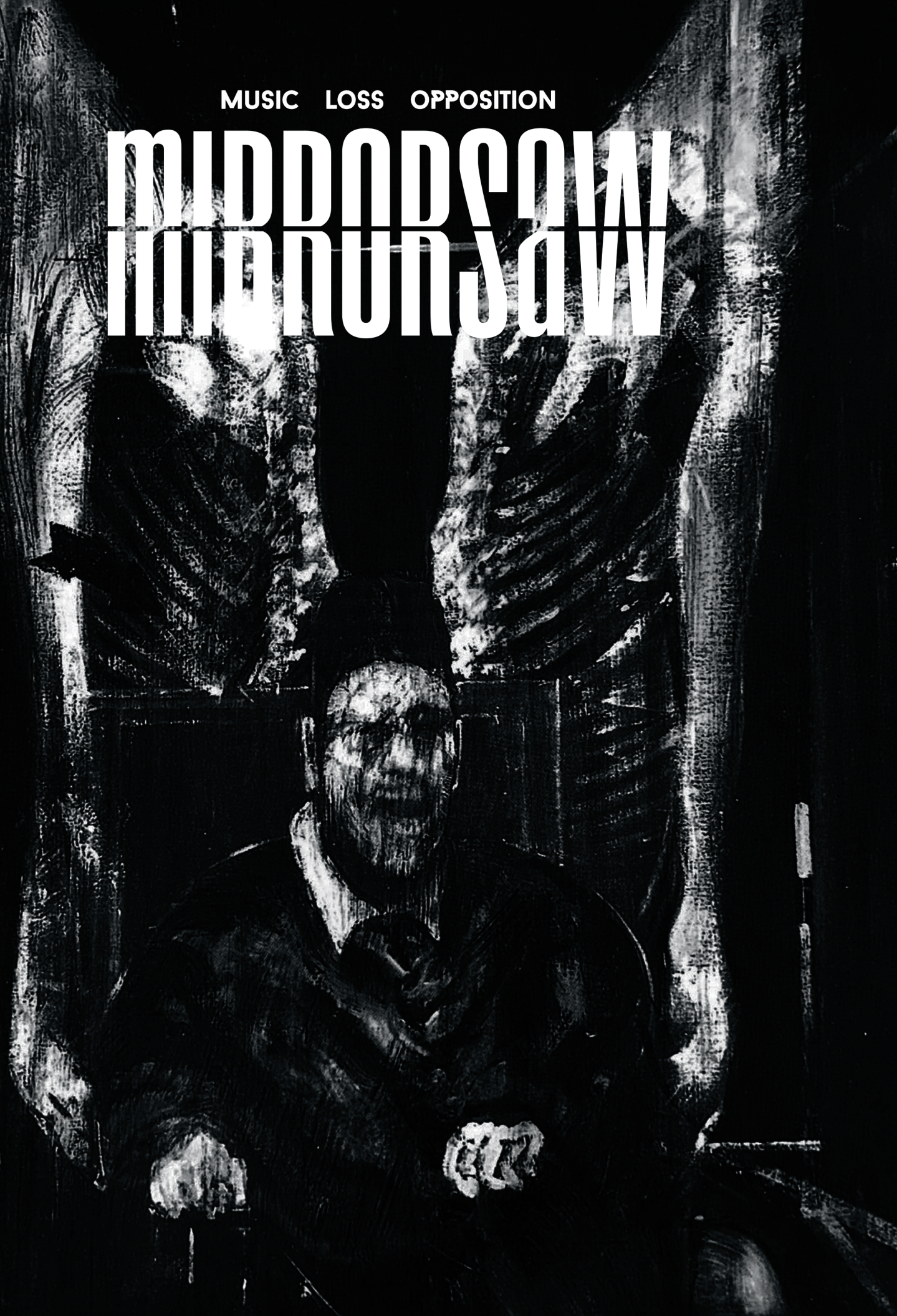
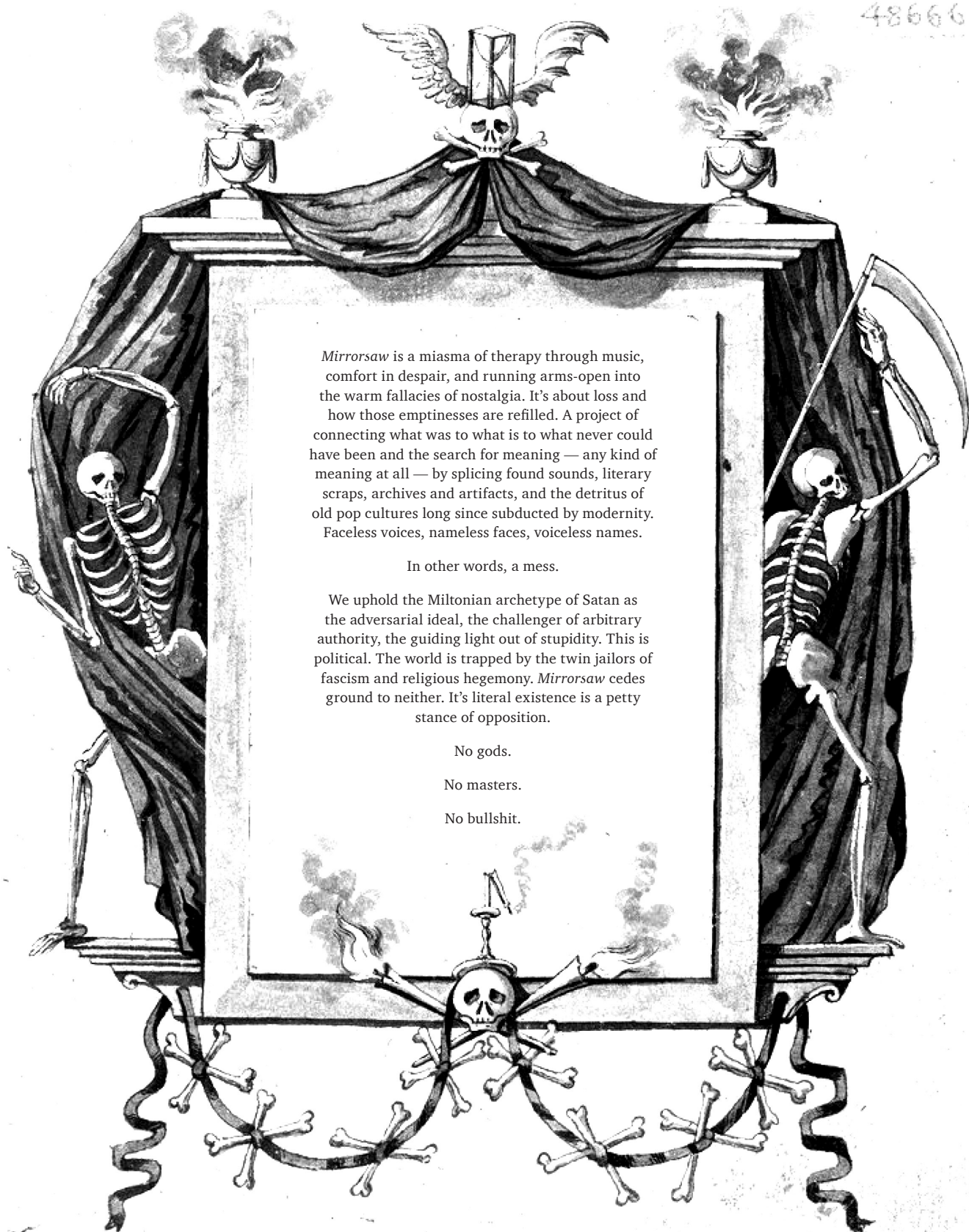


MUSIC LOSS OPPOSITION

MIDDODOWN MIDNUNSAW





[illegible]

I grew up in a very religious family. My parents would often take people in for awhile that were kind of down and out, whether they were recovering from addiction or just needing a place that was relief from their abusive parents at home. When I was 16 or 15, we took in a really close friend of mine at the time who lived in a pretty abusive household.

I just remember

I just remember trying to kiss her once

I just remember trying to kiss her once in secret, and she would never want to kiss me on the mouth. Her eyes would just glaze over. I just remember trying to kiss her once in secret, and she would never want to kiss me on the mouth. Her eyes would just glaze over. I just remember trying to kiss her once in secret, and she would never want to kiss me on the mouth. Her eyes would just glaze over.

eyes would just

glaze over.

I was pretty religious myself with I think quite a savior complex, and I felt a lot of what I thought was compassion for her, but I think really it was pity. We started living in the garage together, which was where I slept. One night she started to sexually abuse me. I was so stunned that I just froze.

It happened multiple times over the course of like maybe six months. I would start to daydream when it was happening. These very vivid daydreams of me being in Mario Kart and her being Luigi. And I would completely leave the building and be like in some fantastical dreamscape. Anyway, over time, she started coming to church with us, with our family, and became a Christian and started getting really involved.

We together, her and I, started to lead the campus ministry at our high school. Even while this was happening in secret in our garage at night. I guess one of the most confusing parts for me about the secret is that over the course of the next few years, I started to think I was falling in love with her. I was very confused.

When I turned 18, I moved very far away. At the time, thinking that I couldn't be gay because I had to be true to God. I'm no longer religious, but she is. Part of the secret is that I don't think anyone knows about this and she's gone on to work at our church in the children's ministry for a while.

Now she works, as far as I know, as a Christian counselor and she's married and just had a baby. I always struggle to know if I should have told anyone this because she was only 16 at the time. I think she's gone on to get help, but I'll never fully know if this is something she still struggles with or would do to somebody else.

I came out of the closet and my community excommunicated me. Meanwhile, she was on the church stage sharing stories. Watching all that was a horrible thing to observe because I was the one trying to be honest. And she was keeping everything secret and being praised for it. One of the biggest parts of this secret is that I never wanted to tell anyone in my family or community because I feel that if they knew that a woman abused me, they would blame my sexuality on this.

I always thought this was ironic because I think if I was abused by a man, they would do the same thing. But I'll never know because I don't think I'll give them the chance to know that about me.

Tell us about GoS.

The Global Order of Satan is an international collection of communal Orders. We promote Satanic idealism and self-worship and protect those oppressed by overbearing religious hegemony and the undue influence of dominant religions in public life.

As atheists, we believe in neither gods nor devils. Our ideology is instead rooted in courage, compassion, science, the self, and in rituals of introspection. The Six Pillars of The Global Order of Satan enshrine our beliefs and provide what we believe to be a superior guide to moral and compassionate living.

Is your organization intentionally political?

We certainly have political views in that we are staunchly and openly antifascist but that feels like a pretty low bar to clear. In the UK, we would certainly never advocate for a political party but we have certainly made our strong stance against the ideas, policies, and ethos of the Conservative Party clear.

