

Tuumba 3

Sections from DEFILED BY WATER

by Jeremy Lipp



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So . . . you've found us. Ingenious, very ingenious I must say . . . or was it through chance alone? It would be so interesting for me to hear you describe the clues and events which led to our discovery, but not now, please . . . because I see you have his notebooks. Oh? You're surprised? Of course, you must be: I know that you do simply because they're a little bit longer than your shoulder bag and as a result the top edges of their colored cardboard covers are exposed near your armpit. I recognize your odor; I recognized the color assortment: green, red, and black, worn colors, three of them: Your bag is shaped rectangular and flat since its width barely accommodates them and you slid them inside with difficulty so that the seams are about to split open and when they do the notebooks will fall into the mud before you can catch them and the ink will dissolve and run all over the pages making them completely illegible . . . You see, my powers of observation have become greatly accentuated in the last week; what else is there here, no one to speak to, certainly not to him or haven't you noticed? Well if you haven't you will, that is, if you stay for a while: your powers of discernment may become as keen as mine have, maybe even keener, who knows. I spend a great deal of my time watching him. Sometimes he doesn't move from the fire: an excellent opportunity to concentrate on detail, the deepening lines under his eyes, around his mouth, the paleness of his lips, and whatever else contributes at that particular moment to this aspect of growing exhaustion. But even this becomes tiresome: he can sit that way for hours, so I examine the scenery or when the urge strikes I urinate and excrete. It amazes me that I still have any shit left in me, yet I continue to shit occasionally. I can be in the middle of such an activity when he'll unexpectedly stand and run from this clearing into the woods as fast as he can. I follow him with difficulty but I have to admit that it's a refreshing change for me during which I can observe nothing, having to concentrate totally on the speed and agility of my limbs. I find that I tire easily whereas he runs and runs without ever feeling fatigue: once I took a short cut through the woods to a spot I was sure he'd pass. When he ran by me I caught a glimpse of his face: the lines had vanished, the skin was smooth and tight across his facial bones, his lips were full and red. I followed him but soon collapsed and he sped away out of sight. Lying on the ground panting, I heard the receding sound of his feet crushing the thin layer of ice over the snow . . . I could go on and on endlessly; there was never a reason before to single out the present. But now I must discipline myself because I'd like to take a sampling of those notebooks before it's too late, a completely

random one to be sure. I know you've read them all but wouldn't it be interesting to hear a selection read dramatically, just to refresh and perhaps enhance our memories? You don't know how wonderful this is for me! . . . oh, you're worried . . . I suppose you'd like to see him again, talk to him . . . but he's not here, he's off running like I said. Please, before they fall . . . You're nervous about giving them to me? . . . of course I won't destroy them. Don't you think I know that you've stolen them? How else could they be in your possession? It's very interesting to note what is justified in the name of desperation. Yes, you've most definitely added your own little facet to all of this. Give me only the green one, it looks the most worn. Sit down here, I'll add some wood to the fire, you must be cold. It is quite cold isn't it? Please pay critical attention to my reading of the selection and give me your opinion only after I have finished. Sit next to me. Put your hand on my thigh . . . no, under the coat. Look at his handwriting: this must be very old:

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. . . Ahhh! . . . hearing it read is captivating isn't it? Reading it is captivating! I knew you were listening even when I couldn't check. I couldn't have done it without you. You made possible the special enunciation and emphasis of those key words, mysterious mirror, did you hear that?, naked, copulating, formaldehyde, amphibian, convulsed, pancreas, gall bladder, dissect, dinghy, ambiguous, wound, webbing, arousing words aren't they? . . . Wait a minute . . . did you even notice how I gave these words, special care . . . Are you too warm? Is that it? Your face is shiny, you look flushed, I can smell your perspiration again: you know, you don't have to keep that blanket wrapped around you if you don't want to. So you'll throw it in my face? . . . You have no intention of answering me? . . . You've waited long enough? For what? You've tried to be indulgent, patient, considerate, giving me more time than I deserve, you mean allowing me to read the stolen notebook? And you're through, you've had it up to here; well take it then, put it back in that rag of yours. Why should I concern myself? So you want to get down to business; excuse me, I feel one of those urges coming on, I won't go far if you don't mind. I hate to leave the fire, it's getting so much colder now that the sun is down, don't you think so? The nights here are something awful. I do still enjoy feeling the urine running out. Don't you? It's one of the few pleasures left to me. There, I'll put it back inside now. I hope you're

