

Life in the *Real*; or The Transformation of a “Normal” Person Through the  
Void of Enigmatic Existence

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The DAY has passed.

It rolled in and over me, tearing my mind apart and jostling my benevolent body as a rag doll in a child’s hands, leaving me with a head full of fog and a quivering composure. She sat next to me, and after giving me a look of seduction, sex and apathy, asked for the fifth time if she could drive. I repeated what I had been saying on every click of a mile, on every hour of the night.

“No.”

I had really only known her six hours--it seemed like longer, perhaps twelve, but then again I had been on the road near four hours; time viewed from behind the wheel can sometimes become distorted, sort of like driving through a long tunnel black as pitch--with blinders attached. She might have been my last girlfriend, a friend’s girlfriend, a shared girlfriend, a woman pressing a lawsuit for my ill behavior, or a woman I didn’t even know.

I wish to say I am not the kind of man who consciously chooses to immerse himself in self-credible or “occult-based” thoughts. I’d rather have no part of it. In fact, I like to think as little as possible, what with the world the way it is, if one is inclined to think about it, he would eventually drive himself crazy. So, in the interests of staying on my side of the fence, of not keeping myself shut off from the world, my friends, family and whatever, I find it best not to ponder--no matter what the circumstances. Though friends say to be an artist, a writer, you have to ponder, I’ll stay out in the light of life instead of shutting myself out--like most artists seem to do. And if I have to

compromise, I'll refuse the art, the ability, and the madness.

I was, however, never certain of the prospects of life, never certain of my position and my place, and powerless to act on my inhibitions.

Earlier in the evening, before I agreed to drive her to San Ramon, we had some drinks, a little food, heavily caffeinated sugarless sodas and generous amounts of concentrated powdered stimulants. My mind was keen, my body was jelly; she grinned from ear to ear and talked of her life in long phrases, the words turned sentences jammed themselves into my ears.

Earlier than that, before the arduous, godforsaken journey began, I met her at a sleazy pool hall--a place where all the lazars, losers, no-lifes, stoners, slammers and tweakers gathered--it might have been pure comedy if I hadn't realized fifteen minutes into our stay that I knew somebody there. I wanted to laugh but only hacked dryly which sounded more forced than accidental. She seemed amused.

Even earlier than that, I had my ear filled by another friend. Apparently he was in the midst of an emergency; a desperate, personal crisis was at hand. The world had fallen in, the pressure on his brain was critical, the stress would kill him at any moment. It was at times like this he chose to channel the crux of his annoyances onto the path of least resistance, to someone else, someone who was close and an easy target. And I was the chosen target this day. I had told him a couple of nights ago, as we were having beers, that if he needed anything, I would be glad to help him out just because we were friends, because I valued his company. He decided to cash in on the proposed favor. But as I heard his girlfriend in the background pleading with him to take her to San Ramon--a small, fairly pleasant town in the hills above the Bay Area, a distance well over a hundred miles--I had caught myself thinking twice about having made the promise in the first place, this favor was beyond the call, stretched beyond its limits. A "normal" person wouldn't. . .but I was a man of my word, one to live up to my responsibilities and to let friends down as infrequently as possible. I had to figure the time involved getting to San Ramon, one literally had no idea after considering all the variables of traffic, construction

and weather that lay in the stretch between the valley and there. After offering me all the pleasantries, and setting up me as the officially sponsored ride, the officiator of good faith that he was requested if I could fulfill the task. I smirked and tried to back out of it--if there was any way to, I had to find it without letting him down. I told him I already gave at the office.

“Hey, this is important,” he thinly pleaded.

I was sure it was, she was near tears, sniveling and whining. She was probably on her knees, which made for an interesting mental picture. I remembered it used to work on him, years ago. Now he was bored and tired of her--now he was immune.

I wished I had been so brazen, and not caught myself in a trap of my own design.

“Come over and we’ll talk about it,” he said. And why not? I was a patronizing guy in need of a good shafting--no lube of course. He was really going to go forward with it, and throw my promise into my face, if it came to that. Every part of me screamed not to go, but being a mediocre writer and adventurer, this could be fodder for creativity. If I only had known.

When I arrived, I came to realize it was a fine performance, one that required tens of minutes of rehearsing; she stood so close to me I picked up a mixed scent of perfume, sweat and fresh, stagnant sex on her. It made me think of my parents’ waterbed, my ex-girlfriend Lisa, her sister, several rolls of film, a box of condoms, a jar of honey, my cat Sam and two feet of twine. Lisa and her sister said it was kinky, I thought it was weird.

“Please,” she whimpered, “I need to go see my son, it’s been months.”

