can disturb one physically; but never, if taken in measure, prove destructive. This green drug can create unheard-of excitations, exasperations; can create

contagious laughter, evoke comical images, supernatural and fantastic.

Now take a world created by Opium. The soil wavers, moves always, in void space; a soil in which no seed nor weed grows. The men and women are veiled—none see their faces. There is light, but neither sun nor stars nor night. The houses have no windows; inside are no mirrors; but everywhere opium dens; everywhere the smoke—incessant—of pipes; everywhere a stench produced by opium and by their moral degradation. The streets are thick with grass; such animals as there are are stupefied. In fact, this inexorably moving world that has no foundations exhales—worse than pestilence—an inexplicable stupefaction.

And, symbolical as it must be, these excitable poisons are to a certainty one of the most terrible means employed by the Prince of the Powers of the Air to enslave deplorable humanity; but by no means to give him, what the drug can give him, the monstrous sense of the suddenness of space and time, as if one were hurled between them by two opposing whirlwinds.

Now appears suddenly the Women—furious, formidable—one called Mephistophila, who having gazed on the Medusa becomes Medusa; who, rouged and pale as the dead, gives one the idea of that eternal minute which must be hell. Her very name trails like a coffin-lid. Abnormal, she is sinister. She is one of my hallucinations. Can she ever count the countless sins she has committed? Occult, she adores the Arcana. Her kisses on women's lips are cruel. Perhaps she is the modern Messalina. *Elle est l'impératrice blême d'un macabre Lesbos.*

She admits—I give here simply her confessions—to no abominations, nor does she specialise her vices. As

certain of her damnation as of her existence—real, imaginary—she lives and loves and lies and forgives. She knows she has abandoned herself to all the impossible desires endured by such souls as hers, who expect annihilation. *Elle est la reine, pas présente, mais acceptée, de la cour des miracles femelles du Mal.*

She is not of those the Furies hate eternally, nor has she knowledge of man's mingled fates; yet certain Circes have shown her how to weave webs of spiritual spiders; she knows not where those are that turn the Wheels of Destiny. Whirlwinds have shaken her in her perfumed room as she lies in perfumed garments, considering her nakedness as sacred: she the impure, never the pure! She is so tired of having ravished souls from bodies and bodies from souls, that all she desires is sleep, sleep without dreams. Did sleep ever come to those who most desired it? Messalina, Helen of Troy, Faustina knew this; dust has closed their lips, the very dust they have trodden under foot, the dust that knows not whither it is drifting: none thinking of the inevitable end.

Has not this poisonous drug shown to me, as to her, shadows hot from hell? Not the shadows the sun casts on our figures as we walk on the grass; not the moon's shadows that make mockery of us; but the veritable heat and fire and flame and fumes of uttermost hell.

In her eyes persists an ardent and violent life, hateful and bestial. Depraved by insensible sensations, she imagines Caligula before her and maledictions not her own. I know her now in vision—she is more insatiable than Death—more ravenous after ravishment than Life. No vampire, no Lamia, she knows not that her body has been drenched with so many poisons that her breath might poison a man with one kiss. And now, now, her

eyes are so weary, her eyeballs ache with such tortured nerves, that she desires nothing—nothing at all.

In the very essence of Haschisch I find a disordered Demon whose insanities make one's very flesh ache. Under his power symbols speak—you can become yourself a living symbol. Under its magic you can imagine black magic, and music can speak your passion: for is not music as passionate as man's love for woman, as a woman's love for a man? It can turn your rhythm into its rhythm, can change every word into a sound, a word into a note of music: it cannot change the substance of your soul.

Finally, the drugged man admires himself inordinately; he condemns himself, he glorifies himself; he realises his condemnation; he becomes the centre of the universe, certain of his virtue as of his genius. Then, in a stupendous irony, he cries: *Je suis devenu Dieu!* One instant after he projects himself out of himself, as if the will of an intoxicated man had an efficacious virtue, and cries, with a cry that might strike down the scattered angels from the ways of the sky: *Je suis un Dieu!*

One of Baudelaire's profoundest sayings is: "Every perfect debauch has need of a perfect leisure: *Toute débauche parfaite a besoin d'un parfait loisir*" He gives his definition of the magic that imposes on haschisch its infernal stigmata; of the soul that sells itself in detail; of the frantic taste for this adorable poison of the man whose soul he had chosen for these experiments, his own soul; of how finally this hazardous spirit, driven, without being aware of it, to the edge of hell, testifies of its original grandeur.