not offended; you can always avoid disgust by adopting a clinical eye. That's the key: the urine is ammonia and other wastes, the penis is an organ no more repulsive than other organs, if it happens to become exposed at a time you might have wished it hadn't, concentrate on the times you'd wished it had or the times that it had and gave you ecstasy: see the balance? Now what exactly is this business you're talking about? . . . Why is he running around like that? It is strange, I suppose, seen for the first time. I forget that you've just arrived. And what are we doing here, the weather unpleasant, the trees bare, the ground soaking wet? You know, he actually hesitated to move when he happened to look towards the road and through those grey leafless branches saw someone coming up the hill, crossing the lower fields, the dividing line of trees, and then reaching the upper fields. No one knows he's here; there aren't even any tracks in the mud because the thaw washed out the road after we got here. He stood taut like a spring, his mouth slightly open, his eyes glaring, a corner of his upper lip twitching, not knowing whether to run or to stay perfectly still and wait; the last patches of snow on the fields were melting: did this person somehow know that he was here or was it coincidence? As the figure neared the woods that surround this clearing, he saw that it was a woman. His cheeks grew pale, his mouth opened wider, he stopped swallowing, his saliva collected on his lower lip and then ran down his neck while he imagined phrases of accusation and interrogation in the shape and slight movements of her lips; her teeth caught the sun and flashed at him blindingly, illuminating this silent rehearsal which, as the sun set slowly, became accompanied in his mind by the humming of a thousand flies. Who could tell what was in the woman's mind? He walked quickly into the thin woods towards her and for an instant they became two figures alone among the young grey beech trees at twilight: one holds a shotgun, cocks it, aims, the other sees him for the first time and stops moving: must be fear. Silence. A gun raised to a shoulder that shivers, an unsteady arm convulsed by recurring spasms, hands that are like wood, stiff, soaked with sweat and then frozen, he whispers it's just the cold the cold the cold while he aims again, while the sights jerk all over taking in branches, trunks, patches of yellow grass, pieces of bark, mud, and sometimes the figure of a woman dressed in red, her long smooth orange hair, tan skin, and slender legs in black winter boots, while those hands squeeze frantic lead into all these targets except for the last, and broken stones ricochet into his face and he bleeds, he screams, thinking that the glass

he's been looking through has shattered, has spiderwebbed with the impact of the last shot, the woman is translucent, pit shaped, central point of impact of the web, vanished, he can't see her, he can't move, silence. She begins to walk again, towards him, slowly, he sees her through blood: there's something terribly wrong: Her face is suddenly desirable, soft, lovely, he forgets how much his face hurts and staggers towards her, holding out his arms, but as she comes closer, her features become worn and ravaged, not what they seem from a distance, not what they once were. He stops and lets the shotgun fall out of his hand, silently realizing that the woman is you, Anna. Let me finish? You opened your mouth but you didn't speak quickly enough, you didn't have a chance. As soon as he saw you start he was overpowered by rage. Remember?: "What's this disease you've contracted while you were away in some fucking exotic zone? Don't touch me! You've covered with it! And insects! I can't even look without retching. Get out of here! Jesus Christ, maybe if I crawl like one of them naked and twitching on my ass in the mud, would that do it?" . . . Did you think he was angry, crazed from the wounds all over his face? He had just almost killed you but you didn't expect what you saw him do next which was exactly what he said he would do: took off all his clothes and thrashed in the mud like an insect of prey, covering his hands with blood from his forehead and his cheeks and smearing it obscenely all over himself. Did you notice the ugly scar on his shoulder at that point when he was naked? He was obviously threatening you with his performance but you weren't ready to accept what was being enacted right in front of your eyes by reacting with anything other than ordinary distress. You said something like, "Jake, stop it, please, what's wrong?" There wasn't the slightest chance of his answering you. He became entranced by the sight of his dark blood falling in drops and then dispersing in the mud, stopped jerking himself around and sat still, crosslegged, bent over, face parallel to the ground while you continued to question him. He wouldn't answer so you tried describing to him your recent trip to the tropics, he was right about that part, it was the tropics, but you hadn't become infected, you'd been very careful, tell him how careful and your itinerary, a few memorable incidents, the fine people you met, he'll see those awful things he said about you aren't true, he'll put on his clothes and come sit with you, you'll talk everything over, you'll exchange stories about what you've both done in the last few weeks, you'll compare and laugh at how different your ex-

