

Confessions of a Ghoul and Other Stories

M.F. Korn

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The Ghouldom of the Grand Guignol D. F. Lewis

...to quote *Confessions of a Ghoul*, this novella, among other sweet shorter arcana, that you surely hold in this volume, by one M.F. Korn, writer and pianist supreme.

When I demanded that I should write the introduction to this novella (without, then, having first read it), I knew it would be special. I hadn't *known* Mike Korn for nothing, after all—following apparent aeons of correspondence and collaboration. He is something really quite beyond description and any assessment of normal genius!

I don't know how personal this novella is, but I can feel it is intrinsic to a soul that sits on him like a head-dress or external brain of kaleidoscopic beauty. It is shocking. It is startling. The language is wickedly soma-semantic. Full of references to pulp and mainstream literature, to theosophy, to classical music, to silent films; and it is a rigorous, yet whimsical, extrapolation from H.P. Lovecraft's *Outsider* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, and Nabokov's *Lolita* and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Ligotti's *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Boswell's *Johnson* and Poppy Z. Brite and ... It is all these and more ... and better.

Tiresias ... the thinking zombie/ ghoulish/ vampire/ librarian/ intellectual/ cosmosist/ shambler ... Tim, the distorted mirror image protagonist, who falls beneath his own studious shortcomings as projected upon the blackening screen of the reader's own consciousness: a heavenly light from some submerged cathedral of the prehensile soul.

It is difficult not to talk like that in the terms of this novella.

Tiresias (Paul Lipscomb) shuffling like a Great Old One from supermarket to gay party to butcher's rubble is so utterly believable, believe me. And disturbing, frightening. And uplifting despite the cannibalistic overtones.

Thank the gawds for MF Korn.

Then young Julia kills Vice.

This novella is utterly incredible, reprehensible, so paradoxically wondrous.

"He carnally savored her hind end."

The novella makes you feel thus: piecemeal: a polkadot critique of a scholarly tour-de-force.

After brainstorming such impressions, it is difficult then to realise the novella is such a compact whole. It is a story that flows easily and begs you to enter and become participant, despite the drawbacks of acknowledging some of the emotions involved. It is organic. It is a simple tale of someone (Tim or Tiresias?) striving to sell the ultimate artwork, of both pulpish and deeply philosophical worth.

Let me say, it sells itself. It attracts and repels at once. There is love, too.

It is a piano concerto with gnawed human bones for keys.

Eternal Questions Posed At the International House of Pancakes

The questions could only be answered at wee hours at a place where bohemian students drank inordinate pots of coffee at 80 cents a night.

Mark made it part of his life, staying up all nights, as he did for the last two of his nine years of college. He was a history major who fawned over eccentric professors because of a fascination with details in the affairs of Mankind.

The IHOP near the campus was filled with English majors, philosophy majors, amateur sophists, general beatniks all drinking coffee. The all night chess players could suck back their share of it, too. This consisted of New Orleans Chicory or Community Dark Roast. It wasn't too watery like McDonald's offering, not muddy like Marine Corps or gas station swill. A pristine brewed, infallible mixture upon which to stoke himself from eleven pm to six am. This left Mark with a schizoaffective mind by at least 3:30.

He avoided the junkie darlings making their way out of the night club dungeons, each filled with nickel beer. He only sought out loons and conspiracy flakes. Any fundamentalist preacher, any fatalist would do nicely.

Mark was a behemoth, but his immense frame contradicted his docile, benevolent attitude. From a glance one could tell he wasn't athletic. More a build like an atrophying Victor Mature but without the pecs. Sort of innocuous.

His face was pudgy, his unkempt brown hair held a small comb in it much of the time. He probably knew too much about world history for his own good. He had been placated by too many lectures. And thumbing through too many history volumes only made him thirst for more.

Tonight he had started on refills a bit early. He knew he would peak on caffeine too fast. He would pay for it later, that mental denouement that started about 6 am the next day.

He looked around the restaurant. Back in the corner were two familiar chess perennials. The one with the prosthetic arm punched his timer and moved a chess piece like a concentrating automaton. The assistant manager was Acknahd, a grad assistant in Microbiology whose overwhelming federal loans forced him to take an extra job here.

Acknahd, the mad Arab from Lovecraft that Mark identified, was far displaced from the Tree of Life in Bahrain. Once he told Mark how much he missed his homeland. Mark had seen the same look on all the foreign nationals.

A loathing of the climate and of spoiled Americans, and revenging all by blowing the exam curves all to hell.

Mark didn't see Pastor Bob that night. He remembered the conversation:

"I got some theories on video games as possible acceptors of Satanic spirits or entities."

A wisp of a man in size, the retired pastor gave an excellent non-stop argument.