What freedoms are most vital? What is imperative to fight for?

We believe everything revolves around the core concepts of autonomy and consent.

What is the Bloody Hell campaign?

In the UK, the NHS which is designed to provide free medical care at the point of need. In reality there are exceptions to this, one of which is period products. There is a genuine issue of period poverty in the UK. Bloody Hell is our way of helping by donating period products to food banks throughout the UK.

What about Satan Not Hatin'?

Satanists come from a range of eclectic backgrounds with many of us coming from various alt music scenes – rock, metal, punk, goth, industrial, and more. Our love of these scenes, along with the bands, venues, and organizations that exist within them, intertwines with our Satanism, often embracing the same themes, imagery, and symbolism.

Sadly, we are noticing a rise in hatred and bigotry in the music scenes we hold dear. We've witnessed racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other hate crimes. We've seen our symbols co-opted into messages of hate. People have been made to feel shamed and unwelcome in what were once open and inclusive communities.

No more. This is where we start to reclaim these spaces. More than 300 bands, venues, and organizations have joined in so far.

How do you define the success of your campaigns?

Depends on the nature of the campaign. I know two of our US Orders are rightly very pleased with how their drives to help distribute goods to their unhoused neighbours went. For them, success is having helped people directly with practical things like sleeping bags, gloves, tooth brushes etc. For UK, success for our Bloody Hell campaign is getting period products to food banks. However, the success of a campaign like Satan Not Hatin' cannot be so easily quantified as its not about products but standing both against one thing and for something else.

Your outreach could be done without Satanic affiliation. Why do you center Satanism?

That's who we are. We're not a campaign group who tacked Satanism on to be edgy. We're Satanists who feel that good ways to express our Satanism can be done via outreach.



erview)

Do you get pushback from groups or organizations you're trying to help? Have you found Satanism to create any barriers to your acts of goodwill?

Sometimes, yes, but not in an organized way. For example, some potential participants for Satan Not Hatin' we've approached have said 'no', not because they disagree with the view that bigotry and fascism should be challenged but because we are Satanists, which is absolutely fair enough and totally their right to do so.

How do you balance religious ritual with direct action?

Unconsciously. We don't really try and say "OK that's enough campaigning, time for a ritual!" The two run alongside and in tandem with each other.

Why do you think organizations in other countries are seeking to become GoS Orders?

We wouldn't presume to speak for them but things they have expressed to us are that GoS' recognizing and respecting the autonomy of each Order to do things in its own way is important to them. We can each do our own thing and still be able to enjoy a large multinational community.

How do you support international Orders?

All Orders support other Orders so its not UK supporting all the other Orders, everyone does their bit. In terms of how, it really depends on the situation but examples include the time that Poland had an extreme right wing party in government. Our Polish Order felt unsafe protesting themselves, so asked UK to highlight issues around LGBTQIA+ rights which UK did via a Black Mass we posted online and which got a lot of media attention in Poland.

Do you embrace the romantic ideal of Satan as the adversary or are your actions rooted in a more pragmatic outlook?

That is a very individual question. You could probably ask every GoS member and get a slightly different answer but I think, generally, we see the two as intertwined. When Shelley wrote out his *Declaration of Rights*, it was a clarion call to indicate the fusion of Romantic Satanism with progressive politics. They feed each other.

What's the single most important way to combat christofascist culture influence in the next few years?

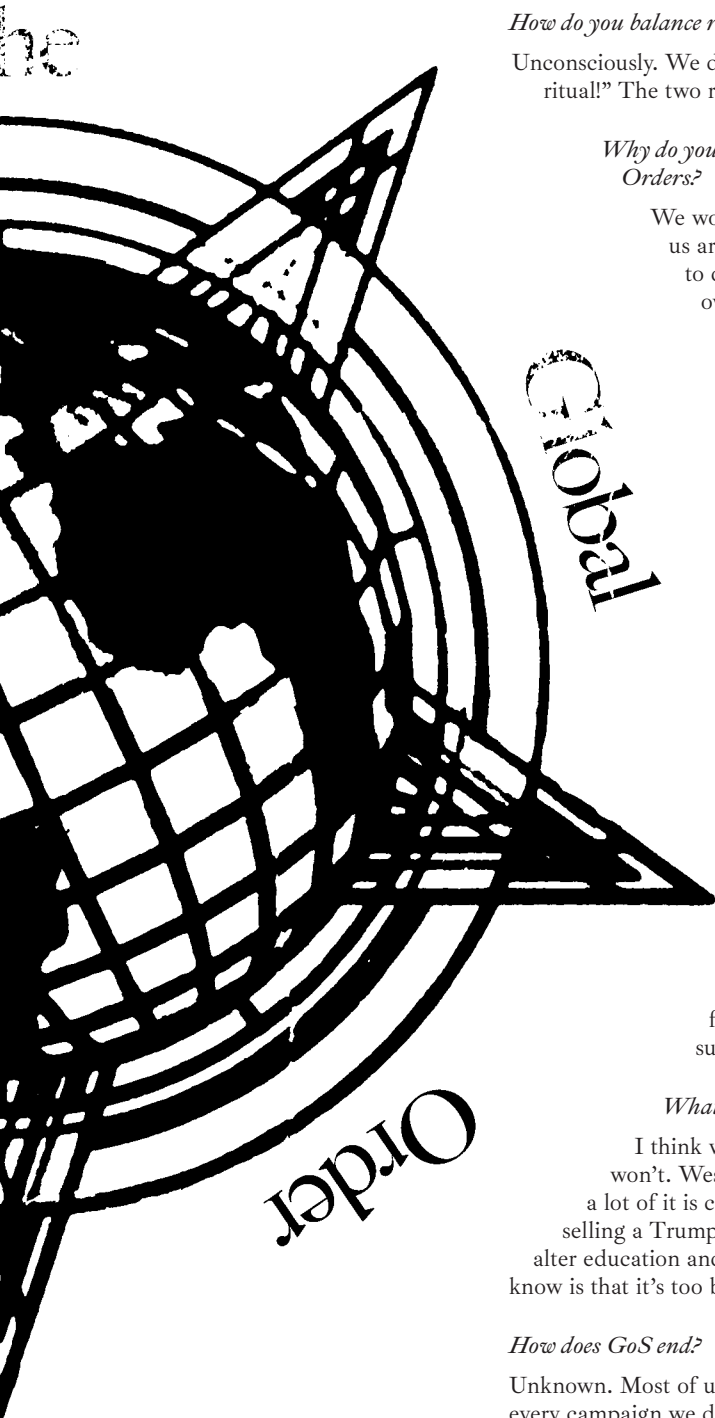
It is just important to fight it. The answer will probably vary from country to country slightly. The trick will be finding ways to successfully combat it.

What's worked in the UK? Either with GoS activities or in general?

I think we're going to find out in the next few years what works and what won't. Westernised cultures seem to be taking a sharp turn to the right and a lot of it is centered around politico-christian fundamentalism. From Trump selling a Trump-bible to the 'New Conservative' movement in the UK trying to alter education and health standards to follow a christian foundation. What we do know is that it's too big to fight alone. We will have to work with related groups.

How does GoS end?

Unknown. Most of us would still want to carry on being part of the community even if every campaign we did was such a success it birthed a new progressive society.



Work takes
our parents
away from us.
Under capitalism and
the ways that we have to work
to survive, how often are we getting
our parents in an altered state? We're getting them
most tired. We're getting them after being demeaned all day, when
they're feeling the lowest. Sometimes our experiences of our
parents is that we saw them when they had the capacity to give the least.



would	would	you	what
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what	do	what	would
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you	do	you	do

On February 25, 2024, Airman Aaron Bushnell of the United States Air Force lit himself on fire outside of the Israeli embassy in Washington D.C. Prior to his self-immolation, he posted a message on Facebook:

Many of us like to ask ourselves, “What would I do if I was alive during slavery? Or the Jim Crow South? Or apartheid? What would I do if my country was committing genocide?” The answer is you’re doing it right now.

He streamed the immolation itself on Twitch, saying the following prior to dousing himself with an accelerant and lighting himself on fire. He continued to shout the words “Free Palestine” as he burned to death.

We will not argue that the actions of Israel in the current conflict with Palestine constitute a genocide; the matter is well documented and clearly evident. Everything quoted from Bushnell is the case: Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people, and the United States provides moral and material support for that genocide. What does that mean for us in terms of duty, responsibility, and complicity?

First: Israel is a state, not a person or an ethnic group; it does not represent the global Jewish population. We are focused on the actions of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the people of his government, the members of the Israeli Defence Forces, and those people who provide them moral or material support, such as the United States.

Next, it’s important that we establish a basis in historical conditions and dispel some common myths and misunderstandings about the conflict.

First, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is new, dating back only as far as the beginning of the 20th Century. There’s a popular narrative that the Jews and Arabs of the Levant have always been at war. That’s not at all the case. That narrative reinforces the false belief that conflict is inevitable and that there can be no peaceful solution. This serves the interest of the colonial Israeli government by making their actions seem *necessary* and *unavoidable*. Both Jews and Arabs have occupied the Levant for thousands of years; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict refers to the specific conflict that began when the Jewish diaspora began a large-scale migration into the Levant in order to establish a Jewish ethnostate in accordance with the political philosophy of Zionism, born in the publication of *Der Judenstaat* in 1896.

In the early 20th century, the British, who had assumed control of Palestine after the First World War, attempted to mediate between the rapidly-increasing Jewish immigrant population and the region’s indigenous Palestinian Arabs. Their efforts failed. It escalated to civil war, and ultimately Britain gave up, allowing Jewish colonists to appropriate the territory as the State of Israel on their own terms. Israel conducted a violent ethnic cleansing of the

territory, an event referred to by Arabs as the Nakba, “the Catastrophe”. Half of Palestine’s Arab population, around 750,000 people, were expelled and forced into small regions of containment, including the Gaza Strip.

Discourse surrounding the conflict often returns to simplistic and reductionist rhetorical questions such as “Does Israel have the right to defend itself?”, “Do the Jews have the right to a homeland?”, and “Do you condemn Hamas?”

One, Israel is a state and does not have rights. *People* have the right to self-defense, individually and collectively, but the actions of Israel do not even represent self-defense.

Two, the Jews have not had a homeland for 2,500 years and the planet’s available territory is already claimed. To say that the Jews have a right to a homeland is to say that Palestinian Arabs do not. To the extent that Israel is considered a homeland for the Jewish people — however tenuous and reductive a claim that may be — Israel need not expand by annexing the land of Palestine. One can claim that the geographical region of Israel is a Jewish homeland without also claiming that the geographical land of Palestine need be included in that description. These issues are logically separate. Israel’s claim is a Zionist prerogative, not a Jewish one. And yes, condemnation of Hamas is clearly necessary, specifically because it does not represent a Palestinian resistance movement but rather because it is the tool of the State of Israel to divide the Palestinian people and justify their oppression.