periences have been, you'll put your tongues into each other's mouths like reconciled lovers, with him turning his head away from the ground, still bent over, looking at you sideways with something important on his mind, in a quiet confidential voice full of concern for you, "Are you sure you wouldn't rather have some poison?", reaching into the pocket of his pants, pulling out a handful of pebbles, his voice turning high pitched and full of loss, "I've been saving them, keeping them from myself, saving them right here, always in this pocket, always tempting me, because I had a feeling; even at night I held back . . . because I knew . . . I tell you I knew! . . . so now please!". holding them out in the palm of his hand like a beggar, I saw you look down at them, your mouth uneasy, and then you squeezed shut your eyes with creases fanning out from their corners and tiny beads of sweat rising from the lower lids that were sacs of tired skin. I sat up, I knew it was fear, a first glimmer of clarity in your perception, you choked, "I don't want it Jake!", and with the suddenness of a snake he changed, he leapt to his feet, he crouched over you with his face grimacing and mouthing exaggerated syllables, "Questions first, right? Right? Right?", until he threw the little round stones at you and ran as quickly as I have ever seen him run into those woods over there, the ones he seems to like the most. It was dusk, now it's completely dark, he's been gone at least two hours. He goes in that direction the most frequently because that's the direction set aside for the time near dark and he leaves the most often near dark and stays out half the night. I admit it! The nighttime fascinates me when he leaves. All that I know are the sounds his feet make crushing the snow, fast and sharp, irregular and slow, and the periods of silence: stopping to look, running to catch it, losing it and stumbling, finding it again only to have it vanish again. These are my only sensations other than the temperature of the air. What does he discover that eludes him so? After hours of concentration during the day I can actually use my accumulation of visual details in a semi-imaginative context, fitting actions to sounds; many actions fit each sound because the sounds are completely ambiguous. To invent a believable continuum is the challenge which enables me to see that as my mind sharpens its focus, my imagination becomes more elaborate and precise because it encompasses perception and, as perception grows, my imagination grows to accommodate: a flexible gauge then of focus, not one that frays at its edges, loses what it can't contain, and worse, never knows that the lost contents have been destroyed. When I realized

that I'd been mistaken about your enjoyment of my reading, I was upset. I assumed that it gave you pleasure because it gave me pleasure. Imagine the shock I received only trying to keep you entertained. Then think of him out there: it's very dark, I'm sure he can't see the trees right in front of him, and cold, unusually cold, look, he left his coat, he must be shivering, but I don't hear a thing, no stumbling sounds, he should keep moving in this cold, why isn't he?, he never stops for this long, I can't understand it, wouldn't it be terrible if . . . I would have gone with him if you weren't here and I would have known the reason for the lack of noise, I could have rescued him. But I wanted to keep you company; imagine sitting here alone all night, I do have a sense of etiquette about certain things . . . but it's not only that, I admit it: you bring something unknown to what I call to myself in moments of weakness, a jewel. These attachments to words or phrases sometimes occur during long periods of idleness or emptiness; the brain clutters itself with images. I've seen you through him a thousand times, grey and eroded by time, but you're still new to me, your flesh and . . . Anna, I hear him again, close by, so soon, normally half the night, sometimes till dawn, I wake up and see him walking towards me; there by that oak, see? Go to him, bring him his coat, he must be chilled, put it around his shoulder, it's your big chance.

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Take the coat and stand right in his path, say something, test his reaction, "Jake, are you alright? You're shivering; here, I brought your coat, let me put it around you." See? He pulls it out of your hands and pushes you out of his way, flinging it around his shoulders. He didn't pay you any attention, you were an obstacle and that was all. He's pulling the coat tight around his waist, the empty sleeves flap, it's windy. Try to keep up with him, he won't let you touch him but try to, ask him why doesn't he put his arms in the sleeves. When we reach the circle of stones where the fire is, look in the light at his skin: blue, frosted, it really is cold, unusually cold, I was right. Say something else to him, how about, "Jake, Jake, what's happened to you. You know why I left. I missed you so. I couldn't stand it. I thought it would be good, but I couldn't stand it. What's going on? I don't understand any of this, please answer me Jake!". Look he's smiling without showing his teeth, watching the flames, you'd better watch them too, there's something menacing about the way he's holding his

