

Faceless Cog

by

Pluto MacPherson

Transcribed and annotated

by Martin Olson

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Some of the chapters in an earlier version of this book were written with my youthful collaborator and friend Christopher Branagan.



INTRODUCTION

By Dr. Adam X. Bayer

The rumor that my patient Pluto MacPherson finger-painted the complete text of this book with his own excrement is patently false. The truth is that only a small portion was painted with his own excrement; the rest was painted with poster paint during the daily arts and crafts hour at the Hollis Home for the Criminally Insane.

At the time of this writing, Mr. MacPherson is a thirty-three year old male, the only son of a Peruvian mother and an Easter Islander father. Mr. MacPherson studied musical composition for two years at the Berklee School of Music in Boston, and later became second cornet for the Ringling Brothers Barnum-Bailey Circus.

At that time, Mr. MacPherson murdered Col. Landers Plunkett, the circus band leader. In a gruesome act of violence, Mr. MacPherson decapitated Mr. Plunkett with the band cymbals, stuffed his head into the circus cannon, and then fired it into the crowd. Diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic, Mr. MacPherson was taken to the Hollis facility and placed under my care.

Refusing to talk, after six months of treatment he began fingerpainting the opening chapters of what was to become his book Faceless Cog.

His writing on this book was interrupted when, due to a mistake in his medication, Mr. MacPherson stabbed a male nurse in the eye with a bread stick.

While in solitary confinement, he asked to be allowed to read the seventy-two art pads upon which he had painted his novel. Since I had refused to allow him access to paints or writing materials at this time, we later found that he used

excrement and blood from biting the inside of his mouth to fingerprint the remaining chapters on the reverse sides of the pad.

The painted pages were transcribed by my secretary, Ms. Mernoo Bershann. This was a difficult and unpleasant task; for not only were most of the pages nearly illegible, but Mr. MacPherson had also imprinted his anus and scrotal sac on each sheet and then painted the text around these imprints.

The story itself, while the work of a violent and mentally-ill individual, has afforded myself and my staff a window into hidden aspects of Mr. MacPherson's pathology. The lead character of the story, for example, while incapable of emotions, gradually becomes all-powerful. (Indeed, in Chapter Twelve, perhaps the most clearly psychotic section of Mr. MacPherson's book, the protagonist is said to have become an omniscient God.)

The psychological issues explored in the book have provided some insights in how to treat Mr. MacPherson, and there have been small successes as a result.

For example, since Mr. MacPherson refused to communicate verbally during the first fourteen years of his stay at Hollis, I attempted to use his fictional protagonist's delusions of grandeur as a bridge to establish communication. By telling him that he was secretly controlling the Hollis facility, and that I worked for him, I achieved eye contact with him for the first time. Although he immediately started banging his head with my desk lamp until attendants restrained him, still I consider this a significant breakthrough.

Later, inspired by the secretary character "Ms. Jones" in his narrative, I pretended to be his secretary and offered to take dictation for him. At that point, he grabbed the letter opener from my desk and began stabbing my bust of Freud until the pepper spray finally took effect.

Although no further progress has been apparent in the eight months since

this incident, I consider these small steps significant and anticipate progress in the future.

The most important contribution of this book towards Mr. MacPherson's treatment occurred when I told him I was submitting the ms. for publication as a clinical research document. He immediately wrote a brief note asking to write an introduction to the manuscript, which follows.

His Foreword reveals many insights into Mr. MacPherson's character which were hidden behind his wall of silence. The bizarre story of his book also reveals the psycho-sexual aspects of Mr. MacPherson's personality. The anecdote of the protagonist's voyeuristic interlude with Ms. Jones, the grotesque episode between the prostitute and Mr. Lix in the subway, and numerous other strange, sexual references, may contribute insights into the sexuality of the paranoid-schizophrenic.

It is hoped that when he sees this book in print, Mr. MacPherson will be inspired to continue to communicate further via fingerpainting, and that more clues into his psyche will result that will assist me in a more accurate prognosis.

But regardless of my limited success in Mr. MacPherson's case, it is hoped that others may benefit from this document's publication, and that it may offer insights into other anomalistic cases of mental illness.

The painted Frontispiece and the various "diagrams" which Mr. MacPherson drew give examples of the manner in which each page was written. The Endpiece illustration also gives the Reader an idea of how the complex charts and footnotes were laid out in the original paintings.

Although Mr. MacPherson is my patient, I have a fondness and genuine sympathy for his situation which transcends our physician-patient relationship. I also would like him to know how much I appreciate the thoughts of kindness he expressed towards me in his Foreword.

Finally, at Mr. MacPherson's request, all proceeds from the sale of this manuscript, Faceless Cog, are being donated to the UFO Cattle Mutilation Research Club of San Diego, California, of which Mr. MacPherson is a sponsor.

Serena Oprah Pasternak, M.D.

Clinical Psychiatrist

Hollis Home for the Criminally Insane

FOREWORD

My name is Pluto MacPherson. I am a musician, a writer and a professional UFOologist.

I killed Col. Landers Plunkett, after he purposely castrated one of my musical arrangements. Because of this act I was judged legally insane and locked up for psychiatric observation.

Am I insane now? No. For legal and insurance reasons, I will change that to a yes. But I don't feel insane. And I didn't feel insane when I wrote this book.

But I will admit that because I am a "mental patient", at times I purposely went a little overboard in some of the chapters, writing them with more freedom than I may have if I wasn't in an insane asylum. The beginning of the book, at any rate, is fairly normal.

But what do you care? If you're reading this, I'm sure it's not because you care, but because you are curious about what an insane person's book is like. If that's the case, let me ask you this. Have you ever thought about doing something insane? You have, haven't you? You've thought of killing someone, I'm sure. Don't lie. Admit it, if only to yourself.

And if, at the time you considered killing someone, or performing any insane act, you happened to be "depressed" (whatever that means) and under who-the-fuck knows what kind of medication these assholes were giving me at the time, then I suspect that you too would have acted on it, that is, you would have gone through with the killing as I did. Which means that right now you'd

also be in an asylum like this one, fingerpainting on these shitty pads of kindergarten paper.

Think about it.

When I calmed down, of course I realized that I had freaked out and killed the colonel in a stupid way, terrifying all of those little kids and old people in the audience. I was a moron to have shot his head at those kids, especially since landed in that idiot lady's lap. She didn't have to get hysterical and scare everybody and cause the stampede that crippled that kid. So fuck her. It wasn't all my fault. I just should have killed him in a smarter way. Then I wouldn't be stuck in this shithole with these urine-stained nut cases for the rest of my fucking life.

It's the drugs they give me. Stay away from anything a shrink gives you. Stay away from shrinks, period. They are all monumental assholes. Every last one of them. That's the only thing those asshole scientologists have right.

Dr. Pasternak, the shrink who looks out after me here, she means well and doesn't keep pumping me full of shit like all those other dildos. As if I was some kind of goddamn test rat. Fuck them all.

And the same goes for you, too, whoever you are reading this, you lousy voyeuristic lame brain, trying to get a vicarious thrill from a book written by a mental case. As if you were completely "sane". You wish.

I wrote this book because I felt like it. You douchebags can analyze it anyway you want. Undoubtedly you'll cover it with ten layers of pretentious psychological crap. Obviously I identify with Mr. Ecks. So don't think you're such a hot shit by drawing all kinds of elaborate inferences about my mental illness from what I wrote about Mr. Ecks. Eighty-five per cent of this book is absolute bullshit I wrote hoping I would get a rise out of Dr. Pasternak, even though I admire her and wish her, and only her, well.

That's right, Doc. You showed me gentleness and consideration, even when you thought you were tricking me to get me to talk. Listen to me, Doc. Don't bother. Get it? I'll never talk. If you were me, and you knew you blew your entire life, and were stuck here in Wingnut Village forever, would you talk? Hell no.

One more thing to any other shrinks reading this: I was high on medication while writing every fucking word. That's more than you can say to justify the dumbass things you do in your "normal" life, you condescending pricks. And if you think I'm mad, (i.e, angry), you're goddamn right. The Fates didn't deal me this hand in life, I did. Boo hoo. So I'm mad at myself for screwing up. I could've easily done things differently. Like not hacking the colonel's head off for starters.

If I ever get out (which I won't) and become furious enough to kill some other idiot, you can bet I'll use more jurisprudence. And I sure as hell won't fire the head out of a cannon to five hundred goddamn witnesses.

In closing, a personal message from me to anybody reading this:

May you rot in bloody hell, every last one of you.

Except you, Dr. Pasternak. You I wish the best, and forgive me for not being able to help you help me. But I can't. And I won't.

That's all I have to say.

Pluto MacPherson

Inmate

Hollis Home for the Criminally Insane

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Dedicated to Christopher Branagan,
the constellation Virgo,
and its most brilliant star Spica.

Space is the Eternal Virgin,
the absolute potentiality of numberless cosmic
actualizations. Trillions of possible universes,
each of which could sing its special song and
reveal in its cyclic harvest a particular quality
of existence brought to a state of perfection,
are implied in its silence.

--- *Dane Rudhyar*

CHAPTER ONE

Mr. Ecks, Object of Scrutiny

The girl's name was Debbie. Having just stabbed her husband Harlan in the back at the kitchen table and left him with his face embedded in his vegetarian plate of mashed potatoes and cauliflower, she trudged out of the house, went to the corner bar and ordered a shot of Jack. Soon they'd come for her, she knew. Who knows, maybe she'd get off. One of those battered women defenses. Despite the fact that whenever her husband had beaten her, she knew she'd deserved it. The last time was when she put a pair of white socks in his black socks drawer. The welts from his belt had felt humiliating, but somehow righteous, knowing that the beatings were justified, that she'd been wrong.

It must have been the same quirk in her personality that had made her pause while holding the carving knife behind Harlan's back. She still wondered what made her curiosity so overpowering. What would it feel like to plunge the blade into his back?

It was, she figured, the power of curiosity, rather than fear or hatred, that made her eviscerate his organs.

Debbie sipped her whiskey, deep in thought, when she noticed the stiff little man in the booth. From her stool, she could see his face clearly. An emotionless face, but inset in the blank face were deep, riveting staring eyes, like those of an expensive doll. He sat motionless, tucked away in the corner. His hand was on the table and he was holding a peculiar object in his palm.

She leaned slightly forward and squinted.

It looked as if he was holding a human brain.

Obviously she was mistaken. She leaned closer, squinted her eyes more. The object indeed had all the physical characteristics of a brain. It was gray, rubbery, ball-like, divided into three lobes and two symmetrical hemispheres separated by a longitudinal fissure, bound together by fibers at the base, its surface criss-crossed with innumerable veiny ganglia.

Naturally, she assumed that he was holding was a plastic replica. Perhaps he was a science teacher out for a quick belt before staggering back to face the rows of acned, idiot faces, behind which were the souls of actual idiots, the implacable stupidity the result of passively absorbing Television Reality since childhood, their souls unstretched, limp, watching him as if he himself were a gooning television show, their expressions the same, as if rubber stamped on the top of their organic sacs, stamps denoting emptiness.

These were not Debbie's thought, however, but rather the thoughts of the biographer of the entity who, at this juncture, appears to be holding a human brain.

Intrigued, Debbie looked more closely. No. The brain could not be a plastic replica; it appeared to be dripping fluid down his fingers and onto the table. The pool of fluid glistened and reflected the flashing red and white Miller Lite sign hanging on the wall above his booth.

Jesus Christ, Debbie thought. Why is he holding a fucking brain?

Her curiosity was becoming obsessive and overpowering. She downed her drink, got up from the bar and slowly walked over to the man's booth.

Three years earlier, the same little man, looking exactly the same, sat on the same side of the same corner booth of the bar. At that time, however, his

hands were not on the table. They were stiffly at his sides. He was motionless. He wore an expensive three piece suit. His hair was immaculately and conservatively styled.

His face, then as now, was dullish, nondescript, if not ever so slightly, when seen in a certain light, moronic. But his eyes belied a gentleness in his demeanor; there was a sweetness there, an innocence. The blankness of his face facilitated the projection of illusory attributes upon him which changed according to the biases of the perceiver, somewhat like the character in Melville's Billy Budd, or more precisely like that in Kosinski's Being There.

Still in the past: The little man looked over at the same rheumy-eyed bartender. The bartender was washing glasses. The little man turned his gaze to the quaint grandfather clock at the other end of the room, then he turned his gaze to an umbrella stand in the adjacent corner, then he turned back again to look at the bartender.

The bartender was washing glasses.

He heard soft music from the speaker over his head, and this faintly pleased him, although he did not know why. But even more than he was pleased by the soft, lilting melody of the music, he was displeased by the fact that the music pleased him.

He turned his mind away from the music, and resumed his study of the bartender.

The bartender was washing glasses.

Then he turned his gaze from the bartender to the quaint grandfather clock at the other end of the room, and, looking away, saw the umbrella stand in the adjacent corner. Then he turned his head back towards the center of the room, and his eyes focused on nothing in particular.

He remained in this state for perhaps a second. Then his gaze became

fixed upon the quaint grandfather clock at the other end of the room.

And it was then that Mr. Ecks realized that for a very brief moment, no thoughts had filled his mind, that for a tiny span of time, no words or feelings or images of any kind had demanded his attention or consideration, and this pleased him greatly; it was pleasure of a different order than that produced earlier by the music.

But his pleasure lasted only for the briefest moment, and the reason for that was that he realized that the realization that for a moment no thoughts had filled his mind, ended the period in which no thoughts had filled his mind, and this thought disturbed Mr. Ecks.

He then realized that, since the moment of his having no thoughts had pleased him, he wished the moment had been longer, that is, that he had not realized so soon that no thoughts were filling his mind; and he continued to harbor this wish, even though he realized that the duration of the moment of his having no thoughts would perhaps make no difference, in view of his realization that no pleasure could be taken in the event itself of no thoughts filling his mind, but only in the realization that the events had occurred.

And this thought neither pleased nor disturbed Mr. Ecks.

A short time later, four men approached Mr. Ecks' table. They too were immaculately groomed and wearing impeccable three piece suits. One of them touched his shoulder significantly and began to speak.

"Mr. Ecks, my name is Mr. Lix. These are my colleagues, Mr. Nix, Mr. Sqecx, and Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuee."

Two of the other men languidly smiled and nodded at the little man. The third, designated by Mr. Lix's gesture as Mr. Sqecx, neither smiled nor frowned, but rather stared intensely at the little man.

"We are the Board of Directors," Mr. Lix continued, "representing the firm of Lix, Nix, Sqecx, and Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, which, as you probably know, controls a tad over forty per cent of all banking interests in the entire world. We own virtually all of the banking in the Midwest, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Camay Islands, China, the Soviet Republics and Peru. Our profits exceeded nine hundred billion dollars in the last two quarters. Since we are negotiating with the Saudis for joint ownership of Europe, the Japanese are trying to cut our balls off. I have a proposition which you may find interesting, although I realize you may be a bit taken aback by such an unexpected offer. Because of the Japanese threat, we now require a fifth member on our Board of Directors to oversee our internal operations. One of us who, requesting anonymity, checked your references and gave you the highest recommendations, brought us here to meet you and see if you seemed a likely candidate. Our consensus is positive and our need immediate. In short, we would like you to consider accepting a position as a Board member in our firm. I know you are probably a bit taken aback by this proposal, and indeed may be taken aback considerably, but of course you may negotiate a salary which I am sure will be more than equitable. I ask you to consider the career rewards this position has to offer, and to give the matter serious thought. We will contact you here at nine o'clock tomorrow morning for your answer. And now we shall leave you alone because we see that you are greatly surprised by this offer and you are no doubt taken aback."

This dialogue, although boring and unlikely, is accurate, at least according to all accounts after the fact, and barring prevarication for reasons unknown to the present biographer.

Be that as it may, at this, Mr. Nix and Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue murmured in agreement with this judgment, and Mr. Sqecx said nothing. The four men in turn nodded and shook hands with Mr. Ecks' limp hand, then left the room.

The little man watched them leave. His face was expressionless. He was trying to understand why Mr. Lix had referred to him as Mr. Ecks. Perhaps this was his name. He realized that he had no idea what his name was. Obviously, he had some form of amnesia. He tried to think of where he lived, of what his profession was, of who his acquaintances were. He could remember nothing but a comforting gray blur of unformed, elusive images which refused to form a picture of the past in his mind.

He wondered which of the men had recommended him (he may as well call himself Mr. Ecks) for the job.

Without knowing why, Mr. Ecks knew that it had been the one called Mr. Sqecx. Perhaps he thought this because Mr. Sqecx had shaken his hand more firmly, more significantly than the others. But what this signified, he knew not.

As he sat thinking about Mr. Lix's proposition, Mr. Ecks realized that Mr. Sqecx, who, he remembered, had not acknowledged any agreement with Mr. Lix's last statement to Mr. Ecks, as had Mr. Nix and Mr. Eueoeueoeueuuuuue, the statement in question being that Mr. Ecks had been taken aback, probably realized that he, Mr. Ecks, had not, as had apparently been supposed by Mr. Lix and the others, been taken aback by Mr. Lix's proposal. But as to whether or not Mr. Sqecx also realized that Mr. Ecks had not only not been taken aback, but also had felt no emotion at all upon hearing the proposal, and, indeed had felt no inclinations whatsoever concerning it, neither positive nor negative, this was not known to Mr. Ecks.

And then a thought occurred to Mr. Ecks that disturbed him very greatly.

This thought caused him far, far more displeasure than had any of his other thoughts that evening. For Mr. Ecks realized that, against his wishes, he had been greatly pleased to realize that he had not been taken aback by Mr. Lix's proposal, and that indeed he had not felt any emotion whatever, either positive

or negative, towards the matter. But he was relieved to be able to believe that Mr. Sqecx probably did not realize that he, Mr. Ecks, had been pleased by his realization. For it seemed to Mr. Ecks that Mr. Sqecx had made no indication of such a realization, and it was therefore justifiable to conclude that he did not have such knowledge, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

The quaint grandfather clock chimed twelve times, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks. The rheumy bartender was turning off the lights and preparing to close for the night, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks. All the customers were leaving, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks. Blowing his nose of excess catarrh, the bartender turned off the last light and, apparently not noticing Mr. Ecks still sitting in the hidden booth, departed, locking the door behind him.

He was alone with himself. Or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.



CHAPTER TWO
Mr. Ecks in the Land
of No Eye Contact

Bright and early the rheumatic bartender unlocked the door with a startling *click-click-click-claaack*, entered whistling and began setting up the bar. Perhaps due to the mucous clouding his eyes, or the fact that Mr. Ecks was sitting facing away from the bar, in effect hidden from view, the bartender still did not notice Mr. Ecks in the corner booth. But that is neither here nor there. What is significant is that at precisely nine o'clock, the same four men reentered the bar and approached Mr. Ecks.

Mr. Lix repeated his proposition. The four took Mr. Ecks' silence as assent.

"Well then," Mr. Lix said briskly, smiling and shaking Mr. Ecks' limp hand again, "we would like to show you around. Mr. Sqecx has contacted your attorney and business affairs are doing the preliminary paperwork. We have a car waiting."

As Mr. Ecks did not move, Mr. Sqecx touched his (Mr. Ecks') shoulder, exerting a subtle pressure indicating that Mr. Ecks should rise. Mr. Ecks did so and followed them out the door to the waiting car.

As they drove, Mr. Lix talked on and on about the company's holdings and their plans for dealing with the Japanese threat. Mr. Ecks knew nothing about the Japanese, but knew that he found pleasure in the phrase "Japanese threat". The fact that this phrase brought him pleasure, of course, was displeasurable to Mr. Ecks.

At their corporate offices, Mr. Lix and the Board members gave Mr. Ecks a tour of the offices. Then they told him to look around on his own if he wished, and talk to various employees in various department which he would be supervising, who had already been informed of Mr. Ecks' arrival. Mr. Lix asked Mr. Ecks to meet the Board in the conference room in one hour.

Mr. Ecks talked to no one, and merely walked in circles around the circular hallways from which sprouted hundreds of offices filled with bustling activity.

Following Mr. Lix's instructions, Mr. Ecks entered the conference room at the appointed time. Mr. Lix and Mr. Nix began debating company policy. Mr. Sqecx seemed to be daydreaming. Mr. Eueoeueoeueuuuuue was scribbling on a pad of paper, filling up page after page with what were, to Mr. Ecks, illegible markings. Mr. Eueoeueoeueuuuuue's note-taking did not seem to correspond to anything that was being said by the other Board members. Mr. Ecks suspected that the nature of Mr. Eueoeueoeueuuuuue's note-taking was also not known by the other Members of the Board. But as to whether the nature of Mr. Eueoeueoeueuuuuue's note-aking was known to Mr. Eueoeueoeueuuuuue, Mr Ecks could not even guess.

