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# Nothing of Substance

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Devoid of essence

Lacking in meaning

Stripped of matter

## Contents

In this I Stand Alone - James Rose

Fragments Radioed in From a Distant Room - Andrew Skarzynski

Remote - Christopher Rose

Crow Speaks to Weasel - James Rose

CALLING to a MOTHER PREACHER - Christopher Rose

The Length of One Curtain - Andrew Skarzynski

Old Shagger - James Rose

Little and Opinion - Christopher Rose

Crimes of Surprise - Christopher Rose

Guidance notes for the Correct Application of Tattoos - Andrew Skarzynski

Isaac's Assassination - James Rose

The Wedding - Christopher Rose

The Desert Grass Life - Christopher Rose

Contact Point - Christopher Rose

Device Representation - Christopher Rose

Grist for the Mill. - Christopher Rose

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## In this I Stand Alone

[1] *At least I think I am Theodore Moorcock.* Theodore Moorcock opens his eyes. Cold. Cold and bright. Early winter. Hoar frost has settled like a reef of diamonds over the streets and pitted black tarmac. He rubs his eyes and concentrates on the patterns created by the pressure of his fingers against his eyes - hypnotic swirls, fragmented geometries shifting lazily around in the darkness. *I think I dreamt of the future last night* mutters Theodore Moorcock, *but it may well have been the past.* He opens his eyes and sits up, leaning against the cold concrete of the shop doorway. His image, a ghost [11] of the dispossessed hovering amongst the latest fashions, stares back at him: a month's worth of beard, grease matting his black hair, sallow cheeks. Pale skin and fading lips. He could be anybody but *I am nobody* [9] whispers Theodore Moorcock.

[2] Theodore Moorcock more than likely bought *Doctor Who and the Dinosaur Invasion* from a charity shop or second hand book shop as the inside cover has a handwritten price in the top left hand corner (75p) and the front page bears the text *Philip Jones, aged 12. Class 4b* handwritten in biro. It has been suggested that Theodore Moorcock may well have had this book as a child himself or became that child at some point during his travels. The book is well read with many of the pages dog eared but only one has a passage underlined, the last paragraph in the book:

*The Doctor shrugged. 'Perhaps they were from another planet, or from the future of this planet.' He replaced the book on its shelf. They got back into the jeep and turned north towards UNIT's temporary Headquarters. 'There are so many mysteries,' [8] said the Doctor as they headed up the Tottenham Court Road. 'Remember what I told you about the Mary Celeste? The whole universe is full of mysteries. The important thing is to keep an open mind.'*

*Doctor Who and the Dinosaur Invasion* by Malcolm Hulke  
(Target Books, 1978)

[3] Novels. All of them are novels. Each has been read, twice at least. His favourites are wrapped in plastic bags to protect them from the rain and damp. Meaningful passages are underlined in thick pencil and the page dog-eared. A wealth of literature [10]. Of knowledge. *A book can take me anywhere, anytime* Theodore Moorcock was once told. *Away from all of this. Out of here and into there.* He continues to work his way through the mass of books until he finds the one he is looking for. A worn spiral-bound notepad, the size of a pocket bible. Held shut with a thick elastic band Bradbury had around his thin wrist. He smiles and takes the worn spiral bound notepad [8] out.

[4] When Theodore Moorcock's body was finally found he was smiling. One hand was deep in his coat pocket clutching a package, the other holding a black zip up bag. The bag contained only books, all of which were science fiction related novels. In addition to six blunt pencils, a worn spiral bound notepad, held shut with a thick elastic band, was also found in Theodore Moorcock's pocket. Near the back there are at least two pages of carefully written [8] names:

- |            |            |             |            |
|------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| ▪ John     | ▪ Sinclair | ▪ Larry     | ▪ Sturgeon |
| ▪ Matheson | ▪ Robert   | ▪ Stapledon | ▪ Iain     |
| ▪ Dick     | ▪ Brian    | ▪ Moorcock  | ▪ Bester   |
| ▪ Wells    | ▪ Alfred   | ▪ Jones     | ▪ Fuller   |
| ▪ Theodore | ▪ Wyndham  | ▪ H.G.      | ▪ Hulke    |
| ▪ Michael  | ▪ Olaf     | ▪ Delany    | ▪ Richard  |
| ▪ Malcolm  | ▪ Niven    | ▪ Phillip   | ▪ Aldiss   |