"You see, the microchips in Galiga and Centipede are intricate circuits. I was a Navy electronics technician during the Korean Conflict. When I got the calling I figured out soon that sentient malevolent demons were housed inside this semiconductor morass.

"They send mesmerizing impulses that make those ghost images that become that phosphor glow of the plastic grid. This appears benign to children.

"Through tactile contact with the joystick and those action buttons, the kids are possessed. The more games they win, the more evil psychically transfers from this 'battery' of energy of quite sinister proportion."

It sounded quite demented, but perhaps only rated fourth in the cockamamie quotient Mark used to tally up the best of the friendly loons.

Was there some sort of psychic cell in the capacitors holding charges of netherworld energy? Not a chance.

But Mark had to ask him the same question he asked all of them: "Do you think the Batman logo is a Satanic symbol?" He could see the dollar cinema outside the restaurant window where he was sitting in his favorite booth. The A & P was next to the Blimpies Poorboy shop. The College Textbook supply was next to that. The Record Store adjoining that was run by hippie capitalists who reaped much college coin from the working-dog masses.

Pastor Bob had said five months ago he had to catch a bus that morning. He was going to the spot where Mormon founder Joseph Smith had been stoned to death two hundred years ago. Mark had

nodded in agreement with Bob about the correctness of Smith's predictions of the end of the world.

Rotten luck was all. And of course Mark did not blink an eye with the premise of Christ making his way to South America. Maybe He came over during an America's Cup race or the Concorde. Maybe He had some tasty waves and shot the gap all the way across.

Pastor Bob's ravings registered fairly high on Mark's gauge of utter psychodrama. Most of these guys were essentially harmless.

There was Jedediah, the defrocked chaplain with a penchant for snuggling up to second class seamen. Extrapolated his five point theory that proved the pyramids were actually built by angels:

"It has all been documented nicely. The three main pyramids that spanned about 16 dynasties or so were not built by poor bondaged bastards with blocks and tackles and a prayer on their lips. It was legions of angels!"

"Squadrons?"

"Uhuh. Everyone knows angels have incredible lifting thrust."

"More than a Sikorsky helicopter?"

"Yessir! And since they were emasculated by the Big Boss Man, there's no chance in Hell of getting a hernia."

Amen, Mark thought. He had never imagined an Archangel wearing a truss.

And Mark had asked him also:

"Do you think the Batman Logo is a Satanic symbol?" Mark now looked out the window into the drizzle that was met by pitted pavement, under vapor lamps that gave some reckoning to the blackness.

The two guys who topped those previous two were an animated flake named George Rhombus, and a country fatboy named "Nimrod" who had read every syllable of Blavatsky and Velakovsky, to give himself breadth regarding lost empires.

The argument started during an escalating Dungeons and Dragons war here late into the night about four months ago. Mark witnessed the whole thing and ran home to scribble it in his diaries:

George Rhombus: "And I'm telling you, it's widely conceded that MU was the sacred motherland of humanity, and Atlantis was a mere outpost! Says so right here!" (holding up a copy of Mu: The Motherland of Man by James Churchward)

Nimrod: "Bull-oney!" This book here (waves large exceedingly boring looking volume by Blavatsky) shows how you're full of it! ATLANTIS is the original home of civilization, and MU was just a moth-eaten, second-rate imitator! What about Lemuria, huh?"

George Rhombus: "Please, let's not traffic in irrelevancies! If Lemuria existed at all, it was just a Muvian way-station to their remote, barbaric, and utterly insignificant colony of Atlantis!" (waves Churchward triumphantly)

Nimrod: (leafing through Blavatsky) "That's a crock! Everyone of any consequence knows Lemuria existed! It was Atlantis's main stopover on the way to their colony of MU! Look at this!" (waggles illustration in Blavatsky in his face)

George Rhombus: "That has no bearing on our present discussion! And don't try to overwhelm ME with Blavatskiana! I was a Theosophist when you were still losing to the Germans in the Russian campaign. I saw the light and started piecing together the REAL occult history of Mankind, with Churchward as my infallible guide!"

Nimrod: "Churchward didn't know a Lakh from a Crore, and his oceanography's all wet!"

George: "Hah!"

Nimrod: "How do you explain Altimira, Stonehenge, and Tassili?"

George: "Flukes! Muvian Remnants! How do you explain Easter Island? Nan Madol? Nazco? The Kalahari Desert?" It was beautiful. He asked both of them the same question after breaking them up:

"Do you think the Batman logo is a Satanic symbol?"

Nimrod asked: "Which one, the old one or the new design?" Thinking of this, Mark had a gleeful smirk on his face as he sipped. The one armed chess man scratched his gimp arm. Soon Mark would have had as much coffee as Lovecraft and E. Hoffman Price had when Lovecraft visited New Orleans.