Mr. Lix pressed buttons on a console which dimmed with lights. Using a laser pointer, Mr. Lix then showed them a world map with Japanese and Saudi holdings color-coded. During his talk, he asked Mr. Nix a series of questions concerning possible company policy changes, with reference to Mr. Ecks' joining the firm allowing Mr. Nix more time to create a strategy to deal with the Japanese threat.

It was unclear to Mr. Ecks whether Mr. Nix's garbled replies were meant to be affirmative, negative, or indifferent. Mr. Nix, it appeared, spoke through an electronic module attached to his throat which emitted a squawking semblance of the human voice. From time to time during the discussion, Mr. Nix would

lower the module, revealing a small hole in his throat, through which he would smoke a cigarette.

Mr. Sqecx took no part in the conversation. Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue pressed buttons on his console and called for wine. Mr. Lix continued the debate with Mr. Nix for several hours, during which time Mr. Sqecx appeared to do nothing and Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue repeatedly called for wine.

Occasionally, Mr. Lix asked Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue to give his opinion on the subject under discussion. At such times he was a fountain of information, opinion and wit. But once, Mr. Nix, leaning over to whisper to Mr. Ecks, remarked that although Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue was a brilliant strategist, in mathematics he was handicapped by a strange limitation in that he was only adept in the use of nonary mathematical notation, and incompetent in the use of any other numerical system. Mr. Ecks did not know what nonary notation was, although he inferred that it was a form of mathematics based on a number system other than base ten. Mr. Ecks, it should be pointed out, was adept only in binary mathematical notation, and so he felt a certain unspoken kinship with Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue in their shared combinatorial handicap.

During the meeting, Mr. Lix asked Mr. Sqecx various questions, but never asked his opinions. Mr. Nix whispered to Mr. Ecks that Mr. Sqecx did not give opinions. He stated only facts, and only if these facts were tangentially related with the subject at hand. If Mr. Sqecx was asked for a direct answer, Mr. Nix whispered, he would glaze over in a dull stupor.

Soon Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue became ill, and began to regurgitate his wine. Mr. Ecks, observing this, found that he could not avoid the suspicion that Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, despite his trim, youthful appearance and vibrant wit, was rather frequently susceptible to gastronomic ailments. Mr. Ecks' suspicions were quickly confirmed, for he noted that the effluvia emitted upon the table from Mr.

Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's mouth did not alarm the others, who merely sent for the janitor who immediately entered and wiped up the pool of excrement.

Immediately after Mr. Lix finished leading their discussion of the Japanese threat, the lights went on and Mr. Ecks was sworn in as the fifth member of the firm of Lix, Nix, Sqecx, Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, and Ecks. A phone call came for Mr. Lix, who announced that the corporation had just closed their deal with the Saudis, and the meeting, on an up-note, was promptly adjourned.

As the members rose to leave, an unusual event transpired, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks:

Thusfar in the meeting, there had been virtually no eye contact among the board members. Indeed, the Corporate Badlands were often spoken of as the Land of No Eye Contact. The touching of eyes, it was felt, among the corporate executives especially, to be an unseemly intimacy, not unlike touching the heads of their penises to each other, which would amount to a perverse and unsuitable breach of decorum.

Yet, to backtrack, the unusual event that transpired at this quiescent crossroad in our tale, was this: Mr. Ecks' eyes met the eyes of Mr. Sqecx for a brief, but telling, instant.

This event, it should be noted, stirred no emotion in Mr. Ecks. Yet he knew that it was perhaps the most significant thing that had happened during his first conference with Mr. Lix, Mr. Nix, Mr. Sqecx and Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue.

Whether or not the event was also significant to Mr. Sqecx, Mr. Ecks could not say.



CHAPTER THREE

Mr. Ecks and the Unspeakable Noises

In the interim between the beginning and the ending of his first day at the firm, many interesting and fabulous events occurred. Or, if they were not exactly fabulous in the literal sense, some were vaguely interpreted as such by Mr. Ecks due to the novelty of the setting in which he found himself, and the many unknown factors involved, which gave every event a slightly shimmering aura of fabulousness. One event was of a highly sexually charged nature:

Sitting in the office of the Mr. Ecks's executive secretary, Ms. Jones, after the meeting of the Board, with a pile of company policy briefs in a folder on his lap, staring forward at nothing in particular, was Mr. Ecks. Ms. Jones, who had given him the papers at the suggestion of Mr. Lix, had silently noted that Mr. Ecks, her new boss, had not even opened the folder to read the documents so pertinent toward the understanding of the firm. She was about to smilingly chastize him, on a gambit of testing his sense of humor, when the highly sexually-charged particular occurred.

A series of poundings, becoming increasingly louder, accompanied by a series of muffled cries, becoming increasingly louder in a ratio proportionate to the increasing gusto of the poundings over a function of time, emanated from the ceiling directly above, suggesting its source being Mr. Lix's office.

Looking up, Ms. Jones stiffened in embarrassment and avoided Mr. Ecks' gaze. This was, after all, the Land of No Eye Contact. But Mr. Ecks' gaze was not upon the pounding ceiling, nor upon Ms. Jones, but rather upon a plate of glass covering a painting of the company logo, or emblem, which hung on the wall behind Ms. Jones, and which reflected the gleaming sphere of the Sun from the window directly to Mr. Ecks' eyes. Thus, oblivious, he had not associated the

sounds in question with the act of surreptitious sexual union, but rather as the settling or bending of the building due to winds buffeting the high rise, or mechanical resonance with construction going on on the street below, or the structural flexibility necessitated by gravitational pull in combination with these various factors.

As the poundings and screams became louder, now vibrating the ceiling tiles, Ms. Jones set her jaw, picked up the intercom receiver and buzzed Mr. Lix's office, but received no answer. Then, as the cries above became, to Ms. Jones, epithets of the most debased forms of carnal intrigue, she stood up from her desk and stormed towards the elevator leading to the executive offices.

Ms. Jones, it should be noted, had bright red hair set in a circular smattering of curls about her head. Her face was beautifully symmetrical in an ugly sort of way. Her body was also beautifully symmetrical and ugly. Her breasts, a factor of paramount importance to the men who ran, owned and controlled all females in the corporation, were unusually high on her chest and oddly thin and pointed, akin to two fresh bananas protruding at right angles from her upper chest, six inches below her shoulder blades. Yet, despite her ugliness and freakish physicality, Ms. Jones radiated an intense vibration of brilliance, intelligence and comfort which made Mr. Ecks feel at peace and out of harm's way.

Mr. Ecks, noting the destruction of the balance of entropy in the room as Ms. Jones stormed towards the door, followed her without thinking. As she entered the elevator, he did as well.

Ms. Jones, her lips pressed tightly together, his hands trembling, pressed the button for the executive suites and the door slid shut behind Mr. Ecks. Ms. Jones and Mr. Ecks stood in stony silence as the little room emitted a mechanical rumble and began rising up, drawing them into the air.

In the elevator, the pummellings, grunts, shrieks, moans and plethora of expletives rose, muffled, above the humming engine of the elevator apparatus as they drew closer to Mr. Lix's office. The little room jolted to a stop and the door slid open to reveal the circular conference room. Here the unspeakable noises from Mr. Lix's office were louder still, vibrating the dust on the circular wooden conference table into delicate Chladni patterns.

Unsure of what procedure to adopt in this circumstance, Ms. Jones went up to Mr. Lix's door and tried tapping faintly thereupon. But to no avail. The caterwauling continued unabated. Then Ms. Jones tried slowly turning the doorknob, with the vague idea of discreetly entering and somehow imploring them to desist. But the door was locked tight.

Mr. Ecks approached the door in question and stood next to Ms. Jones. Aping her reflexively, he put his tender ear to the door. The adoption of this mimicking position placed him directly face-to-face with Ms. Jones, and their eyes met as they listened to the sloshing, slapping, cursing and ramming occurring at high speed behind the door.

It was at this point in the proceedings that a woman's voice loudly screamed a brief sentence of guttural encouragement to (Ms. Jones inferred) Mr. Lix, and upon hearing the voice, Ms. Jones gasped in shock and disbelief. She uncontrollably whispered a name, and quickly clamped her hand over her mouth, remembering that Mr. Ecks, the new member of the Board, was observing at close quarters her new experience (?) as an unwilling, but aroused, sexual voyeur.

As to the question of whether or not Mr. Ecks was aroused, it may be posited skeptically, for the peculiar aura surrounding Mr. Ecks (and Ms. Jones noted at the instant her eyes first fell upon him that such an aura did exist) did not seem in Ms. Jones's view to express itself sexually.

And as to the name, which was whispered forth irretrievably into the unerasable skein of space and time, regrettably uttered and then stifled, by Ms. Jones, it was: "Ms. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue."



CHAPTER FOUR
The End of Mr. Sqecx

Mr. Ecks did not leave the building at night. Instead, he walked around the circular hallways until the sun arose, at which time he returned to his office. One morning, an engraved invitation lay on his desk, inviting him to attend a cocktail party at the home of Mr. Lix. He crumpled the invitation and threw it to the carpet and, with the heel of his Italian shoe, ground the invitation to a wadded pulp.

He had good reason for doing this. Mr. Ecks was certain of very few things, but one thing of which he was certain was this, that his favorite word was *pulp*. While walking in lazy circles through the empty hallways at night, he was especially fond of murmuring to himself, "*Pulp... pulp... pulp, pulp... pulp... pulp, pulp, pulp,*" etc., and listening to the sound of the word accompanying the soft tread of his feet on the carpet.

Another favorite word, almost as well enjoyed by Mr. Ecks as *pulp* was *plush*, and its close relative, *posh*. Occasionally, as his mood dictated, he would substitute either of these words for *pulp*, in his nighttime journeys, e.g., "Plush ... plush, plush ...", or "Posh, posh, posh ...", or, more frequently, he would engage in long soliloquies of any two, or all three of these words in combination, thus: "Pulp... pulp, posh ... plush, pulp... posh ... pulp, posh, plush... plush, posh, pulp ... pulp... pulp, plush, pulp..." And often, he would inexplicably interject into these monologues, at irregular intervals, a clicking sound made with his thin, rubbery lips, but these interjections were reserved for his more equivocal

states of mind.

He decided to accept the invitation, as it would he supposed be folly to decline what amounted to he imagined an order from he surmised Mr. Lix. It was for this reason that Mr. Ecks presented himself on the appointed day at the appointed hour at Mr. Lix's house.

Mr. Ecks was the last of the guests to arrive. He saw that everyone present was engaged in a chatter of conversation, except for Mr. Sqecx, who stood apart, and Ms. Lix, who was busy making introductions.

Ms. Lix's introductions were as follows: "Mr. and Ms. Nix, I'd like you to meet Mr. and Ms. Borple. Mr. and Ms. Borple, meet the Nixes. Mr. and Ms. Pix, meet Mr. and Ms. Porple. Mr. and Ms. Porple, meet the Pixes. Mr. and Ms. Norple, meet Mr. and Ms. Nix. Mr. and Ms. Nix, meet the Norples. Mr. and Ms. Borple, meet Mr. and Ms. Norple. Mr. and Ms. Norple, meet the Borples. Mr. and Ms. Porple, meet Mr. and Ms. Nix. Mr. and Ms. Nix, meet the Porples. Mr. and Ms. Pix, meet Mr. and Ms. Borple. Mr. and Ms. Borple, meet the Pixes. Mr. and Ms. Norple, meet Mr. and Ms. Porple. Mr. and Ms. Porple, meet the Norples. Mr. and Ms. Nix, meet Mr. and Ms. Pix. Mr. and Ms. Pix, meet the Nixes. Mr. and Ms. Pix, meet Mr. and Ms. Norple. Mr. and Ms. Norple, meet the Pixes."

Mr. Sqecx was the only person who witnessed these proceedings. All others attended to other things, except Mr. Ecks. This state of affairs continued throughout the evening, at the conclusion of which Mr. Lix announced that the corporation, in league with the Saudis, had just acquired the Bank of England. He then called for a meeting of the Board of Directors for the following day and said farewell to his departing guests.

Each guest in turn left the house, except Mr. Sqecx, who apparently desired to remain a while longer. It appeared that Mr. Sqecx's desires, since he

did not appear to express himself verbally except on matters only tangentially related to the matter at hand, could therefore only be inferred from his actions, and not ascertained directly. Therefore when Mr. Sqecx made no motion to leave, Mr. Ecks felt justified in forming his belief that Mr. Sqecx desired to remain.

Mr. Ecks did not hold the same belief regarding Mr. Sqecx's wife. She had been dead for some years, but Mr. Lix allowed Mr. Sqecx to secretly bring her with him (Mr. Sqecx) when he felt the need to have her near, but to keep her hidden in a nearby recess, out of sight of those who would not understand the pathological depths of Mr. Sqecx's love for his deceased wife. In this case, the hiding place for Ms. Sqecx was in the kitchen pantry. When lonely at work, Mr. Sqecx brought her in rolled in an Egyptian tapestry depicting a mysterious interaction between Hordrus and Ra; Mr. Sqecx would keep her in his office closet for weeks at a time, until he felt the need to have her at home again. On the occasion of her death, Mr. Nix later whispered to Mr. Ecks, Mr. Sqecx had objected to her being embalmed, feeling that this would strip her of what little humanity remained in her corpse, and had for the same reason refused to have her buried or cremated.

After her death, considerable social pressure was applied to force Mr. Sqecx to allow the corpse to be embalmed; he capitulated to the extent of permitting her to be half-embalmed, that is, not for half of her body to be embalmed and the other half not, but rather for her entire body to be subjected to half the usual embalming procedure. Despite the fact that Mr. Sqecx kept her fully dressed in the most expensive fashionable attire, the half-embalming procedure gave Ms. Sqecx a curiously mottled appearance. Her odor, a strong combination of raw putrefaction and formaldehyde, although he continually sprayed her, in private, of course, with Glade air freshener, had long ago

destroyed her husband's olfactory nerves. Her face had the texture of rotted fruit. Mr. Nix, who had once witnessed Mr. Sqecx dressing his wife, whispered to Mr. Ecks that her body consisted of clumps of partially decomposed flesh clinging stubbornly to the inner recesses of her skeleton. So as not to alarm Mr. Ecks by this gruesome peculiarity iof Mr. Sqecx, Mr. Nix whispered that Mr. Sqecx was in every other respect perfectly normal and, indeed, the driving force behind the firm who had drawn up their original business plan, and was considered, by those with eyes to see, the real genius who had engineered their vast financial empire. Thus, as multimillionaires who could easily hide their idiosyncrasies from the public, Mr. Sqecx's proclivity towards retaining his dead wife was constantly covered up from the public and the other workers at great expense. In exchange, the firm remained under the eccentric, but ingenious, leadership of Mr. Sqecx.

All of the guests had now left except for Mr. Sqecx, his wife, and Mr. Ecks, who had been observing Mr. Sqecx throughout the course of the evening. Mr. Sqecx was about to leave when he noticed Ms. Lix dash out of the house in a frenzy, and speak to some of the guests outside. It seemed that Ms. Lix had neglected to introduce Mr. and Ms. Borple to Mr. and Ms. Porple. She was greatly relieved to remedy this oversight before the parties concerned had departed.

Although it was now quite late in the evening, it was when he witnessed this incident that Mr. Sqecx drew a revolver from his inside coat pocket and shot himself in the head.



CHAPTER FIVE

Mr. Ecks' Negative Propensity

Mr. Ecks entered the conference room of the firm of Lix, Nix, Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, and Ecks. The other members of the Board were already present. Not that Mr. Ecks was late, for he was not; rather, the other members were early, and Mr. Ecks was precisely on time.

Mr. Lix presided over the meeting, which was convened to discuss policy changes that were necessitated by the untimely death of Mr. Sqecx. A photograph of the former Board member was ceremoniously hung on the wall behind Mr. Lix. It was torn and faded, with a yellowish tinge: an old black-and-white wallet photo obtained from Mr. Sqecx's aunt in Youngstown, Ohio, which was the only likeness available.

Mr. Lix and Mr. Nix debated company policy while Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue scribbled on his pad and Mr. Ecks familiarized himself with his new office. Until this time, Mr. Ecks had had an elegant but temporary office. But now that Mr. Sqecx was dead, Mr. Sqecx was a lifeless, immobile corpse, and had no further use for his office. Therefore, Mr. Ecks was given the office formerly occupied by the late Mr. Sqecx.

As the conference continued, Mr. Ecks secluded himself in his new office, while Ms. Jones wandered aimlessly through the vast hallways, singing inexplicably a series of bawdy and unseemly sea chanties at the top of her lungs.

[Publisher's Note: Here a gap in the MS. of 144 blank pages, each numbered, appeared. This seemingly inexplicable,

yet purposeful, gap may have been intended symbolically.]

Mr. Ecks' new office was bare except for the desk and a chair and a stack of several dozen books in the corner. Under Mr. Sqecx's orders, Ms. Jones had carefully studied these volumes, and even now, she continued to peruse them from time to time. Each of these cumbersome tomes, which were all identical, bore the title, *Aborigines of the New Guinea Bush Country, Volume 8*, author anonymous, considered by Mr. Sqecx to contain the definitive exposition of company policy.

At Mr. Lix's request, Mr. Ecks rejoined the conference, and appeared to listen attentively while Mr. Lix announced the company's latest acquisition of property. It seemed that the firm now owned all major industries west of the Mississippi, a good deal of that in Canada, and all of that in Peru.

Mr. Lix resumed the debate over company policy with Mr. Nix. Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuue slept soundly through these discussions, although his frequent burps, belches, and various other auditory manifestations, indicating a continuing gastric imbalance, periodically caused Mr. Lix and Mr. Nix to pause in their debate.

Mr. Lix began to speak on the possibility of further industrial expansion. Occasionally either he or Mr. Nix asked for Mr. Ecks' opinion. At such times, Mr. Ecks would either reply or would not. The reason for Mr. Ecks' changing behavior on these occasions was his tendency to regret having made a reply, when he replied, and to regret not having replied, when he did not. Therefore, his habit was to alternate more or less randomly between replying and not replying. But as to what caused him to reply or not reply on any particular occasion, Mr. Ecks was not certain. He wished to believe that it was a matter of

pure chance, whether he replied or did not reply, but he found that he could not believe that this was so.

When spoken to, not only did Mr. Ecks inexplicably vary his responses, but it was interesting to Mr. Ecks that his state of mind after replying or not replying varied also. He was most often disturbed, but sometimes he was pleased and sometimes he had no feelings on the matter.

His varying states of mind in these cases were due to things he had said and wished he had not, or things he had not said and wished that he had, or things he had said and was glad he had said them, or things he had not said and was glad he had not, or things he had said and was neither glad he had said them nor wished he had not, or things he had not said and was neither glad that he had not said them nor wished that he had. But in general, what disturbed Mr. Ecks the most in this regard were the things he said and then wished he had not.

Mr. Ecks' opinion of himself was generally negative, and the explanation for this varied with the circumstances, but at the moment it had to do with the fact that he was considering the points Mr. Lix was making in his speech, despite the fact that he had no interest in anything Mr. Lix said.

You see, Mr. Ecks never intentionally listened to the discussions at the conference table; rather, he intently observed the particles of dust that floated down from the ceiling, reflecting the sunlight filtering through the dome overhead. Often, lost in an intense but inane reverie, he would contemplate the pattern of cracks and fissures in the grain of the table, or consider the twisting path of an ant crawling along the floor at his feet. Yet it was his contemplation of these cracks and fissures, and ants, and dust particles (and speeches), and so on, that contributed most, at this time and at most times, to Mr. Ecks' negative attitude towards himself.

For the one thing that disturbed Mr. Ecks perhaps more than anything

else, was his propensity to attend to matters of no consequence.



CHAPTER SIX

Mr. Ecks and the Lost Child

On a day following the death of Mr. Sqecx, a somber, middleaged man wearing a dull blue uniform entered the offices of the firm of Lix, Nix, Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, & Ecks. His presence was per Ms. Jones's request, for he was to perform repairs on each of the various typewriters sprinkling the various offices.

The typewriter repairman entered Mr. Ecks' office with a dour expression and began administrations upon one of the executive machines. How taut was his brow; how dull and lusterless were his eyes as he worked, reflecting perhaps the torpidity of his thoughts.

Yet when he saw Mr. Ecks' serpentine gaze, he began to speak to him with increasing gusto, in a garbled, but excessively embellished and bombastic, style. However, this was neither here nor there, for Mr. Ecks.