- [5] Theodore Moorcock's copy of *Death is a Lonely Business* was found inside a supermarket plastic carrier bag. The handles were tightly knotted and wrapped around the book. The book itself, published in 1986, was well read. The spine has multiple cracks, loose pages and a number of passages underlined in pencil. Perhaps the most symbolic is this one:

*Along the way, I thought I saw myself passing on a bike, twelve years old, delivering papers in the dark morn. Further on, my older self, nineteen, wandered home [11], bumping into poles, lipstick on my cheek, drunk with love.*

*Death is a Lonely Business* by Ray Bradbury  
(Grafton Books, 1986)

- [6] Theodore Moorcock continues through the tide of people, walking towards the fountain at the centre of the city. *It has not always been like this* thinks Theodore Moorcock. The streets of this city have changed their path, taken different routes within the confines of the dark brown river. He smiles. The busy streets are a home, one that he longs to be his own, *Like when Hulke took me...* Theodore Moorcock stops. *I have got that wrong. I was Hulke.* He continues to walk toward the fountain, remembering that *When I was Hulke I walked the deserted streets of this city. I walked the streets accompanied by the sound of the birds, the soft wind through the trees. I had a companion during those travels, a girl, Sarah. She was always asking a lot of questions. Why was the city deserted? Where was everybody? I didn't know the answers to her questions nor did I want to know them. The crowded streets were now empty. I had never seen them like this before.*

*That night I dreamt dinosaurs were roaming the grey city streets but dinosaurs don't exist. They vanished, swallowed up by a crack in the earth [14].*

- [7] Through the rush of strangers, Theodore Moorcock sees the doorway, a crack running up the side of the building opposite him. He waits and watches the crack. It could widen but there is the possibility that it could also close, a doorway through time closed forever. Theodore Moorcock reaches into his deep pockets and takes out his worn spiral bound notepad and a blunt pencil. Flicks through the pages, looking for the map [18].

Theodore Moorcock finds the pages, flattening out the double spread on his lap. The map is crudely drawn: single lines represent the streets and their junctions, uneven squares for buildings, all surrounded by a thick heavy line of graphite - the river, Theodore Moorcock's boundary. Some of the buildings have thin haphazard lines

drawn through them. Above these buildings are arrows, pointing left or right, to the past or the future. Dates are written above each of the arrows.

- [8] He removes the elastic band, wearing it like a bangle around his thin wrist so as not to lose it. Thumbs through the pages, near to the back, stopping at the page where Theodore Moorcock has started his list. He reads each entry out loud, moving through them with his index finger: H.G., Bester, Matheson, Philip, Blish, Bradbury. Name after name [4] after name. Four sides of names, all written in clean, precise handwriting.

Theodore Moorcock searches through his coat pockets, feeling around for his pencils. Finds the sharpest of the six and adds a new entry to the bottom of the list: Theodore Moorcock.

Closes the worn spiral-bound notepad. Seals it shut with the thick elastic band Bradbury found. Puts the pad into his coat pocket along with his pencils and stands up. The bag of books is heavy in his hands. The river passes lazily before him. The commotion of rush hour to his left [13], the meandering path of the river to his right [16].

- [9] Sitting on a bench overlooking the river, a bench dedicated to 'Beloved Philip, ever loving husband and proud father of Jenny and Nancy. Sadly missed.' Theodore Moorcock unzips his black bag with hands whose dirty fingernails are bitten down to the quick and rummages through what little possessions he owns: books. Books bought from charity shops. Books stolen from the local library. Books borrowed from the shelter. Books [3] given to him by... *By whom?* thinks Theodore Moorcock.

- [10] When Theodore Moorcock's body was finally found he was smiling. One hand was deep in his coat pocket clutching a package, the other holding a black zip up bag. The bag contained only books, one of which was a worn spiral-bound notepad while the rest were the science fiction novels listed below. The package, made of newspaper and tied with string was opened to reveal its contents: nothing but a few breadcrumbs [3].