coat together with his knuckles turning white from squeezing the cloth and the way he rocks back when he smiles that strange smile, frightening to see the first time isn't it? Just relax, watch the flames, and wait. He'll make the next move, don't worry. When he does, then you can look up. He doesn't care if his nose runs, he stares and keeps his body tense, that's all. Soon it won't look like anything to you . . . He's getting ready. It's strange to be afraid of him isn't it, someone so familiar? He moves only his mouth and his tongue; his teeth give the impression of biting each word that emerges, "Smell it, godamit it's obvious, smell it! I know the skin falls and hangs separated from the bones. Don't kid yourself: the membranes first affected are innocent victims, innocent, innocent. Jesus, she hasn't even noticed. It's contagious. It's not cold enough. How cold does it have to be? What do I have to do? Don't tremble; you're trembling; don't tremble; you're trembling; don't tremble . . ." Don't look away! Can't you see that he shows concern for you? It's more than I expected. But watch only out of the corner of your eye. Calm down and listen to me. You know that he won't answer you. Are you ready to listen? Look at him again straight on. Come on, look! Let it become a picture of terror that you know so intimately that it no longer inspires fear, only curiosity. And keep looking while I'm talking. Don't stop looking and don't talk.

Do you remember how his voice sounded in the different rooms, first when he called you softly from the shower stall in the bathroom, then louder, questioning, from the bedroom, then louder frantic from the living room, then louder desperate in the kitchen, then soft and broken in the bedroom, muffled on the bed? Don't tell me . . . how could you?

(. . . For three or four days I didn't know what was going on. Those bottles lying around, stale beer in some of them with cigarette ashes, next to the mattress on the floor. I went downstairs, opened the basement door, and stiffened up like seeing a corpse, all the furniture piled up there, quiet, chairs upside down on other chairs, and tables leaning all over the walls, legs sticking out slanted up at the ceiling, all poised to collapse and fall through the doorway on me: on the afternoon of the fourth day, the phone's ringing, I run upstairs. Is Doug there? Jesus, there's no Doug here. Hang up damnit. Is Jacob there then? Oh God, he knows him, who could he be? Jacob? No, Jacob's not here. Do you know where I can reach them? No, I don't, I'm sorry. This is Doug's father, Doug gave me this number in case I wanted to reach him. I'm sorry but I don't know your son; he

was coming here to visit Jacob? Yes, they're old friends. Apparently Jacob called him after all these years and they decided to get together. When they come back would you have Doug call me please? Well, you see, I don't know if they will be back . . . No one's here or has been for the last four days. I've been away for a couple of weeks and when I came back there wasn't anybody here, I tried not to sound scared, did Doug tell you anything else, any other number or name or anything? That makes him nervous, thinking something weird is happening, well he did leave me another number, but is something wrong there? What's going on? My son should be there, that is where Jacob lives isn't it? Please just give me that number. He hesitates, not knowing whether to trust me, who knows what the fuck he's thinking, the number, tell me that fucking number, I can't deal with him starting some routine, look, it's just something between me and Jacob, I'm sure everything is fine with your son; when I see him I'll tell him to call you. Alright, it's 977-3670 and there was a name with it, Deidre, no last name. I really don't understand what's going on there. Are you sure everything is alright? Doug gave me this number, he should be there. I told you we had a fight, your son isn't involved, they probably went somewhere together, what do I have to say to convince you? Doug would have called to let me know. Who are you anyway? What are you doing there? Hang up hang up. Stick it! 977-3670 Deidre, call . . .)

You were already gone. Within two hours he was moving away, he didn't know where, all he knew was that he wanted to clear everything out, the furniture, the books, the dishes, to turn the place into a fragile shell that he could easily crush. He didn't think you'd ever come back and he didn't blame you. He was exhausted, lying there on the bed . . . it cost him something to stand up and act. You know that it isn't possible to conjure effort out of thin air . . . that energy was drawn from what could be called his last link . . . link to what? You must know better than I do. Remember the night before when he grabbed the phone and called every woman he could think of and one by one seduced them all with incredibly perfect lines? You didn't know how he'd done it, it seemed inspired. You stood in the doorway looking amazed and he threw you on the floor over by the phone and walked out. When he came back much later he took off his pants and grabbed your face and pushed it down and made you smell all those women. Did you think he was angry? He asked you if you wanted to take a shower with him, his voice suddenly weak and shaky. You stood up and smashed him