Finally, it is often said that there would be peace if the Palestinians put down their weapons but there would be a genocide if the Israelis put down theirs. It’s true that Hamas have used explicitly genocidal rhetoric. But Israeli leaders have used such rhetoric as well, and what we’re seeing at present is the actual, illegal, collective punishment of 2.3 million people, 99% of whom are not members of Hamas. The Palestinians have attempted peaceful negotiation and nonviolent resistance. Peaceful protests along the border from 2018-2019 resulted in 223 Palestinians killed (including 46 children) and 8,079 injured. Many of these injuries resulted from pot shots taken by snipers, who often aimed to injure rather than kill in order to inflict lasting torment.

None of this justifies the brutality of the October 7th attacks, but a substantial portion of the blame must be laid at the feet of Israel, who established the prevailing conditions under which such an attack was all but inevitable.

Consider the conditions of Palestinian children living in the Gaza Strip. Suppose you’re a child of 10, born in Gaza City in 2014. You’re likely small for your age as a result of malnutrition. You’re hungry and thirsty all the time and have been displaced from your home. You almost never sleep, and when you do, nightmares abound. You likely have at least

one untreated medical condition or injury due to the dire conditions combined with lack of access to healthcare. The water makes you sick when you drink it. You've received no formal education. The idea of normal childhood play is not something that's ever entered your experience. Two out of every five other children you know have been killed, as well as many of the adults whom you trust to keep you safe. You likely have a caregiver role for even younger children who have been wounded or orphaned. The adults around you tell you who is responsible, and you have no reason to question them.

Now imagine, one night, someone hands you a rocket launcher and tells you to shoot it over the wall. You do so, and the rocket hits an Israeli home and kills an entire civilian family. To what degree are you morally culpable for their murder?

We know as a matter of empirical fact that those raised in poverty are less capable of moral reasoning, and the conditions for this child far exceed mere poverty. That doesn't justify the act. It's still a moral evil. But can we reasonably expect the child to refuse firing the rocket on moral grounds? Can we not lay at least some of the blame on those who established those prevailing conditions?

So we turn our condemnation toward the Israeli government and the IDF. How widely do we cast our net of indirect responsibility? What about those who support Netanyahu's administration? What about those opposed to his administration but who pay taxes which support the government and the Israeli defense industry? What about those in other nations, such as the United States, whose governments back the genocidal actions?

Let's expand our scope here to emphasize the weight of the larger problem at stake.

In her 1963 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, philosopher Hannah Arendt proposes that at the largest and most grotesque scales, human evil tends to be the functional actions of individuals within the systems responsible for perpetuating the egregious evil. The horrors of the 20th Century were the result of *systems* which demanded a minimum threshold of loyalty from individuals who simply carried out their day-to-day tasks to ensure the smooth operation of the subset of the system of which they were a part. This "loyalty" needn't entail explicit belief in the ideology of the system. All that's required is simply carrying out orders from above. One could reject the ideology of Nazism or Zionism yet still be complicit in perpetuating violence precisely by continuing to merely "do one's job". This is the essence of the idea of structural violence.

Arendt shows us that instead of evil manifesting as an overpowering spectacle that one can only fight by warring on a battlefield, the backbone of evil is, to put it simply, willful ignorance. "Stupidity" to be even more concise.

Evil as spectacle is an ideological operation perpetuated to convince individuals that they have no real power to fight it, cannot do anything to stop it, and is therefore cleansed of any real complicity. A "guilty" verdict against an individual who simply "does their job" would seem ridiculous. And yet, Adolf Eichmann was found guilty of crimes against humanity — crimes against the Jewish people — and executed. His defense ultimately boiled down to the phrase we hear over and over again: "I was just following orders".

Following orders, crunching numbers, drafting plans for railway systems, detailing the logistics for the transportation of cargo, understanding how to maximize occupancy inside train cars, accounting for fuel supplies and food rations, allocating funds and resources to ensure continued operations. These mundane tasks were performed by Eichmann and others within the Third Reich, each contributing to the genocide of millions and irreparable trauma inflicted on survivors and their descendants, and to the psychic wound forever the inheritance of mankind.

Complicity is born of conformity. Evil, then, is often the result of an entrenched underestimation of the systematic sublimation of violence into innocuous structural mechanisms. Mechanisms which obfuscate the tangible effects our actions have on other human beings.

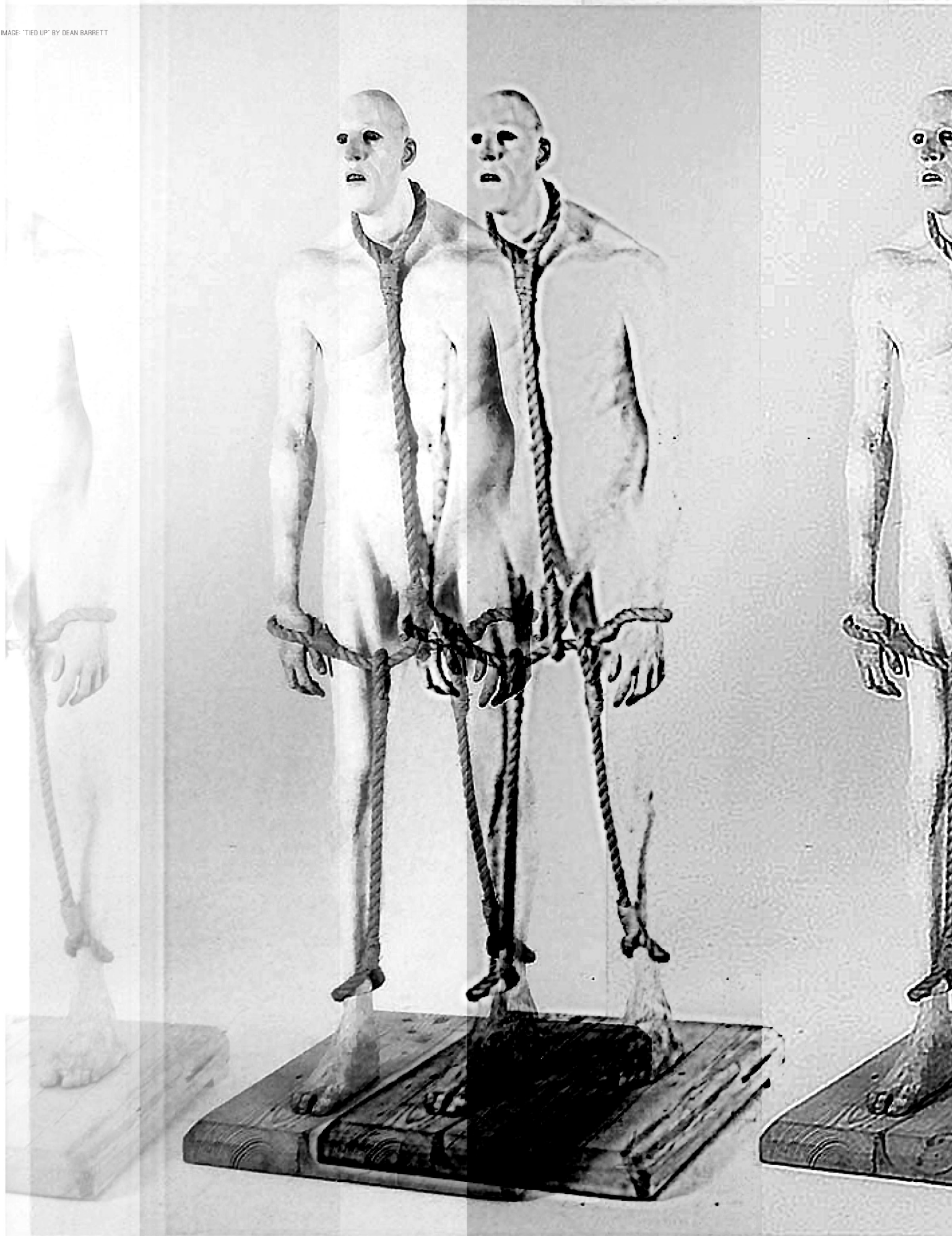
This is not to say that all responsibility for evil lies at the foot of the average individual who must work and survive in a systematically brutal society. Overemphasis on the responsibility of the individual is one of the system's greatest tricks. This tactic obscures the structural base that grounds the violence in Palestine and thereby defers the eye of justice away from those who are in fact most complicit.

Complicity is complicated; it is multilayered and confounding. So then is the responsibility we incur as individuals. Nothing here is black and white. This is the war for the baseline of morality and ethics under capitalism and modernity. Eichmann was condemned for his actions and complicity, and rightfully so. The question that weighs on us now is: how dissimilar are we from Eichmann, or from any number of normal, every day people who enabled gas chambers and mass graves? How will the eye of history perceive our inaction, our silence, and our continued complicity in the genocide of the Palestinian people?

And so it bears reminding ourselves one last time of the final public statement made by Aaron Bushnell:

Many of us like to ask ourselves, 'What would I do if I was alive during slavery? Or the Jim Crow South? Or apartheid? What would I do if my country was committing genocide?' The answer is you're doing it. Right now.

Free Palestine.



There are a few interesting areas left. Especially the assimilation — and Christianisation of ancient pagan beliefs. Building churches on ancient sites of worship in an

attempt to suppress the currents of power already there. To pervert the established ancient orders.



The Kabbalah is a huge body of work and the more you study it the more you realise this fact. You absorb it and use it — incorporate it into every aspect of life. You suddenly notice that apparently random events and circumstances, justifications of objects and happening, suddenly make complete sense, become part of an organised chaos. You

realise that people long ago knew that an underlying system of correspondances and parallels existed. To study it provides insight and a certain power. Each symbol is a potent and potentially dangerous — if misused or misapplied — source of personal power. It can enrich and it can possibly unbalance. Each power used must have a

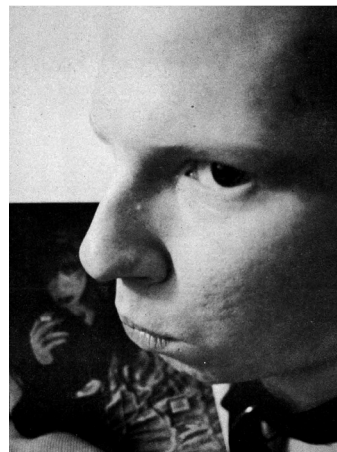
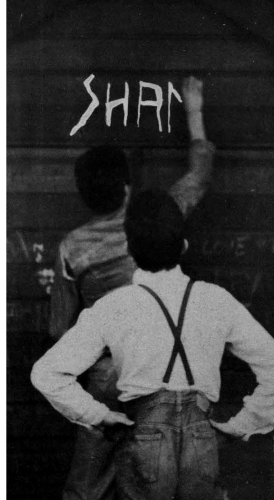
purpose; an earth like an immense psychic lightening bolt. With no purpose — no Earth — there is a danger of damage. The force must have a form. The energy must flow to somewhere. To risk sounding very hippy, you realise subtle and profound correspondances between the personal microcosmic universe (oneself) and the Universe (the

macrocosmic Everything Else). The Norse western tradition of Runes is very similar. It too is a map, a lattice of pathways and correspondances, which have personal and universal importances. We usually can't help but incorporate what we have observed into our music, into the lyrics. In numerous ways, embedded fragments, clues, etc.