- *Behold the Man* by Michael Moorcock
- *Cities in Flight* by James Blish
- *Death is a Lonely Business* by Ray Bradbury [5]
- *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick
- *Doctor Who and the Dinosaur Invasion* by Malcolm Hulke [2]
- *Flying to Nowhere* by John Fuller
- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
- *I am Legend* by Richard Matheson
- *The Invisible Man* by H.G. Wells
- *The Midwich Cuckoo's* by John Wyndham
- *More than Human* by Theodore Sturgeon
- *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf
- *The Planet of the Apes* by Pierre Boulle
- *The Picture of Dorian Grey* by Oscar Wilde
- *Solaris* by Stanislaw Lem
- *Time's Arrow* by Martin Amis [12]

- *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells

[11] The following text appears on the second page of the worn spiral bound notepad found amongst Theodore Moorcock's possessions. The brief paragraph is written in clear, precise handwriting: *The river binds me. That dark brown curve is, and always will be, my boundary. It encloses me within the perimeter of these grey streets. I am unseen as my eternity is spent drifting through time: a witness, the transparent chronicler of the lives of the unseen* [10]. *The date is always today, the time is always now.*

[12] It would appear that Theodore Moorcock's copy of *Time's Arrow* was only read once. In comparison to the others in his black zip up bag, *Time's Arrow* is in virtually pristine condition with very little wear or damage to the cover or to the pages. It is possible he bought this book new or it was given to him new. There is only one passage underlined in this book:

*Above, a failing-vision kind of light, with the sky fighting down its nausea. Its many nuances of nausea. When Odilo closes his eyes I see an arrow fly - but wrongly. Point-first. Oh no, but then... We're away once more, over the field. Odilo Unverdorben and his eager heart. And I within, who came at the wrong time* [11] - *either too soon, or after it was all too late.*

*Time's Arrow* by Martin Amis  
(Penguin Books, 1991)

[13] Theodore Moorcock walks against the flow of human traffic. No one acknowledges him. People move out of his way, adjusting their path so as not to touch him. They do not even make eye contact. *It is as if I am not here* thinks Theodore Moorcock.

These people are not strangers. He has seen all of these people before. He knows them all. Their pattern in life is impressed in his memory, written in his worn spiral bound notepad: two kids, bunking off school, walk past him. They are sharing a stolen cigarette and giggling. A young man in a suit shouts into his mobile phone as he dodges past the other pedestrians. A middle-aged woman, lost in her thoughts, carries a bag of shopping in each hand. Her young daughter, sucking a bright red lollipop, walks two paces behind her. *It's going to be a glorious day* [6] thinks Theodore Moorcock.

[14] *When I woke up, I was here. The streets were flooded with people, flowing with anonymous faces. I looked at them, trying to recognise their features, to see a friend, to see myself.*

*I didn't know where to go. I had been to so many places, yet I had probably only ever been here. Stuck in time. A traveller without a map. My memories for a compass. I looked for a chance, an opportunity in the crumbling fabric of a building, a sliver of darkness, a crack in the earth. These are the doorways back. What would my wife say?*

Theodore Moorcock sits on the edge of the fountain, his black zip up bag placed between his feet. He looks around at the city, at the people passing by, at the buildings [7].

- [15] Theodore Moorcock wades through the torrent of strangers. None of them see him. None of them touch him. He might as well not be there. He reaches the building. The crack cuts through the brickwork, running up for nearly the full height of the building. Theodore Moorcock hesitates, quickly looking around him, and then runs his fingers along part of the crack.

The edges of the crack are sharp, wide enough apart to slip a finger into the fissure. Theodore Moorcock leans forward and looks into the darkness. He feels its immense weight pushing against him, feels its cold emptiness. He starts to go numb [20]

- [16] *The river [19] is history* thinks Theodore Moorcock. *Its current carries the relics of an era onto the shores of another century. Fragments, moments, a word or a sentence. A memory or a myth. All spoken in the language of time. All of our lives are caught amongst the river's current. We are drifting back to the source, our journey over.* He smiles. *Everyone is equal. We just take a different path, that's all.* Theodore Moorcock reaches into his pocket, to take out his worn spiral bound notepad but stops, his fingers resting against the cover. He withdraws his hand and bends down, whispering *I'm sorry, I'm so sorry* [24] as he does so.

- [17] The newspaper is a day old. Some of the job adverts have been circled and brief notes written alongside the typeset. Opposite the adverts are columns of stories. These are the stories that are not important enough to warrant a full article. A hierarchy of tragedy and mishap ending here, reduced to a few sentences just before the columns of opportunity and death...