in the jaw as hard as you could and dragged him on his back into the shower where he lay unconscious until morning. When he woke up, you had already sat at the table for hours thinking about what you should do, you had gone from anger to calm but still emotional consideration of what was wrong, and you had written a passionate note and left for the tropics. Now you're back from the tropics and you've found this place through a series of unknown and mysterious clues, and the questions that seem to interest you the most are why he's here, why he's not there, why it's cold up here, why he doesn't have a building to sleep in especially because there is one down by the paved road at the bottom of the hill, and isn't it wet sleeping on the ground during the thaw?

Yes. Interestingly enough, sometimes the most effective continuum of actions to ascribe to his night sounds involves you. Listen to this: from here he sees you peering out at him from behind the old maple tree that grows just a few yards from where those woods begin, he sees you the way you once were in his eyes, such a softness about you and a suppleness to your movements that he falls in love with you. He wants you and runs towards you but when he reaches the edge of the woods you're gone. As he stumbles towards the maple tree in the dark trying to find you, his love becomes the memory of the morning when he woke up naked and hungover, slouched against a corner of the shower stall. He got up. His mouth tasted bitter. In the bedroom dresser drawers were pulled out and half empty, and his clothes were hanging over the sides or lying all over the floor. The mattress was stripped bare. The blankets and pillows sat on it in a pile. He lay down and covered his head with them. You appear next to a young beech tree in the middle of the little beech grove ten yards away. You're leaning your shoulder against the slender trunk and all your weight is on the opposite hip so that your body curves out from the trees and then at the hip begins to swerve back towards it. He runs as fast as he can, thinking of his hands caressing your ribs, waist, hips and thighs and when he enters the grove, you vanish. Out in the other rooms there wasn't a single trace of you or of your ever having been there. It was very quiet; he couldn't stay there alone. He got dressed and started moving all the furniture down into the basement. He brought books and dishes over to his brothers's house and left them there in the garage without a word. The day passed quickly because he never stopped. But then he was finished. There was nothing left except a mattress and some clothes and he had to leave them because he didn't have

anywhere else to sleep. This goes on, these cycles, for hours. He becomes exhausted and walks back here slowly to the fire where it's warm and where he can sleep. He pulls the blankets over his head. He went out just to walk and found the streets jammed. Before he could get back inside, bodies pushed him down or to the side away from the door. He had to move their way, he rushes frantically, too many of them to dodge, he had to bludgeon his way through, reckless and desperate, crossing streets in front of oncoming cars that slammed on their brakes and screeched and blasted their horns at him not caring or even hearing as long as he could get through to some imaginary place up ahead where it was clear, where he could calm himself by walking slowly and breathing deeply. Finally he stops tossing, I can see that his form becomes still under the blankets; it rests, it breathes deeply, it must sleep quietly, thoughtlessly. It's dark and there is no motion. You think that my invention isn't realistic. I know that my hands tear at each other but I ignore them. He could be dead. I get out from under my blanket and squat down next to him. He stares at the trees when the sun starts to set; his face mixes fear and lust on its features and becomes confused and then, abruptly, it decides, and he hurries there. Then I get up and shit in those woods and I can't see a thing it's so dark. He sees you ravaged by a disease of the skin and dances for you. How could there be anything tangible here, sweetheart? He has been conquered. Look at him! He doesn't care how obvious it is because he doesn't know! Isn't that symptomatic? Careful, don't get reckless. He's still quite menacing. Have his knuckles become any less prominent? And I still haven't answered you. Come here, sit by me again. I'd love to tell you everything.