TO BE CONTINUED

LES
PARADIS

ARTIFICIELS

OPIUM ET HASCHISCH

PAR

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE



PARIS

POULET-MALASSIS ET DE BROISE

LIBRAIRES-ÉDITEURS

9, rue des Beaux-Arts

—
1860

Traduction et reproduction réservées.

THE YELLOW ORCHID

**A DIARY OF THE PANDEMIC
VIEWED THROUGH ERNST
GRAF'S VERY PARTICULAR LENS**

by Ernst Graf

CHAPTER 36 SHE'S A 10

I was dreaming about mother last night, early hours of this morning really, for the first time since her passing. She was cooking a lovely roast dinner for me but I could tell she was sad, something was wrong so I asked her and she quietly said “dad doesn’t want to live here anymore”, and I hugged her so tightly and it was lovely to see her again but I felt so sad she was sad, and

so amazed she was feeling so sad and yet still working so hard and lovingly cooking for me.

When I feel sad I just shut down and become cold to people around me, but mother just goes on being warm, and kind, and doing anything to make me happy, even though she herself is sad.

Then I dreamt of — (my ex wife) in blue dress, blonde hair, standing at some door looking in, and I said to her “come on, let’s go”, and I said to her “you look lovely”, because she did, then we are walking away together, then for some reason she is walking ahead of me and turns the corner and when I turn the corner she is gone.

Dreaming about my late mother and my ex-wife in the same sleep. What does it all mean?

My daily reminder I am blissfully happy.

Living in the flat of my dreams, high up in Penicillin Mansions, Praed Street.

In the job of my dreams, working alone at night in the Royal Paddington Hotel, earning 40K a year.

Free to jump 2½ hours to Paris Sphynx and Chat Noir whenever I want. Even a long trip to Hamburg or Vienna.

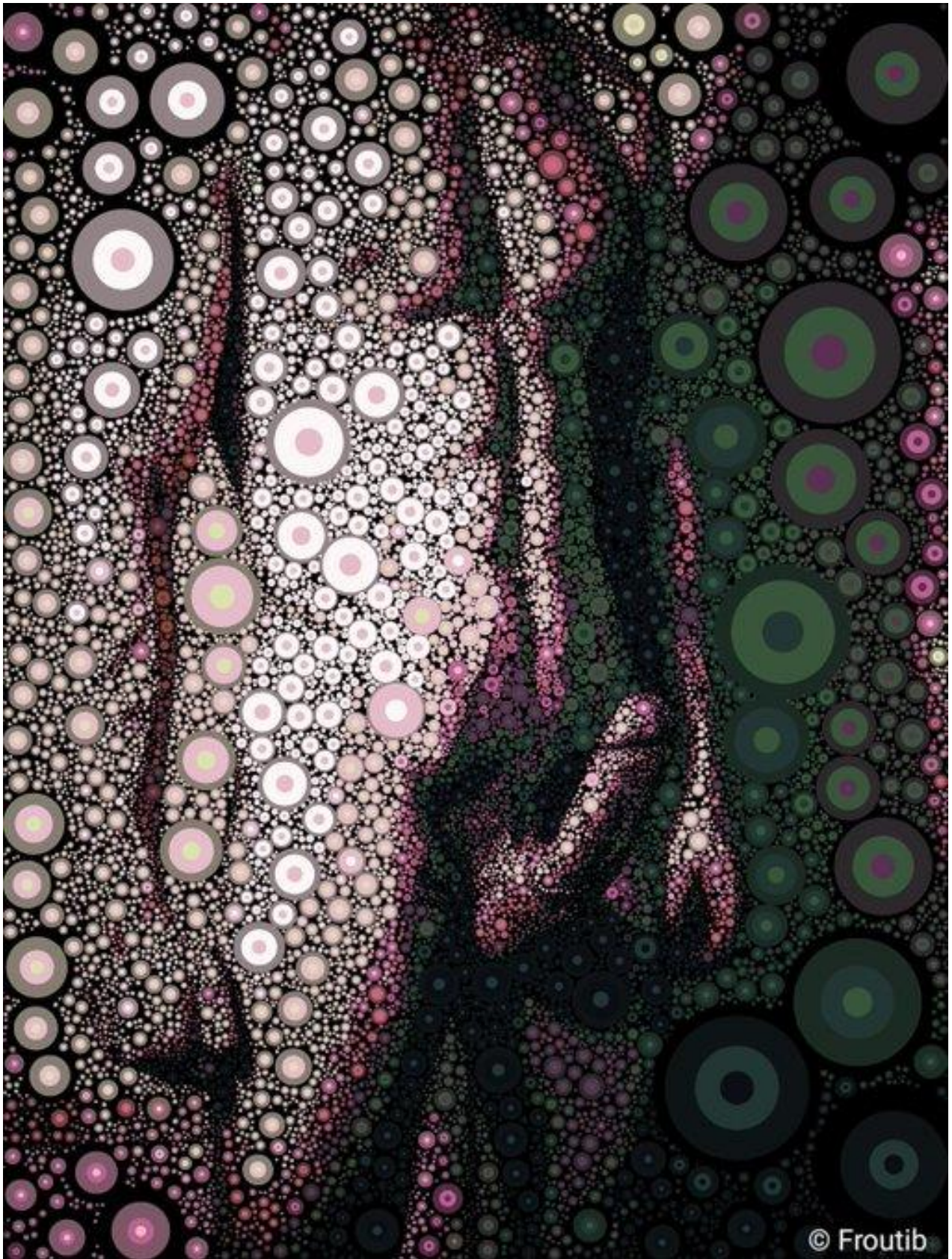
Leaving work in the morning I suddenly realised I felt so calm and at ease. Seeing the stressed nervous faces of other people on their way TO work just reinforced it. Told myself I should feel cocky. Realise my power.