**IDENTITY GIVEN TO RIVER BODY** Two weeks after being found floating in the river, the body of a homeless person has being identified as Philip Wells [1]. Wells, the father of two deceased daughters and husband to Julie Wells, went missing from his home a year ago. Julie Wells, who confirmed her husband's identity for the police yesterday, commented that the discovery of her husband's body ended a twelve-month period of uncertainty for her. Mrs Wells added that she would be commemorating the memory of her husband by dedicating a bench to him by their favourite spot on the river; opposite the bonding warehouse where Well's father used to work. Well's funeral will take place next week.

- [18] *For so long I have wandered without a map. It wasn't until Philip bought the notepad and Bradbury the pencils that I could begin to draw this map. Without it I would be lost.* Theodore Moorcock adds another crudely drawn square to the map, marking it with a haphazard line. He looks up and to his left at the clock tower. Notes down the time. A newspaper rests on the fountains edge. Theodore Moorcock reaches over and picks it up, finds the date on the cover and copies it onto the map. Satisfied with this accuracy, Theodore Moorcock returns the worn spiral bound notepad and the blunt pencils back into his deep pockets. He picks up his black zip up bag and walks over to the crack [15] in the building.



[19] Theodore Moorcock walks along the edge of the river, looking down into its continuous flow. The sun catches the ripples. *Slivers of silver on a tide of darkness* thinks Theodore Moorcock. *I am breathing now. Scarecrow body. A silver minnow of history. Caught amongst the reeds, suffocating.* Theodore Moorcock stops and looks across the river, across to a land he has never walked. *For all the centuries I have spent walking these streets, I have never known those.* There are buildings across the river. They may be offices or they may be flats, Theodore Moorcock isn't sure. It doesn't matter. They are there, in sight but forever out of reach. They would always be there, as would the river, the barrier to Theodore Moorcock's passing.

He turns and walks to a bench beneath an oak tree. He sits down, pulling his black zip up bag close to his chest. Theodore Moorcock closes his eyes and sleeps the sleep of the thousand dead [22]

[20] Theodore Moorcock looks once more into the fissure: This is what it is always like. Immense darkness. Infinite darkness. Darkness without detail, without sound. A sliver into the abyss. He runs his fingers along the edge of the deep black crack. Somewhere a clock chimes. In the darkness thinks Theodore Moorcock. The river continues in its endless flow. Retreating back to where it came from. How can I get back if I don't know where I am from?

The date is always today. The time is always now. Theodore Moorcock steps into the darkness... [16]

[21] He stands at the edge of the river, looking across its slow shifting surface. *This river has had many names*, he thinks. Remembers. Fifteen years ago he was known as Philip. Twenty-five years ago he was called Bradbury. Eighty years ago his friends simply called him H.G. One hundred and twenty years ago he went by the name of Matheson. Two hundred and fifty years ago he was simply known as Blish. But today, today this stranger is called Theodore Moorcock. *But it's always been the same* thinks Theodore Moorcock. *Like the river. Regardless of what has been built upon its banks, the river has always been here. Moving slowly, endlessly, towards its source.* Theodore Moorcock puts his hand into his deep pockets, taking hold of the wrapped sparrow.

He watches his breath dissipate into the air. *I have been here before [1]. I always will have been, at some time or another. Time. Time holds no constraints for me. I will always be living in the past - your present and your future. Unrecognised. Anonymous. Another face in the tide, washed upon the shore of your century. I will always be here and without a doubt will also have been here before. In this, I stand alone. Out of place. Out of time.*

[22] Late afternoon. Somewhere a clock is ticking. Theodore Moorcock slowly opens his eyes and sees the river. *I am a silver minnow caught in history. Swimming against the current.* Theodore Moorcock reaches into his deep coat pocket and pulls out his worn spiral bound notepad and a blunt pencil. Randomly opens the worn spiral bound notepad and writes *In this, I stand alone*. He closes the worn spiral bound notepad and puts it into his deep coat pocket. He looks at the pencil, licks its tip, then puts that back into his deep coat pockets.

Theodore Moorcock gets up from the bench and walks to the river's edge. Without hesitation he steps down into the water and whispers *I am a silver minnow caught in the currents of history. In this, I stand alone* [17].