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He came up behind a young woman in a long fur coat. Indulge me: The exposed, slender, golden halves of her calves moved slowly, hesitantly, branches being gradually pushed along in rapids, spurts of erratic movement and then caught again on rocks or an irregularity in the river edge or a fallen tree that juts out into the current. While motionless, the branches seem untouched by the water that rushes bulging around them. The people in front of him veered off sharply to her sides. He was caught in between those going to her left and those going to her right because he was wondering why they did, staring at her, his momentum lost, jostled and spun in the crosscur-

rents directly towards not around her. Closer: from behind, her upper arm looks extended and seems to bob rhythmically, backs of black tinted lenses that darken the edges of skin surrounding her eyes. It's too late to pass her. It's a long hollow aluminum cane that's been making that tapping noise. He's going to collide . . . Believe it or not, he was saved by a cross-walk and red light. Everyone stopped, she right at the curb and he inches from her back squeezing around her and waiting beside her, watching the light without blinking because there were too many cars even for him. When it changed and as he stepped down, the cane tapped softly along the pavement towards him and touched his leg. It stroked him through his trousers and quickly withdrew. He felt examined by an insect-like probe. She apologized into her darkness. He froze. "Are you there?", she asked. He wouldn't answer. But she knew he was with her keen sharp ears: "Please, couldn't you walk with me? I can't cross alone." By then they were the only ones left standing there. He felt that he couldn't refuse her. "Are you there?", she repeated. He wordlessly took her hand and put it under his arm and they crossed together unbearably slowly like convalescents, she holding him very tightly, almost painfully, and leaning on him with every other step, and he covered himself with a film of uneasy sweat and oil which rose from his skin while he fought his revulsion and his urge to rip her clinging hand off him and kick her into the street, and his simultaneous desire and his urge to grab her and to violently squeeze her and to force her clinging hand down his pants to tear her dress and her bra and her panties and to put his hands all over her, all over her smooth soft trembling with fear flesh. He tried to release himself; she said softly, almost tenderly. "Wait, please don't leave."

Her invitation dazed him and he stopped resisting; suddenly he was trembling and not knowing what to say. They walked together to her house, she continuing to hold him but now more leisurely and without leaning, and he as silent as before but now with words jammed in his throat. He tried to kiss her hair and pull her hand against his chest, repeating to himself that she was blind, it should be easy, she can't see a thing, she can't see how your face is twisting, relax, caress her; and she let him with a little cry of pain and kissed his mouth, feeling for it first with her fingers and he still trying to remember the ease of touching a woman without this jerking spastic lust that he hated and couldn't restrain and thinking of you sweetheart for the first time since that morning and the discovery of your

departure, how he'd suspected sometimes like after he's lain down alone while you were still reading in the next room late at night, shit now he could see it on his hands!, in his goddamn spastic hands!, and had dreamt helplessly of a whore, a gorgeous whore he'd never seen, that the years with you had crippled him, had cancelled out all the years before you, and their dark affair that drew them into the most perverse, sin-ridden pits of the world, not just the women, everything you bitch!, where aroused by the prick of the jewels in her navel and on her breasts, so that he was without any experiences whatsoever that might have soothed, that might have given him confidence through the fact of their existence, she suddenly turned and seduced him at knifepoint, even you, the one woman he could remember, gone, and they screwed violently like dogs, fuck her!

Did you know? In such a state of anger and bitterness and fear, he pictured you first as a near fatal stab wound from which the blade has only recently been extracted and second, as a terrible maiming disease the disfiguring effects of which may or may not be permanent. The appearance of these images caused the encounter with this woman to assume the aspect of a test over which he had to triumph. What a wild imagination! But after all it encompasses his perceptions so how could it not take on their character? They need not be precise in the objective sense in order to accentuate his fantasies, simply focused sharply through any lense, no matter how distorted. Sweetheart, don't you see? This is what I was getting at before: discussing out loud, reading out loud, you can see the result for yourself: a broader, fuller viewpoint on a subject you'd think worn to death! Deesn't that interest you?

But let's not remind ourselves of your earlier behavior; no recriminations, no regrets, right?

He braced himself, standing behind her while she examined her front door and found the key hole with her sensitive fingers. Inside, she offered him a seat on the couch, pointing in its general direction with her cane; she folded up the cane, put it down on the coffee table, and then groped her way next to him and they kissed passionately, his hands quickly feeling for the opening and starting to slip inside her fur coat but she took hold of his wrists, whispering breathlessly, "no wait!", pulling back from his mouth, standing up, unbuttoning the coat while walking away from him to the center of the room, and then letting it fall to the floor behind her, leaving her naked. She turned and faced him and took off her dark glasses like a