Papers report bat flu cases rising across Europe, Biden says there WILL be another pandemic, Russia says they'll wipe UK off the face of the Earth. This is why I must travel and travel and travel now. Grab what pleasures I can while still healthy. Saturday in 34°C Sphynx was pointless but earlier Chat Noir had been so good. Lesson there.

"Deep is the hatred that the vulgar soul feels against beauty."
- Ernst Jünger

She's a 10 but all she thinks about is Ernst Graf.

Huge problem.



Statue by FROUTIB

She's a 10 but she's got all her own teeth so charges more than the other girls so I have to say no.

She's a 10 but someone else got there just before you and it's gonna be 'sloppy seconds' again but she doesn't mind as long as you don't.

Never regret anything that made you ejaculate.

Whenever you knock your glass of beer over, are your first words always "I'm not even drunk!"? Mine are!

I now have a healthy "3/4" drinking regime. Three days binge drinking, four days absolutely sober.

Checked the weather forecast this morning & they didn't even predict any rain. Not only has it been raining hard for more than an hour, it is now thundering. They are absolutely useless. All the millions spent on it & all the money they earn, they are useless.

A horrible moment for me as a child when I realised Sean Connery didn't make all the Bond films. It is a wound that has never healed. A horrible moment when Woody Allen became too old to take the lead role in his own films and had to cast younger actors to basically take his role.

A horrible feeling when you see a man and woman in a film with no sexual chemistry between them whatsoever yet we have to believe they are burning with lust and passion for each other. Why I could never believe Bond had his heart broken by Vesper Lynd and that was the weak link running throughout the whole Craig bond arc (when otherwise he was finally a worthy successor to Connery) until the sublime Léa Seydoux arrived, the sexiest and loveliest Bond girl of them all. I now want Seydoux in every Bond film, if there are any more.

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I am a survivor. A survivor of self-abuse.

A man going out into his back garden naked at night under a new moon & ejaculating is one of the most beautiful things.

She's a 10 but she's clearly showing symptoms of monkey pox, but you know this is probably your only chance.

Which way, Western man?

CHAPTER 37

KATRINA

How many times do you see a girl on tube, train, bus or in bar and you get an instant erection?

It is so rare, but so amazingly delicious when it happens.

Just the sight of her.

1104 Eurostar and in 1922 Paris and the King Edward VII Hotel by 430. As I waited to check in the housekeeping manager came past followed by one of her chambermaids, a gorgeous voluptuous frizzy blonde in black tight maid's tunic. I got erection in my room thinking about asking her out for a drink.

After two beers I headed out, as I crossed road gorgeous blonde passing the hotel in painted on pale blue stretch skirt over most sensational bouncing buttocks. So tempted to follow her down as far as Chat Noir but resisted and carried on along M—, and was rewarded by most GORGEOUS little Latina brunette outside Café Espaniola! Christ, she was lovely, like a Spanish Michela. Not the girl I saw in there before.

On to Sphynx and the big South Sea island girl was SENSATIONAL in tight white top over massive tits in push up bra, and skin tight blue skirt. I never realised her body looked so good, I got start of erection. Wanted her.