- [24] His fingers wrap around the dead bird, tight enough so he won't drop it as he searches through the bin with his other hand. Plastic bottles, a half eaten burger, aluminium cans. Carrier bags full of rubbish. Yesterday's newspaper [17]. Theodore Moorcock puts the newspaper under his arm and peels one half of the white bread roll off the burger. Takes them over to the nearest bench and flattens the newspaper out on his lap. Places the sparrow in the middle of the columns of text. He then breaks off small pieces of the bread and puts them next to the birds beak. *For the journey* says Theodore Moorcock. *To thank the man who gave you words when he had no grain.* He carefully folds the newspaper around the corpse, wrapping the bird into a monochrome package. Searches through his pockets. Finds what he is looking for. Wraps the string around the parcel. Ties it once. Wraps the string around again and ties another knot. Says the Lord's Prayer as he does this. Stands up and puts the bundle of words, bird and bread into his coat pocket, next to his worn spiral bound notepad and blunt pencils. The sun is bright, the pavement and roads damp with the melting jewels of frost. The sounds of the city [13] have settled into their nine to five patterns and the river, the river moves on towards its end [21].

## **Fragments Radioed in From a Distant Room**

### **#1**

Three free words uttered on an uneven breeze,  
The start of a storm.

Three repetitive clicks on a mistaken wavelength,  
Bringing a message home.

### **#2**

In B&Q there is a banner proclaiming the availability of “Kitchens as individual as you are”.  
Five types of kitchen are available.

This seems about right on the basis of the consumer promise made.

Go to a foreclosed burger shop and buy out all of its fittings.  
Highly colour saturated images of implausible greasy stacks and fries smothered in  
unidentified glutinous goo.

Deck your house out with these monstrous designs and invite your friends and family around.

That’s individual.

### **#5**

On March 19th I purchased seven cheap porcelain figurines from the hospice charity shop,  
rustic gardeners leaning on spades and smoking pipes, ladies holding the hems of their  
long ceramic dresses.

With great care I chipped off their heads and swapped their heads and bodies, making them  
whole again. Exercising great care with modeller’s clay, adhesive cement, paint and  
varnish I ensured my work was entirely unnoticeable, returning them to the charity  
shop in a well packed box with a few additional well thumbed books and an old belt.

## **Remote**

a reluctant subject  
a chemical accident  
the evidence of my words  
punctures nervous reason  
the liberty of biochemistry  
just a red herring  
built on strong foundations

## **Crow Speaks to Weasel**

Crow speaks to Weasel.  
Together they plot.

Against the Vole and the Pheasant,  
The lambs and their mothers.  
Against the Badger and the Rat,  
The Stag and his does.

They crush the Spider  
And skin the Snake.  
They strangle the Bear  
And murder the Wolf.

Finally, they trap what is left of Woman  
And castrate what is left of Man.

Crow smiles.  
Weasel lies dead.

## **CALLING to a MOTHER PREACHER**

the bondage of my birth  
in the CARNAGE of the afternoon  
born of a darkened land  
this LIZARD sermon of come  
this liar earth  
behind the beach

HEAR me FUCKERS  
SITTING IN ON GOD  
your new rival  
here to COUNTER your POWER  
i am a man of need

WAITing at the church  
with hot sin RISING  
STORM hungry for you

*The length of one curtain shall be eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure.*

*The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and other five curtains shall be coupled one to another.*

*And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of another curtain, in the coupling of the second.*

*Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that is in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches.*

### **Exodus. 26:1--6**

The high-ceilinged double fronted shop on York Way had been in more or less the same position since the late nineteen-thirties. At some now forgotten point in the early fifties it had moved from number forty-seven to number forty-nine, but beyond a change of name from Elgin & Sons to Value Curtains around the end of 1997 its tenure as a supplier of domestic curtains in north London had been unbroken. The sign was traditionally hand-painted for seventy of its eighty years, only succumbing to a bright vinyl printed sign very recently.

I had only known the shop in the last three years and had only managed to actually become employed there by a series of twists and turns that simply don't concern you. I arrive early for work and leave promptly as the graffiti tagged steel-grey shutters roll down at 6:00pm. At lunchtime, I eat swiftly and without fuss and never let my colleagues see me entering or exiting the lavatories on the premises, preferring to wait patiently till I am sure that no one is nearby.

The great book speaks honestly and openly about the majesty of curtains and it hardly bothers me now that the rolls of fabric we sell by metric metre are largely of an economy type with low yarn count, inferior stitching and a poor lustre. Worn out looking couples browse the looms of garish patterns each making the same remarks as the last, struggling to capture the optimism that such a capital purchase should inspire.