I watched her shuffle over to the fireplace and stick her face close to the fire. “I’m so stressed,” she said at last. “My mother’s going to take him away from me and I’ll have no one in the world--no one at all.”

That must’ve meant her boyfriend didn’t count; he glared at her, mouthed ‘not my kid’, made obscene masturbating gestures and went off to the kitchen. After the sound of him rifling frantically through cabinets echoed through the house, he came back with a lone, helpless Ho-Ho and messily devoured it. His blank face was smeared with cream

filling.

I gazed at the fire seeing the flames lick the blackened bricks. I pictured myself as a brick, the girl as the fire, and my friend as the mortar holding me in place. My good-natured, naive urge to help people being defaced by the flames. I wished I never saw the fireplace, or the girl, or my friend. I only had one prevailing thought. . I wished I listened to myself and still lived in obscurity in the city, without friends, without colleagues, and without problems.

And before all that happened, I was resting quietly in my room, the walls a wash of tan and white, the ceiling a glimmer of specks, the insides of my eyes a kaleidoscope. My stomach wrenched, my appetite non-existent, insomnia overtaking, the cause of which unrenowned to me. When the phone rang, every fiber of my being chorused I not answer, that it would be certain death, the gun with a single bullet in the chamber aimed at my head. I smiled and opened my eyes, gazing at the phone, the receiver nearly jumping out of its cradle into my hand.

The clap of fire, the projectile lodged in the fall wall after passing through unshielded flesh. An aroma of gunpowder hung heavy in the air.

## II

The highway leaped out before me, crouching into curves, tucking itself under bridges; sodium lamps screamed orange streaks casting eerie shadows on her expressionless face.

I used to toy with the idea I was losing my mind, but I had given it up years ago, after seeing what an emotionless bastard I had become--I had no choice but to. I hated myself. And almost died at my own hands. I had put all that negativity away, far away, where I could never find it. I blocked everything, and denied everything; slowly I had become a better person, more human. And now the muck was being stirred, feelings dredged up from the bottom of the black pool I was so afraid of. The old glove of assimilation into the void, was upon me. But why toy? Why even worry about it? Why

fight it? Just admit to the fact I had lost it. Why spend so much energy prolonging the inevitable? I mean, here I was, exactly where I didn't want to be, with her, in my car, on the road, to a destination of great unimportance. I had lost the capacity for rational, reasonable thoughts indicative of self-preservation. I must have been out of my noodle. I had broken a branch in the hierarchy of the Tree of Life and fallen a great distance--all fingers pointed, all eyes stared, all faces laughed--I had to be insane.

“What are you thinking?” She asked callously.

“Oh, nothing.” I said and pulled the car hard into a curve, hoping the ditch would find me.

“Sure?”

“Well, no, that's a lie. But if you really must know, I'm pondering. . .driving, flying, crawling, leaning; swallowing, spitting, chewing, licking; twisting, turning, spinning, whirling. . .Lisa, Bethany, Lyle and Oreos; breasts, buttocks, hemorrhoids and vices; a friend, an enemy, his wife and my car; life, death, lust and the Japanese. . .Dinah, Hiela, Maria and herpes; sex, fucking, love and inconveniences; high, low, never and a memory lapse; amphetamines, depressants, a bore and what I need right now.” In my mind I had said it all, and without rehearsal. But my lips would have no part of it. If I let her know anything about me, then, she could manipulate her brilliant discoveries. She would incessantly keep her wandering eyes fixed upon me, looking for more worldly information in a vain attempt to familiarize herself with my psyche. And I was having a difficult time as it was remaining enigmatic, it was all I could do to keep from sliding completely into the seat.

. . .She sits next to me, her eyes on the road, her eyes on me. . .I'm finding it difficult to discern my erratic high from reality, I can't distinguish which is fact, which is fiction, and which is pure illusion. I look at her, her eyes meet mine. I follow the curves of her body: long, tangled brown hair, thin eyebrows, large hazel eyes, small nose and lips: her chin, her neck, her shoulders and breasts, her waist, hips, cunt and legs. . .I fantasize. . .I see a movie of us having sex together. . .

But the sight of my friend pumping steadily into her awakes me, discarded shimmering silver Ho-Ho wrappers litter his bedroom floor.

. . .Later:

Near eleven, my thoughts slow, I shut the car off in a parking lot. She laid rails and I became the 10:53 Express, leaning to check my reflection. She decided on swallowing rather than breathing and winced as it went down. I wished to smile but found I couldn't, the phantom grin permanently wiped from my face. At 5:30 she was cute, at 7:00 she was adorable, at 9:15 she was naked, breasts perking out, her fingers probing between her legs; at 9:16 I purposely slammed my head into the door glass. At 10:00 she was irritating, at 10:20 I wanted to strike her, at 10:40 I wanted to choke her, at 10:45 I wanted to kill her and at 10:54, I loved her.