The dangerous part was returning home. On the IHOP heira back to the dorm he had been accosted by a juiced pool hustler in a Salvation Army suit. He had been slam danced by some shaved headed thugs percolating on love drugs gone bad, wearing fascist manifestos. How many times had he been jumped by mental cases still woozy from giving plasma on Chimes Street? Eight bucks a bag and always at least 40 proof.

LSU's bohemian culture was generated as far back as thirties radicals on up through the beatniks and surged quite well during the mind-expanding sixties. The campus coasted easily through the shameless seventies, welcomed the advent of punks, subversive skinheads, until that garden variety hatecrooks of punk rock and grim nihilism emerged in the nineties.

Mark was actually sentimental about his adventures. Seeking out the mystics who espoused Huxley's peyote button-chewing. That smug confidence of the English majors was not to be confused with the theater majors' flamboyance and the obnoxiousness of the music majors.

Mark was a slacker. The new model of perpetual student. Taking "Method Theory of Archeology," "Rome of the Caesars," "4th Century Latin Literature" when he should have been trying to graduate.

Now he looked down at his Batman t-shirt. The new design from the revamped Batman of the DARK KNIGHT and the movie. It was a year ago tonight that he was walking across the parking lot, making his way to the Ganges River, or his dormitory on the other end of campus.

He liked wearing the Batman t-shirt almost as much as he like the tie-dyed Captain Sunshine t-shirt that became his when it mysteriously ended up in his laundry basket.

Drenching humidity outside. Taenia, his favorite waitress, took his order.

"I'll have the patty melt from hell," Mark said. She tried to smile.

"Saving the wicked chili for later?" she asked.

"Yes ma'am." Chili was good for reviving his constitution. It pumped him up for that long ambulatory walk home.

Mostly coffee was all he could afford. There was some sort of magic that enormous vats of coffee did to light his neuron-firing nodes. To make him feel excited during the throes of talking to truly-flawed lunatics.

Strictly fodder for his diaries. Hell, it was Fat City for suspending his beliefs. Just that single moment when he would weigh the vast proportion of diseased logic from his unknowing acquaintance. What a delight, listening to these aliens from beyond anyone's sensibilities.

It was the time of night that gave it a surreal quality. The mass of students soundly asleep just made it all the more palatable. It wasn't enough to seek out "bad" horror and Sci Fi movies. He was hopelessly addicted to listening to the eternal questions.

But how in hell could any sort of cosmic riddle be unlocked and freed in this capitalist working dog diner? Alone, he looked about him to the orange vinyl motif surrounding him.

Everything really did blank out when he was in the throes of animated debate. The fry cooks anticipating completion of their doctorates, the chess automatons, the Nobel Laureate English majors-all vanished during debate.

This was a free-thinking climate. This was as far away as he could get from the stillborn unoriginality found coming from the dutiful cloned students clawing their way to moderate grades. He devoured all of History, Literature, Fine Arts, Humanities. Still awaiting him were the eternal questions. This greasy spoon franchise was hardly a think tank like the RAND corporation.

But that was the beauty of it. This perfectly sweet diseased clientele was the right direction. The more outlandish the premise, the closer to truth.

He saw that Taenia was glowering a bit. The chess automatons were feebly hitting on her again.

No chance of him cheering her up. Let her simmer. He saw two coeds come in for a late study session.

He would be loitering, except for the one single cup of refillable coffee. It kept him his freedom to sit and read Will Durant or slick science fiction or anything. He gladly consumed one paperback a night. But tonight he was too tired to read another version of the Battle of Hastings. This one attested that the eclipse that occurred during the battle in 1066 was a Velakovskian meteorite fluke. He put it aside, on the smooth Formica table. He was so tightly squeezed into the booth he could hardly move. The drizzling mist continued outside the window.

He reached for his backup, Robert E. Howard's *Almuric*. But reading was too passive, for now. In the last two weeks he had gotten only run-of-the-mill theorists who subsisted solely on Chariots of the Gods and Hal Lindsay apocalypses. Throw a stick in the IHOP and you could hit four of them. It took true imagination to extrapolate further into theosophy. To throw out documented theorems to understand a fundamentalist. To see how a Baby-Buster New-Waver turns nihilistic after an Ontology class. To see the swaying of a bible-thumper from acquired beliefs now mortified by some devious philosophy professor.

Back to the traversal of the parking lot. Accursed it once was. It was the same as it always was: dark, wet, a series of puddle craters, tiny unison of a larger whole. He was wearing his Batman t-shirt. He shuddered.

Tonight he got lucky. He was now talking with the last real loon, Miller Stevens. Here was a man whose conspiracy-paranoia paved inroads into incredulity.

He was wearing a black jacket and aviator glasses.

"Venusians are buying up oil leases, the gains are funneled back to the planet Venus, where soon there will be an invasion that not even H. G. Wells could have surmised!" Miller Stevens looked at his Gorbachev wristwatch, holding a well read PRAVDA in his left hand from the city newsstand.