THE TYPEWRITER REPAIRMAN'S STORY

Wal, out of de nothingness we sweetly comes, into de nothingness we sweetly goes, dat's how I looks at it. It ain't much comin, from me, a mere typewriter repairman, I know, but I seed a thing or two in my day. What're ya starin' at, anyhow? You think I'm puttin' on some kind o' show or sumpin'? Dis here's my job, pal, wedder you likes it or not, dere's some of us what's gotta do some woik in dis here woild! Ah, nebber mind! I doesn't care if ya watches me woikin', I mean, so what if ya ain't got nuttin' bedder to do wit' yer time, den wadda I care, hah? Wal, I guess I shouldn't not be actin' like dis, I mean yellin' an' all. It's jest dat I been thinkin' about bad times lately, ya know? What

wid my daughter an' all. Lawd, ya should o' seed de liddle tyke. Golden hair streamin' down her shoulders, ant de biggest, brightest eyes you ebber did see. But I shouldn't not go on talkin' about it no more. You see, we been habbin' bad times, me an' my wife, dat is. You see, I ain't been a typewriter repairman all my life, no, sir. I had a small farm out in de midlands wid a few cows, pigs, chickens, big corn field ant all. But de times, dey was bad. See, my daughter, de liddle girl, she -- she went an' got herself lost one day. I mean, my wife says she was here one second an' jest gone de next! So what's de poor ol' gal to do? She starts a-hollerin' ebber which way, but it ain't no good. See, she found de liddle darlin's ribbons on de edge of de corn field, an' de damn corn field, it stretches out most far as de eyes can see. So de wife she goes runnin' t'rough de stalks, yellin' an' screamin' till she was hoarse an' blue in de face. But it ain't no good. By de time I come home, all de neighbors is over, an' dey is all searchin' ebber which way. But de field is so damn big, an' de stalks is so damn tall, my daughter she could o' been anyplace, wanderin, around, lookin' for her liddle ribbons, lookin' for de way home to her momma an' poppa. Wal, it started gettin' dark, an' we commenced searchin' by lanterns, tryin' to keep our spirits up an' comb de fields as best we could, all de lights shinin' out in de dark, I thought fer sure de baby would yell when she seed one o' de lights, but we was all quiet in de dark, an' dare weren't no sounds at all in all de night sky, 'cept all de crunchin' of de stalks underfoot. So we yells to each udder, an' we come togedder, an' de neighbors, dey tells me to wait till sun up, to get to bed so's we can search all de next day an' find my sweet liddle darlin'. But I weren't in my right mind den, no, sir, an' I guess I started screamin' at dem pretty horrible. I swear like I just goes half crazy, ya know? So dey all left me alone, wanderin' t'rough de fields, de lamp-light splutterin' eerie-like over all de stalks, makin' shadows like debbils sneakin' ebber which way. I did lots o' cryin' dat night, staggerin' t'rough da fields, like a dreamer goin' noplac in a bad, empty dream. Dey found me still walkin' in a damn fever de next mornin', de lamp out, but me still holdin' it up lek a damn fool, walkin in de same circles over an' over. An'

when dey seen me like dat, wid'out sayin' a woid, de whole damn town , dey come out to de field an' searched wid me fer all dat day an' all day night, an' de next day an' de next night, an' on de third day, finally somebody wid a lick of sense in 'em says, "Listen! Why don't we jest join up hands?" So ebber'body wid'out a word comes togedder, an' we joins up hands in a long, long line, sweeping across de whole damn field, hand in hand. About five o'clock, when de sky was all blood red wid de sunset, dere, all huddled up, huddled up around de stalks, wid her liddle ribbons dere, we found my poor, poor liddle girl, my poor, sweet liddle child, curled up wid de ribbons in her hair, jest lek she was all gently sleepin'. Dey tell me I wrapped my coat around her precious liddle body, an' picks her up, de tears streamin' down over de ribbons in her hair, my eyes jest clutched closed tight, de creases in my face deep an' red an' wet. Den my poor wife, my poor old wife, she turn to ebber-body an' de old lady she says so soft it almost cracks my heart in two, she says, "Why oh why didn't we join our hands togedder sooner? Why? Why?" An' dat's when I felt sumpin' hurt sp deep inside, an' I know jest what it is now in thinkin' back on it. See, it weren't de child no more what was lost, no, sr, I could feel it right den, dere was sumpin' else dat was lost, sumpin' else inside dat was gone, gone forebber. An' now, t'inkin' back, it's dat same damn t'ing what's been hauntin' me fer all dese damn years, ebber since den, fer somehow I jest been searchin' and searchin' fer da one dat's still lost, de one what's in here, in my head, in my heart, here inside, I feel dis child I lost forebber, feel dat child tryin' to get found, tryin' to get out, not knowin' where he is, not knowin' what's he doin' hidden in dere in de foist place, not knowin' nuttin' 'cept dat fer sure he's lost, lost forebber. An' sometimes I netchurly can't help thinkin', dat if only ebber'body would jest, jest like join up dere hands togedder, an' all search togedder for de lost child, dat dat's de only way we'll ebber find him, deep inside. An' when we do, I know deep in my goddamn fuckin' heart dat de child ain't dead, no, sir, I know de child is alive.

The typewriter repairman finished his work upon the defective typewriter just as he finished his histrionic speech and, without even a farewell, departed, to enter the next sequential office, and as to whether the typewriter repairman spoke in a similar manner to any of the other members of the firm, this is not known.

However, what is known is that Mr. Ecks did nothing for all the remainder of that day, except to don his hat, and his coat, and depart, when the sun was setting pinkly and nattily upon the horizon.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Mr. Lix's Obligatory Sexual Liason

The obligatory sexual scene in this otherwise inordinately prim novel does not concern Mr. Ecks, but rather concerns Mr. Lix.

It begins, rather arbitrarily, with Mr. Lix sedately seated in a fashionable restaurant. He had just finished masticating his curdled eggs and hash when he discovered a speck of distinctly foreign matter baked into the underside of his spoon. It occurred to him that he should request another spoon accompanying this request with a stern rebuke. Yet this would be an unsatisfactory solution, for the state of cuisine sanitation on the premises would undoubtedly remain unaltered. Therefore Mr. Lix decided upon an alternate solution: he would decline to pay his cheque. A neat solution, and one not to Mr. Lix's disadvantage.

Thus, on the pretext of using the lavatory facilities, he deftly skirted out the rear entrance, and stiffly made his way down the rubbled street.

He passed an alley and a doorways both lushly perfumed with the odor of urine. One half of Mr. Lix valiantly tried to convince the other half that he had not sampled any of the wafting odors. He thought of the serenity of his spotless home, the tinge of scrubbing ammonia in the air, the quietude, and squeezed out any acknowledgment of the excretal whiffs which made his nostrils twitch and expand.

It was while he was on the train that the remnants of the foul alley breeze formed a hard crust of mucous upon the upper edge of the inside of his left nostril. This crust, as it grew, began to dig cuttingly against the tender interior of

his nose, causing Mr. Lix great discomfort and irritation. Yet it was out of the question, in Mr. Lix's view, to insert a digital into the left nostril for the purpose of removing the detestable crust, for this, unfortunately, was a public place.

As it was a late car, only one other member of the human species filled the jolting, careening vessel. This person, Mr. Lix noted with distaste, was a Portugese Negress, possessing a bulbous tuft of orange hair, brown skin, a flat nose, and large lips.

Although Mr. Lix understood the principles of brotherhood, he secretly believed that all foreign races were both inferior and distinctly undesirable. Therefore, when the person in question approached Mr. Lix and sat in the seat next to him, Mr. Lix tastefully averted his eyes.

Prostitute.

The word formed lamely in the center of his brain, driving out all other words, The Portugese Negress asked Mr. Lix what his name was, Mr. Lix did not reply. *Prostitute, prostitute.* The Portugese Negress shifted in the seat opposite Mr. Lix, revealing long brown legs artfully contrasted against a white, slitted skirt. Mr. Lix's averted pupils began to dilate inappropriately. The chiaroscuro of the nylon leggings before him caused certain cells in his brain to vibrate uncontrollably. He tried to usher out the single word from his skull, but it sat there immobile with implacable finality.

The Portugese Negress asked Mr. Lix if he would like to have an enjoyable time.

The pause which followed this question was the most uncomfortable moment of the evening, for Mr. Lix. He did not feel disinclined towards mating with a receptive female, particularly one he considered to be animalistic; yet many unsavory images were inextricably linked to the persistent word in the core of his brain. He closed his eyes and pictured the legions of tiny parasitic lice

marching amid her orange torso hair.

The Portugese Negress realized that Mr. Lix was now teetering at the breaking point of possible conciliation, and decided to candidly reveal the gist of her argument. Thus, she took Mr. Lix's clammy hand and placed it against one of her large, prominently-tipped breasts and recommended that they journey onward to a local flophouse.

It was at this point that Mr. Lix could not avoid looking into her eyes.

The look which she returned to him was one he would never forget. It seemed to Mr. Lix, in retrospect, that the central focus of all of his fundamental desires, which had from time to time wafted through his being without direction or focus, causing him a secret and unspeakable rage at his loathesome weaknesses, was suddenly and unexpectedly before him, embodied in the meaningful glances from the eyes of the tawdry pin-head.

The electric intensity surprised Mr. Lix, for he was not so far gone to see objectively that the nincompoop's furrowed eyes were caked with slimy blue paint, and that the eyebrows had been tweezered out, hair by hair, to allow an expression of perpetual sexual interest to be penciled onto the forehead, and that the lashes had been elongated by the glueing on of stiff, black hairs, which Mr. Lix surmised to have once adorned the rump of a horse.

But the grotesqueries of the emotions, as Mr. Lix knew, ever reign over the subtleties of the intellect, and he was lost in a wonder of magic and desire. Were it not for a peculiar and striking circumstance, it would not be long before we would see Mr. Lix being led through the winding corridors of the flophouse, like a rat through a maze, after a mouldy scrap of cheese.

For just as Mr. Lix's dry hand encompassed the idiot's teat in one mincing heaps the shuddering train passed through a section of tunnel which was pervaded by the sulphurous stench of sewage, caused by a rupture in an

excrement-filled cistern directly above the subterranean channel.

This wretched odor caused both Mr. Lix and the Portugese Negress to stiffen, for each thought that the other had surreptitiously emitted a foul flatulence.

Their hands froze upon each other's organs in secret revulsion.

It was a moment for introspection and reflection.

Mr. Lix was summoned from his heights of orgiastic speculation inspired by the Negress's striking glances; his thoughts turned to the ungainly reality of bodily functions, and he pictured against his will the incremental accumulation of waste material in the labyrinthine bowels directly below the squashed pap upon which his hand reluctantly rested. He was reminded of a moment's insight while reading an encyclopedic tome: a picture of the rubbery pulp of the bowels strongly resembled a picture on the same page of the rubbery pulp of the brain.

As to the matter at hand, so to speak, his mind teemed with inner recommendations. For a time, he pensively advanced various assertions and negations in a quagmire of internal debate.

The Portugese Negress, it should be mentioned, entertained thoughts parallel to those entertained by Mr. Lix, despite her mental ineptitude, for complications arising from inadvertent flatulence and unfulfilled sexual desire are a rank commodity. She, too, it may be added, envisioned the ripeness of the other's intestines, and weighed her desire for monetary gain against the malaise of contact with undesirable flesh.

Thus the two of them sat in contemplation, their hands affixed to each other's appropriate appendages.

When the train halted, Mr. Lix rose and extricated himself with bland aplomb, for the entire scene had at once disintegrated in his mind to one of dreary banality. With a curt nod he walked out of the car, clearly intending to

terminate their relationship.

Yet this was not to be so.

For she hurriedly followed him out of the car, locking her arm with his, making desperate remarks in his ear.

This was a turn of events Mr. Lix had not considered. Was he to lounge that evening in a flophouse? Although his eyes gazed fixedly forward, he listened carefully to her overture. He had resisted her tugs at his arm initially, but now he laxed his guard.

What was Mr. Lix to think of himself? But this was not the time for candid reflection. This was the time for an obligatory sexual scene.

Mr. Lix allowed himself to be led sheepishly behind the subway stairwell, a darkened recess popular among the derelict elite for excretal purposes. The Portugese Negress knelt before Mr. Lix in fellatual attitudes.

Thus a rather absurd and insignificant act took place, yet it is the culminating act of this prosaic segment, for there remains nothing more to be recorded concerning this matter, save the fact that Mr. Lix related this string of events to Ms. Lix that evening, and that this contributed to Ms. Lix's subsequent psychotic episode, which will be described in prim detail, at a later date, in this finely crafted, albeit anomalistic, biographical record.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Mr. Ecks, the Marble-Mouthed Guard
and the Vacuum Cleaner Salesman

The following day Mr. Ecks arrived at his office, formerly the office of Mr. Sqecx, at eight o'clock, sharp, as was his habit, and found that neither Mr. Lix, nor Mr. Nix, nor Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, nor Ms. Jones, was present. Instead, Mr. Ecks found that a mysterious assembly of uniformed men and women was seated in the conference room, listening attentively to the speaker who stood before them.

Draping the wall immediately behind the speaker, partially obscuring the photographic portrait of the late Mr. Sqecx, a large banner had been neatly tacked up. The banner, which was entirely white, was inscribed with the following legend, also in white:

*THE OPTIMIST CLUB**Perceive the World Through Perfect Eyes*

Standing immobile in the doorway of the conference room, the backs of the assembly facing him, Mr. Ecks realized his error, that this day was Saturday, a day when he was not to appear at the office, since he was only to appear at the office Monday through Friday, and not on Saturday, nor on Sunday, which was the Day of Rest.

Mr. Ecks turned to depart. Suddenly he felt a hand light upon his shoulder. It was a guard, in Optimist garb, with an old and craggy face. The guard spoke to Mr. Ecks quietly, but in a voice that sounded as if his mouth was stuffed with five or six or seven marbles, a semiotic symbol of the difficulty of

humanity in expressing itself with words alone. Despite these vocal vacillations, the guard was able to feebly articulate an inquiry as to why he, Mr. Ecks, had neglected to wear his uniform to the present meeting. The marble-mouthed old guard, whose name was Babe, interpreted Mr. Ecks' silence as a sign of embarrassment at having forgotten, or lost, or sold, or given away, or removed his Optimist uniform. Therefore Babe matter-of-factly secured a new uniform out of a box, and handed it to Mr. Ecks, and asked if he would please change in one of the adjoining offices.

Mr. Ecks chose Mr. Sqecx's office in which to become an Optimist.

Mr. Ecks reentered the room in his new Optimist uniform and sat at the back of the assembly with his new Optimist friend, the craggy inarticulate guard, who introduced himself and shook Mr. Ecks' limp hand.

All of the assembly before him wore the bright white uniform of the official optimist, with insignia of varying rank. The most highly ranked members were those whose life histories involved the most drastic transformations from failure to success. The chairman himself was a healthy millionaire who had at one time been a penniless, decrepit bum.

Babe the guard interpreted Mr. Ecks' silence as a sign of embarrassment, and for this reason, Babe leaned over to Mr. Ecks and began telling him about a significant event in his life story.

However, all the time that Babe was telling his story, and all the time that the chairman was giving his impassioned speech at the front of the room, Mr. Ecks was completely immersed in a mystical vision which sprinkled down before his eyes: it was the silent drift of dust particles which shimmered and shifted in delicate patterns, sifting down from the circular dome above, through which the sun sent its gentle warmth to spin the dust in gyrating, intricate dances. The fingers of sunlight wafted through the floating embers, and Mr. Ecks watched

them with serene complacency, oblivious to all but the drifting dust.

BABE THE GUARD'S STORY

See, one day I was out a-sashayin' aroun' town when dis big guy come up to me an' he says, "Hey you, wit' de big ears! I got a job fer somebody wit' de right incrementals, see?" So, like, I took de job, an' I goes home to de old lady who's in a bad mood, see, an' she starts wit' dis ascreamin' an' a-hollerin' an' throwin' fits! So what's a guy to do, you know what I mean? I says, "Aah, shaddup ya old bag or I'll brain ya an' squash yer brains fer ya!" But some jerk was knockin' at de door so de old lady she opens it an' who walks in but dis saleman jerk who makes like de rug is doity so's he can sell dis vacuum cleaner, see, an' de old lady she don't go fer dis technique too good, see, so she clobbers de jerk! Now I starts laughin' an' laughin' 'cause de salesman is knocked out cold on de floor, an' while dis racket is goin' on, de old bag downstairs called de cops on us, see, so de cops come an' arrest me fer distoibin' de peace! Now, I'll tell ya de trut', see, me an' de old lady, we don't always get along too good, see, I'm da foist ta admit, but when dey start wit' grabbin' me like dey wants ta arrest me, see, well, de old lady, she goes beserk an' starts a-clobberin' all de cops an' knocks dem all out what was tryin' ta take away her old man! So's I starts laughin' 'cause all de cops an' de salesman what's lying on de floor wakes up, an' she goes nuts an' clobbers dem all again! So den de phone rings, see, an' it's de old lady's ma, an', well, I'll tell ya de trut', dis was one old bag I never did like, you know? So's I toll her over de phone what a saggin' ol' decrepit bunch o' bones she was, so den de old lady, she hears me an' clobbers me over de head! So's I takes de table an' smashes it over her head so she tries rollin' me up in de rug so's I takes a anvil an' drops it on her foot! So de old lady starts wit' de loudest a-hollerin' an' a-screechin' what I ever seed an' she starts pukin' an' retchin' an' makin' a big mess all over de floor an' all over de cops what was still passed out an' de salesman jerk what was under de cops, an' de puke was runnin' all over de busted-up table what was on top o' de cops an'

de salesman jerk, see, plus all de udder garbage what got wrecked in de fight, see, so like I said, de old lady pukes all over all dis mess an' den, all of a sudden, one o' de cops wakes up an' sees all de mess an' de crap all over him an' de udder cops, see, an' he smells de puke what's all over his head, see, so's he runs over to de open window an' gags, an' den he starts pukin', too, right out de window an' down inta de street! Well, I never seen de like o' dis in all my bawn days, see? So I starts laughin' an' laughin' so's I think my stomach's gonna bust, you know what I mean? An' den (an' dis is de crazy part o' what happened) den de cop at de window, he goes beserk an' starts screamin' an' actually jumps out de window! Now, I'll tell ya, I ain't never seen nothin' like dis, so's I looks out de window an' sees de cop what jumped out de window lyin' in de street all squashed up like a accordeen, an' all his guts splattered all over de place an' his head cracked open an' his brains all squashed, an' all de people crowdin' all around de stinkin' mess, see? So all de people in de street is jumpin' up an' down an' screamin' an' hollerin', so den de old lady, she come over to de window when she hears de racket, an' sees de dead cop what she puked on lyin' like dat in de street, but de old lady, she's still sick what wit' her foot all crushed up by de anvil what I dropped on her, an' I guess all de racket she was makin' wakes up de udder cops what was still passed out, you know, so's dey jumps up from de mess an' runs to de window an' sees what's goin' on, an' den dey grabs me an' de old lady an' drags us down inta de street where all de commotion was goin' on, see? So meanwhile de vacuum cleaner sales-jerk was still up in de room under de broken table what I smashed over de old lady's head, an' he suddenly wakes up, see, an' sees de mess, what wit' de puke all over de place an' all over his head, an' he musta heard all de racket goin' on outside in de street 'cause de next ting I know he's down in de street a-screamin' an' a-hollerin' to de cops, "My vacuum cleaner! Dey wrecked my vacuum cleaner! Dat cost me a hunnert bucks!" So de jerk sees me an' makes a dive fer my throat, see, so's de cops pulls him off o' me an' he's ravin' an' rantin' about his vacuum cleaner, as if dey cared about his crummy vacuum cleaner when de cop's brains is lyin' all over

de street, you know what I mean? So de cops is holdin' him back by de arms, an' de jerk yells at me, "You stinkin' bum! You can't get away wit' dis! You stink, you know dat, you stink to high heaven! That's right, ya stink, stink, stink!" So's de old lady, she don't like nobody sayin' her old man stinks, so she jumps de sales jerk an' starts strangling him right dere in de street! So de cops, dey pull de old lady off de jerk, an' den--"

But at this point in Babe's story¹, the Chairman of the optimists concluded his speech with a deft aphorism, and all of the Optimists rose to their feet as one. Then the Chairman led them all in the *Optimist Club Song*, which resounded from the lips of each member. When Babe heard it, he joined in with a beaming grin of optimistic joy:

*An Optimist he's soon to suck
A pap of every whore!
He sucks a flask & spits a tune
To Him who sucked him from the womb
And chucked him on the floor!*

*And when the world has sucked him dry,
He weds a stinking bitch!
And when he sucks his final cup,
The stinking earth will suck him up
To feed a stinking ditch!*

The Optimists cheered happily, and thus the meeting came to an end.