The sway of emotions, the turpitude of my thoughts and fantasies, didn't surprise me as much as the erection in my pants. I looked down at myself and was perplexed at what I saw--this odd bulge--it couldn't have been for her, I wasn't even attracted to her. She was plain, banal, dispassionate, and patronizing. It must have been from running on high octane, on pure reaction, on instinct, on fear.

"I like your hair," she said solemnly, trying to strike up a conversation. Not much had been said in the last hour. I had gotten used to the purr of the motor, the slipstream of the wind, the growling of the road pounding into my head. I had worked myself into a daze; a scenario: after a great cataclysm, after total annihilation of the earth and its components, I was the only soul left in the world, damned to pay for the sins of a wanton life by (endlessly) driving to a non-existent destination. And she was a figment of my imagination, the only company I could muster in the plight of my (doom, situation). And I was fond of talking to my imagination, believing it could manifest itself outside of my head. And apparently it had. So, with a complete blank on my face and a constant monotone in my voice, I nodded and replied with a proper,

"Thanks."

"That's a nice ring too. Can I see it?" The projection asked. I held my hand to its face, the gold caught the glint of the night.

"A gift?"

"Yes."

"Nice."

“Thanks.”

“From who?”

“A friend.”

“Girlfriend?”

“I can’t say.”

“Can’t or won’t?”

“I really have no idea.”

Silence. The banter waned. My imagination was staring to lose cohesion--to lose its imagination. I was desperately disappointed. The drive was endless.

In San Ramon:

Into town, up hills and down hills, around curves, dips, and inconsistent pavement surfaces. I was impatient and had been for the better part of sixty miles. Her directions were a maze of pernicious angles, disorganized and skewed, related to me in a tone that included questions she asked of herself: where the hell was she taking us, it’s late and maybe her mother’s asleep, what street was that, are we in the right town, she wanted to make it up to me on the way back, and she was lost.

I was thinking of what my friend told me before I left with her.

“Expect her to say, ‘I’ll make it up to you’. If she does (and she probably will), be sure you cash in before you drop her off--or else you’ll see nothing of her promise. Oh, yeah, most importantly, play on her a little, she’ll kick down, promise or not.”

“Nah,” I said. “She’s YOUR girlfriend.”

“She not MY girlfriend, just my Ho.”

Like whore, harlot, skank, sleaze, Ho, or prostitute; like Ho-Hos, like the way the cream filling was lodged into the corners of his mouth. I, like the crumpled silver wrapper peeking out of the fingers of his clenched fist, screaming to be let free.

“But, you know, she has the tightest pussy. Even after pumping out a kid. You’ve got to find out.”

Sighing heavily, I turned my back on him wondering why he had so little respect, so much anger, hatred and malice toward the small female. If I hadn’t learned it then, I

was to find out very soon. The had been trap baited and the prey snared; all that remained to be done--skin and devour the poor beast.

The truth was becoming painfully obvious. No sense denying it any longer. I wanted to. . .ahh. . .I wanted to. . .to. . .to. . .I want to. . .my erection throbbed. It wouldn't go away. Hopefully she won't take notice. But, as precaution, I should have brought condoms.

But I didn't and that's good, it'll insure I remain unaffected by her, never mind all that. At any moment, I'll calm down. Let it be said, I have absolutely no intention to fuck her.

Could probably buy condoms at the liquor store we just passed, they always have a good supply of them.

“Not now or never,” I whispered to myself.

Pretty cheap too.

I have better taste than that and I'm broke, besides HE had sex with her, Mr. Single-Speed with Reverse going out. And she LIKED it, she wanted it, and probably ANTICIPATED it. No way I could share the same space with HIM, I shudder at the thought, at the pictures in my brain. If I could only make myself physically sick, that would convince her I wanted nothing to do with her.

Although she's not bad to look at, even if her hair is a fright.

STOP IT!!

I sighed and felt a sudden silence in my mind, the facilities causing calamity in me shut down; quaint, piquant, aloof, nice. Even my imaginary girlfriend riding shotgun was silent, still. I breathed a sigh of relief. I thought back to my relaxing insomnia in my room at home and took reverie in the moment of retrospect. Calm. Peace. Passivity. The first time since. . .

Fluorescent ones only \$1.69 for a three pack. . .

“There it is!” She screamed, bouncing up and down while pointing out the window as if she were fourteen and looking into the monkey house watching the primates inspect their genitals. “Park here.”

I pulled to the curb.