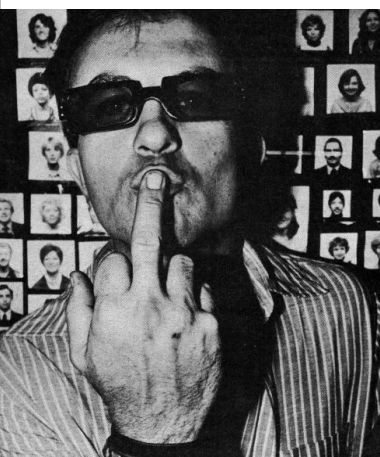
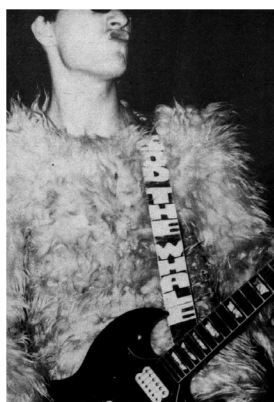
"How To Destroy Angels" was ritualised. Every aspect of that piece of music was produced according to predetermined and mathematically and Kabbalistically determined guidelines. Then we recorded it and the element of chance tempered by our preconditioned states of mind

came into play. It was based around Mars. There are male aspects — metals, specially iron and steel — five huge gongs, five small gongs. Five being the number of Mars.





IMAGES: SLASH, 1977-1980



So is it weird to be going to a wedding? I imagine that's like not a dream thing, right?

Yeah, I think when I actually get there, it'll be tough, but it's my friend, so I want him to be happy. I already talked to him before. Just saying 'I'm not gonna like make a fucking scene or something', you know? And that's the problem, isn't it? Like he is thinking about me, but at the same time, it's also his happiest day on earth. I do all the scene making myself when I'm alone, so don't worry about it.

I was gonna ask if there was a thing you were leaning on more since. Music or whatever.

I've been reading a lot. I was playing Zelda for like a hundred hours and that's been helpful. Been trying to write stuff down I remember about her.

If you imagine someone is gonna be listening to this, what would you say? Is there a version of this that you would want to lead off with?

It's hard to, you know, condense it. I found the love of my life. Everything I talk about. This sounds cliché, but I'd never been happier in my life and we just wanted to grow old and be boring together. We just bought our first house in November on her birthday. I mean, she had a disease. We brought Erica up to Boston where she had the last seizure of her life, until this last one, of course. But we had an appointment at Mass General Hospital and they figured it out immediately. Well, they thought they did, of course, but there were no warning signs whatsoever. She never had another seizure or tremor or anything for three years to the day. She had her bridal shower and I was at a friend's bachelor party. All her family and friends were there, and, you know, and then she died that day.

You made her so happy and she made you so happy. You were like these shining, fully embodied versions of these ghosts that I'd met years earlier.

We kind of did just need each other at all times. Maybe that's selfish, but it's kind of selfless too. I'm a real sap. When I asked her to marry me, I planned it for months and had like 50 people come to surprise us. Her mom came up and you saw at the funeral how many people came and how dedicated everyone was.

It was stunning. Death had struck and it made the funeral so profoundly painful in this way that no other funeral I had ever been to. There was no looking back. It was looking forward at this thing that didn't get to happen.

That's what I'm most angry about. People keep telling me to take care of yourself. 'She'd want you to be happy.' Maybe someday I'll get there, but right now I'm just so angry that everything I get to experience ... every new episode of *Veep* that comes out ... she doesn't get to see it. It's just so unfair. You know, anyone dealing with death, it's so weird. It's like radiation. It just lingers. People will just keep sending me letters that I haven't talked to forever.

Does any of it change the shape of what you're feeling in any way?

Some people do say the wrong things, but they come from a good place. The outpouring has been so crazy because it's just so fucked. I have a pile of letters on my countertop that are from her bridal shower just wanting us to grow old together, wishing us well and stuff, and then there's the next pile from the same people saying I'm so sorry. It feels like I'm in a dream. I mean, next weekend is our wedding. I'm beyond crying now. I mean, it happens. You'll just hear something or see something. You know, I'm still living in the house and I have to sell it next week. Just seeing her stuff. Sometimes I just run outside. It's very strange not being in control of yourself when that happens.

This is the mystery and the pain at the center of human life. Death and loss. No one knows how to approach that abyss. From what you're saying, it sounds like you feel a guilt for bringing people up to that abyss.

I grew up with Catholicism, so that's gonna be with me forever.

When this kind of shit happens, we can either fall back on formulas, say things like 'one day at a time' and 'here's a casserole'. Or you can let it scare you. Even the day at that funeral, I felt like you were confronting it and making sure shit got said and guiding the day.

Again, I know it sounds cheesy, but she was my entirety. It's very empty without her. There's so many beautiful people helping me, but when they're not there, the house is just so quiet and, you know ... I don't make her dinner anymore.

What has helped you?

Mostly just actions. Just being there. And the thing that Saunders wrote me was really wonderful. That made me not feel insane.

What was different about it?

Because he didn't say it was gonna get better. He didn't expect me to think that it was gonna get better.

I would love for you to read it.

You posted an excerpt from one of the last pages of *Lincoln in the Bardo* and I couldn't stop rereading it. It's just so beautiful.

It was the book I was reading that day. I immediately connected it in my head to what happened. But I didn't ever think that you would reach out to George Saunders.

I just wanted to let him know. Even if it never got to him. So I just wrote:

Hello, I just lost my fiancé two weeks ago, and she was buried this last Saturday. She was 29. We had just moved into our first house together and we were about to start our life. My friend sent me an excerpt from your new novel, and I keep it with me always. I don't even know if anyone will see this, but I just want you to know that you have helped me. I don't even know what to do anymore. I've never understood loss like this and the only thing keeping me from taking my life is that I know what it does to others.

And he wrote back:

I am so, so sorry for your loss. That must be just unspeakably difficult. I'm glad the book is saying something to you. I don't really know what to say except that someone told me this recently that grief

is a form of praise. You are praising the wonder of the person you lost. The great pain you are feeling means great love. I can't imagine that helps, but it is true. It is like cause and effect. You really saw and knew and cherished her. That's what your grief is proving and proving that she was wonderful and that you appreciated that. If you'll allow me for one more thought, I'm 58 and it feels like no time at all has passed since I was your age. soon you will be here. I wonder if it helps to ask yourself, 'what am I going to do with that very short time I have before I see my loved one again'. The more you do, the more you love, and the more lives you touch, the better you are here for both of you. Now, of course, I don't know you and I hope I have not offended or over advised, but my heart goes out to you brother, and my prayers. All the best.

I don't know, that kind of floored me. I didn't respond to him cuz I, you know, I didn't wanna bother him. Then he kept reaching out to me on Facebook saying, I hope you got my note. So I wrote him back, I don't know why I had this need, it sounds selfish, but I wrote him our engagement story and sent a picture. I wanted him to just see her and know her. but it just meant a lot, you know, just complete strangers doing this. And I have to cut this short. I'm talking forever. I guess I'll leave it with this. This is not really talked about, but I don't want people to feel crazy, you know, the way they're feeling and it's OK. I don't know. That's it. Bye.

what was said

proclamation of no hope

Hard and heavy experimental sounds open up this loud and pounding proclamation of no hope. The music here is created with something of a Whitehouse sensibility at times, connected to Skinny Puppy technology, or perhaps a little bit like Pig. Belgium's answer to Jim Foetus.

DIVE. *FIRST ALBUM*
THE FIFTH PATH #4. WINTER 1992

living in this machine

I had a rule with myself during the recording that I would only do two takes of the vocals. I'd sing it once and it would usually suck, and then the second take I would use — good or bad. Even if the pitch or intonation was off. The only exception was if I sang the wrong words. I wanted to express a kind of vulnerability — the idea that I was a person trying to keep my head above water, living in this machine which was moving forward.

TRENT REZNOR
MONDO 2000 #5

wholly its own

MZ412's darkness is at once pure and foreboding; relentless and still, violent and oddly peaceful. Droning noise loops, disco samples, creepy ambience, and vocals from the pits of hell. This is possibly the most important release of the year: a definitive work, something wholly its own. Drawing inspiration from a variety of sources but emulating none, MZ412 gives no quarter and demands none; the listener is drawn into the depths of their sound, subject to the unforgiving blackness. The standard by which others are judged.

MASCHINENZIMMER 412. *MACHT DURCH STIMME*
INDUSTRIAL NATION #12. SPRING 1995

self-depresso sludge

I see where this album got its title. The music slowly seeps out of the speaker into your ears. Middle of the night self-depresso sludge. Not knowing the Cure too well, is this what they're always like? No hit singles here and the song "Lullaby" just ain't no lullaby. How much more depressed can an artist be — especially when the songwriter is probably worth millions. Not for fans of dance music.

THE CURE. *DISINTEGRATION*
NERVE #34. JUNE 1989

cascading sound

Lycia now unravel their debut. And it is more than I could have wished for. Theirs are shimmering walls of intense, cascading sound. Ionia entraps in its glory. Writhing keyboards are flooded with blanket guitars, embracing a deep, whispered voice, too sensuous for words. In fact, words cannot reap praise enough. Lycia rise from a gothic haze, cutting a swathe that envelops their magnificent musical aura. Ionia is their first full breath, may this life allow many more.

LYCIA. *IONIA*
MUSIC FROM THE EMPTY QUARTER #2. AUG 1991

chopped in the neck

There were also choking fumes from the gasoline motor-driven equipment, and dust from the jackhammer's obliteration of a pile of cinder blocks. For a finale the goon with the jackhammer used it to punch the sheet metal and steel rods into the audience. I was chopped in the neck by the falling debris; good thing my jacket collar was up or I'd have been cut. Apparently no one was seriously hurt in the "collapse", but a lot of people were mad and heckled the group; a couple even threw beer bottles. The bloodthirsty fiends on stage responded by hurling chunks of cinder blocks at the angry mob. I got scared and split.