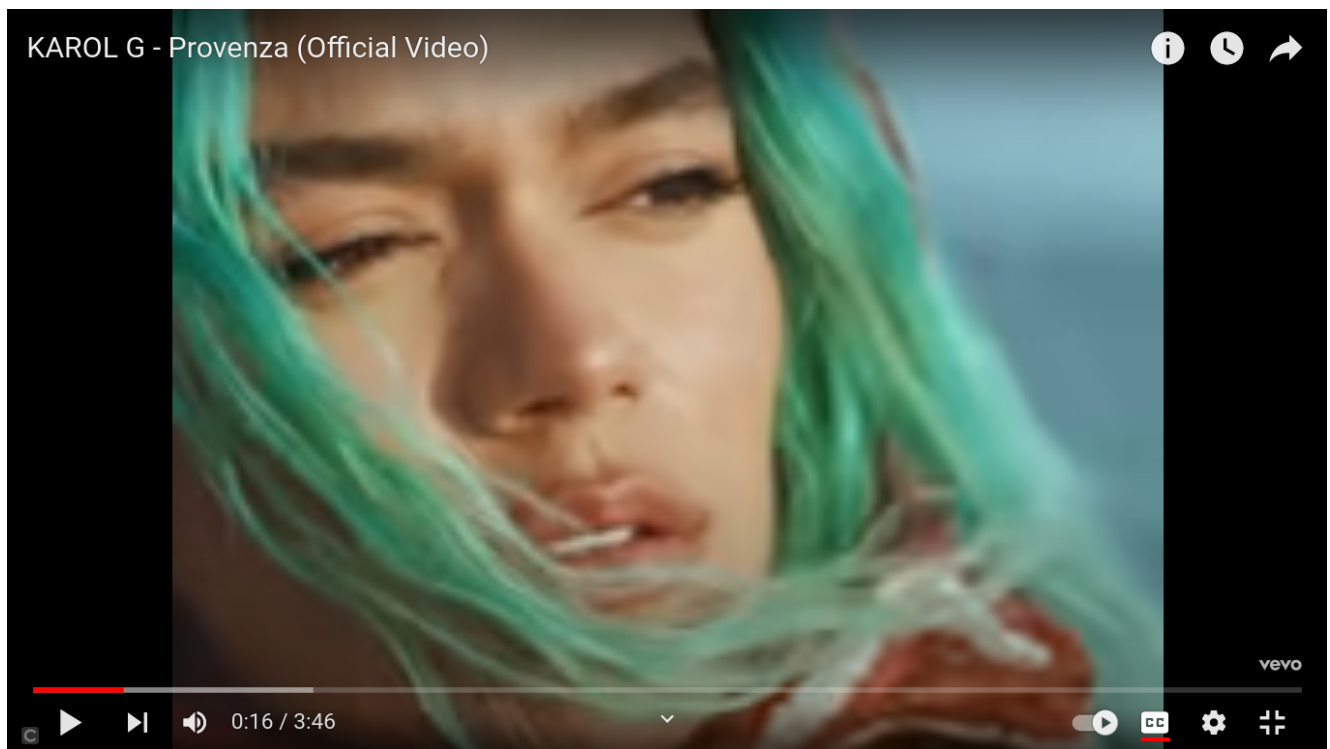
Jenny looked great in satin corset over white skirt, but I did not want her as much as last time. Georgina did not come in till after 7 I think and I cannot remember if I spoke to her even. I interrupted my Sphinx session to pop back to Café Espaniola but it was the man behind the bar! Went in again on way back home and it was him again! Where was she? She does work there doesn't she? Unless she just stopped to talk to the two men as she was passing to somewhere else??? She had no handbag, just a little waitress pouch on belt around her waist. If not here, where else does she work? Maybe Flamingo? Christ, how tantalising, I SHOULD SHOULD SHOULD have gone in as soon as I saw her. Curses. Try again today and tomorrow.

So an incredibly exciting start to the trip, but the night got worse as I got more drunk and more tired.

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Another amazing day in Paris. Didn't leave room till 230, had two beers in lounge, some gorgeous girls passing below again, then to bank and had idea to pop to Café Espaniola first just to check if girl was there, and as I approached I saw two girls in the doorway, my Spanish Michela with her back to me talking to another gorgeous girl just inside. Michela had backpack on and was obviously just popping in to speak to her colleague. I sat on stool and took a good look at Michela before she left. Her replacement was stunning. Black-haired Latina with big boobies in brown blouse and brown floral silk skirt. She was playing Spanish songs, which she sang along to at one point. At my request she turned up the volume so I could hear them too, so sexy. Then for no apparent reason she came from behind me and was mopping the floor in front of me, bending over and wobbling her gorgeous voluptuous buttocks in my face. I got an instant erection. Then five minutes later she came back and did the same thing again! Sensational. One of the most exciting moments of my life.