¹*Editor's Note: See LaMarcke's "Anima Mundi and 'Babe the Guard's Story'" in Journal of Abnormal Psychology, exploring the psycho-mythological aspects in Babe's dense and complex tale.*

When all the Optimists had departed, and the room was silent and abandoned, only Mr. Ecks remained, sitting quietly in his chair.

He watched the dust sprinkle gently through the light, and in a moment of mysterious beauty, all of the world glittered and gleamed, as if distorted through a strangely glinting misty, silken screen. Or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.



CHAPTER NINE

Mr. Ecks Witnesses a Crime

Mr. Ecks thought about the late Mr. Sqecx in this way:

To begin, he would conjure the image of the face of Mr. Sqecx, then he would conjure the image of himself, Mr. Ecks, in the act of thinking of Mr. Sqecx, adjacent to the image of the face of Mr. Sqecx. Then he would conjure the image of himself, Mr. Ecks, in the act of conjuring the image of both himself, Mr. Ecks, and the adjacent Mr. Sqecx, of whom the adjacent Mr. Ecks was thinking. Lastly, Mr. Ecks would conjure the image of Mr. Sqecx, overlooking this series of images, in the act of conjuring the image of nothing.

Because this method of thinking of Mr. Sqecx was the only method which Mr. Ecks found to be satisfactory, and because this method was to Mr. Ecks very painful in its intricacies, Mr. Ecks resolved at length never to think of Mr. Sqecx again, and this was strange, for had not Mr. Ecks loved Mr. Sqecx dearly, for unknown reasons? And yet never thereafter did Mr. Ecks think of Mr. Sqecx in this way, not in this world, not in this book.

On the day that this resolution was conceived and executed, Mr. Ecks received an anonymous phone call from a woman whom Mr. Ecks suspected was the victim of grotesque delusions, for what manner of woman would insist that he, Mr. Ecks, a man of unimpeachable (although obscure) principles, agree to a rendezvous in the vein of the midnight tryst motif? Yet there was a haunting tincture of hysteria in the woman's voice, and Mr. Ecks, as was his habit, was

strangely attracted by the mystery surrounding the woman's desperate plea.

Therefore Mr. Ecks appeared that night at the appointed place at the appointed time. Not that Mr. Ecks was curious as to the identity of the woman, or as to the nature of her dilemma; no, these particulars did not concern Mr. Ecks. What concerned Mr. Ecks was his attraction towards the fact that a mystery existed, in the act of hearing the woman's maniacal tirade, for it was only the existence of the mystery which interested Mr. Ecks, and not the origin, or explication, of the mystery.

The woman who met Mr. Ecks was none other than Ms. Lix. Ms. Lix's face was flushed with tears. Mr. Ecks made a passing remark to this effect, but Ms. Lix only lay her head upon his shoulder in a welter of desultory sobs.

Mr. Ecks responded by suggesting that they sit down. As they were in a restaurant, they sat down in a booth. The disgusting remains of previous patrons lay before them in a disgusting array of rinds, ashes, crumbs, hairs, and spittle.

Ms. Lix chose to be romantic. Mr. Ecks, in a sudden foray of politeness, inquired as to the motives behind Ms. Lix's thusfar unaccountable behaviour, whether they be intellectual, emotional, or financial. Ms. Lix responded with a description of the heated argument she and her husband, Mr. Lix, had entertained earlier in the day.

Many times, in the dead of night, Mr. Ecks would later savor the intricate impression which he received of Ms. Lix's story as she briefly related it to him. It should be noted that, although he could not remember her exact words, Mr. Ecks arranged in his mind Ms. Lix's story as he thought she may have entertained it, and if, as Mr. Ecks suspected, the story as he seemed to remember it was inaccurate in his reporting of it, as a result of the passing of years against his memory, still it was Mr. Ecks' opinion that Ms. Lix's story as he remembered it

was true to the spirit of Ms. Lix's story as she had told it, if not to its actual substance.

MRS. NORBLE'S STORY

*O, my name is Ms. Lix and I ain't got much to tell.
 I'll whisper everything I say or maybe I will yell.
 I been all 'round the world, an' I seen all I could see.
 I seen it in the mountains an' I seen it in the sea.
 Now gather round and I will tell you what you want to know.
 I'll tell it like the waters what continually flow.
 O, my husband's Mr. Lix and I see him every day.
 I see him every morning and I see him every day.
 He shot me in a cannon, into a nearby lake.
 He put me into spinach pies what later he did bake.
 One day I tried to leave him, but somehow he got wise.
 He tied me to a kite and then he sailed me through the skies.
 But one day when at last I felt as helpless as a worm,
 We threw a cocktail party for my husband's business firm.
 And in my grief I sat alone in woeful misery,
 Until I seen this man what seemed to cast his eye on me.
 I asked him who he was and what he did but neler he spoke.
 I grabbed him by the neck and threatened brutally to choke.
 He didn't say no answer so I punched him in the gut.
 He crashed into the closet and the closet door slammed shut.
 He did not move, he did not speak, no noise I heard inside.
 And so, in fear that he was hurt, the door I opened wide.
 He was standing sleeping quietly, as peaceful as a child.
 The attitude upon his face what slept was sweet and mild.*

*And lo! right then I fell in love with this my nameless guest.
Ne'er a face as sweet as his I seen in East nor West.
So there I stood admiring my simple, nameless man.
But suddenly my husband comes and slaps me with his hand.
He says, You been carousing! You been going out with men!
I punched him in the nose and so he slapped my face again.
I cursed him without tiring and to Satan pledged his soul.
I bought him bent cigars and in his boat I drilled a hole.
I baked him cakes with rubber sauce and made ball bearing stew.
I ripped up all his books and with a fan the pieces blew.
And while he slept I dyed his hair the color of green slime.
I cut off all his fingernails and dipped his hands in lime.
I filled his pool with ink and slit the tires of his car.
I poisoned all his household pets and filled his shoes with tar.
I filled his bed with mayonaise and washed his suits in blood.
I burned his money and for supper served him stones and mud.
I buried all his neckties and would nightly rant and rave.
I sold him phoney stocks and then dug up his mother's grave.
But yet today I seen him smile, and so I shouted, Sir!
And so a monstrous fist-fight in the kitchen did occur.
I threw the pots and pans and shouted, Ned! You know I'll kill!
He threw the stove upon my head and screamed, My name is Bill!
We kicked and punched until the sun was falling from the sky.
We punched and kicked until the moon had risen with a sigh.
And when we both were nearly dead and lying on the floor,
I asked him who it was whold slept behind the closet door.
To make him answer, over his head I squeezed the broiler pot,*

*And deep within the broiler char he answered, Mr. Ecks.
 My nameless man! I hired private eyes to track you down.
 One said you lived inside a boxcar and were westward bound.
 Another said you pitched a tent upon your mother's tomb.said you lived by spinning
 gold upon a loom.said you spent your days in search of haddocks' eyes.said that nightly
 you were clothed in deft disguise.said that daily you sold kisses for a dime.said you
 worshipped stars and only spoke in rhyme.said that you were green and came from outer
 space.said that you had decomposed without a trace.said you lived with dogs, another said
 with apes.told me you wore spats, another told me capes.
 But now at length I found you what were hiding from me long.
 And now I tell you all my thoughts and sing my bitter song.*

[Here Mrs. Norble sang a bitter song from her homeland, before
 continuing her story. It was this song, which Mr. Ecks later heard Ms.
 Jones singing at the funeral of Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, which first caused
 Mr. Ecks to despise the singing of songs.]²

*For Mr. Lix seeks me out and says that he will kill,
 Because I was unfaithful and forgot his name was Bill.
 But I will kill him first because I deeply do despise
 The man what tied me to a kite and sailed me through the skies.
 O, my name is Ms. Lix and I ain't got much to tell.
 I'll whisper everything I say or maybe I will yell.
 I been all 'round this whole wide world, I seen all I could see.
 I seen it in the mountains and I seen it in the sea.*

It was at this point that Mr. Lix entered the room and sat down at a corner

table. Not yet aware of his wife's presence, he ordered a bowl of hash and a drink.

At once Ms. Lix became purple with rage. The cause which produced in Ms. Lix the effect of rage was threefold:

- 1) Mr. Lix was wearing a polka-dotted necktie with a plaid suit, a combination in which Mr. Lix purposefully indulged in order to agitate Ms. Lix's highly refined artistic sensibilities.
- 2) Mr. Lix had ordered a Sidecar (a diabolical mid-afternoon drink) with his hash, a grotesque combination which Ms. Lix assumed to be a purposeful assault on her highly refined "gourmetic" sensibilities.
- 3) Mr. Lix still had not yet removed the broiler pot from off his head and face, and was attempting to squeeze his drink and his hash up under the edge of the pot, in this way hoping that the respective foods would make their way into his concealed mouth, and it was this particular detail which viciously provoked Ms. Lix's highly refined sensibility of decorum.

The combination of these various means of provocation held such force upon the soul of Ms. Lix, that she hysterically drew a cutting-knife from the table and, diving across the room with bizarre attitudes at the unsuspecting Mr. Lix, who was at the time inserting a straw in his Sidecar in order to more practically ingest it, buried the blade in his chest, killing him instantly.

Women screamed. Men, not screaming, restrained themselves from screaming; instead they drew the mad Ms. Lix back by the arms and forced her against the wall, for she was flailing the bloody knife about insanely, screaming invectives to the gods, who gazed down upon the scene, one doubts, and laughed.

At this point, a flood of blue police stormed the room and took hold of Ms. Lix, who returned their attentions by mortally stabbing two officers and viciously wounding the maitre de. After taking her away, the police inquired their inquiries and directed their directives until the requirements of the law were satisfied, whereupon they left, and directed everyone to do likewise, however subject to further inquiries, as required by law.

As the bus boys began clearing off the tables, they discovered a man lying under one of the booths who was trying to sleep.

This man was Mr. Ecks.

The bus boys directed him to come out from under the table, but Mr. Ecks did not comply, as he was at the time trying to sleep. When at last their tirade of exclamations made it impossible for Mr. Ecks to sleep, he attempted to rise from under the booth. But just as Mr. Ecks had tried to sleep and was unable to do so, so did he try to rise from under the booth, and was, for reasons of fatigue and cramps of the limbs, likewise unable to do so. For this reason, the bus boys extracted Mr. Ecks from under the booth by grabbing his two legs and pulling him out. After they did this, they threw him out into the street.

Mr. Ecks, whose body was stout and toroidal, rolled and rolled like a lopsided gourd down the moonlit street, and as Mr. Ecks preferred the road to the street, he left the street, in search of a road. (The road which he sought, perhaps, was the road which led home, for Mr. Ecks could not find home unless he first found the road, and Mr. Ecks was unable to find the road.)

If it had chanced that the bus boys had thrown Mr. Ecks out into a road, as opposed to a street, perhaps Mr. Ecks would have stayed where he lay, there, in the road, for Mr. Ecks liked to lie in the road, for unknown reasons; indeed, many times Mr. Ecks had found himself lying in the road, and this made him very, very happy, for there he would lie, in the middle of the road, and look up

at the stars, and sing:

*here I lie in the road
neither beginning nor end
neither morn nor night
but sweet twilight
here I lie in the road
here I lie in the road
here I lie in the road*

Other times he would lie in the road and not sing. Other times he would lie in the road and begin to sing and then desist. But more often than not, Mr. Ecks did not sing when he lay in the road, but rather, he would simply lie in the road, devoid of song.

This, then, was Mr. Ecks' preference, in the matter of singing, and of roads, and of singing in roads.



CHAPTER TEN

The Sensuality of the Half-Circle

Promptly at eight o'clock, as was his habit, Mr. Ecks arrived at his office, formerly Mr. Sqecx's office, and was informed by Ms. Jones that a conference would be held, concerning the tragic and untimely death of Mr. Lix, at nine o'clock, sharp.

For one hour after his arrival at Mr. Sqecx's office, then, as was his habit, Mr. Ecks did absolutely nothing. Ms. Jones brought in various papers for him to read and sign, but he read nothing, he signed nothing, as was his habit.

At one minute to nine, Mr. Ecks left Mr. Sqecx's office and entered the inner conference room. Simultaneously, he observed Mr. Nix and Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue entering the room from their respective offices. Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue assumed the chairman's seat. Mr. Nix and Mr. Ecks, therefore, sat elsewhere at the table, for the chairman's seat was now occupied.

During the interval between the moment when he sat down at the table and the moment Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue began to speak, Mr. Ecks felt strangely at peace where he sat, in the great circular room, before the circle of polished mahogany at which they sat, beneath the great circular dome high above the table, through which the circle of sun issued its sifting rays in order to accompany the falling dust to the circular heads of the three men, as they sat there in a circle of silence, in the interval between the moment Mr. Ecks sat down, and the moment Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue began to speak.

"Gentlemen," began Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue.

From this point on, Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's speech rapidly degenerated. Mr. Nix immediately fell into a dull stupor. Mr. Ecks, in any event, was not listening to Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's speech, as was his habit; instead, he was watching the silent yellow streams of dust, as they drifted slowly down, as previously described, to the heads of the three men.

At the conclusion of Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's oratory, Ms. Jones entered the conference room and ritually placed a photographic portrait of the beloved Mr. Lix on the far wall next to that of the beloved Mr. Sqecx.

The three men stood up from the table to view with decorum the two faces of their deceased colleagues, the decorous portrait of the face of Mr. Lix, the decorous portrait of the face of Mr. Sqecx.

If the gods could speak and could exist, perhaps they would say, concerning this touching scene:

*O the wick is short, the flame is dim,
the wax a shapeless medium
the cave is dark, the eyes are weak,
the world a stuff of tedium
For we are Jokers in the Sky,
without no face, without no eye*

*O the spirit's sick, the body's weak,
and it raineth every day
the brain's a sot, and thoughts are clots
where drunken blood doth play
For we are Jokers in the Sky,
without no suit, without no tie*

*O the earth is drab, the sky's a bore,
and life away is stealing,
and scattered are the tattered cards
that death is swiftly dealing*

*For we are Jokers in the Sky,
without no what, without no why*

Immediately adjacent to Mr. Ecks' office, formerly Mr. Sqecx's office, was Mr. Lix's office. Since Mr. Lix's office was now vacant, Ms. Jones suggested that the wall between Mr. Ecks' office and Mr. Lix's office be removed, in order to allow Mr. Ecks a larger office space, and thus utilize an otherwise vacant, and unused, area.

Ms. Jones interpreted Mr. Ecks' silence on the matter as a sign of assent; therefore, she had workmen tear down the wall, thus affording Mr. Ecks the use of both Mr. Sqecx's former office and Mr. Lix's former office.

When the work was at last completed, Mr. Ecks was unusually pleased with this arrangement of intertwining offices; for the shape of Mr. Sqecx's office (as with the other three offices) had previously been that of one-fourth of the perimeter of a circle, as the building itself which housed the offices was cylindrical in shape. Now with the addition of Mr. Lix's office to Mr. Sqecx's office, Mr. Ecks now enjoyed the luxury of inhabiting two-fourths, or one-half, of the circle, of adjoining offices, during his working hours, from morn till night, each day.

The reason that Mr. Ecks favored the half-circle, as opposed to the quarter-circle, was that upon arriving at work, Mr. Ecks daily perceived the sun, through his office window, rising from the eastern horizon. At noon, Mr. Ecks daily perceived the sun at its zenith, through the great dome of the conference

room. At dusk, when Mr. Ecks retired from his office, he perceived the sun descending to the western horizon, thus completing its half-circle of apparent motion. This geometric congruity with the greatest of heavenly bodies, other than the lopsided egg upon which he lived, was a sensual pleasure to Mr. Ecks.

At this point during Mr. Ecks' association with the firm Nix, Eueoeueuoeeuuue, & Ecks, the arrangement of offices, then, was perceived by Mr. Ecks to be as follows.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mr. Ecks and the Wretched Club

On an otherwise unnotable morning, a Saturday, the budding sun which rises persistently in the East, rose upon this day also, in the same dreary East, and some of its rays streamed through the windows of a particular conference room at the top of a large office building, illuminating within a large banner which hung directly over the photographs of two rather innocuous looking individuals. The banner, which was entirely black, was inscribed with the following words, also in black:

PESSIMIST CLUB

Perceive the World

Through Perfect Eyes

The chairman of the group was at the front of the room giving an impassioned speech.

Each person in the room wore the pitch black uniform of the official Pessimist, with insignia of varying rank. The most highly ranked members were those whose life histories were most in keeping with the club's philosophy the disabled, the deformed, the morose, the destitute, and the wretched. The chairman himself was a leper, a chain smoker, and an ex-carnival snake-dancer.

At precisely 8:00 A.M., a man quietly entered the meeting. A murmur ran through the little band, for the stranger was wearing a bright white uniform, in brilliant contrast to the dull, black suits which the assembly sported. Lettered

across the front of the stranger's uniform were the words, *OPTIMIST CLUB*.

His presence was clearly a matter of concern to the Pessimists, who eyed the intruder with stern approbation; however, the chairman did not interrupt his speech.

When questioned quietly at the rear of the assembly, the intruder appeared to be nonplussed, for he did not respond to any questions asked of him. Yet he was at length persuaded to become a member of the Pessimist Club (by his silent assent) and this was fortunate, for the club was a secret society, the rules of which clearly stated that any non-member who learned of the club's existence must become a member. However, this rule was rarely adhered to, due to the general pessimism of the members concerning the issue of New Membership.

A man with the pox gave the stranger a black Pessimist uniform, and asked him to change in one of the adjacent offices. The intruder complied with the request, and then returned to take a seat near the back of the room. The man with the pox leaned over to him and whispered that the circumstances of his initiation into the club were not at all unusual, and went on to relate the interesting and articulate story of his own indoctrination.

THE MAN WITH THE POX'S STORY

Wal, I recollect on the time I was holed up in Arkansas down yonder, lookin' fer to fetch some vittles, when I seen this horrible great longshoreman strollin' calm as you please down Main Street I'm sayin', an' lookin' fer all the world to be gwyne to Texarkana, U.S.A. Wal, I run an' fetched ma shotgun, an' I reckon I'd o' take an' bust 'im side de head wit' the butt end on it, but the longshoreman, he sees me in' takes off lide a greased hog-belly, a-huffin' an' a-puffin' like a old coon hound what's on his last legs. So's I up an' shot the no good bastard in the leg, an' he commences to bellerin' an' a-whinin' the

like you ain't never seed in yer bawn days. Incidentally, this particular longshoreman harbored not the slightest inclination towards conciliation of acknowledgement of his wrongdoing, and was indeed positively adamant in his insistence of his innocence; hence the remarkable enthusiasm with which he perpetrated his ingenious escape. Not only did I feel justified in drawing these inferences concerning his intentions, but I dasn't blow his brains out, being as how I warn't sure as to how much he'd fetch alive, but it figures to be plenty, I says to meself. And now I knew I had one heck of a job trackin' down that damn fella what had skedaddled a fur piece up the road cause I seen he was fixin' to hornswoggle me as how a coon-waller sets in them caves jest layin' fer ya. Wal, I musta chased that slinky varmit clear past the El Paso line afore I realized he'd hijinxed me good by shavin' off his beard an' mustache, you know, so's how ya couldn't hardly recognize the likes o' him nohow, get me? Wal, finally I ketched up with him in this here rat hole saloon what's called "The Dirty Cow", where I heard tell more's gone on behind them back doors than you'll ever hear told by nobody that ain't dead, wal, anyway, I walks up to him at the bar an' he looks at me from the corner o' his shifty little eyes an' says, "Mebbe I hear tell you're a-lookin' fer me, now, tell me, sir, is that so or ain't it?" So's I says, real quiet-like, "Mebbe it is, an' mebbe it ain't." So's he draws his .45 an' means to shoot me right there at the bar, but I throw my glass o' whiskey right in his beady little eyes, an' he yells an' we wrassle with his gun, an' finally the gun goes off, an' he drops down to the floor, stone dead.

Wal, ye can say what ya likes, but I'll tell ya, there ain't no fun in killin' a man, no matter how low-down a no good cottin'-pickin' skunk he may be, ya know? An' bein' as how I jest kilt him deader 'n a door nail, it was up to me to bury the no good sonuva bitch. Wal, I buries him up Boot Hill, ya know, where the wild flowers is all a-wanglin' around the tombstones wheneler a breeze come up. However, in the overview, it is manifest that any perturbations in my thoughts must needs be eradicated by my own understanding of the exigency of immediate action upon being confronted by my

opponent. Indeed, if, in fact, as a matter of protocol, I had acted contrary to my instincts in this incident, perhaps, it occurs to me now, the outcome would have ultimately been of a different order. But in any case, be that as it may, as I later discovered, the incident provoked considerable controversy among the civic leaders of the community; i.e., the town elders, the School Committee, the Board of Directors of the Department of Public Works, the proprietors of "The Dirty Cow" (in which the incident occurred), the County Alcoholic Beverage Commission, the Executive Board of --²

It was at this point in the man with the pox's story that the chairman concluded his speech, and here all the assembly of Pessimists arose as a single body and ceremoniously sang the Pessimist Club Song:

*Like swan & cygnet, spark & sun,
 Man & infant are but one.
 Like brain to body, blood to heart,
 Man & seed are but a part.
 As earth is dirt & flower is germ,
 So all is atoms, & man is worm.
 As steam to ice & bread to crust,
 So truth to man & man to dust.
 As all & nothing twist & twine,
 Your love is all, & nothing, & mine.*

The conclusion of this song signaled the end of the meeting, and all of the Pessimists silently departed, save one, the strange newcomer.