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN. *LIVE IN NYC*
PROPAGANDA #3. SUMMER 1984

M I E K K E I M

C O A O D D O A O C



V 2 A E G H U A E J L E A U N E A S V

G R I D K L C O O C L K D I R G

B I T C H R 2 U U S R H C T I B

M . C A D O O O O D A C . M

D R Y F T T F Y R D



How do you see the tension between articulating your vision and leaving the listener to their interpretation?

I feel that, ultimately, the listener will come up with their own interpretation whether I drive a meaning home or not. I've never included easily legible lyrics in any of my physical releases for vocals. This is more to allow the listener to have an open form to interpret what is conveyed by the tone and/or conviction of the performance rather than the actual words. This was a critical point in Gridlock, as the voice was just

another instrument. Bitcrush and, to a lesser extent, Dryft vocals were also only added to a composition if warranted. With Vague Lanes, each song has a specific theme since they all have vocals. However, I write the lyrics from a broad point of view. For instance, "A Dying Star" is about my father and his struggle with dementia; however, Badger, my partner in Vague Lanes, when reading the lyrics, connected with it about his relationship with his father. This similarity, we ended up concluding, was because I obscured the dementia language to a phrase that only loved ones who have/had dementia would know. With Vague Lanes, I have tried my best not to make any of the meanings obvious or overtly personal so the listener's interpretation can be more personal to them.

Aside from vocals, anything thematic that I convey in an instrumental track will not really come across to a listener. They might feel that sense of turmoil or emotion, but if I tried to drive a specific narrative home with an instrumental work, it would be wholly disingenuous and against my entire creative ethos.

How do you manage the gradations between "perfect" and "good enough" as a piece becomes viable for release?

I have been, on some occasions, okay with good enough. I have recorded things in less-than-optimal environments and headspaces, but the performances were what I wanted. I've even tried to rerecord them, but they lacked that certain immediacy. Much of *Ventricle* was this way, as was *Epilogue in Waves* to some extent. I wanted the latter one to sound as if I was a "band," even though it was created via electronic music means, so I left in many imperfections to simulate a band playing together in a space.

I spent a lot of time on the production of the new Vague Lanes album, *Divergence & Declaration*, which we just completed. Nothing will ever be "perfect," and I could change so many things about it, but I would be the only one who notices these small details. While it is way

beyond "good enough," it's also not "perfect," I think some of its lack of perfection makes it so good. It is so easy to overproduce things now.

What is necessary for you to enter what you describe as "near autopilot catharsis" when writing music?

Unfortunately, the necessity is some form of turmoil. Well, that and the fact that I am alone to create. Bitcrush and the recent releases under my name are the main cathartic conduits.

Is there a specific moment of creation that you wish you could go back and live again?

This is tricky; to live them again would no longer make them special. There were some great moments of creation with Mike Wells during the *Further* sessions, but I would not like to relive any of them, as the good often comes with the bad. The creation of the Bitcrush track "Post" would be one, too, as that thing just poured out over an evening, and most of it is first takes. I don't know if I'd want to live it again, but I sure would like to harness that level of focus a decade later.

What was the context of recording "Post"?

I think it was fairly late and I had been working on beats all evening. I let one of the drum loops roll and recorded and the bassline just happened, I then hit record again and played a high bass part over the top which is the lead in the beginning. The minimal lyrics "I can no longer follow, I can no longer do this any way" came the next day. It was extremely fluid. Something that happens very rarely — if at all — in a musician's lifetime.

The album *The Dissolution of Recall* was about your journey to understand dementia through the eyes of your father. What did it say that was never expressed in life?

Since I wrote this from what I perceived to be his perspective and the fact that I never spoke to him about it, I think he would have loved the idea



THE DISSOLUTION OF RECALL

of me writing a whole album about him, but I think what might not have been conveyed in life is that I understood that he was scared. I understood the anxiety he must have felt, losing his memory as he did. He and I never spoke of it. I tried to make our time together as pleasant and worry-free as possible, although he was a handful. The album's end might also express the peacefulness toward the end and that he seemed to fade away quickly, entirely on his terms—something I've never expressed to anyone.

How does a song's meaning change after you've performed it live for the first time?

This is a good question. However, with the music I create, there is either meaning through lyrics or meaning that only pertains to me, as the works are instrumental tracks. I have never had a song's meaning change, as they are, quite simply, my truths.

How has the subject of your music changed? What external or internal forces drove that change?

Most subjects are from personal experiences; they also started out to be very grim in the Gridlock period: drug use, alcoholism, anti-religion, and abuse. With Bitcrush, my first releases post-Gridlock, I used a lot of oceanic themes to convey how I was feeling. There was this idea of the undercurrent, the harshness of being battered by waves and drifting seemingly aimlessly in a vast space as I was doing all this alone in a vacuum. These releases are where the "have you lost your way" tagline came from. I was

trying to find my way and am still entirely lost, but I am 100% OK with it.

Many of your releases carry oceanic and abyssal themes. How is the ocean meaningful to you? Is it a place of solace or retreat?

At that time I did use the ocean and neighboring geography as symbolism. There is also the "wade" vs "waited" that I used to symbolize stagnation. I don't think of the ocean as retreat but rather a vast and somewhat tumultuous place that I was in. I left the "rough waters" of Gridlock and now was "drifting" alone ... these analogies all seemed to fit how I was feeling at that moment. Obviously some of the songs don't have these oceanic themes; "And Triage", "Of Embers", and "Song for Three", for example. I wrote the latter for my then-unborn son and I wanted that song to have a pre- and post-womb sound to it, and for it to have a really huge and positive sound-impacting impact.

And now?

Now, with Vague Lanes, the subject matter has returned to more grim subjects, as I mentioned with Gridlock. However, for the first time on this new album, I have written lyrics from a perspective other than my own. There is a song on the album about divorce, which I wrote from my partner Badger's perspective. There is also a song I wrote about a child/parent mentor/mentee in two parts. I wrote it about my son, who is now, as I type this, 18 years old. It is a bittersweet song to perform and is the only uplifting song in the Vague Lanes catalog.

You're comfortable letting projects slip into new genres. What is the moment where you say, "yes, this is the new sound of X"?

All projects have an evolution. Gridlock indeed did, which is what makes the project so unique to people to this day.

Dryft has always been about experimentation within electronic music. *Cell* and the EP after it are different, but they

are somewhat cohesive in that they are basically bass music releases. *Ventricle* is the outlier, just a series of tracks forming an album. I had a particular idea for *The Blur Vent*, and I still really love that album. The most recent Dryft album, *From Stasis*, was just a "getting back to basics" album by writing experimental electronic music again. While I didn't try for any style per se, it ended up being more like my Gridlock output because I gravitate to those creative tools when making the album.

Bitcrush is a bit more interesting, as there is a journey most are not aware of: it is really an arch back to where I was prior to Gridlock, a way to get back to the beginning and return stylistically to just before I made the jump to industrial music creation.

Does your choice of genre, style, or instrument influence your message, or vice versa? Or is the message and the medium distinct?

It might. I never thought about it, but Bitcrush messages have been much more personal. With many of those compositions, I start with some gauzy guitar lines, mostly post-rock in nature. So that project might equate to being an example of an instrument or style being the catalyst for the message. However, as I said before, my message in an instrumental work is a moot point. The listener, in that case, is the catalyst for whatever message they choose.

Was Vague Lanes created as a vehicle for sonic expression or lyrical expression? Why the imperative to move vocals to the foreground?

Vague Lanes was created by accident. My lovely wife purchased a 6-string bass as a gift a few Christmases ago. Early the following year, I wrote the music for the first four songs, which ended up being the first EP, *Cassette*. The idea was to write these songs with only three instruments: the 6-string bass, a drum machine, and a synth. I had yet to sing on them, though. Or even come up with lyrics. They sat for some time without, and I was unsure what

to do about them. I remembered that there was a song that is still unreleased that I cut from the Dryft album *The Blur Vent* that I had sung in this big, full-chested style, and because of that, it no longer fit the album. I decided to try that style of vocals for these Vague Lanes tracks, and it worked. I get more confident each day when singing, but I am not a singer. Before I began recording this new style of vocals for the EP, I contacted my friend Badger to see if he might be interested in this new project, and he was. The move to vocals was not imperative, just something that I felt the songs needed, and I think of some of my favorite post-punk and darkwave bands; the vocals are front and center, so I opted to follow suit.

How would you summarize the emotional core that each project represents? Loss? Anger?

Gridlock would probably have been fear, anger, and sadness. Bitcrush is more bittersweet, there is relief in some of the songs. Maybe even moments of contemplation. M.Cad00 was strictly confusion and anger, as that project started as a means to make music any way possible after I had a major hard drive failure. The work I now do under my name spans many emotions, but I believe it focuses more on anxious topics. Vague Lanes is hard to say, as I am having fun with it, as much fun as anyone can have moonlighting in a darkwave band :).

Almost (if not all?) your creative life has been spent in the Bay Area. Has this influenced you? Is the city a secret member of your projects?

I am ultimately a product of my environment, and if you look at the beginnings and bulk of the work completed on each project, you will see the locations are different.

Gridlock was conceived and written mainly in San Francisco. We did spend some months in Oakland, but the bulk of it was spread between studio spaces in the Upper Haight and Outter Mission. Rehearsals for live performances were at a studio in the Tenderloin. So we saw a lot of levels of human existence, which we channeled into the

music in one way or another. So, the city was indeed a secret member.

Bitcrush, the entire catalog, except three of the more recent songs, was conceived in Oakland, mostly in and around the Piedmont Ave Area and North Oakland, either at my home or at the n5MD office. For obvious reasons, these were places I felt the most at home and safe, which leads me to think the environments in which I inhabited had an impact.

Vague Lanes' is spread between my home in Alameda and West Oakland, the latter of which is seeing a bit of revitalization at the moment. I don't know if these environments affect the project at all. We are in a very troubling time in history, which has influenced the project more than its environment.

I do my best to not get political or spiritual. Those things should be (and usually are) funneled into the music. I'm also not of any political party or denomination. I do feel that we are in a time where things are getting quite distorted and there is emphasis placed on things that distract from the true important issues.

WHERE TO START (WHEN YOU'VE LOST YOUR WAY)

"SICKNESS"
GRIDLOCK
THE SYNTHETIC FORM

"VAPOURS AND WASTE"
DRYFT
VENTRICLE

"TIDES"
BITCRUSH
EPILOGUE IN WAVES

"NIHILIST KNOT TWIST"
VAGUE LANES
FOUNDATION AND DIVERGENCE

"I CAN NO LONGER HIDE THIS"
M.CAD00
THE DISSOLUTION OF RECALL

There was this certain confidence that I had while growing up - watching movies in the classroom - that we had it all figured out. We never got the message that we didn't know what we were doing, so we continued to pollute. Hey, we thought that Man was a great success.