What does jar against my keenly developed sense of righteousness is the need to sell to the heathens and fundamentally unclean that walk through the shop every single day. The Torah does of course make some mention, The Song of Songs speaking with appropriate reverence of the 'curtains of Solomon', and the Hebrew Bible urging us to "let them stretch forth the curtains". I accord our clearly orthodox Jewish customers the respect that these ancient facts rightly entitle them.

As they enter the door of our humble store, sounding the bell, like shabby black rooks, with yamukahs or black fedoras and curls, I remind myself that, 1 Chronicles 17 starkly tells us that 'the ark of the covenant of the LORD dwelleth under curtains', and ensure they are steered away from the rolls of unmarked sprouting seconds, sure to delaminate and droop within a week. As their women folk trail at a respectful distance and they wring their hands

mournfully I help them to locate looms of reasonable density and resilience with only limited flaws and off-shading.

Don't misunderstand, I don't tell them the truth. I don't warn them away from our special offers for 'no lining required' and I don't dispel their illusions about our 'ready-to-hang' products. But I provide them with the basic broad parameters for a semi-well informed decision about curtain purchase within the constraints of their belief system.

When faced with customers in traditional Islamic dress I find my finely attuned senses prickling with disgust, knowing that the holy Qur'an makes only two scant mentions of curtains. Once as a simile relating to fire and once suggesting that when visiting a person's house any requests for food or goods should be made from behind a curtain (chapter 33 verse 53). Why I would request my dinner from behind a curtain is simply beyond my comprehension. Perhaps I might emerge from behind a curtain bearing platters for a feast of some sort, or part some curtains to have revealed some kind of unique vision or view of a critical and courageous scene from the life of Mohammed, but no such mentions exist.

I have checked.

Beyond these trifling matters, which to be honest hardly try my unusually generous tolerance any more, are the customers who simply have no faith at all. They run their puffy secular fingers over braids and rails having hopped out of mid-priced cars parked on the single-yellows outside the shop. Nervously they keep an eye on the window for traffic wardens as they refer to scribbled notes and calculations on scraps of paper.

At this point in my story I can more or less hear you the reader chiding me, saying, "You are too much of an idealist, you ask too much, in a modest mid-priced curtain retail outlet you will inevitably be faced with all manner of people, some with a limited understanding of the role of curtains in scripture". I will be honest I have thought this very thought myself more than ninety three times. But think about it. Can one even be an idealist in an environment where those ideals are manifest and real already? On the contrary, that would simply return one to the state of a realist. All forms of idealism are fundamentally at odds with their present. So I retain my standards and apply them with vigour, though with sufficient subterfuge that I am not sacked for rudeness or some other infringement of the employee code of conduct pinned up in the tiny staff area behind the office.

The shop is continually haunted by the drifting sounds of the radio from the admin office at the back of the shop where all transactions and paperwork are handled. When the manager is in the office the station is usually unremarkable and largely forgettable. When the girls in the office are unsupervised, the cheap and crackly result is always that ugly music preferred by the young. It sickens me and frightens me with its lascivious tone and aggressive parlance.

At these times, I often position myself near the open doorway that leads to the office so I can listen to the conversation about sin that ultimately follows the office being left without the conservative presence of our manager. These discussions help me to properly put in perspective the suffering that will be brought to bear on those who have strayed.

You may assume that I am frightened by that which I don't understand. In fact, the opposite is true. I am in fact only twenty two years old myself. I dislike the culture of the young precisely because I can see just how asinine, ugly and pointless it is. It is the participants themselves, 'noses pressed up against the glass' that are too close to see. It is the things we don't understand that we love the most and ultimately adhere to, because in the end everything is equally ridiculous. The things to which we cling are those we have misunderstood, often wilfully, and have given false meanings too, this I know. A level of self-realisation you will not have granted me before now in my story I am fairly sure.

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Initially I started to burn just off-cuts of curtains in the metal head high commercial bins behind the shop. Not precisely instructed to do so by the manager, but certainly well within my rights as an employee asked to dispose of remnants and surplus. The smell of burning fibres from the fire filling my nostrils, stinging my eyes and yet somehow making me feel wonderfully clean and precise.

It was only once I had brought a lighter to the frayed edge of a full 100 metre roll in the unlit quadrant behind the park that the real sense of my task coalesced and I had a keen sense of unavoidable purpose. A dread knowing that made me float around the shop only partially aware of the coming and going of customers and orders.

Why is the ruined form of a building more potent than it's uninjured form? Why do the broken lines of a burned out curtain shop tell a more refined and beautiful story than the preceding complete premises?