“Not here, down there. Somebody else parks there.”

I bet they do.

“Now, here’s the story.” She turned and gave me details on what I was supposed to know and what I didn’t know. This sort of thing is usually labeled deception but too many hours and too many miles had passed, I couldn’t care less. Too much information had been input. Too many reactions. Too much stress, anticipation and anxiety. Shutdown had commenced.

But somehow, somehow I managed enough thoughtfulness to help her out of the car and to the front door; my noble reward a stumble over a hose the father of the child had left lying on the sidewalk.

(Tripe details of our visit to her mother’s and the eye-wrenching, tear-jerking reunion of her and her son are hereby omitted. Save the father was nowhere to be found. And the mother was about as agreeable as a cat about to take a bath. Oh, yeah, everybody--except the two year-old--was on some sort of drug or another.

Okay, one sentence, fourteen words. An impression of the whole ordeal:

The only item I learned was that I should have less respect for her.)

### III

While driving, a lifetime could have expired.

Sometime during the small hours of the morning, on the trip back to the valley, she started speaking. I wasn’t sure if I had heard right, I was lost in the vacuous expanse that was once my mind.

She asked about love.

I told her what I thought about it.

She asked me how serious I get with a woman.

I told her what I thought.

She asked if I ever fell in love would it always be.

I told her what I thought.

Was it deep? Was it passionate? Was it obsessive?

She knew the answer.

She paused, as if she were afraid of her next question; the silence a prickled cushion making even me nervous.

“Would you think about being in a relationship with me?”

I smiled and nodded but gave no response. I could've lied, could have spent the time fabricating a wonderful, poetic line as my friend inevitably had, but I knew my eyes wouldn't be able to pull it off.

## IV

It was daylight, the sun was lazily beaming through the clouds; I stopped before a house she wanted to be let off at. I was exhausted and had to get home, back to my room where I could be alone and think and meditate--my manners were nowhere to be found. She made motions like she wanted me to walk her to the door, as if I should attempt to cash in on that promise. I thought to but it remained as such, my body would not move.

“Well, I . . .” she started to say.

“Goodbye.” I sat, my eyes staring out the windshield. Her face in a pathetic pout, a disdainful frown, a devastating disappointment. Certain to cause great change in her, she would alter her ways so that she might be with me, to get herself up to my standards--right. That is a laugh, a joke, a spit into the face of human, a kick in the ass to the continuity and ability of life to sustain and replicate itself. Ironically, I had no standards and fell for just about everything that became available to me. But not this one, not in any lifetime. I knew too much about her although we had not spoken. I knew the ins and outs of her although we had not touched. I knew the fabric of her being without compromise, without prejudice, and without objectivity. She faded away, her face as

indistinguishable as the highway in the fog I had just traversed. The door slammed and I put the accelerator to the floor, not once looking behind me.

The DAY has passed.  
Seconds to minutes to hours gone  
A day never to have known  
What hopes, what desires  
Time being a thief.

'Tis the NIGHT now.  
Time to reflect, time to solace  
My aching head and body  
Time to find a quick resolve  
That offers immediate pleasure.

My friend phoned and asked if I had indeed fucked her. I didn't answer him, not even wishing to speak to him, limiting myself to only thinking about it. Wondering absolutely nothing, wishing for naught; time spent viewing things in a less productive light.

I sat back and thought long and hard about what I had done and what I had allowed to happen to me. Let it be known, I had the absolute control of a deaf-mute over my environment. I had set me up and thrown myself to the whims of random chance, not my friend, not the guy who I thought should catch hell for setting the events in motion. In my own recently acquired fucked up way, I had cleverly masked my emotions, my desires, and my perceptions--all in the journey to some sort of enlightenment the Buddhists call nirvana. I had created a screwy cast of characters and analogous relations to better answer the questions of why: why I had kidded myself, why I had become disturbed, perhaps obsessed with present and past events, and why the whole affair had such a profound affect on me. The girl served as the curious side of me, my erection as my limitations, the stimulants my way of altering reality and the Ho-Hos. . .well, I'm still not sure where those things fit into this whole mess. Do I blame myself? Do I pity

myself? Do I hate myself? Do I think this changed me? No, no, uncertain, and maybe for the good but more for the bad.

But . . .

Glad the DAY is gone.

The adventure a wash

Clear memory now a peek through dirty glass. . .

No regrets. Not now or never. I wish to hide away, to be with myself, to impregnate my creativity, to birth a new me, and to disappear. Perhaps to a place unknown to even me. That's about it, I guess. Oh, yeah, to be more selfish, that would be nice, and to obsess even more on introspective thoughts. The comforts of which. . .are invaluable and horizonless.