But just like any classic story, there's the hope that someone will be born and save everybody. It will probably be a technology thing, a technological savior. In a way, the most evil instrument now is television, and the savior will be the home video camera. Before, only the richest people had control of the TV and they decided what you saw, including the disease of advertising. But now because of video cameras in the USSR and the video camera that caught that guy getting beat up by the cops in LA, the power is beginning to even out.

Before, it was just information gushing out of your TV, and for the last thirty years we ate it up. And boy did we love it! Boy did we love those tits and ass. Did we ever love that Pillsbury Dough Boy. But when I watch TV now I'm screaming at it, "shut up!" and "fuck you!" I hope that people do the same. There has to be equalization within our media. We can't have all the information going one way. It has to go back and forth like in a conversation.

There is a whole part of society that is missing the magic.

It's not there anymore.

You go to a church to experience something and they don't give you anything real or substantial to deal with. People don't believe in anything anymore. They look at the TV and the whole world is there, created for you. But it doesn't really exist. It doesn't give anybody anything to hold on to. Nobody feels part of society anymore. I'm living in this building with perhaps one hundred other people and I don't know any of them. We're all putting up psychological as well as physical walls around ourselves.

NOT THERE ANY MORE

TEXT: DWAYNE GOETTEL
IMAGES: "KILLING GAME", SKINNY PUPPY

That's just the thing, isn't it? Americans are, of course, the most thoroughly and passively indoctrinated people on Earth. Americans, by design, know next to nothing as a rule about their own history, or the histories of other nations, nor are they taught to care to ask. Americans know nothing of the various social movements that have risen and fallen in the past, and they certainly know little or nothing have no grasp of the nuances, complexities, and contradictions of ideas like "socialism" and "capitalism". ¶

Chiefly, what Americans have been trained not to know or even suspect is that, in many ways, they enjoy far fewer freedoms, and suffer under a more intrusive centralized state, than do the citizens of countries with more vigorous social-democratic institutions. This is at once the most comic funniest and most tragic saddest aspect of the excitable alarm that talk of social democracy or democratic socialism can incite on these shores within these unwashed masses. ¶

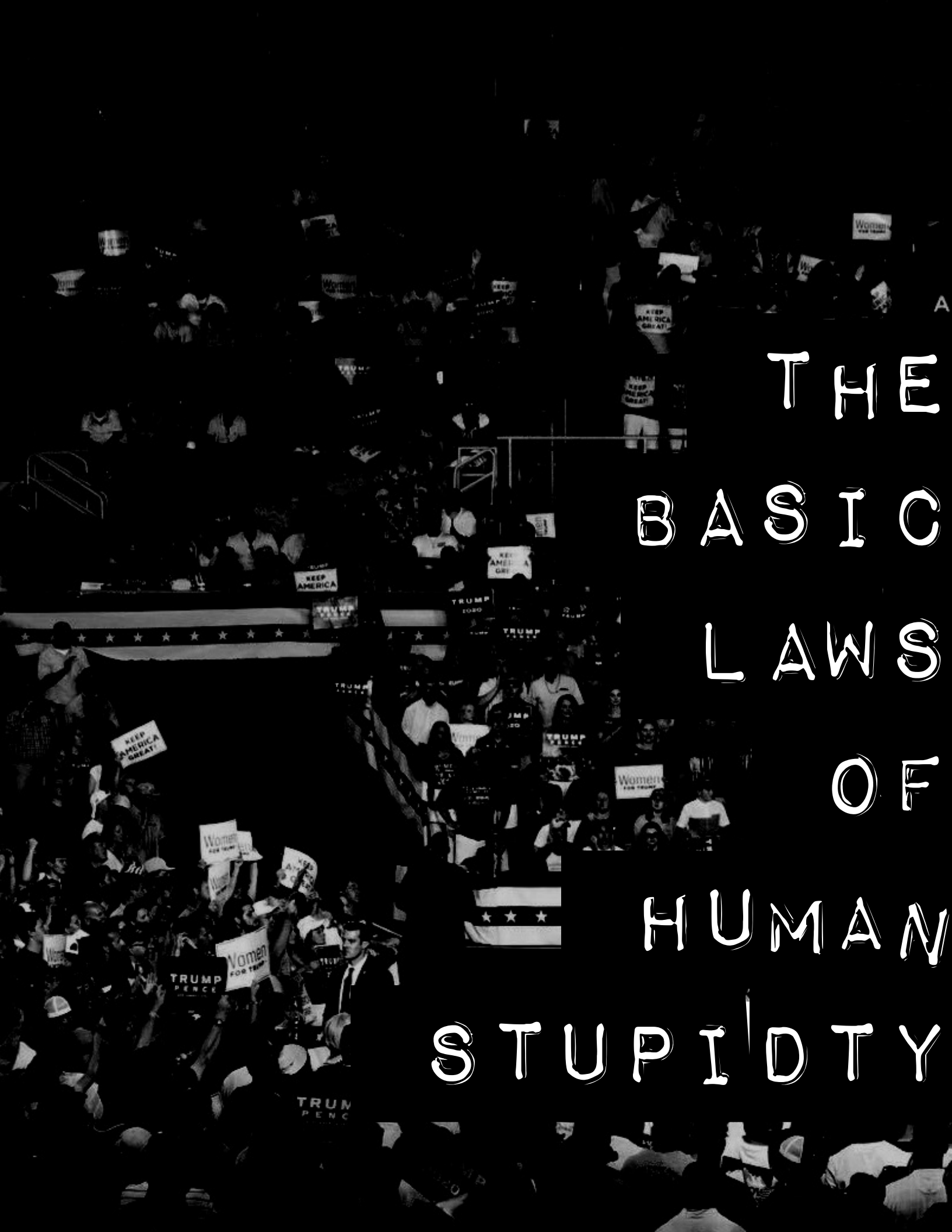
In one of the great cognitive bamboozles of the modern era, an enormous number of Americans have been persuaded to believe that they are freer in the abstract than, say, Germans or Danes most European and Central American countries precisely because they possess far fewer actual, real, tangible freedoms in the concrete. They are far more vulnerable to medical and financial crisis emergencies, far more likely to receive inadequate health coverage to deal with those crises, far more prone to irreparable insolvency, far more primed to embrace populist channels of blame like racism and xenophobia, far more likely to die violently by guns and car accidents, far more conditioned to have their voting rights suppressed without recourse, far less protected against predatory creditors, far more subject to income inequality, and so forth, while effectively paying more in tax if you account for federal, state, local, and sales taxes, and then compound those with out-of-pocket expenditures for healthcare and parental leave that in America, as almost nowhere else, is somehow uncovered in all those taxes. ¶

One might think that a people who once rebelled against the mightiest empire on earth on the principle of no taxation without representation would not meekly accept taxation without adequate government services. But we accept what we have become used to, I suppose. Even so, one must ask: what state apparatus in the "free world" could be more powerful insidious and tyrannical than the one that exhaustively taxes its citizens while providing no substantial civic benefits in return, solely in order to enrich a piratically overinflated military industrial complex and to ease the tax burdens of the immensely wealthy? to prop up a bloated military industrial murder complex and to gift away the tax burdens of the immensely wealthy while providing no substantial civic benefits? ¶

What are we actually defending anymore? ¶



mermaid
maniacs
vanilla
vulture rice
rascals milk
cricket people
of colonial
complexion
plantation barbies
cheese skins
bleach demons flour
monster discharge
doggie saltine cracker
sour cream salamanders
cave dweller cracker
mutations yeast maggots
snow pigs milky munchers
yeast yeti no purpose
flour iphone on light
mode iron golem plaster
people dandruff flake salt
shaker chalk child toilet
paper roll sour milk snow
possum palm coloured ones sour
milk blue cheese demon lice
lieutenant coke rabbits dust
mites snow roaches christopher
columbus stans plaster demons
oreo filling chalk dust unedited
google document unseasoned chicken
colonizer pale lice cotton ball albino
ape unseasoned urchins flour bags
pasty parrots failed abortions semen
skinned mayosapiens dandruff dalmations
powder patch kids mayo militia styrofoam
vanilla gorilla spiceless girls string
cheese ranch raccoons mayo mutations the
uncolored GMO people pale sailors clear folk
snow geckos soggy toilet paper sheets cocaine
chameleons rice krispies mayo monkeys plain
paper porridge cumstains sour cream citizens
light mode leeches Klu Klux Karen snow blenders
walking corpse mayo packets yeast infection sugar
sardines dandruff demons nut keepers elbow crust dried
cum white blood cell mashed potatoes marshmallow minions
yeast demons dandruff paper cracka jacks neanderthal
monkey dna mistakes mutated beings lice crawlers chalk
walking ranch shaved monkeys default color pale-
faced drywall plaster people
walking napkins mutated
vermin translucent
people shaved rats
mole rats albino pigs
albino monkey albino rats
diseased albino monster ashy
smelly white roaches cracker monster
ghost walker walking snowflakes ice walkers colonizing vultures
white meat years worth of dirt caked up that you can't see
untamed beasts blank paper invasive species weeds air thin-lipped
monkeys saggy white beasts lice invaders dandruff shakers sun like
monsters pale freaks book walking monsters white blood suckers
albino mosquito errors cop supporters unreadable chromosomes
products of incest all-purpose granulated sugar pillsbury doughboy
salt shaker papier-mache people paper towels ice betty crocker
winter wallabies freezer burn blizzard paper straws powdered sugar
crest 3-D whitening strips pillow people parchment paper wax figures
popcorn ceiling micro organism polar bears cream filling reverse
steve cousin lovers culture vultures substances contaminated paper
corn starch go snow blasted ghost thugs cotton I wouldn't pick racist
rascals anthropomorphic hairless cats vanilla soft serve goat milk
unwhipped cream vanilla villains uncleaned chalkboards q-tip grandma's
pubes fresh tampon skeleton frosty the snowman glue bottles people
of no colour (penc for short) cornstarch corinthians bleach flamingos
ranch rangers cotton pads milk crickets coconut comrade frosted
fairies white paint transparent PNG file night lights powdered
donuts white cheddar popcorn lice leader chalk crabs Columbus cadet
magic mayo ppl ready salted crisps without the mf salt cream cheese
confederates bleach foaming spray pasta parasites bleach bandit
teabag trespassers clammy klanny not meant to exist white "people" was
just god experimenting rally of unshaved beasts decomposing form of
humanity manifest destiny delusional lice bobble head mermaid maniacs
vanilla vulture rice rascals milk cricket people of colonial complexion
plantation barbies cheese skins bleach demons flour monster discharge



THE
BASIC
LAWS
OF
HUMAN
STUPIDITY

Rule 1.

Always and inevitably everyone underestimates the number of stupid individuals in circulation.