I'll tell you why! Because like the dreams of a totally hairless horse, the emotional thrill of a show of power, the fractious pleasure of the emergency services arriving on the scene, "my" scene makes my heart race. Fire has followed the subtle blueprints of my mind's architect endlessly drawing structures without doors in remote and barren landscapes.

I wasn't stupid enough to be caught. Even when questioned by the most aggressive policemen and women, bright pictures of charred interiors, inclusive of bodies, strewn on their vinyl topped desks.

There are two types of people in the world, though you could make the dichotomy based upon just about any old indices. In my world there are just two types of people. Those predisposed to murder and those predisposed to suicide.

It's all about selfishness and selflessness and I will always be inclined to serve, whether in the old shop or in the broader sense.

*The sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. **Luke 23:45***

## Old Shagger

The stench of cooked meat clings to the stained rags of his clothes, clotting in his hair. Grease slick fingers, splintered nails and the lines born into his palms etched clear in congealed blood. The moon rises over the familiar shore of his butcher block; runs those fingers along its splintered edges to imprint forever the memory of the kill. The wooden legs are strong and bear notch marks like a lover's bedpost, a series of deep incisions made by the cleaver for each sole hammer-blow that killed. He touches them fondly, fingering them as if they were injuries eager for its edges to be tenderly held and gently peeled back.

On his knees now, one hand firm around the notched leg, the other searching for the zipper beneath his leather apron. Soon the free hand coils and is in rhythm with his breath. He leans forward, smells the wood, the settled blood and slivers of metal, the coarse salt in the burning wound. His release is fast and blunt, splattering on the tiled floor where its colour shines. He gathers it up into his palm and rubs it into the cuts. Sweat beading on his brow, the thick hairs on his arm raised, warm blood flowing.

## Little and Opinion

another stained day  
afraid and fragile  
like the shrunken cunt  
a private flower might wake

wake remembering hate  
worse than the thump of gold  
simple and kind  
touch something  
person  
hair  
remember  
feelings measure tomorrow  
a dot

released honesty  
the next boundary  
reminiscent of thought  
your dead  
What next  
strangers  
just you



## Crimes of Surprise

women are ripping people  
claiming it's perfectly legal

advanced AIDS readily available  
fact  
believe

waves violet wands  
amusing  
touching a body  
scratching at words  
naked dead  
a functioning system  
in the lucrative hours

believe in glass  
living bacteria  
resonates the eye

she feels like a fraud  
handing out  
desperate cancer devices  
triggered by different frequencies  
an example of the marijuana particle conspiracy  
secret messages in the pizza delivery  
electronic prostitution  
selling rocks to gas stations  
psychotic touch contacts  
cure everything

difficult  
messy  
lucrative  
saliva on a battery terminal  
its late now

## **Guidance notes for the Correct Application of Tattoos (Standard Western Guidelines Jan 2012)**

*Guidelines for the appropriate application of inked tattoos.*

*Does not apply to henna, temporary or other non-permanent skin markings, see separate leaflet H774B.*

Certain people are immune from the strictures set out in this document and they are:

- Sailors (specifically, merchant seamen, members of the navy and trawelermen. 'Leisure sailors' and other boat owners are not included in this category)
- Prison inmates in categories A and B (not C and not those in open prisons)
- Confirmed religious leaders within racial sub-groups that can trace their specific heritage back to prehistory.

This list is exhaustive.

Critical to the correct application of a tattoo are two considerations:

- 1) Position of the marking
- 2) The specific design to be applied

### **Position**

Contrary to much current tattoo activity, there is only one appropriate position for a tattoo and this is the centre of the forehead.

### **Design**

Two 'designs' are permissible, though these can be executed in a range of sizes and some stylistic leeway is allowed.

The two designs deemed acceptable are the swastika and the letters C, U, N, T in that specific order.

All deviations from this approach are deemed wrong by the terms of this document for the following reasons:

- a) The express purpose of a tattoo is to mark the tattooed individual out as a threat and/or fundamentally of lesser worth.
- b) All other designs are simply an indirect means of achieving the same outcome.