No point going to Chat Noir, I told myself; only go there when the man is behind the bar. I have found a new favourite place in Paris, I thought. Two of the most beautiful girls you've ever seen in life are the two barmaids here.



Left to check out Sphynx. Jenny already there and sitting at table at the back, so unusual. She didn't stay long and I felt she had only come in and sat there to try for me. She had on tight black basque top which accentuated her breasts, more sizable than I thought, and flared black skirt and smart black & red high heel shoes. Then she changed into tight blue skirt and skin tight white top which accentuated her tits even more. I wanted her then.

This left Georgina, who came in with her friend shortly after me, and a girl with glasses who reminds me of Sakira. I left and returned to Espaniola for a couple more till the man arrived, when I returned to Sphynx. Sakira went to room so that left Georgina, sitting at table by window with two men & her friend, and she had taken her glasses off and Christ she looked so beautiful without glasses. Wanted her so much.

So up we went. I started off with her lying next to me with her head on my shoulder and like last time asked for a massage but this time she said no, and insisted on sex. Her on top then missionary, then I was licking her pussy the whole time.

Tipped her some money in the bar afterwards and came back for a Grand Egg dinner.

Woke up so fucking horny.

Sunday in Paris—check out 12. Found Espaniola closed so to Chat Noir and did get really turned on the whole time. *Deluxe Orgy* and then some French compilation. Hard the whole time. Espaniola still closed, so to Sphynx. Tempting peroxide blonde Brazilian at back new to me, and Sakira. Time running out I was so tempted to stay in Paris another night and get a 2pm Eurostar home Monday afternoon just in time for work. Thank God I did not. Passing Espaniola on way back it was open, curses! My girl behind bar in white blouse. I asked her name & she said Katrina. Just one more then on my way. I could not swallow another drop.

Massive queues and delays at Eurostar. It has not gone away, not during summer holiday season anyway.

I remember thinking in Sphynx on Saturday that I can now say a Third Golden Age HAS begun. The Roaring Twenties have begun at last.

I've been saying for two weeks keep your eyes open, as things are starting to happen. Girls on way to work and home. Then I kept my eyes open in Paris and was so rewarded. Crossing Praed Street this morning Chinese-looking girl, I kept looking and she noticed & glanced back and away with a little smile. Then pretty brunette smiling as I let her out of the house. Then black-maned Chinese girl getting out of the lift.

NEXT WEEK—KATRINA CLEANING WINDOWS

ENDNOTES

Your Editor Ernst Graf—A cultured man with a passion for opera & European pornography [Marquis de Yellow Pill / X](#) and [My Books](#)



Troy Francis—Troy Francis is a writer and also a coach who helps high value men achieve success in their dating lives. Find him on Twitter [Troy Francis \(@RealTroyFrancis\) / X](#) and *Rampant Roger* at [Amazon.com: Rampant Roger : The Priapic Prime Minister eBook : Francis, T](#)

MT White—MT White started as a comic book artist but only ever published as a novelist and essayist. He's written about film, culture, mixed martial arts & pro wrestling for assorted online outlets. He now considers himself a moraliste (in the French sense not a "moralist" in the English sense). Funny enough, he's never been to France. One might like to buy his controversial book [Content](#).

John Gorman—[john j gorman \(@masaccio28\) / X](#)

FROUTIB— Man, 49, erotic art lover. Art is sublimation of life. Life is Art. I ❤️ the beauty of curves and sensuality of forms, without perversity...  [FROUTIB / X](#)

Nina Theda Black—art saves [Gallery nina theda black \(@ninathedablack\) / X](#)

Bruce Chardon—Writer. Wordchad. Sigma male. Cum Zone Pioneer. Le Marquis de Toilette. [Bruce Chardon Blog](#) [Bruce Chardon \(@BruceChardon\) / X](#)

COVER ART: *High Collar* by Nina Theda Black

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**Marquis de X—sigma male (silent alpha)** @ernstgraf · Jan 20, 2023 ...

Five star hotels are horrible. So stiff, formal and uncomfortable. A nice cosy good standard 3 star hotel is much nicer.

Discuss.

YES YOU ARE RIGHT AGAIN	56.8%
NO	43.2%

37 votes · Final results



Apelles draws Bacchanaliae.
14x21cm, ink, notebook.
John J Gorman