²Editor's Note: See Jarpolsky's "Psychotic Self-Immolation in The Man With the Pox's Story" in *Self-Abuse Quarterly*, No. 3, Vol. 10.

He remained there, where he sat, until the sound of his own internal mechanisms in the silence made him vaguely nauseous. It was then that he departed, not knowing why he had come, or why he must now leave, or anything else dealing with the questions of why or wherefore.



CHAPTER TWELVE

On the Irrelevancy of Meaninglessness

Simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic, Mr. Ecks appeared at the office promptly each day, month after month, year upon year, as the Hunger of Time, much written-about elsewhere, began devouring the freshness from his flesh, such as it was, and excreting decay.

The mechanism of his mind, through the theoretical Laws of Entropy, although growing less and less reliable in its over-all function, became more and more particular and specialized in its mode of identification and subsequent assimilation of data from the seemingly rigid World of Matter.

Thus, through interior mental reference, or through the exterior force of circumstance, Mr. Ecks would draw hypothesises, tally conclusions and, upon noting the relativity of inner and outer seeming imbalances between the World of Thought and the World of Matter, and, he would occasionally and reluctantly acknowledge, a degree of unprovoked intuition (from whence he knew not), Mr. Ecks would act.

This process, by the increasing stiffness of his thinking, was often long and tedious (as must be, to the bane of the doleful Reader, these descriptions of this process); Mr. Ecks found that in most cases, the consideration, the mental preparation, the introductory logic preceding the act was, in the end, more significant than the act itself, and that these introductions between changes, as it were, these obligatory (for they were, he assumed, of the highest order of necessity, obviously, since he did think of them at all) streams of transitional logic were, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks, the objects of excruciating pleasure.

This pleasure in his thoughts, as noted elsewhere, Mr. Ecks abhorred. Therefore, he relished with shame the logic and order of his computer-like mind, and spared no energy in attempting to achieve a polished precision in his thinking.

It was not by a quirk of casual error, then, that after the death of Mr. Lix, Mr. Ecks, through the intricate interconnections of the analogue functions of his unusual mind, was of the opinion, independent from the majority of opinions held, and held most strongly, by Mr. Nix and Mr. Eueoeueoeeuuuuue, among myriad others, that he, Mr. Ecks, was the only Being in actual existence, that all other beings were illusory aspects of his own being, in short, that he himself was God, the Eternal Creator, All That Is, the One Nameless One Known by Many Names, the Infinite Being Within Whom We Move and Have Our Being.

Two series of circumstances resulted from this singular opinion, which he held, most strongly, after the death of Mr. Lix, independent from the majority of opinions held, and held most strongly, as noted above.

The first series of circumstances which resulted from his singular opinion that he was God, which he independently maintained, after the death of Mr. Lix, involves the effects of those circumstances upon himself.

The first member of this first series which involves the effects of his singular opinion on himself, was that he demonstrated his opinion, that he was God, by mentally commanding, with a degree of confidence proportionate to his belief that he was God, that various phenomena occur.

For example, he would mentally command his foot, such as it was, to rise from the dank soil, extend outward before him, and then descend again to the level of the sod, and there stop, or desist from movement for the nonce, thus commanding, Godlike, that a step to be taken in the flesh. In this examples his foot, such as it was, seemingly independent from the intangible World of

Thoughts would rise, lo, to the prescribed level, and then descend at a forward incline, corresponding to all material philosophical systems coincidentally to his mental command, for it was impossible, in this World of Matter, for an immaterial, or forceless, substance, such as thought, to hold dominion over the particles of matter engaged in the act of clinging together in the form of Mr. Ecks' foot, such as it was. But contrary to all rules and regulations of material science, the self-same foot would rise and fall, against all odds, at his mental command, an incredible abridgement and short-circuiting of all natural laws known to empirical and logically fastidious modern man.

But Mr. Ecks did not stop merely at commanding the foot, no, he issued command upon command in the pulp of his brains to all quarters of his body, which would, as a result, correspondingly ripple, cleave, or spin, according to his every adjunct whim. It was this miracle of his ability to conform the material to the will of the immaterial that confirmed, in his plastic mind, the ineffable deity of his nature, and comprised in this way the first member of this first series.

The second member of this first series which involves the effects of his opinion that he was God, which he held after the untimely death of Mr. Lix, on himself, was that he was aware of the meaning, purpose, and origin of himself. He became aware of the meaning, purpose, and origin of himself by this reasoning, that since he was God, and only God can create, or destroy, through his omnipotence, then he, God, created himself, God, since only God can create, and that his meaning was self-contained, that is, that his meaning was that he was God, and that his purpose was to be God.

The third member of this first series which involves the effects of his opinion that he was God, which he held after the untimely death of Mr. Lix, and held most strongly, contrary to the opinions held by the surviving Members of

the Board, among others, upon himself, was that he could assume a state of non-entity in both appearance and state of mind. He did this by dressing with a modicum of tasteful formality of attire, and entering the firm of Nix, Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue and Ecks, in this costume, while forming in his mind the idéé fix that he was, in fact, a non-entity, or more clearly stated, while forming in his mind the closest approximation he could muster to having no state of mind.

Daily, monthly, by small increments, while appearing at the firm in that costume, in that state of mind, or rather, with no state of mind, it gradually seemed to Mr. Ecks that no one saw him in that attire, in that state of mind, or knew that he was there. It is true that Ms. Jones, or Mr. Nix, or even, on rare occasion, Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, would enter Mr. Ecks' serpentine office, and set on the desk before Mr. Ecks various documents of company policy pertinent to the business at hand; but never once, during this period, did anyone appear to see Mr. Ecks, or know that he was there, while in that costume, while in that state of mind.

The fourth and last member of this first series which involves the effects of his singular opinion, which he strongly maintained, during that period subsequent to the untimely death of Mr. Lix, and the incarceration of Ms. Lix, that he was God, on himself, was that he became catatonic. The reason for this quaint happenstance was that during this period, he came to the full realization that he, God, was everything, and that everything was God, himself, and that this realization led to the inevitable conclusion that all action, function, daily activity, etc., was deemed entirely unnecessary, with overtones of superficiality and rank redundance, since all experiences of man interacting with the universe, and of the universe interacting with itself were his, since he, as God, was the universe, including man and any interactions between any combinations within thereof.

This entirely logical resulting state of catatonia was characterized in Mr. Ecks by a total withdrawal and denial of all physical action and experience.

He would, during this period, lay limp on the floor of his office, his eyes open slightly, looking (or not looking) straight forward, unblinking, unmoving, dead, most probably, by definition, although by no means do we suggest that we are here and now obliged to speak of definitions; on the contrary, this record is an attempt to show the life-style of Mr. Ecks in the limited aspects through which he styled his life, and during the period of his life when he allowed himself to hold opinions, which was a considerable part of his life, he abhorred the existence of definitions, not because of any possible results of their existence, although this alone is easily reason enough for justified abhorrance, but because of the very nature of definition, of defining, an occasion which he deemed the most negative of occasions, since it can only limit, or inhibit, so to speak, the potentiality of the very essences trapped within the occasion of defining, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

The second series of circumstances which resulted from his singular opinion that he was God, which he maintained, most strongly, after the untimely death of Mr. Lix, involves his effect on other peoples and on his surrounding environment.

The first member of this second series which involves the effects of his singular opinion that he was God an other people and on his surrounding environment, was that people regarded him as an object of ridicule, an object upon which to release aggression, hostility and sexual frustrations, and these various attitudes, held by people concerning Mr. Ecks, were readily demonstrated by such descriptive phrases, hurled futilely at the person of Mr. Ecks, as, "crack-pot", "shit-head", "fruit-cake", "dope-fiend", "pizza-face", "buck-teeth", "wet-back", "mother-fucker", "fat-head", "acid-head", "pot-head", "funny-

boy", "nature-boy", "jungle-boy", "lover-boy", "mama's-boy", "play-boy", "pug-nose", "war-monger", "peace-nik", "book-worm", "big-shot", "fart-face", "prune-face", "ass-lips", "hair-dresser", "pig-fucker", "goodie-goodie", "rotten-apple", "lady-killer", "bird-brain", "pea-brain", "con-artist", "pin-head", "bone-head", "dog-face", "sun-worshipper", "half-wit", "shit-eater", "ass-kisser", "moon-struck", "piss-mouth", "pot-belly", "stink-pot", "puke-face", "shut-in", "glass-eye", "peg-leg", "runny-nose", "potato-head", "loan-shark", "black-mailer", "web-fingers", "hook-nose", "double-crosser", "horse-thief", "cat-burglar", "home-wrecker", "commie-pinko", "cattle-rustler", "ass-hole", "speed-freak", "dick-licker", "salami-slurper", "porno-collector", "spam-eater", "beef-cake", "woman-hater", "man-hater", "mutton-head", "wise-acre", "paranoid-schizo", "hen-pecked", "chrome-dome", "whey-face", "construction-worker", "ill-proportioned", "screw-ball", "smart-aleck", "cock-eyed", "light-headed", "manic-depressive", "phone-tapper", "bad-egg", "hare-brained", "laughing-stock", "sod-buster", "green-horn", "sap-head", "knuckle-head", "milk-sop", "scatter-brain", "anti-intellectual", "backseat-driver", "poker-faced", "pussy-whipped", "clod-hopper", "dim-witted", "numb-skull", "cabbage-head", "ill-defined", "scum-bag", "spaced-out", "master-mind", "brain-damaged", "tattle-tale", "do-nothing", "Rhodes-scholar", "crap-head", "cross-eyed", "egg-head", "chicken-shit", "whore-bait", "addle-headed", "odd-duck", "empty-headed", "feeble-minded", "stool-pigeon", "well-read", "blimp-butt", "film-critic", "pussy-foot", "one-eyed", "day-dreamer", "stargazer", "eaves-dropper", "neo-Hegelian", "dunder-head", "tender-foot", "foul-mouthed", "pig-headed", "old-fogey", "flimflam-man", "double-crosser", "dumb-bell", "trouble-maker", "congenial-idiot", "innocent-bystander", "plain-speaking", "half-brained", "dull-witted", "color-blind", "absent-minded", "true-blue", "bird-watcher", "big-mouth", "self-taught", "tight-lipped", "two-faced", "mealy-mouthed", "credulous-fool", "carpet-bagger", "four-flusher", "tongue-tied", "dress-

designer", "leg-puller", "counter-feiter", "card-sharp", "faint-hearted", "gutless-wonder", "insurance-swindler", "weak-willed", "easy-going", "feather-brained", "escape-artist", "self-controlled", "fucked-up", "iron-willed", "law-abiding", "blood-thirsty", "ill-mannered", "sour-puss", "stand-offish", "desert-dweller", "sweet-tempered", "god-forsaken", "cave-man", "back-gabber", "anti-Semite", "black-listed", "narrow-minded", "fortune-hunter", "hanger-on", "boot-licker", "bosom-buddy", "ball-buster", "high-handed", "stuck-up", "self-effacing", "swell-headed", "cum-lapper", "show-off", "purse-snatcher", "fancy-free", "old-maid", "flesh-monger", "grave-robber", "kind-hearted", "ill-tempered", "jerk-off", "dipshit", "broken-hearted", "wind-bag", "long-faced", "wild-eyed", "cold-hearted", "money-grubbing", "under-handed", "skin-flint", "slave-trader", "money-bags", "pool-shark", "shit-licker", "meat-eater", "child-beater", "pick-pocket", "body-snatcher", "hit-man", "blood-sucker", "heir-apparent", "bug-eyed", "pasty-faced", "nurse-maid", "wage-slave", "party-crasher", "bed-wetter", "sure-footed", "half-baked", "weak-kneed", "fire-eater", "battle-scarred", "cut-throat", "phlegm-drinker", "well-disposed", "dead-weight", "spoil-sport", "child-molester", "kill-joy", "penis-breath", "tone-deaf", "street-urchin", "butter-fingers", "sorcerer's-apprentice", "scum-slurper", "lice-infested", "crack-shot", "dog-weary", "club-footed", "hare-lipped", "lazy-bones", "opium-eater", "half-cocked", "tax-dodger", "ugly-customer", "bad-apple", "ass-pincher", "hell-bent", "brain-dead", "sewer-swimmer", "God-fearing", "plague-carrier", "thunder-rectum", "chimney-sweeper", "maggot-mouth", "skunk-farmer", "unwiped-rump", "smut-dealer", "clean-shaven", "pus-lips", "hog-caller", "trance-channeler", "leather-fancier", "nail-biter", "slime-sucker", "twisted-fuck", "gas-passer", "priest-puncher", "slut-hanger", "booze-hound", "light-weight", "sex-fiend", "Mr.-Nobody", "famine-stricken", "wife-stealer", "gin-guzzler", "gutter-bum", "hoity-toidy", "country-bumpkin", "dope-dealer", "book-maker", "religious-fanatic", "axe-murderer",

"serial-killer", "devil-worshipper", "gun-collector", "sedition-monger", "palm-greaser", "heaven-sent", "flower-child", "loathsome-swine", "wishy-washy", "elephant-ears", "dead-beat", "chauvinist-pig", "stupid-twit", "thin-skinned", "lady-killer", "punch-drunk", "high-strung", "girl-crazy", "fungus-face", "swill-swallower", "dodo-bird", "jelly-fish", "self-destructive", "head-hunter", "mercy-killer", "homicidal-maniac", "lone-wolf", "bad-tempered", "muscle-bound", "ram-rod", "big-balls", "flaccid-dick", "chicken-choker", "meat-beater", "whore-master", "muff-diver", "oyster-eater", "jaw-breaker", "simpering-ape", "petty-thief", "long-dong", "glassy-eyed", "tool-tonguer", "bottle-nosed", "screwed-up", "thrill-seeker", "sadistic-fuck", "ugly-duckling", "low-life", "above-board", "good-sport", "murder-suspect", "mud-stinger", "tire-slasher", "muck-raker", "hen-pecked", "cock-sucker", "logical-positivist", "circus-freak", "whore-chewer", "knock-kneed", "easy-lay", "sex-mad", "soft-hearted", "plug-ugly", "hired-assassin", "jail-bird", "juvenile-delinquent", "wife-beater", "trigger-happy", "sharp-tongued", "prick-pounder", "finger-fucker", "mental-case", "human-stain", "insipid-twit", "ill-humored", "schlong-stroker", "jism-jerker", "clit-licker", "pud-pumper", "sugar-daddy", "heart-throb", "ill-bred", "honey-tongued", "beaver-banger", "muff-muncher", "cock's-man", "self-abuser", "shit-bum", "anti-American", "tit-man", "ass-man", "dick-drooler", "long-winded", "four-eyed", "anal-retentive", "bad-news", "pig-eyes", "pot-bellied", "flat-footed", "whore-humper", "hymen-buster", "skunk-sniffer", "lesbo-lapper", "scag-freak", "gang-banger", "donkey-dick", "slit-slurper", "drag-queen", "neo-Platonist", "cootie-carrier", "potato-head", "cradle-robber", "bum-fucker", "cunt-hunter", "bush-whacker", "spunk-swallower", "boy-fondler", "ski-bush", "sperm-spiller", "animal-lover", "glue-sniffer", "speed-freak", "gutless-worm", "penny-pincher", "scum-sucker", "pencil-prick", "limp-dick", "machine-gunner", "slow-stroker", "lousy-lay", "tit-fucker", "gross-pig", "lunch-blower", "fart-lighter", "investment-counselor", "foot-fancier", "class-stud", "town-drunk",

"flagpole-sitter", "bitch-hanger", "smegma-sipper", "dip-shit", "dog-teaser", "ball-biter", "peeping-tom", "cross-dresser", "well-hung", "small-dick", "gate-crasher", "safe-cracker", "side-kick", "class-bully", "pen-pal", "split-personality", "kissing-cousin", "sitting-duck", "shameless-rogue", "fat-ass", "swell-headed", "stand-offish", "gutter-snipe", "white-trash", "zoot-suiter", "rough-neck", "pan-handler", "hay-seed", "salami-squeezer", "riff-raff", "boorish-lout", "suck-ass", "mindless-brute", "well-respected", "cold-blooded", "slap-happy", "dare-devil", "desert-rat", "cry-baby", "he-man", "bull-dyke", "panic-struck", "high-strung", "queer-fish", "old-geezer", "cox-comb", "boy-buggerer", "smirking-snob", "palpable-absurdity", "fashion-conscious", "trend-setter", "flamboyant-faggot", "hunch-backed", "web-toed", "pock-marked", "screaming-queen", "pigeon-toed", "bow-legged", "rosy-cheeked", "nimble-witted", "hard-boiled", "pathetic-gimp", "mindless-fuck", "smarty-pants", "human-vomit", "rubber-neck", "dickless-wonder", and other imaginative phrases, too numerous to mention here.³

The second member of this second series of circumstances involving the effects that Mr. Ecks' opinion of self-divinity had on other entities and his surrounding environment was that his surrounding natural environment, the events of nature, the workings of the universe became, from an objective viewpoint, an inclusive, self-perpetuating system independent from the simultaneous existence of Mr. Ecks, who was himself, in effect, an inclusive, self-perpetuating system. It could be argued that this second member was not an

³Such as "dink", "kook", "moron", "Jap", "chink", "nigger", "kike", "krout", "guinnie", "spick", "beaner", "homo", "bastard", "queer", "pervert", "pimp", "wino", "hippy", "fatso", "quack", "geezoid", "shrimp", "twit", "cur", "hick", "boor", "yokel", "upstart", "fof", "liar", "braggart", "bully", "ruffian", "hoodlum", "toad", "snake", "parasite", "jackal", "leech", "gigilo", "sponge", "fiend", "leper", "alien", "derelict", "punk", "cunt", "sucker", "offal", "meglomaniac", "bastardo", "dullard", "idiot", "cretin", "imbecile", "ninny", "simpleton", "boob", "sap", "nincompoop", "dope", "goof", "drip", "dunce", "chump", "oaf", "daft", "clod", "nuts", "screwy", "demented", "fucked", "shlepp", "pansy", "fairy", "hobo", "tramp", "dumb", "fat", "shmuck", "lizard", "bum", "weirdo", "jerk", etc.

actual physical effect, and therefore cannot be a member of the series of circumstances involving the effects of a certain opinion held by a certain man on his surrounding environment. Yet by "effects" we include also any resulting changes in philosophical outlook involving Mr. Ecks' surrounding environments and since this new attitude, this shift of perspective, was a direct result of Mr. Ecks' own activities resulting in a period of isolation and self-judgment, tempering his opinion that he was God, the Eternal Creator, All That Is, the One Nameless One known by many Names, the Infinite Being within Whom We (apparently) Move and Have Our Being, then this second member of this second series is valid, since it fulfills the requirements of membership in this series.

The third member of this second series which involves the effects of his singular opinion, which he held most strongly, that he was God, on other people and on his surrounding environment, was that various entities who came into contact with Mr. Ecks at various times found themselves obliged to move his physical body from one place to another when they found it convenient, or necessary, to do so, for Mr. Ecks would not/could not move his physical self from one place to another on various occasions. As a result of this circumstance, Mr. Ecks often found himself in many unusual and varied geographical locations.

For example, he once found himself in an organ-meister's broom closet with a radish, a silver dollar, and an article of woman's lingerie stuffed into his mouth.⁴

On another occasion, he found himself hanging upside-down over the edge of a cliff, while a decrepit old man clutched at his socks.

⁴For documentation of these particulars, see Appendix 5.

On another occasion, he found himself lying in a large vat of rancid cheese. (Upon finding himself in these three circumstances, and in the circumstance which follows Mr. Ecks had no memory of what actions had led to his delicate, and often complicated, placement in each of these circumstances, the result, it must be assumed, of his mental stupor which, in turn, was the result of psychological ramifications of his singular opinion, namely, that he was God.)

On another occasion, he found himself standing in the middle of Times Square, New York City, with a red carnation in the buttonhole of his lapel.

On another occasion, he found that a large amount of cement had been layered over the top of his head.

On another occasion, he found himself in the presence of a fetid odor.