## Isaac's Assassination

It's a sunny day in September. Isaac is in his suit. Black jacket, white shirt, crisply ironed. He sits on the back seat of an open-topped car, a woman who he does not know sitting next to him. He leans forward and asks the driver his name. *Special Agent William R. Greer sir, Secret Service.* Isaac smiles and sits back. Outside the road is flanked by towering buildings which soon give way to an open plaza – the expanse of concrete and glass broken up by neat blocks of grass. Greer turns his head slightly, *Sir, Frame 210 is just around this corner.* Isaac prepares himself, feels the lady take hold of his hand and gently squeeze it. The first bullet takes out Isaac's throat. The second, one hundred and three frames later, cleaves off part of his skull.

## The Wedding

"hesitate and remember my spiteful kisses" says the scarecrow  
"i have spent these past years smoothing my wings  
punishing my sick self over your sentimental salute  
now look straight into me without breaking"  
he speaks to the unknown lady  
the courtship of the tongue of man  
her with hands of blood, stained with love  
"obedience is easily won from the wilful" she replies  
he removes her mask and turns his back upon the city  
the scarecrow gives birth to the night

## The Desert Grass Life

try the desert grass life  
torso softening  
struggling  
beneath surreal  
basking eyes of failure  
breathe dehydration  
sickness of structure  
face embedded in my arms  
this masquerade will find joy  
in everything  
i own all here

## Contact Point

born with the frequency  
the fingerprint of potential  
cross-checked and hidden  
travelling through bodily emissions  
the sustained cry  
of the connected multitude

parasites reference  
a crude suspect  
the patience of my problem  
measured in the human way  
reaching proto-pitch

blood nerve damage  
plots against reason  
the blackbody alternative  
an ion stream of mammals  
leave with a cry of 'far out'

## Device Representation

the taxing hand  
the prolonged human  
a pinpoint of organic material  
hacking a pathway  
to the limit of hell

flowers shift  
hitching the will  
to the long anatomy  
a refreshing mechanism  
of cathode potential

focus changes  
unresolved waves  
attract vast contact time  
repelling the disciple  
a hot needle completes the circuit

## Grist for the Mill

FADE IN:

EXT. ANY STREET IN SUBURBAN ENGLAND - DAY

The birds are singing and a gentle breeze blows on a warm sunny day in middle class England.

A family estate car turns into the street and drives a short way before turning into one of the many driveways.

The driver turns off the engine and a man in his late thirties exit the vehicle.

He is wearing a shirt and tie, over his arm is his suit jacket and he is carrying a leather briefcase. He closes the car door and locks it.

He approaches the front door of the house and tries the door handle.

It is locked.

He has a puzzled look on his face for a split second and then opens the front door of the house with a key from the bunch which he still has in his hand from locking the car.

INT. HALLWAY OF THE HOUSE - DAY

The man enters the house.

MAN

Emma?

(Pause)

Emma?

When he receives no response he walks through into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The man enters and puts down his jacket and briefcase.

He opens the briefcase and removes a sandwich box from it and places it next to the sink As he does so he sees a hand written note on the work surface which reads

*Gone to Karens  
back @ 5*

He puts the note down and looks at his wrist watch. It reads 4.05.

He smiles and leaves the room.

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

The man moves through the hallway and goes up the stairs.

INT. BEDROOM – DAY

The man enters the bedroom. There is a double bed, each side of which there is a bedside table with a lamp. One of them has a digital alarm clock radio on. It is now 4.06pm.

He kneels in front of one the bedside tables and removes the bottom drawer. He puts his hand inside the hole that this has created and fishes around in the darkness.  
He brings out three adult magazines. Probably Razzle, possibly Fiesta, maybe Escort.  
He puts them on the bed and replaces the drawer.

He sits on the bed and begins to thumb through the magazine on the top of the pile.

From this point all we see is a very tight CU of the mans face, just his eyes. Nothing else.

Sounds of magazine pages turning.  
The noise of a zip fly being undone.  
Pages continue turning punctuated by the rhythmic noise of clothing moving.  
The mans breathing starts to get shorter and sharper.

Pages turning.  
Clothing moving.  
Breathing shorter.  
Pages turning.  
Clothing moving.  
Breathing sharper.

Suddenly his eyes close tightly shut and he lets out a long sigh.

(Pause)

His eyes open slowly.  
His expression is one of pleasure that turns quickly to terror.

INT. SHOPPING CENTRE- DAY

The shot pulls out slowly from the mans eyes.  
He is sitting on a bench in a shopping centre.  
His trousers are around his ankles.  
There are shoppers everywhere  
They are walking past looking at him. Parents pull small children to their sides as they pass the bench.  
The camera continues to pull back.

FADE OUT.

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