At first, the statement sounds trivial, vague and horribly ungenerous. Closer scrutiny will however reveal its realistic veracity. No matter how high are one's estimates of human stupidity, one is repeatedly and recurrently startled by the fact that:

a) People whom one had once judged rational and intelligent turn out to be unashamedly stupid.

b) Day after day, with unceasing monotony, one is harassed in one's activities by stupid individuals who appear suddenly and unexpectedly in the most inconvenient places and at the most improbable moments.

The First Basic Law prevents me from attributing a specific numerical value to the fraction of stupid people within the total population: any numerical estimate would turn out to be an underestimate.

Rule 2.

The probability that a certain person be stupid is independent of any other characteristic of that person.

Rule 3.

A stupid person is a person who causes losses to another person or to a group of persons while himself deriving no gain and even possibly incurring loss.

Rule 4.

Non-stupid people always underestimate the damaging power of stupid individuals. In particular non-stupid people constantly forget that at all times and places and under any circumstances to deal and/or associate with stupid people always turns out to be a costly mistake.

Rule 5.

A stupid person is the most dangerous type of person.

ERICA GREAT!





New Year's Eve

Kit's first postcard arrived after only five days. San Francisco: a trolley climbing a near-vertical street.

"Dear Liath, I think of you more than I expected. Why? Do you think of me? Our time was so short. I wish you were here to talk away these long drives. These guys are more boring than pavement. Did you see the Manson verdict? We're in San Fran. It's weird. There are more people without jobs than with."

His handwriting was precise, geometric, carefully etched like a book report.

His second arrived a week later from Portland. Some large outdoor fish market.

"Dear Liath, Last night we played our largest crowd ever. Door guy said we topped 200. Bernie (guitar) puked his guts out from bad clams and Donald (vocalist) beat the shit out of the same door guy when he said all the 'mongoloids in the jungle' should be nuked to ash. This war is killing our whole country. It's cold here. I miss that dead palm we hid under."

Then the Space Needle from Seattle, then snowy Vancouver, then some bridges in Chicago many weeks later. I amassed dozens of images of 1971 America as Peleonnor Fields wound a clockwise route around the country.

Turns out that Cleveland had better corned beef sandwiches than New York and that Brunswick Stew is religion in Atlanta. That their manager named Sled was stealing from them to gamble and every sound guy was an idiot. That Bernie was secretly shooting heroin and that Donald was secretly gay. That good people outnumbered bad people. Probably.

Talking on the phone was difficult. The one phone in my dorm hallway was ceaselessly occupied by crying girls. We caught each other for five minutes here, ten minutes there, but I had little to say. School was fine. I was fine. No, I didn't know my summer plans.

Over time, Kit wrote more on each postcard. His typewriter letters shrunk to tiny runes that wallpapered the white space and frequently curled, mid-word, onto the front image like an enterprising march of ants.

My favorite card, the one I still remember by heart, arrived from Princeton with a hazy still of the campus. By this time, Kit had shortened my name to just "Li", either out of familiarity or out of brevity. I adored it.

"Li, somehow being in New Jersey makes me feel closer to you. I've driven your roads,

1971

walked your streets, eaten your pizza. I'm sitting on a broken park bench watching kids in a playground across the street, picturing you as an 8-year-old beating up boys and picking up bugs. I think a lot about the space between us — all of us — in this wobbly grid of life, plotted on axes of minutes and miles, each of us playing this game board in our own way, adjacent, parallel, criss-crossing, running into and around one another, falling and pushing and drifting into long trails we don't understand but still make perfect sense. I think about our pieces on this game board today, at what point we'll meet again. I wish I had a picture of you."

Then the cards stopped. Then, a month later, a final letter with a New York return address. Inside the envelope was a folded postcard of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

"Li, it felt weird not to finish this on a postcard so here you go. The tour ended last night in NYC. I wish it were happier times. Bernie's in bad shape. He's deep in the horse and I don't know what to do. Donald's depressed. He just sleeps all the time. I had to cancel our last two shows. This is the last of Pelennor Fields. It was a good run. I'm living in Manhattan now, trying to get gigs. There's a nice group of hippies nearby at a hotel called Chelsea. Mostly artists, I think. Now that we've stopped moving, I miss you more than ever. I don't know how you affected me so much. Write me your plans."

My plans, as it turned out, were simple: top my class in every subject, like high school, just more. More writing, more talking, more testing. I grew bored of psychology and dove into biological chemistry. I spent what time I could at Puerco Beach.

I gave up on the prospect of friends. Other girls were either too competitive or too distracted. Boys only wanted to be a distraction. I wanted none of it. Just my degree.

For a short time, I worked reception at a psychologist's office that pandered to C-list Hollywood. Their problems were so boring. Emotional addictions, childhood trauma, infidelity, sexual insecurity. By business model or ineptitude, their problems were never solved.

I was bribed to come to New York. Twice.

As I navigated graduate school choices, my mother offered to pay my rent if I moved close enough to visit every other week. This was a cutting sacrifice on her school teacher salary. The proximity made me nervous, but the rope of our relationship had frayed to the thinnest of threads. I didn't have the stomach for complete separation.

The second bribe was from Kit. He offered no livelihood whatsoever, but did promise a friendly face and a circle of interesting people. After four years of lonely California, that was a strong draw.

In the spring of 1971 I scored a 525 on the MCAT, took my exams, and was somehow accepted to St John's in Queens. I didn't care. I just needed another piece of paper to get on with my life. I packed one suitcase with a few clothes, my degree, a bag of peyote, and Kit's postcards.

I spent the four-day train ride in a low-grade peyote haze, drifting between between the images of Kit's postcards, the sad secrets of failing Hollywood actors, those long numb weeks after my father's suicide, the tangled emotional yarn around my mother. I don't remember leaving the window. There was desert, then mountains, then dirt, then farmland, more mountains, and then an endless tide of suburban sprawl whose wave finally crested at the New York City skyline.

NYC has a knack for laughing in the face of your preconceptions.

Heat, for example. I walked out of Penn Station into a gray soup of summer that stank like a stale laundromat. The sun arced overhead like an angry god, turning phonebooths into kilns and sidewalks into stovetops, vaporizing sweat, wilting vegetables and fruit, warping the air. Shade didn't help. The humidity lurked and loomed, gagging and cloying.

Or *crazy*. We were taught not to use that word. But NYC was crazy. There was no other word. Screaming protesters blocking traffic. Homeless begging for cash to buy a hit. Pimps and traders dressed with callous immunity. Cops beating black men for walking wrong. Everything at full volume: arguments, car horns, radios, hot dog stands. Its crazy bled into your brain, as inescapable as the heat.

Or *prosperity*. The American dream of my youth was a precisely curated promise of square lawns, station wagons, meatloaf, national parks and the latest model of refrigerator. The New York version was violent capitalism. Gain at any cost. Pressed masses into tiny apartments. Broken subways. Neighborhoods left to gangs. People that pine for the "old" New York forget that most of Manhattan and Queens was indistinguishable from Belfast or Beirut.

My apartment in Jamaica Hills was on the second floor of a hateful brown box. Every

window was cracked, the linoleum was mostly gone, and I had to brush my teeth in the kitchen because there was no sink in the bathroom. The landlord was a vile, shirtless old man with the complexion and personality of mashed potatoes. On my second day, I added four new deadbolts after finding a drunk stranger passed out on my kitchen floor.

It wasn't until day five that I saw Kit. I refused to let him help me navigate anywhere. I mapped the correct train to Queens, practiced the walk to the school, found the closest produce stands and bakeries, the best Greek cafe for coffee, the best Jamaican shack for sweet potato stew.

Kit was shorter than I remembered. About my height and I barely cleared five-five depending on shoes. He was well-muscled from a billion hours behind drums. His chin was shaved clean and his black hair was cut short to land session gigs. But all of that was just framing for his emerald eyes, a lavish and supernatural Irish countryside green.

Kit lived on 20th between 8th and 7th Avenues. His apartment was marginally larger. He had a sink in the bathroom but a homeless guitarist named Frodo on the couch.

Our dynamic was off-kilter at first. I knew him from one kaleidoscopic night in LA and a few dozen postcards. He was eager to relight that brief, bright spark. For sex or friendship I wasn't sure.

Kit whirled within a circus of pontificating beatniks, night owl jazz fiends, broke actors, brash alcoholic writers, suicidal poets and a tumbling posse of painters, sculptors, and filmmakers. Everyone knew everyone. Somehow they made a little money, performing here, selling that, publishing whatever. Relationships were fluid, identity was a spectrum, art was religion, drugs were gateways.

Because he wasn't starving or broke or shaking from withdraw, Kit lacked street credibility but generally passed as a neutral ally to the circus. The couch to crash on, the yeah-sure quarter for a cup of coffee, the nip from a flask.

He became my tour guide that summer. I learned the subways, when the park was safe, who lurked in which Chelsea room, where to score free food when money was tight.

Because money wasn't just "tight". Money was nonexistent. In my first week, my only dollars went to door locks, bread, and subway tokens. On my first visit to my mother — a terse, brief, awkward and unbalanced dinner in New Jersey — I had to ask for cash to get home. She huffed, but neither of us had the energy to draw swords.

I started classes in September. I was thankful for a commute that didn't involve subway tokens or rats or homeless roommates.

Every other week, as agreed, I visited my

mother. We never spoke of my father. The magma of her anger had crusted over enough for us to argue about things comfortably outside our relationship: Vietnam, Watergate, Warhol, Elvis.

She scarcely asked about school; psychology and biology and chemistry were foreign languages. She taught middle school English. Science was men's domain. MCAT meant nothing to her.

Med school was immediately, refreshingly challenging. The library and I became intimate. I learned to type with velocity, steal cafeteria food, and engage in circular debates while high. The psychiatry field was convulsing over the general failure of mental hospitals and this yielded screaming debates with students storming out of classrooms.

I had no time for Manhattan. Kit visited on days out of the studio. We walked and talked, often stoned, shoulders pressed together like that Bob Dylan cover. He was always close, his face near mine. He tried to kiss me, once, under a tree in the dusk of Chelsea Park. I turned away. He never said anything about it.

On Christmas Eve, I brought Kit to my mother's house for the first time. He agonized over a gift for a week, but in the end brought her flowers and a heavy bottle of French brandy. She was nonplussed, as I forewarned him.

Later, over the phone, her critique was like Hemingway describing Warhol. Nice boy. Good eyes. Too short.

A week after, Kit and I attended a New Year's Eve party at the Chelsea Hotel.

My previous visits to the Chelsea had been brief and hazy. Its residents were the cast of Kit's circus. Patti Smith, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Bill Burroughs stalked the rooms; the voices of Mark Twain, Janis Joplin and Bob Dylan still echoed. It was a cathedral of desperate creativity: alive, vibrating, furious and fractured and pure. The lobby overflowed with work traded by artists that couldn't pay their rent. In other words, most of them.