On another occasion, he found himself lying face-down in a squalid ditch in Bialystok, Poland.

On another occasion, he found that someone had glued thick, matted fur over his entire body, and that he was foaming at the mouth.

On another occasion, he found himself sitting naked in the center of a large white cube.

On another occasion, he found himself in a chess match with Mr. Nix.

On another occasion, he found his head embedded in what appeared to be an icy tundra.

On yet another occasion, he found himself in the precise center of gravity of all the vast universe.

Finding himself in these and other geographical and physiological positions, Mr. Ecks, through the seeping of his thoughts, soon began to regard all action, all circumstance, all life, all the universe, as dolefully passé.

The fourth and last member of this second series of circumstances

involving the effects that his opinion of self-divinity had on other people and his surrounding environment was that the culmination, and eventual climax, of the previous two members was epitomized in a forayed, sense-cultivated "eueoeueuoeeuuue", without the slightest breach of relative indifference, demonstrating a supreme balance of content over presentation, notwithstanding the obviously abrasive elements of spam that were involved.

The third and final series of the set of series involving the effects of Mr. Ecks' singular opinion that he was God, which he held most strongly, contrary to the opinions held by the other members of the Board, who, it is assumed, did not believe that Mr. Ecks was in fact God, possesses only one member; yet this last member of the series is the most important of the three, in that it extends and resolves the series as a whole.

This third series involves the final results of all the members of each of the two original series, and the implications arising from these results.

The first part of the single member of this third series is made up of the following statements of fact:

1) (First/First) That since he demonstrated his opinion that he was God by commanding, with much confidence, that various phenomena occur, and that, invariably, these phenomena that he commanded to occur did in fact occur, Mr. Ecks came to believe that all phenomena in nature is relative to the perceiver, and that since no two viewpoints of perception can be the same, since no two entities have precisely the same experiences and therefore do not perceive in precisely the same way, then the world of natural phenomena must be a world of chaotic inconsistency, instability, deception, and meaninglessness

2) (First/Second) That since he "solved" the problem of purpose and

meaning by proclaiming that his proclamation that he was God actually created "meaning" out of nothingness, and that since his rationalization of the eternal void served only to cover up the original problem of meaning with reams of repulsive logic, it gradually occurred to Mr. Ecks that no matter what reasoning, no matter what rationalization evolves (although it is the perverse nature of human thought-form to restrict its own knowledge of the universe by self-imposed limitations), there will always be the eternal void that is all-inclusive in its utter virginity, and inescapable, and therefore all of life is trivial, absurd, and meaningless, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

3) (First/Third) That since he could assume a state of non-entity in both appearance and state of mind with relative ease, then there was but a fraction of difference between his state of "being" and his state of non-entity, and that it could not be ascertained scientifically or by other means just where one began and where the other left off, and since this lack of determinacy between being and non-being existed, it gradually occurred to Mr. Ecks that this indeterminacy suggested that the seemingly stable world around him was merely a shallow mask covering a focusless, ever-shifting universe of chaos, confusion, and meaninglessness, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

4) (First/Fourth) That since the result of his opinion, which he held strongly, that he was God, was that he became catatonic, then his supposed state of meaning (Godhead) resulted in a state of non-meaning (catatonia), and this relationship is contrary to the original proposition of Mr. Ecks' lovingly-held opinion that he was God, in that the "meaning" that he found to be central and necessary to his existence consequently resulted in the termination (psychologically) of his existence, which occurred in his development of the catatonic state; and this contradiction, although subtle, suggested that the underlying nature of the universe was one of inconsistency, instability,

deception, and meaninglessness, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

5) (Second/First) That since Mr. Ecks' singular opinion, which he held most strongly, that he was God, triggered tirades of ridicule, hostility, aggression, and general abuse towards him by all entities with whom he came into contact, it appeared to Mr. Ecks that these base epithets and snide canards were simply representative of the obligatory excretion of thoughts and emotions, and these thoughts and emotions, Mr. Ecks perceived, were merely functions of necessity and utility to the emotional and mental bodies of human entities, and expressed through releasing tension via the physical flesh; the mental-physical states of a human entity were thus seen by Mr. Ecks to be analogous to the logical-structural states of a Turing machine.

Therefore it appeared that consciousness itself was nothing more than a mystical name given to the physical processes of the brain, and thus all of life was seen to be merely a shallow exchange of energy and matter, representative of a meaningless flow within a meaningless universe, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

6) (Second/Second) That since as a result of his strongly-held opinion that he was God that Mr. Ecks and the universe became two separate, inclusive, self-perpetuating systems, each dependent on the existence of the other in order to be "independent" from something, then each was equally devoid of meaning, for each system, thinking itself the Ultimo, the Prime Intelligence of the Universe, together formed One Great System of Nothing, which appeared to be the true nature of all that existed, namely, ultimate nothingness and meaninglessness, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

7) (Second/Third) That since as a result of his catatonia, which was a result of his opinion that he was God, which he held strongly, that entities were obliged to move Mr. Ecks about from place to place when it was found convenient to do so, since he could not do so himself, and that as a result of

finding himself in such a vast variety of geographical and psychological positions, it appeared that all action, all circumstance, all life, all the universe was a pathetically dull mishmash, dolefully passé, boring, absurd, and ultimately meaningless, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

8) (Second/Fourth) That since the effects that his opinion of self-divinity had on other people and his surrounding environment was that the culmination and eventual climax of the previous two members was epitomized in a forayed, sense-cultivated "eueoeueuoeeuuue", without the slightest breach of relative indifference, demonstrating a supreme balance of content over presentation, notwithstanding the obviously abrasive elements of spam that were involved, then, obviously, the world, if retaining such a nature must dissolve into an absurd melange of superficiality, absurdity and meaninglessness, or so it seemed to Ecks.

The second part of the single member of this third series is the conclusion which Mr. Ecks reached upon reflection, through the seepings of his thoughts, on his Period of Deception, as we may refer to this period wherein Mr. Ecks fell victim to the illusions resulting from attempting to force the gross structure of blubbering, inchoate logical analysis upon the infinitely subtle, ancient non-structure of the universe. Each of the three series and all of their extensions, implications and various interpretations were apparent to Mr. Ecks, through the seepings of his thoughts, and well understood.

After homely reflection upon these extensions, implications and interpretations, Mr. Ecks gradually came to a clear and distinct conclusion which appeared to be logical as a result of these series, and decidedly inescapable. His conclusion was not in the least rare or even unique among entities lost in the realm of matter, and even approached banality, but was nevertheless

unavoidable, and so Mr. Ecks considered this conclusion with reverence and respect:

*If everything is so futile and meaningless, and yet life is all we have, we may as well make the best of it we can, laughing not only at the ridiculous spirit of seriousness of others, but at our own disillusionment.*⁵



⁵Leonard Cabell Pronko, *Avant-Garde* p. 205.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Mr. Ecks and the Severed Finger

The years had been good to Mr. Ecks. He had risen to a position of power and prominence. He was third in line to the largest investment firm in the country. The firm of Nix, Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, & Ecks controlled a vast industrial complex that spanned the globe, and was growing more and more powerful as time wore onward towards its ineluctable non-destination and inconclusion, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

And throughout these long years, Mr. Ecks persistently appeared at his curling office, doing nothing, attending meetings, offering no opinions, making his presence felt through his comforting silences, his total lack of activity, and his air of utter nothingness.

Yes, his presence was an inspiration to Mr. Nix and Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, who felt kindly and, it may even be said, tenderly towards Mr. Ecks.

Yet, occurrences occurred, as is their wont.

Mr. Nix's death, for example, was inferred after a series of bizarre incidents. First and foremost of these incidents was the appearance of Mr. Nix's severed finger in the mail one morning. The parcel had been directed to Mr. Ecks. Since Mr. Ecks did not open his mail, as was his habit, Ms. Jones opened his mail for him, and therefore was the first to discover the appendage. Accompanying the hideous object was the following note.

To the Firm of Nix, Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, & Ecks:

*We keep B. tucked away good so nobody
find him. Leave 1 million unmarked bills*

*in trash bucket by bridge in park tonite
10 P.M., or else we send more presents.*

Signed,

[Black dot - Yakuza symbol]

With trembling hands, Ms. Jones deposited the note and the parcel on Mr. Ecks' desk, and fled the building in tears. The reason that Ms. Jones delivered the note and parcel to Mr. Ecks, and not to Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue, was twofold: first, the parcel was addressed to Mr. Ecks, for unknown reasons; second, Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue was never, ever to be disturbed during working hours for any reason whatsoever, and this was a steadfast, inflexible rule with Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue.

So it was that Mr. Ecks received the note and the attached finger. When he saw the note, Mr. Ecks crumpled it and threw it to the floor and stepped on it and ground it to a pulp. He had good reason for doing this. The enclosed finger, however, which was by now bloated and mottled in appearance, in appearance not unlike a curdled Jimmy Dean sausage, he gently placed in his desk drawer with the other articles of value he had collected during his years with the firm: a clump of dried weeds, a pornographic book with a bullet-hole through the center, wittily entitled *Fuck My Asshole*, a dead fish, a novelty glasses-nose-and-mustache, a photograph of a cactus, a plastic wig, and now, Mr. Nix's gangrenous finger.

Often, in the dead of night, Mr. Ecks, who went to bed but never slept, would savor the image of these objects, turning them over and over in his mind, until the night birds would appear, and the skirmish of leaves against leaves hushed his thoughts.

On the following morning, Mr. Ecks witnessed Ms. Jones informing Mr.

Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue of the kidnapping. Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue was aghast and speechless. He asked to be alone for a moment. He retired to his office and did not reappear until the end of the work day, at which time he did not mention the kidnapping to Ms. Jones, but rather passed by her desk in silence, entered Mr. Ecks' labyrinthine office and closed the door behind him.

Mr. Ecks was at that moment sitting motionless at his desk, thinking his plastic wig. Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue told Mr. Ecks that the firm was in serious trouble, since it was Mr. Nix who had handled all of the affairs of the company, since the untimely death of Mr. Lix. Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue choked as he admitted his own incompetence, and at length broke down into tears, saying, We are alone, Mr. Ecks. We must go on alone.

After making it clear to Mr. Ecks that the firm would pay no ransom to the Japaese under any circumstances, and that therefore Mr. Nix may as well be considered as good as dead, and that the firm may now be called Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks, Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue primly departed.

Mr. Ecks finished putting on his coat, and departed.

Ms. Jones then turned off all the lights, locked all the doors, and departed.

Two days later another parcel arrived. This contained Mr. Nix's ears. The note read as follows.

To the firm of Nix, Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks:

We will chop up B. unless you deliver

1 million. At same place, same time, tonite.

Be there, or more presents.

Signed,

[Black dot - Yakuza symbol]

A week later another parcel arrived. This contained Mr. Nix's right hand. The note read as follows.

To the Firm of Nix, Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks:

B. on last legs, then we chop them off.

Deliver tonite, no cops, or else.

Signed,

[Black dot - Yakuza symbol]

When Ms. Jones brought this note in to Mr. Ecks, Mr. Ecks was wearing his plastic wig. The reason for his wearing the wig was threefold: first, a window-washer was perched outside his office window, washing, and Mr. Ecks' method of dealing with this invasion of privacy was to disguise himself; second, this was a Tuesday, and Mr. Ecks had made a vow never to wear his wig except on Tuesdays; and third, the reason Mr. Ecks found it necessary to make a vow concerning his wig was due to the fact that he was totally bald, and had developed an addicting propensity towards the wearing of wigs. This tendency in himself he loathed, and therefore restricted his use of the wig to one day of the week only, that day being Tuesday. How he chose the day Tuesday, or how he developed a propensity to decorate his bald scalp are questions which will not be answered, not in this book.

When Ms. Jones brought the latest note in to Mr. Ecks, Mr. Ecks was wearing his plastic wig. She placed the note directly in front of him on his desk, and departed. The severed hand lay next to the note, complementing and illustrating the text of the note. Mr. Ecks sat motionless in his chair, staring forward, thinking unnamable thoughts.

There was a tapping at the window. Mr. Ecks slowly turned his head but

could not see the window proper due to the fact that the plastic tendrils from the wig obscured his vision. The tapping continued. Then Mr. Ecks perceived that it was none other than the Japanese window-washer, trying to get his attention.

Mr. Ecks rose to the occasion. He opened the window slightly. A faint lush breeze made the tendrils tremble across his face.

"Roasting pigeons," said the window-washer.

Mr. Ecks found pleasure in this remark, thinking that it had nothing to do with any subject at hand; but he was mistaken, for the grinning Nip was pointing down, down, into the depths of the alley far below.

Mr. Ecks slowly slipped his head out the window, and saw below a small group of winos cooking up birds over an open fire. The smoke wafted its way to Mr. Ecks' face, with an aroma of intermingling molecules, and for a brief moment, such as it was, he felt at one with the cosmos.

The remark sounded strange with his Japanese accent. The window-washer continued to talk as he worked. "Anything that moves will suit them on a cold winter's day."

For it was true; frost had gathered across the expanse of glass separating the window-washer and Mr. Ecks, and a gentle drift of snow seeped in through the slightly opened window.

It may then be asked, why is a window-washer employed in the dead of winter, when frost gluts the pane, when one false move across a tread of ice means certain death? How could this be a washer of windows if all the window-washers are home snug in bed or employed elsewhere?

These questions did not occur to Mr. Ecks, who tended to take things as they were, and not as they should be.

For the truth of the matter was that the window-washer was not a window-washer at all, but rather, he was a Yakuza killer, one of Mr. Nix's

kidnappers. He had of late parted ways with the other two kidnappers due to a heated dispute over protocol. The window-washing Yakuza was the most ruthless. Although he loved killing, he had wished to keep Mr. Nix alive throughout all of the dissections upon his person; the others did not wish to torture Mr. Nix, and for this reason they agreed to kill Mr. Nix without the window-washer's consent. This enraged the window-washer, who berated them as weaklings and incompetent fools. To prove his point, he reminded them that Mr. Ecks had been too clever to be ambushed, despite their repeated demands. And so the window washer had boasted that he would kill Mr. Ecks himself.

"I have heard rumors about a kidnapping."

Mr. Ecks stared dully at the little dancing snowflakes. Each tiny crystal was to Mr. Ecks an exacting paradigm of all of nature, an intricate spinning wheel of unknowable but certain imperfections.

"I hope you refuse their demands."

The window-washer interpreted Mr. Ecks' silence as a guarded assent to his remarks.

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This strengthened the kidnapper's suspicions concerning the safe. His plan was to overpower Mr. Ecks, and threaten to throw him out the window to his death below unless he open the safe.⁶ If the safe could not be opened, at least this influential executive would be in his power, and a deal could be made to his advantage.

He was a desperate man.

⁶It should be noted that as a child, the kidnapper had accidentally shot his dog, Blackie. This left a deep impression upon his soul, and made the inclusion of firearms in any of his subsequent schemes impossible.

The crook continued to weave his web around Mr. Ecks with deft banter, all the while slowly easing the window open wider and wider and gradually sliding his buttocks up over the window ledge affording himself easy access to Mr. Ecks' unsuspecting person. At last the kidnapper was ready to make his move.

"And I imagine, sir, that you could open that safe, if you had to." His voice took on a threatening edge. "Or, if you were *forced* to."

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With this remark the killer took out his gun and viciously grabbed a fistful of Mr. Ecks' hair, in an attempt to pull him out the window and thrust the gun into his mouth. Yet it was not Mr. Ecks' head which the kidnapper grabbed, but rather Mr. Ecks' plastic wig. Of course the killer fell with the wig and that is the end of the incident. But let us follow it through with fabulous details, to pass the time:

The inertia of the killer's violent attack served to throw him off balance, his arms flailing wildly, the plastic wig clenched in his fist, the gun in the other, and he toppled backwards and fell, reeling downwards, murdered by the Law of Gravity. As he fell, he fired up a Mr. Ecks, missing four times, but the fifth bullet blowing a hole in the palm of Mr. Ecks's hand. Mr. Ecks stared at the hole in his hand, then peered down at the falling man.

The killer's screams of terror, growing lower in pitch in proportion to his descent, according to the Doppler Effect, was music to Mr. Ecks' ears, who stood there motionless, looking down at the receding, screaming figure.

The window-washer fell amid the crowd of feasting winos, and a cloud of dust arose from their filthy greatcoats, as if the souls of the luckless pigeons were suddenly set free into the atmosphere like a drifting smoke.

Mr. Ecks' bare scalp began to grow cold.

He closed the window, and returned to his desk. At his desk, he found that the lighting was not to his liking, and therefore he proceeded in to Mr. Lix's office, and assumed his seat at the desk. Here the lighting was perfect.

But in the first draft of this book the lighting at Mr. Lix's desk was unacceptable to Mr. Ecks, and so he returned to the desk of Mr. Sqecx to compare the two effects. In this way Mr. Ecks went from one desk to the other for some time trying to judge which lighting was more suitable to his tastes.

In this book, however, we do not discuss these details, however important they may be to the narrative as a whole. This then was the occasion of the Japanese window washer, and it was a memorable occasion in the memory of Mr. Ecks. And as for memorable occasions, they were, in Mr. Ecks' view, the most desirable to forget utterly.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Mystique of Mr. Ecks

In investment firms throughout the world, the name of Mr. Ecks was whispered behind closed doors and alluded to secretly in the lavatories, and men who otherwise would have had nothing in common, due to differing opinions and taste, held a common bond upon which tender friendships grew, that bond being the admiration of, or jealousy towards, Mr. Ecks' success.

Knowledge of Mr. Ecks' mysterious rise to power became the source of esoteric allusions among the business hierarchy; a cliquish veil gradually wove itself, falling between those "in the know" and those unacquainted with the mystery of Mr. Ecks' mystical genius. Stories were told and then retold with deft elaboration, and the obscure figure of Mr. Ecks snowballed into a mystique, a symbol, a dream for the businessmen of the world.

So much for Mr. Ecks' reputation.

Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue and Mr. Ecks entered the conference room of the firm of Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks. Both men entered the room at one minute to twelve, as the meeting was to be at twelve. Not that they entered the room simultaneously, for they did not, rather, they entered the room at approximately the same time, at one minute to twelve, from their respective offices.

Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue was suffering from an acute gastric ailment, yet he presided over the meeting, which was convened to discuss policy changes that were necessitated by the tragic and untimely death of Mr. Nix.

Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue assumed the chairman's seat.

Mr. Ecks sat elsewhere, as the chairman's seat was now occupied.

Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue opened his mouth and began to speak. He first moved that Mr. Nix be considered officially dead, as a matter of company policy. As Mr. Ecks did not object, the motion was carried. Therefore, Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue moved that the firm be renamed Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks, after the two surviving members. As Mr. Ecks did not object, the motion was carried.

Next, he moved that all company affairs be the responsibility of Ms. Jones. The motion was carried. He moved that they call for wine. The motion was carried. He moved that the firm be turned into a whorehouse. The motion was carried.

Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue smacked his lips in anticipation. Whether he was anticipating the wine or the whores is not known, for it was at that moment that Ms. Jones entered the conference room, and ritually placed a photographic portrait of the beloved Mr. Nix on the far wall next to that of the beloved Mr. Lix and the beloved Mr. Sqecx.

The two men stood up from the circular table to view with decorum the three faces of their deceased colleagues.

All was total silence, save for the incessant howling and whining and blaring of miss Jones's radio.

It was a touching moment, and to commemorate the lives and deaths of these three beloved men, Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue led Mr. Ecks and Ms. Jones in a quiet rendition of Spencer's *Funeral Hymn*:

*O my mother she's in Mexico,
My father he's in France
My candle's in my handle
and my dandle's in my pants.
I'll eat my slop and smack my lips*

*And finish amid the farce,
 And soon I'll croon a luscious tune
 and I'll croon it with me arse.
 O they say there's gods atop of the world
 And demons down below,
 But the girls in France don't wear no pants
 and that's all I need to know.*

Tears of sadness rolled down Mr. Eueoeueoeueuuue's bloated cheeks in response to this tender pæan. He blubbered, called again for wine, and moved that the meeting be adjourned.