g-string and said, "You know, I'm not really blind." She picked up the cane and threw it up and caught it and threw it up and caught it and jumped and danced around tables, chairs, through doorways and back to the couch where he was sitting and watching her with a look of disbelief. "Now do you believe me? Come on, don't be mad! You needed a surprise, admit it. Don't think I don't know how you were feeling out there when I asked squirming around like that, standing there right on the edge of the curb looking like you'd just taken an overdose of amphetamines. I couldn't resist. After all the usual solicitousness what would this maniac do if I asked him for help? I knew I had you right away when I tapped you with my cane, by accident of course, and you didn't run. Why didn't you? I wouldn't have seen you go, right? . . . but I was glad you didn't and also glad to see that there's still a spark of common decency left in you, oh come on, don't take it seriously, I'm joking really, smile a little for me. What's your name anyway? Jacob? Jacob, I loved crossing with you. How could I let you just leave? You're glad aren't you? Tell me you are." And she kissed him again, entered his mouth with her tongue and put his hands on her breasts and her nipples swelled out swelled out in between his fingers. Don't look at me like that! These details are essential. I wouldn't include them if they weren't, you know I wouldn't, stop it! . . . Didn't I tell you already? . . . It was Deidre, that's right, (977-3670, her), I must have forgotten, (not hello but where are you? seductive, confident, sure of her secret lover's call. What else could I say, is this 977-3670), why do you ask?, (Oh, sorry, I thought you were someone else), just curiosity?, (Yes this is Deidre Whitehall, who is this?), alright don't tell me, (Oh, I see. No, it's no bother at all, but I'm afraid Jacob isn't here), She left him all of a sudden, (Yes of course I know him, in fact I'm beginning to realize who you are too), confusing him, (he told me about you), and making him wonder if he'd done something wrong, (why shouldn't he?), but what?, (only that you left him), did she expect him to have known that she wasn't really blind?, (that was all he said, he didn't want to talk about it, he didn't even tell me your name but now I know what it is), how the hell could he tell?, (I have an idea but it's a long drive from here), making fun of him, getting him all excited, (I think he's upset about something), and then walking out, (I don't know, I haven't been able to go see him), but she'd been excited too, hadn't she?, (because he has my car, do you have one?), breathing hard and making those little noises, (good, then I can give you directions), and she'd been wet too,

(and tell him I want the car back), hadn't she?, (thanks), no, she'd be back, (no nothing else). it was nothing, what was he thinking? Jesus Christ!, (goodbye Anna) . . . he controlled himself by letting his mind wander to this moment that is passing right now; how differently things have turned out from his conjectures: seeing you, if he ever would, how bitter would he be? He might throw you down, slap you. What would that be like, to really harm you physically? Your nose and lips might bleed and swell, you'd cry, how would you react?, would it make you hate him?, would he then hate you?, would you plead with him?, would he melt at the sight of you in pain?, would you forgive him?, would he flare up and snap and kick you again? You can see how totally this must have absorbed him, so much so that when the woman came back into the room with a bottle of whiskey and two glasses, he saw her as an apparition of the past and began to stumble and strain to somehow reorient himself; whereas she, having found him clenching his teeth and his hands tearing at each other even before he had noticed her reentry and so thinking that he must be nervous, poured him a full glass and handed it to him which he drank down at once and she refilled it for him and poured herself a glass and settled back on the couch with him. The whiskey affected him before he could clear up his confusion of times, and, once intoxicated, he either didn't care to or he forgot about it completely because the sight of her full dark lips pressing against the glass, curling over the rim and dipping into the liquid which her throat then opened to receive, apparition or not, aroused him. She was keenly aware of the change and, smiling, put down the bottle and slipped beside him, fitting, he thought, exactly under his arm, inside his hand, against his chest. She held his face in between her palms and pushed warm whiskey into his mouth from hers, unbuttoning his clothes, making him lie down, straddling his face with her thighs, sucking on his slowly hardening penis, he breaking away from her only occasionally to drink from the glass that she kept filled for him on the coffee table . . . Later she didn't look to him like flesh but like polished stone, lying on her stomach, the clear transparent green eyes closed, his hand over and over again smoothing her buttocks while she slept.

\$1.00

My friends, let us love what we
love. The man who damn well refuses
to love what he loves dooms himself.

— Van Gogh

In the light of certain theories of
history in which man is characterized
by an economical struggle for survival,
the persistence of poetry is a difficult
fact to account for. Poetry is the
history of man's disinterestedness.

— Wallace Fowlie

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