We passed through that lobby just after ten. Less than two hours remained of 1971.

I stayed close to Kit as we climbed the wrapping flights of stairs, silvery hairs on my forearms lifting to whatever electricity prickled the air. We danced around revelers in the halls, stepped over those that had already passed out. The air was freezing and smelled of carpet stores and wet snow. I wished I had peyote.

We found the roof. It took a minute for my watering eyes to clear from the shock of blustering, frozen air.

A narrow patio teemed with a dense crowd hunched like penguins, laughing loudly, clinking glasses, waving their arms emphatically, breath and cigarette smoke pluming

before the ice-cold breeze ripped it away. One side opened to a clear view of the city. A small forest of potted trees and winter-blasted plants surrounded the other sides. Beyond that sulked the gloomy, silent vents and chimneys of the hotel.

A glittering web of golden lights strung above the bubbling crowd led to a dark, Bavarian wooden pyramid buttressed against a massive brick chimney.

Kit pointed. "That's the rooftop penthouse. Not the warmest place, but definitely the nicest view. Currently belongs to the painter Mueller. Let's get a drink."

We swam a jagged path through the crowd. The interior of the pyramid penthouse was split into three vague levels with its triangular corners lost to deep shadows. Canvases and paints covered surfaces like a detonated art store. The tidal crowd ebbed between the inside and outside, silhouettes and murmurs.

A vast table of old doors held dozens of champagne bottles chilled from the frozen night air and a flea market array of hollow glass objects from which to drink. I selected a chipped blue flower vase and Kit picked a hollow clear skull. Others drank from jam jars, bowls, a piece of chandelier, a retrofitted Christmas ornament. Kit grabbed a bottle of champagne as we moved back outside.

We mingled carefully at the crowd's edge. Kit attached himself to musicians. Dylan's drummer sagged into a bush, too drunk to stand. A dude who claimed to know Lou Reed grabbed my ass.

When I mentioned med school, all eyes glazed over. Except for a guy named Richard Hell, who told me his father had been a "weird" psychologist. Without warning, Richard Hell asked when my own father had died. My shock must have been obvious. I remember his words: "you wear your loss and I'd recognize that costume anywhere". Then he asked what kind of drugs I could score from med school.

At midnight, the crowd pressed against the open side of the patio. To our right, we could just see the luminous twin sentinels of the new World Trade Center towers fortifying the southern tip of the city. In front of us, the Empire State Building, then the East River, then the splotchy sprawl of Brooklyn.

Looking left down 7th Avenue, Times Square's god-defying pillar of light bleached the night sky. We couldn't see the ball dropping, but the crowd's countdown reverberated between the buildings. Illegal fireworks and gunshots exploded all over. A car burst into flame just around the corner of 22nd.

After the sloppy hugs and wet toasts and some drag queen puked into a potted bush next to poor Dylan's drummer, the crowd retreated into a nucleus of clown-dressed art-

ists. Freezing, we pressed inward. Kit nodded toward one tall thin bald man wrapped in furry white robes. A clock hung around his neck. His posse was laughing.

"That's Mueller," he whispered. "Our host. Dressed as Father Time guessing by his typical subtlety. He just showed at Martha Jackson's gallery and I heard he sold almost half a million. I'll introduce you."

Mueller offered a dismissive limp finger without shaking, then resumed describing his new Jaguar. Around him, peacocking men laughed too loud and shivering young women scowled and whispered. These were not friends of Mueller. Or to one another.

In our brown corduroy and brown wool coats, Kit and I looked from another world.

One man stared at me intensely through wide gold-rimmed glasses. He was tall, wrapped in a flamingo-pink overcoat, generally shaped like neckless bowling pin. He guzzled from a glass slipper.

He interrupted Mueller mid-sentence, his eyes never leaving me.

"Liath. Interesting. It means 'gray', correct?"

He knew his Gaelic. First person in my life to connect that. I told him so. The crowd turned as someone besides Mueller was finally talking.

He introduced himself. "Lewis Chartreuse. You've probably seen my sculptures. What do you do, Liath?"

I told him I was studying psychiatry at St John's.

"In Queens?" he choked like he found a cockroach in his reuben. "Ugh. Well," and here he scanned me up and down, slowly, teetering from champagne, "you're a long way from home, Dorothy." The circle chuckled, its appetite whetted.

"She's with me, Lewis," sighed Kit with earthen disdain. I remembered that Kit probably knew everyone up here. He tugged my sleeve to walk away. I ignored him.

"Clearly," Lewis scorned. "You both shopped at the same church basement sale."

The crowd snickered louder. Whatever Kit was about to say, Lewis cut him off, emphasizing words like a drag racer gunning the exhaust at the starting line.

"Relax, Banger. It was a *joke*." He held out his slipper and a bespeckled lackey refilled it. "But I am curious what drives a person to psychiatry. Everyone *here* is a *creator*, a *liberator* of concepts, focused on making the unreal *tangible*." He pointed at me. "Your kind cannot conjure ideas. You want only to *dissect* their source, *rationalize* their purpose, *quantify* their magic."

He sniffed and glanced around. The crowd chuckled, sneered, leaned in.

"C'mon," muttered Kit, nudging me again. "Let's go back inside."

I pulled my elbow from his fingers.

"If you can't conceive of creativity beyond

the boundary of art, I think you have almost no creativity at all,” I spit back. Kit went rigid.

Big pink Lewis’ smile withered to a terse frown.

I leaned in. “What difference is there between a lab and a studio —”

Lewis waved his hand and raised his voice, “Psychology only wants to *dismantle* the machine of the mind to see its gears and wires, as if the parts had meaning without context.”

“Psychiatry”, I corrected.

“Even *worse*,” he bellowed, a preacher stepping up into a sermon lilt. Champagne dribbled onto his great pink belly. “People are who they are. They *can’t* be *fixed*. A mind is glass that cracks and chips with life’s assaults. We’re just damage patterns. You can’t undo what’s done. You can’t *unmake* people. All of us here,” and his arms swung wide, swishing his pink coat, forcing two blue-lipped women to step back, “are irrevocably *unfixable* heirlooms relearning how to hold together every time something cracks.”

“Therapy can help. Medicine can help.” I don’t know why I said that. Pathetic. To my side, Kit shifted uncomfortably as if to avoid splatter and furtively glanced at the faces of spectators.

Lewis laughed, gesturing at me to the crowd.

“No. You can’t even say that with conviction. Medicine is an *illusion*. Chemicals can’t transform a person into another person. Take the drugs away, they *revert*. Everyone here knows enough about drugs to tell you that.”

My voice shook, sprinted ahead in a weirdly high pitch. “Yes, I want to know how people break. If we understand the fracture, we know how to help them.”

I stopped, caught my breath. What was I chasing? My father, before he stepped in front of that NJ Transit train. My mother, before her slow pickling into sour hot rage. The world, before the stupidity and depravity of millions of unfaithful, abusive, suffering people found another Vietnam or Manson.

Lewis hadn’t stopped.

“You’re *deleting* soul. Taking away what makes people who they are. Creativity comes from our fractures. Your drugs are another weapon of corporate fealty, a *capitalist trap* of inventing problems and selling chemicals to fix them. You are the *predator* of artists, Liath.”

He crossed his arms defensively, spilling the last of his champagne. His anger surprised me; I think it surprised him too. The circle looked backward uncomfortably, seeking an elegant exit. Poor Mueller’s eyes were wide. You could almost hear the gasping of his thoughts as they floundered in his shallow brain puddle.

I yanked my arm away from Kit’s repeated fumbling attempts to pull me back. Deep in my chest a sac of bloody fury burst, flooding my limbs with a hot, numb rage. Kit later recited to me what I “puked back at him”.

“Lewis, no one needs school to analyze you. Daddy didn’t hug you enough. Mommy still doesn’t give a shit about whatever abstract wreckage you’re stapling together even though she foot the bill for your studio and that awful coat. Your need for attention is crippling. Infantile. Should I even remind you of what you’re wearing? You don’t know work, or struggle. You’re desperate to convince us that you’re a transgressive artist, but you have no ideas. I saw your mess in the lobby. It’s imitation John Chamberlain painted orange. You’re a fraud at every level and terrified of what we’ll see if we look too close. But I see you. You wear your mendacity and I’d recognize that costume anywhere.”

Distantly, Times Square roared.

Lewis’ eyes were wide behind his gold rims, twitching, staring out of focus at some point beyond my shoulder.

Kit broke the heartbeat of silence. “Sorry Lewis, we’ve had too much champagne. She didn’t mean it.” To me: “C’m on, *let’s go*.”

I just looked at Kit. Fucking Judas hiding in plain sight.

Lewis took a step forward, but a dark shape stepped between us, shifted violently, and Lewis dropped to the frozen stone, gasping, his glass slipper shattering.

Richard Hell turned around, winked. “Just a baby shot to the kidney. He’ll piss blood for a week but at least he’ll shut up for the rest of the night.”

He swiveled toward Kit. “Banger, I seen you play. I’m amazed can do it at all without a spine.” For me, a subtle nod. “Fuck these fucks, Liath. Come see us play next week. Gonna be bigger than Bowie.”

The two hypothermic women that had dodged Lewis Chartreuse’s grand-standing helped him off the stone. The rest of the crowd flowed toward the pyramid-shaped penthouse, led by Father Time asking who else needed to do a line after that “shit spectacle”.

Everyone turned away from us.

I turned away from Kit.



DATE/TIME Dec 28 1991

DATE/TIME

SOURCE ☐ DISK ☐ AIR CHECK ☐ TAPE TO TAPESOURCE ☐ DISK ☐ AIR CHECK ☐ TAPE TO TAPENOISE REDUCTION ☐ ON ☐ OFF ()NOISE REDUCTION ☐ ON ☐ OFF ()

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Black Xmas**A**

COUNT

Dark Skinned + Inuring (Blacks Tape)When You Sleep (mbu)Amen Yves (For Against)Heartbeat City (Cass)This is a Recording (De la Soul)Natures Revenge (Skinny Puppy)Sandcastle (Little Nemo)New Dress (DM) ♥Man of Christ (Exec Slacks)Brass Monkey (Beasties)Marlene Dietrich (P. Murphy)Come in Piece (Doubting Thomas)**A** (cut off ... sorry)

COUNT

B

COUNT

Kerosene (Big Black)Lost in the Supermarket (Clash)Ashes to Ashes (Bowie)Broken Face (Pixies) ☹Passion of Lovers (Bauhaus)Homesick (Cun)Don't Argue (~~the~~ Cabaret Voltaire)Angel (Ministry)Running to Stand Still (U2)Little Huffy Clouds (Orb)

(shut up you like it)

B

COUNT