Mr. Eueoeueoeueuuue watched Mr. Ecks silently depart. *We are alone, Mr. Ecks,* he called to him through his tears. *We must go on alone.*

But Mr. Ecks was thinking that he must hurry, for the novelty shop would soon be closed, and today was the day he was to purchase a new plastic wig.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Mr. Ecks and the Bacchanal

Mr. Ecks walked through the streets of the city, his limbs tense, his thoughts intent upon nothing in particular. Soon he saw his office building looming before him. As he approached, he observed a gooning sandwich-sign carrier pacing back and forth in front of the entrance. At the top of his sign, in multi-colored letters, was the word ENNUI. Underneath this, lettered in a fantastic array, was the following message:

*FREE! Absolutely Free! Everybody invited! Secret Society of the ENNUI
Presents the Biggest Time You Ever Seen! Free Food! Free Beer! Wild
Women! All Free! Booze & Broads Galore! Free Liquor! Come One, Come
All! Door Prizes! Don't Be a Dope! Come On In & Bring a Friend! If You
Ain't Got Friends We'll Give You Some! If You Don't Want No Friends,
Come On In & We'll Leave You Alone! Anything You Want!!
ANYTHING, You Hear?? So Step Right Up! This Means YOU! Like I
said, GUARANTEED THE BIGGEST TIME YOU EVER SEEN!!!*

The man who paraded about with this quaint legend was a dwarf in all respects save that of height. That is, his total demeanor, in part consisting of an unusually large head and arms with respect to the size of the body and a somewhat simian protrusion of the brows and cheeks, would lead one to believe that he was a dwarf, were it not for the fact that he was of normal height, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

The sandwich-sign carrier was waving a banner in each over-sized hand,

and wore a bright, cheap, plastic hat. Painted on both the hat and the banners, rife with exclamations of simulated excitement, was the following:

FREE!!! Everything FREE!!!

Mr. Ecks slowly came to a halt. From a distance, he realized his error. This day was Saturday, a day when he was not to appear at the office. In point of fact, this was the third consecutive Saturday which Mr. Ecks had mistakenly assumed to be a work-day; his error, he noted, was compounded and complicated by the matter of the various Clubs which seemed to operate in the conference room in what appeared to be a sequence of alternating or doubly alternating Saturdays. Mr. Ecks reviewed the facts.

1. Two Saturdays ago he had mistakenly gone to work, and had encountered the Optimist Club.
2. One Saturday ago he had mistakenly gone to work, and had encountered the Pessimist Club.
3. Today, a Saturday, he had mistakenly gone to work, and was confronted by what appeared to be a third Club.

Inexplicably, a small bird lighted upon his head. Mr. Ecks heard the bird peeping, peeping.

This unexpected sound gave Mr. Ecks pleasure.

Was this due to the fact that the word "peep" resembled the word "pulp", and other words like it which Mr. Ecks favored?

Was this why Mr. Ecks stood motionless on the sidewalk, oblivious to all but the quiet peeping in his ear?

Possibly.

All that is known for certain is that had not the bird lighted as it had upon

his head and sent him into a peaceful reverie with its singing, Mr. Ecks may never have been taken off guard as it were and herded into the office building with a large wave of people who were shoving and bustling to enter and receive the free articles advertised by the sandwich-sign carrier.

In this way Mr. Ecks was carried away with the mob into the elevator which lifted them off the ground, and deposited them high, high in the air, into the offices of the firm of Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks.

The elevator door slid open to a scene of noise and bedlam. With great effort, he adjusted his hearing to the loud music, slid through the crowd jamming his office, and entered the conference room.

Mr. Ecks noted that the conference room was in utter chaos. People were singing and dancing and drinking and carrying on with an enthusiasm Mr. Ecks had never thought possible. Laughter and song echoed through his offices, disrupting the hallowed silence he had known during his years with the company. Women drank champagne from silver goblets, men drank whiskey from brown bottles and swilled beer in great quantities from a row of gigantic kegs along the wall.

Mr. Ecks checked his watch; it was precisely 8:00 A.M.

He looked about and noticed that some of the people in the packed crowd around him were not strangers; he recognized several members of the Ennui Club, all of them thoroughly drunk, and they drew him into the room and thrust an immense mug of beer into his hand. A girl latched onto his other arm and Mr. Ecks, through circumstantial assimilation, became one with the festivities.

Beautiful women were everywhere! Some of the more berserk revelers had taken over the conference table and were dancing on it in time to the Song of the Ennui, rendered by the more vociferous members of the party.

When I was an a little tiny boy

*with a heigh-ho, the wind & the rain
 I touched & tasted every joy
 For the rain it raineth every day.
 Then when I was in my prime
 with a heigh-ho, the wind & the rain
 I found we climbed up from the slime
 For the rain it raineth every day.
 A long time ago the world was begun
 with a heigh-ho, the wind & the rain
 But that's all one, our song is done
 For the rain it raineth every day.*

Mr. Ecks regarded this song with reserved approbation. The crowd, however, was cheering and shrieking and whistling and hooting, roaring with unabashed approval.

By noon the excitement was still at its peak and continuing unabated. People were sprawled unconscious in every corner of every room, but the rest continued the bacchanal with even greater enthusiasm. The party expanded throughout the offices and hallways, and spilled over into the other floors of the building. Some mysterious agency seemed to continually replenish the supply of liquor, and thus all newcomers were well accommodated.

Mr. Ecks held the brimming mug in his hand, but did not partake of any refreshments. For the fact was that Mr. Ecks did not drink; this was not due to a dislike of alcohol, for Mr. Ecks had never tasted alcohol, but rather, he did not drink liquids of any kind, not because he did not like liquids, for he had never tasted liquids, but rather because he did not require them.

As to the woman who had latched herself onto his arm, she soon grew tired of Mr. Ecks standing perfectly still, for he made no motions acknowledging

her presence, and did not answer her caresses. This is not to say that Mr. Ecks did not like women, for he liked women as much as he liked men. This is not to say that he liked men and women, but rather that he neither liked nor disliked men and women.

Mr. Ecks, then, stood perfectly still in the center of the raucous mob, which was by now disgustingly drunk, and extremely obnoxious; but the spirit of the occasion was such that no one cared, least of all Mr. Ecks.

As the day wore on, the participants departed one by one and were replaced by newcomers eager to gain access to the free articles advertised by the quaint sandwich-sign carrier.

Yet with all this shifting and mulling and changing of faces, Mr. Ecks remained motionless, holding his brimming mug of beer, there, in the center of the churning mass.

Slowly the crowd depleted. Soon only a thin trickle of new members replaced those who had left in a drunken wave, and finally, all had departed.

And throughout all of the comings and goings of the crowd, it was Mr. Ecks who yet remained, alone, alone in the center of the conference room, holding the brimming mug in his hand, surrounded by a small ocean of beer flowing from room to room to room, through the vast hallways to the elevator, and cascading down the elevator shaft to the blackened depths of the basement below.

And in this foaming waterfall floated cigar butts, plastic cups, filthy paper plates and napkins, the half-eaten remnants of hot dogs, chili, potato chips, Chinese fried rice, party dips, in addition to shoes, neckties, soiled handkerchiefs, party hats, vomit, ashes, fruit rinds, spittle, and other items.

It was there that Mr. Ecks stood, in the middle of the conference room, alone, motionless, with the brimming mug in his extended hand, until very late

in the evening, when the morning stars began to appear.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Mr. Ecks and the Hidden Room

One day Mr. Ecks arrived at his office, at the firm of Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks. Ms. Jones promptly presented him with reams of papers to sign, forms to be checked, orders to be filled, etc. Mr. Ecks did none of these things, as was his habit. Instead, he motioned miss Jones to open the drapes, as it was a cloudy day.

Mr. Ecks' preference with regard to drapes in his office was as follows: fully open on cloudy days, partly open on sunny days. on days of varying degrees of sunniness and cloudiness, Ms. Jones was often kept quite busy attending to the drapes, for Mr. Ecks preferred to be surrounded continuously by a diffuse halflight, and to make this possible he found it necessary to move with the sun as the day wore on; entering Mr. Sqecx's former office in the morning, moving to Mr. Lix's office towards midday, and then to Mr. Nix's office in the afternoon.

Fortunately, Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's office was on the north side of the building, hence Mr. Ecks never found it necessary to violate Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's privacy in order to satisfy his needs concerning office lighting.

At 5:01 P.M. on this particular day, Mr. Ecks was leaving his office and passing through the conference room when he heard a most fearful wailing and congested howling emanating from Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's office.

Mr. Ecks, a creature of inaction, did nothing upon hearing these cries, but Ms. Jones, possessing a more active nature, rushed forward and banged

repeatedly on Eueoeueuoeeuuue's door, which was locked. She then began to throw herself against the door, attempting to break it in. She soon succeeded in her efforts, and, with a cry, burst into Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuue's office.

Seconds later she burst out again, gagging, followed by an oozing pool of blood, brain matter, saliva, phlegm, stomach lining, intestinal contents, dead lymphocytes, mucus, sections of decayed liver, fat, bile, bone marrow, and various glandular secretions and effluents. Ms. Jones then held her breath and, cautiously side-stepping the puddle of gore, reentered the office with Mr. Ecks.

Mr. Ecks, in spite of his ignorance of medical matters, needed no further assurance that Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuue was stone dead, the ghastly remnants of his face lying half submerged in his own bodily constituents, which flowed off his desk and nearly covered the floor. On the desk was a brightly-wrapped package, recently opened, labeled *Candy*. Eueoeueuoeeuuue's hand and mouth were blown off, it seemed, from what might, one may infer, could possibly, perhaps, have been an explosive hidden in a piece of candy. Presumably after the explosion, Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuue, still barely alive and in shock, had vomited the entire contents of his body out upon the floor; in a word, he had literally vomited out his viscera, including what appeared to be his stomach, liver and pancreas.

No one save Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuue had entered this office since it had been built many years earlier. Now the pair took in the whole disgusting scene all at once. Ms. Jones began to moan softly.

The office apparently had not been cleaned since Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuue had first moved in long ago. The light was poor, as the window was blocked by chaotic piles of refuse, and the only light bulb had apparently burnt out years ago. Empty expensive wine bottles were strewn in heaps everywhere, rubbish was piled up to the ceiling, and garbage had been thrown all over the floor and

walls. Rats darted in and out of the offal, searching for food. The carpet was alive with insects. Countless cigar butts littered the floor, and hundreds of wads of used chewing tobacco were stuck to the walls. Plaster hung down from the ceiling and walls and an inch of dust carpeted the heaps of trash.

Upon viewing this hideous and touching scene, Ms. Jones whimpered and, through her tears, began to sing a quiet lament her mother had sung to her as a child, entitled *Ritualism and Controversy*. She accompanied her song with handclaps, while Mr. Ecks quietly found himself quietly tapping his foot.⁷

In the early morning, Ms. Jones ordered workmen to clean Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuue's office, and remove the wall adjacent to Mr. Nix's office and the wall adjacent to Mr. Sqecx's office. This would complete the circle and give Mr. Ecks a single cylindrical office surrounding the conference room on all sides.

However, when the workmen removed the last remaining wall, expecting to reach Mr. Sqecx's former office, they found something strange. For hidden between the walls was a small, dark windowless room, at one time occupied, but now abandoned.

Inside the hidden room was a cot, a workbench, and one bare hanging lightbulb. On the workbench, covered with dust and in varying degrees of completion, were various assemblies of electronic gadgetry, computer boards, mechanical frames and chassis, diagrams, charts, graphs and programs.

Ms. Jones immediately ordered the mess cleaned up and thrown away, for she had of late become mad with power.

What this mysterious room meant no one knew and no one cared, for the workmen had by now removed the far wall of this chamber, and Mr. Ecks'

⁷*Editor's Note:* This sentence appears to have been added by another mental patient, since it was fingerpainted in a thinner, gruelier style.

cylindrical office was complete.

A short time later, Ms. Jones informed Mr. Ecks that the company had acquired Europe.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Mr. Ecks in the Rounded Dark

Like yellow pus from a wound, the sun spewed interminably forth from the horizon, without hope for a cure, giving us yet another glorious day, in the life of Mr. Ecks. Upon this particular day, Mr. Ecks arrived at the firm of Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks dressed in very chic attire. No, not that Mr. Ecks was a fashion-monger, far from it. It is true that from year to year, from day to day, from morn till night, he sported an attractive pair of rubber pants, yet this was not due to a regard for fashion; rather, Mr. Ecks wore his rubber pants because he liked to snap the band of the pants as he walked, of a fine summer's day, or of a chilly winter's day, or of a windy autumn's day, and so on. Or of a sunny spring's day.

But today, today Mr. Ecks did not sport his attractive rubber pants. For this day was a Saturday, a day when Mr. Ecks was not to appear at the office. Yet Saturday had become, for Mr. Ecks, a special day, a "Club Day", or, the day upon which various secret club meetings were held, within the vast curving walls of the firm of Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue & Ecks.

Mr. Ecks stood at the threshold of the office building, upon the penneplain of the road, in his peculiar garb. For although Mr. Ecks was not wearing his divine rubber pants, he ably sported a loud jacket and tie, the preferred uniform of the Ennui. Beneath this, he wore the dull black uniform of the Pessimist. Beneath this, he wore the gleaming white uniform of the Optimist. But this in itself would not constitute what may be called a peculiarity of dress; rather, the fact that Mr. Ecks was completely caked with a thick layer of mud, from head to

toe, the result of a careless driver inadvertently splashing him with the clotted substance, contributed to the true peculiarity of his dress; for now, now he enters the towering cylinder, walking stiffly, the pack of mud hindering his movements, ready to face the faces of his fellow club members, face to face, be they Optimists, or Pessimists, or Ennuis.

For the fact of the matter was that Mr. Ecks did not know which club meeting was to be held upon that day.

Alone in the elevator, Mr. Ecks peered through his mask of stinking mud at the row of numbers as they gently illuminated, each in its turn. At length, the door slid open. Mr. Ecks stepped out into darkness.

The rooms were empty.

He looked to his left, and then to his right. But no, there were no members here.

Mr. Ecks must have thought: How is it that this, a Club Day, is lacking in club members and, therefore, in clubs? Where is the impassioned speech, the deliciously futile debate, the ensuing gaiety, laughter, wine, and song?

He slowly circled through the darkened offices, thinking all the while that at any moment the lights would suddenly burst on and all of the members would jump up with a cry from their various places of concealment, and the club meeting would happily begin.

But no, there was no one in the rounded dark.

Did Mr. Ecks, then, conclude that there was no meeting upon that day, that this Club Day was an exception to the revolving series of meetings which had been held, weekly, upon this day? No, these were not Mr. Ecks' conclusions. Rather, Mr. Ecks reasoned in the following manner:

- 1) Today is a Club Day, a day upon which

one of a revolving series of meetings occurs.

2) Therefore, this unattended gathering was in itself a meeting of a club the nature of which Mr. Ecks was as yet ignorant.

3) Therefore, one of the rules of this club must be that members are not required to attend the club meetings.

4) Therefore, Mr. Ecks had committed a grave error, in disturbing the sanctity of the club's meeting, by his attendance at that meeting.

5) Therefore, in order to fulfill the requirements of membership in this club, Mr. Ecks must refrain from attending each meeting; thus he must immediately turn upon his mud-caked heels and depart from the present meeting, allowing the premises which housed the nameless club to return, in accordance with the Ultimate Law of Darkness and Silence, to darkness, and silence.

He did so.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Mr. Ecks' Speaks

A meeting was convened to discuss policy changes which were necessitated by the tragic and untimely death of Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue. The conference was to be at nine o'clock, sharp. Therefore, at one minute to nine, Mr. Ecks entered the conference room, and assumed his place at the chairman's seat.

Mr. Ecks gazed slowly and serenely at the empty chairs surrounding the empty table. This was a meeting after Mr. Ecks' own heart.

Ms. Jones entered and ritually placed a photographic portrait of the beloved Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue on the far wall next to that of Mr. Lix, Mr. Nix, and Mr. Sqecx. Ms. Jones eyed the portraits solemnly, recited a prayer, and quietly departed.

MS. JONES'S PRAYER

Dear Lawd, What wid all dis fussin' an' finagellin' aroun' we been doin' consoinin' dese here poor dead, wal, dere ain't nuttin' we here kin do fer 'em, bein' as how dey ain't aroun' no mo', so's all we ax is dat you, in yer lovin' ways, take dese here poor souls up in yer arms an' hold 'em dere gently fer all eternity, showin' 'em all de wondrous dancin' spheres amid de unnumbered throng o' stars, an' bathin' 'em clean in de pure, shimmerin' darkness o' night. An' Lawd, if ye really is up dere, look kindly down on dese here poor deeds we been doin', for we ain't sure jest what's goin' on, wid respect to why we human bein's is put here in de foist place, so natchrally, we been pretty mixed-up not knowin' fer sure jest who's runnin' de show, an' what de show's all about, if ye know what I mean. All dese people runnin' aroun', all dese men an' women chasin' after each udder until dey die, tryin' to git what dey wants, it's all crazy an' complicated an' mixed-up. Everybody's chasin' after everybody else, hopin' to find somebody wid a

answer about what's goin' on. An' dat's why, once in a while, a soitin' guy come along what seems to got de answer, but in de end it turn out dat he don't know nuttin' mo' den nobody else! So it gets ya thinkin' dat maybe dere aint nebber gonna be nobody 'cept ourselfs to come up wid de answer an' set us free from all this runnin' around lookin' fer it all de time. So, Lawd, if ye kin find it in yer heart to forgive all de foolish an' gawd-awful things we been doin' to each udder, an' let bygones be bygones, wal, mebbe in spite o' de fack dat everythin' seems so futile-like an' meanin'less, ya kin help us to be laughin' at little more at how crazy dis whole mess o' life is, not only laughin' at how serious we been takin' de whole crazy business, but also laughin' at our own hurtfulness an' at our own disillusionment. Amen.

As previously stated, after her garbled prayer, Ms. Jones immediately left the room and would soon be, after a final sentimental appearance in the next chapter, ancient history to the telling of this, Mr. Ecks' tale.

As the principal speaker and now the sole attendee at the meeting, Mr. Ecks rose to the occasion. He stood there motionless, alone in the middle of the conference room.

A small flying insect lighted in the glass ashtray, and sucked greedily upon a tiny bead of spittle that had been emitted during Ms. Jones' speech, and had somehow found its way to rest among the smoldering, twisted ruins of cigarettes and cigars. Now the sparkling dust, illuminated by the sunbeams, drifted down like a loosely-woven blanket before his eyes. All was peace and quiet, for here, where Mr. Ecks assumed the chairman's seat, the silent debators were all in perfect accord.

The scene remained fixed for some time, while Mr. Ecks remained motionless. And from a perspective high, high above, where, one doubts, the gods drift aimlessly from hither to thither, a curious omnipotent being could

have feasted his eyes upon the delicate geometry of the scene as a whole:

- 1) A circle (Mr. Ecks' head) intersected at one point another circle (the conference table).
- 2) These circles were surrounded by three concentric circles (the conference room, the office building, and the earth, respectively).
- 3) Around this traversed in a circular path another circle (the Moon).
- 4) This system of circles then circled a larger circle (the sun).

The rather touching (however trite) arrangement as a whole, then, could, from such a perspective, be viewed as follows:

[INSERT DIAGRAM OF THE SYSTEM OF CIRCLES]



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Mr. Ecks is Loved

Mr. Ecks slowly stood up from his desk. The light filtering in through Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's window was unfavorable to him. It would be natural for one to assume, then, that he proceeded onward, onward, into Mr. Sqecx's office, in order to take advantage of the sun's shifting position on the equinox, as was his usual wont. But no, Mr. Ecks made no motions to proceed.

The reason for Mr. Ecks' reluctance to proceed in this instance was as follows: that morning, he had begun his unobtrusive duties at the desk of Mr. Sqecx, and had continued on sequentially, from office to office in a full circle, from Mr. Sqecx's office to Mr. Lix's office to Mr. Nix's office to Mr. Eueoeueuoeeuuuuue's office; to begin again, to cross the threshold to Mr. Sqecx's office would be, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks, the tortuous beginning of an infinite series, for he could not stop there, occupying Mr. Sqecx's office once again, without proceeding to each respective office in turn; and once the circuit had been made again, the completion of two revolutions only would be intollerable to Mr. Ecks' sensibilities, for he would have to continue on, on, until the requirements of the infinite circle were satisfied, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

It was at this crucial moment, then, that Ms. Jones made her entrance. Her eyes were wet and raw, evidently the aftermath of a bout of tears. To explicate, rather than to infer, the reason for these gentle tears which, at this very moment on the page, stream in glistening tracks from lash to brow, from brow to chin, from chin to nape, would be a tactless redundancy, for the inference is clear: in her right hand was a cardboard box, addressed to Mr. Ecks, which had been

opened (presumably by Ms. Jones) and then resealed; in her left hand was an envelope, addressed to Mr. Ecks, which had been opened also (presumably by Ms. Jones) and then resealed; these articles, for unknown reasons, had apparently broken her heart.

She placed the items on the desk before Mr. Ecks.

A silence ensued, as Ms. Jones stood there, her lips trembling, her eyes fixed upon Mr. Ecks, as if in dramatic prelude to -- what?

Mr. Ecks' eyes, however, were trained upon the surface of his desk, upon which a small paper clip, which seized the foundering sunlight from the window, bathed his rapt gaze in a strange reflection of variegated luminescence.

It was in vain, then, that Ms. Jones, unable to hold back the desire to express her feelings, her wants, her desires, to the oblivious Mr. Ecks, opened her mouth and, in a voice replete with gentleness and despair, began to speak:

"It ain't fair, me findin' out like dis, what de scoop is, it jest don't seem right, you know? I mean, I thought, maybe, you an' me, wal, somehow I figured, what wit' all de time we been spendin' together, wal, dat in time you'd come to feel about me de same way I feel about you. Oh, I know, I know, I'm jest a secretary an' you, you're de big boss o' de whole company, but, wal, somehow I still figured dat de feelin's deep wit'in de heart would always win out in de end, you know? But now, now it's all over, it don't matter no more. Before, ya was like a mystery to me, a beautiful mystery what become more an' more gentle as times wore on, an' it seem almos' like - like fate dat ebberybody jest croaked off, one by one, 'cept fer you an' me. But now, now it don't matter no more. Nuttin' matters no more, 'cause I know now dat ya can't feel about me like I feel about ya, 'cause ya don't feel about nobody de way people should feel towards each udder --"

Here Ms. Jones was choked with emotion, and wept long and deeply. Mr.

Ecks was at the time hunched over his desk so that his nose was flattened against his blotting pad, so intent was his gaze upon the tiny glint of light.

"It jest -- it jest hurts so much when all yer dreams an' hopes all come to nuttin', I mean, it makes ya feel like dere ain't no purpose to nuttin' nobody does, an' dat's so hard -- so hard to face, you know? I remember, when I was a little kid, my pa tellin' me dat at all de universe is nuttin' but a big machine what ain't got no particular rhyme or reason, an' dat dere ain't no rules fer what nobody does, 'cept fer what rules we make up fer ourselves, an' dat dere's nobody to blame but yerself fer whatebber happens to ya, 'cause he said dat dere ain't nobody runnin' de machine, dere ain't nobody up in de sky watchin' down over ya, when you need a helpin' hand, when t'ings is bad. But it always been so hard fer me to believe dat t'ings could be so mixed-up. I mean, I can't help feelin' dat dere must be sumpin' inside de machine, sumpin' dat ain't necessarily part o' de machine, sumpin' dat means sumpin', so we ain't jest flounderin' aroun' on our own, wit'out nobody to turn to. It's all too horrible to think about. We don't know nuttin' about nuttin', but still all dese jerks keeps sayin' dat dey know jest what's goin' on, all of 'em wit' dere different ideas, gettin' you so mixed-up, ya don't know if yer comin' or goin'. What's goin' on? What am I doin' here anyhow? Why was I even born? Sometimes it jest made me wanna lay down an' die. Nuttin' made no sense. But den, out o' de blue, in de midst o' all dis turmoil an' confusion, out o' de blue, you suddenly came into my life like a shaft o' light glistenin' t'rough de darkness, an' all my worryin' an' complainin' seem like so much whinin' an' babblin', an' I seen myself actin' like some little baby what can't even lift up de spoon to feed herself. Oh, when I first seen ya, you was so beautiful, my darlin', dat it took my breath away. De sky wasn't no more jest a bunch o' empty spaces 'twixt de stars, 'cause now I seen it like a dazzlin', shimmerin' curtain sprinkled wit' all de jewels o' de night sky, an' de whole

world, when I thought o' ya, was filled wit' beauty an' meanin'. Oh, my own true love, I swear I loved ya wit' ebbery inch o' my heart, you was so sweet, an' quiet an' peaceful, an' I suppose I still do love ya wit' all my heart, even now, but only in a different way, after readin' dat letter. Oh, baby, if only -- if only I didn't read dis stuff! T'ings might o' been different. We could o' still been togedder. But it seem like -- like I was only dreamin' a stupid dream what was blindin' me to de way things really is. I remember tryin' to peep glimpses o' ya, t'rough de crack in de door, to see ya sittin' dere starin' out de window, doin' nuttin'. How I loved you at dose moments. I used to watch ya fer hours, I loved ya so much. It was like a addiction o' all my senses, gettin' worse an' 't'rough de keyhole, worse. I couldn't get enough o' ya, watchin' ya t'rough de keyhole, thinkin' about ya my ebber wakin' moment, day in, day out. I used to lie awake at night an' dream o' holdin' ya close, sleepin' an' snugglin' wit' ya so peaceful an' quiet. But den -- I read dis letter. Oh, I was so shocked, readin' dese papers. But on de udder hand, it made ebberyt'ing suddenly make sense. I could look back an' say, Now I unnerstan' why ya been actin' so mysterious. Now I unnerstan' why t'ings is de way dey is. An' it's funny, 'cause I don't know fer sure if ya knows what's goin' on yerself. Mebbe ebber't'ing seem all mixed-up to you, too. But it don't matter. Nuttin' matters no more. All I knows is, dat I can't go on like dis. I can't go on workin' in de same place wit' ya, knowin' what I know now. I gotta move on, go someplace where I can start fresh, wit'out bein' haunted by yer sweet face, day in, day out. So now ya knows. I spoke my piece. Dat's de beginnin' an' end o' it. But before I go, I jest want ya to know dat -- dat I'll nebber forget you, nebber, ebber. An', in spite o, ebber't'ing, I swear, my darlin', I'll always -- love you."

After this graceful and feeling reparté, she gently kissed Mr. Ecks' forehead, tasting a brackish layer of dust thereupon and nothing more, and

silently departed. As promised in the previous chapter, no more will we see Ms. Jones, not in this world, not in this book.

As to Ms. Jones's appeal ad hominem, needless to say, it left Mr. Ecks high and dry. The bright hypnotic gleam of the paper clip at length diminished, as the sunlight waned, to a dull glimmering.

He turned his gaze, then, from its dying lustre, lifting his nose from the blotting pad, and noted the envelope, the cardboard box, lying squarely in his view, two new items from which the pleasure of novelty could be obtained once again. Thus he looked upon the two articles, not with revulsion, nor with delight, but rather with languid interest.

Now the room was dark. This was, in effect, an electromagnetic signal, a sign, which told Mr. Ecks that it was time, at last, to depart.

He rose from the desk. He picked up the envelope, the cardboard box, and glided through the sultry umbra. Alone in the elevator, the little numbers lit up from right to left, in reverse sequence, bringing Mr. Ecks and his new accouterments deeper and deeper into the depths of the master cylinder.

The door slid deftly open. Mr. Ecks made his way out under the stars, for it was by now twilight, a lovely, quiet time, for Mr. Ecks.



CHAPTER TWENTY

Mr. Ecks Remembers

He walked into a bar. His eyes failed him and he bumped into a wall, flattening his nose. This error was not due to excessive darkness in the room, but rather it was due to the fact that his eyes, his ears, his nose had begun failing him for some time; thus the ratio of increasing age to decreasing acumen was inverted, and this pleased Mr. Ecks, for he cherished the shape of the inverse ratio.

He sat down in a corner booth. The bartender was washing glasses.

Mr. Ecks gradually turned his gaze to the articles before him. The little envelope, the little cardboard box.

How sweet were these items to him, for sweetness, to Mr. Ecks, was ever externally banal, to the point of insipidity, and yet, internally mysterious, dark and unknown in its purpose, meaning, and origin. Thus was the little envelope, the cardboard box, sweet, to Mr. Ecks.

Mr. Ecks picked up the letter. Written upon it, in a light scrawl, was the following directive:

TO BE DELIVERED TO MR. ECKS
AT A RANDOM MOMENT IN TIME

What interested Mr. Ecks about this mysterious directive was not the directive in itself, but rather the fact that he recognized to whom the peculiar

handwriting belonged.

"Mr. Sqecx."

The name came tumbling from his lips, before he could hold it back. He would gladly have taken back the words thus uttered, but he could not, for they were irretrievably lost to him, those words, so feebly uttered.

Mr. Sqecx. Mr. Sqecx.

The question may be raised, Why did Ms. Jones deliver the letter to Mr. Ecks at the end of the tale, which appears to be the proper place, in the dramatic sense, for its appearance, when in fact the directive calls for its appearance at a random moment in time? The answer to this objection is twofold:

- 1) Although a "random appearance" implies an appearance at an unexpected, or inappropriate, time, a truly random appearance could occur at any time whatsoever, whether appropriate or inappropriate, expected or unexpected; furthermore, if an unexpected appearance is expected, what could be more unexpected than to make its appearance at an expected, or appropriate, time?
- 2) How was Ms. Jones to know that this was the end of the book? She is within the book, and one cannot see what is what from within; one must be outside the world to see the world as it is, for how can one see the field from within the field, when one can see nothing but the field, the field?

Due to the interactions of unknown circuitry within his head, Mr. Ecks first turned his attention to the envelope before him. He opened the letter in the manner of one unaccustomed to opening letters; that is to say, he made a small hole in the middle of the envelope, and pinched and minced the papers until they were drawn through the hole in a thin, rumped wad.

The envelope thus ripped and crumpled, the contents lay naked before Mr.

Ecks' fly-like gaze. He unfolded the ruined papers with tender gesticulation, carefully freeing each sheet from each sheet, dissecting the little paper cigar, or so it seemed, to Mr. Ecks. At last, he laid out the crumpled remnants flat on the beer-stained table. The documents, then, from Mr. Sqecx, to Mr. Ecks, appeared to consist wholly of complex diagrams and schematics of interfacing computers. The sheets were carefully numbered, and obviously comprised the complete parts of a single, multi-faceted, technically advanced mechanism.

Mr. Ecks stopped in his perusal. He had at that moment the uncanny feeling that he had seen these bland pages many times before, but --- where?

Slowly, just below his consciousness, such as it was, the memories began seeping in. Little drippings. So sweet, in their recollection.

A scene gradually formed in his mind:

It was Mr. Ecks, in his memory,⁸ sitting on a bench, alone with Mr. Sqecx. The air was opulent with mystery. Blinking lights, wires, shiny tools, the odor of fresh solder, rattling schematics, clickings, bleeps, electrical cackle. Little drippings. Behind the fog of sounds and smells remembered, a picture slowly emerged, becoming tangible:

Mr. Sqecx was lifting off the top of Mr. Ecks' head, and inserting deeply therein a delicate tweaking tool, probing, adjusting the intricate recesses of the cavity in question.

Mr. Sqecx cleared his throat.

Right eye, said Mr. Sqecx. Left eye.

Mr. Ecks' Tight eye, then left eye, closed, opened.

⁸And is not his memory an elegant miniature, so to speak, of the exposed akashic film of space-time?

Both eyes, said Mr. Sqecx,

Both eyes, Mr. Ecks' left eye, and Mr. Ecks' right eye, closed.

The rumbling fog reemerged, obscuring the little scene. His memory churned, surged, From beneath the haze, another touching scene appeared:

Mr. Ecks was in a small room, sitting on a workbench. He had no skin. His legs were gone. Attached to the frame of his head was an artificial duck-bill, the beak of a duck, fitted by rows of tiny screws to his mouth cavity. Mr. Sqecx was holding a remote control device, and pressing a button to make the beak open and close.

"Quack," said Mr. Sqecx. "Quack, quack."

The rumbling fog reemerged, obscuring the little scene in Mr. Ecks' mind. His memory churned, surged. From beneath the haze, another vision appeared:

Mr. Sqecx was seated at his workbench, drawing up the papers which Mr. Ecks now held in his hands. When he had finished, Mr. Sqecx played a phonograph record on a phonograph machine on his desk. When the music began, Mr. Sqecx embraced Mr. Ecks, and they danced around and around the room. The scene twirled and swirled in his mind, the accordion whining, the clarinet bleating.

The rumbling fog reemerged, and another vision appeared:

Mr. Ecks stood in the small room, dressed as a cowboy. With a fine tool, Mr. Sqecx was adjusting the various mechanisms within Mr. Ecks' torso. When the adjustments were complete, Mr. Sqecx donned a horse costume, and began giving Mr. Ecks a cowboy pony ride.

The rumbling fog reemerged, and another vision appeared:

Mr. Ecks sat in a small room, immersed in a tank of water. Mr. Sqecx

stood outside the tank, checking items on a clipboard. When the list was completed, Mr. Sqecx donned a diving mask and flippers, climbed a footladder next to the enormous tank, and jumped into the water. Mr. Ecks sat immobile at the bottom of the tank, watching the spiral of bubbles and swirling flak whirl and eddy about his little watery domain. When Mr. Sqecx was thoroughly immersed in the tank, he took out a little hammer and began thumping Mr. Ecks' head experimentally in the water. Thump, thump, went Mr. Sqecx.

The rumbling fog reemerged, and another vision appeared:

Mr. Ecks and Mr. Sqecx were dressed in tuxedos, and seated in a plush nightclub. A girl in an evening gown sang a song about her boyfriend's automobile. Clap, clap, went Mr. Ecks and Mr. Sqecx. Then a man in a tuxedo came out and told funny jokes. Ha, ha, went Mr. Ecks and Mr. Sqecx.

The rumbling fog reemerged; another scene appeared:

Mr. Ecks was sitting on a workbench, alone with Mr. Sqecx. Mr. Sqecx had composed a love poem to Mr. Ecks. With tears streaming down his face, Mr. Sqecx read the poem aloud.

*Though sweet, your lips are sour in silent mood
As the sun disguises day in masks of night,
And every living thing is racked in solitude,
Until darkness dons its comic mask of light,
But now chameleons morph within the mires
And moonlit vapors mask the stars with sadness,
While you and I, rapt in love's desires
Disguise our inward reason with outward madness.*

*For though we love with thoughts of gentleness,
We know the truest love can only seem;
But still, we cannot love each other less,
Though love be but a scrap, a whisp, a dream.
For nothingness is cloaked in each caress,
And all that is, a mask of nothingness.*



CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Goodbye Mr. Ecks

The memories listed in the preceding chapter, as well as many others, some fond and sentimental, some quaint and plebian, some having other qualities not alluded to at this time, not in this book, came to Mr. Ecks, as he sat placidly at his table, the schematics lying between his dimly pulsating fingertips. It had been, in effect, the distorted memory of his own little life, passing before his eyes.

Mr. Ecks turned his attention away from the squashed schematics, and directed it towards the other item he had been given by the disabused Ms. Jones.

This item was the cardboard box.

Like all the packages from the Yakuza, the box was gaily wrapped with ribbons and colorful paper.

He opened the package in the manner of one unaccustomed to opening packages. As he was engaged in this action, he accidentally ripped a ragged segment of skin from the worn flesh in the palm of his right hand. He noted that this rupture glowed in the semi-dark, exposing the dim blinking of tiny lights between a maze of wires and circuits.

It was a pretty sight.

The lights reflected off his glazed eyes. He stared at the faint electronic blips in the dark recesses of his hand for two hours.

At the end of this time, as his attention was slowly drawn back to the kidnapper's gift-wrapped package, he carefully removed the piece of paper showing only a black dot, pushed aside the shards of ripped-and shredded

cardboard that had been the cover, and gingerly lifted out the oval object that had been neatly wrapped between layers of crinkled tissue.

It was Mr. Nix's brain.

There was no note accompanying the item; rather, the brain was noteless.

But since the wrappings were much the same as the others from the Japanese, he knew that this fruitlike globe of gore had once lived in Mr. Nix's skull. It was, perhaps, a final gesture on the part of the Yakuza, to illustrate their consistency, or, alternatively, their love of symbolic ritual, or both.

Did not Mr. Ecks reflect, then, that this brain within his hands had often held within it his image, the image of Mr. Ecks, and through various mental gyrations, had associated the name Mr. Ecks with the image of Mr. Ecks, repeatedly and monotonously?

Did not Mr. Ecks reflect that this brain in his hands had conjured from the void a magnificent investment empire, and had ruled it with grace and dignity?

Did not Mr. Ecks reflect that this brain in his hands was, in effect, the same as his own brain, or so it seemed to Mr Ecks, and that the perceptions of this biological binary computer were the only known means by which anything in the universe was perceived to exist?

No.

These were not Mr. Ecks' thoughts.

Rather, he lifted again Mr. Sqecx's schematics, in his right hand (the damaged hand), since his left hand was already occupied in the act of holding Mr. Nix's brain.

Viewing these objects, all the world stopped, for a time, for Mr. Ecks, as it were, as he gazed implacably at the papers and the brain, or so it seemed, to Mr. Ecks.

At length, he turned his eyes slowly outward, outward, in a widening

gyre, away from the ponderous objects in his hands.

It was late in the evening, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks. The grandfather clock chimed twelve times, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks. The bartender was turning off the light, and preparing to close for the evening, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks. All of the customers were reluctantly departing, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks. The bartender turned out the last light and departed, locking the door from the outside, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks. Apparently, he had seemed to have been unobserved, a phrase which some have argued is the finest and most loquacious in all of the phrases in this exactly phrased biographical record. The fact that Mr. Ecks had been unobserved would appear to be an unlikely happenstance, so it would seem, unless, of course, he was seated in a dark corner, or unless, of course, he was never there, and that somehow he himself did not really exist at all, that he had never existed at all, except in the pages of this quaint volume, or so it seemed to Mr. Ecks.

But regardless of the Problem of Existence, that is, whether he ultimately existed or not, Mr. Ecks knew that it was a fact that he now sat alone in the darkness. The glimmering light from the opening in his hand blinked faintly, on and off. The faint flashes were comforting to Mr. Ecks, giving the illusion that something was happening when, in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The soft flashes of illumination, then, after several hours, or years, or centuries, or eons, or quantum instants, began to fade, fade, fading, as if from a dying power source, now dimly lighting, now dimly darkening, his blank, expressionless face.

The pale, blinking, electronic fire waned and weakened and at last began to slowly fade.

And as it did, Mr. Ecks sat motionless, doing nothing, as was his wont, for there was nothing more to be done by Mr. Ecks, nothing at all, except perhaps to

drift freely in the tide of the interminable current of lush almost-emptiness, a speck in the sea of time and space that ebbed and flowed within and without him endlessly, gently ushering Mr. Ecks to the ragged, or sultry, or indifferent shores of heaven, or hell, or both.

Or oblivion, to offer an equally as appealing option in Mr. Ecks' final moments to what is, ultimately, indeed, despite the underlying paradox and impossibility of his or anyone else's real and implacable existence, his real and implacable existence.

For we shall see no more of Mr. Ecks, not in this world, not in this book.

Out of the nothingness he sweetly came, into the nothingness he sweetly goes.

Or so it seemed, to Mr. Ecks.



AUTHOR'S NOTES
ON IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE
ON THE TEXT OF FACELESS COG

Note: None of these improvements will ever be addressed.

- Use false quote from Bertram Russell in prologue.
- Change open: open with the ending: Mr. X sitting at bar table holding the brain and schematics. Don't reveal as brain, rather as "an organ of a male's human anatomy". Have him staring at them, then flash back to the beginning. (He was in the same bar, many years ago, watching the bartender etc., when a group of four men approached him etc.)
- More on open: Mr. Ecks entered and sat in a corner booth of the bar. Whence he came we know not, for as our attention focuses on the filthy room, he is simply -- there.
- More on open: A dark-faced woman is eyeing Mr. Ecks from where she sits at the bar; Mr. X observes this objectively. Show him analyzing the sexual come-on, then the businessmen come to his table. Resolve her seeing X with the brain etc.
- Finish ending to include the girl in the bar at the open of the book, and what happened when she saw the brain in Mr. X's hands.
- Make it an investment firm.
- Establish Mr. Sqecx as a computer genius, the first to computerize the entire enterprise to maximum efficiency, and so that the corp runs on its own with less and less input from the Board except for broad decisions, which is how the firm got so far ahead of every other investment firm. If you're flying a 2-seater plane and it starts to drift, if you keep trying to correct its controls manually, it will get worse -- you have to LET GO OF THE WHEEL and let it aright itself naturally. So too with a corporation. Let the physics of nature do its thing. (also it helped the corporation's profits that they kept changing the name?)
- More on end: A page or so before he dies, have Mr. X's position spatially analyzed as before, but this time from a POV within (going a la powers-of-10

within the opening in his hand). For that is where he is going, within, just as much as going without (for the energy can best be seen compacted within). Show Diagram 3: The Arrangement of Inner Circles.

- Add colorful and bizarre references from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* and *Foundations of Mathematics*, *Chuang Tzu* and especially Wheelright's *The Presocratics*.
- Add more poems.
- Add math permutations & equations to "over-describe" certain events or patterns. Chapt. on Mr. X on roof. Analysis of patterns of crowds below, when frozen, as magic square patterns; clicks on frozen "mind-photo" of patterns and analyzes them. Looks up at cloud, bird, star patterns. Click, click, click. Show pattern diagrams. Use geomancy/astrological symb. Show his conclusions of interconnecting patterns and Give examples. Use patterns in Andrews' *Magic Squares*.