Mark looked at him with a slight grin.

"So they live on the Venusian surface?" (Mark knew the correct word for inhabitants of Venus was "Venerians.")

"Of course", Miller said, his toupee sliding forward with every nod, then pulled back in a talented maneuver.

"Well, uh, how do these Venusians live in 900 degree heat?" Mark projected. He was ready to lay into him with Mariner probe findings, Russian pods sending data before melting on the surface, computer mapping through the huge syrup of the muddled clouds surrounding Venus. All of it was mapped and there were no condos in sight.

"Well, that's easy enough. These creatures are more metallic than us, practically 100% base metals. Besides, you know that scientists admit discovering ice particles in the upper atmosphere!"

"Yes, way up!" But Mark was being a bit too difficult. Don't want to tip it. Don't want to chase him away. This was beginning to be a junky habit.

Like a monkey on his back, a psychological Jones.

"So, it's like that book, The Space Merchants?"

"Well, kind of like that! But when the Earth recognizes the free market outside our galaxy, there will be no affirmative action for Klingons! No setasides for Romulans!" He looked at his Gorbachev wristwatch again.

Mark finished his sixth cup.

"See this?" Miller said, pointing to his wristwatch. "It keeps Russian Navy time."

"That's very interesting," Mark said. Total Bullshit. Miller Stevens got up, looking uneasy. The schizoid look was ingrained like a slant on his face.

He walked out and Mark thought, would he see Miller again? The best theory, run through, discoursed, extrapolated masterfully, Mark would spill every tidbit into his diary after he woke up. He forgot to ask him about the Batman logo before he left the International House of Pancakes.

He always seemed to go back to his Batman t-shirt. Just how do most people regard Batman logos? How could a nameless neophyte skinhead brimming with hallucinatory mood drugs, an extension of one's own psyche, take the Batman logo on Mark's t-shirt as Satanical? Proctor and Gamble went to great litigious lengths to prove they had no ties with Lucifer.

He didn't like to think about it. He had always trod the same path through the ethereal dawn skittering outside the IHOP slow glass across from the failing Dollar cinema. Past the Baskin Robbins to McDonald's to safety on the campus. It was always just the matter of getting across Chimes Street. All the times he had been a patsy to punks bumming quarters on Chimes street.

The legendary street that bounded the eastern end of a campus housing both intellect and ignorance had led Mark to expect anything.

So he still couldn't rid himself of the damning pervasive event six months ago. Too much caffeine? Having turned blind corners after a loony coup d'etat in the restaurant three months ago he had only tried to walk home. Yawning like Chewbacca, he had walked past the Mc Dee's and up the incline. He had then seen the lurking man. Technicolored t-shirt of its own, this pitiable skinhead had no right to threaten him.

If a skinhead has figured out how interesting and fun it is to have a criminal mind, then beware! Hell, Albert Camus often dwelled on it. What the hell else could a future Nobel Laureate do while selling auto parts? In his diaries he put that he thought of himself as a protagonist in this scenario. Walking across a parking lot. Mark borrowed Newton's Particle Universe Theory. First, the parking lot-Zero Particle Universe. Nothing happens. Then, enter himself, Mark-a one particle universe. The dreadnought, nameless, skinhead comes along, pure sublimated essence of sound and fury, signifying nothing. He is the second particle in this ideal model. So just how does each particle in this algorithm of closure affect on the other? The gravity of Pluto still affects the sun, however minuscule.

Guys didn't call Churchill a faggot, and he didn't pump iron. So where does the skinhead, let's call him ... what would be a good nomenclature? Pol Pot? Nosferatu? Just a would-be Diabolist apprenticing? Demon in residence? The diabolist thug made eye contact with me before I caught his gnarly frame in blue jeans, skull earrings, an extra iron cross on the opposite ear. Shiny boots, like a good goose stepper. The IHOP might as well have been the Reich Chancellery to him. Nazi's won the elections in 1933 Germany.

And they surely had victories in the streets that year. Now this Diabolist probably had no vision of Germanic history. That block of Igneous rock that his bare head was carved from, like on Easter Island, emitted nothing but barely suppressed derangement. Mark had tried to walk past, giving special care to feign mild-mannered friendliness. Mark's black-on-yellow Bat logo, (truly a dark furtive symbol indicating power) had become visible to our skinhead. There must have been a sudden twist in his 2000 ml brain.

That mindset of white-hot hatred that gives birth to crimes not nearly as premeditated as Camus's thoughtful protagonists. The Diabolist skinhead was set off.

So Mark, the striding protagonist of the Greek tragedy, was approaching a force, as antagonist, and what is missing? The conflict. A ratiocination goes forth.

Mark remembered, pidgin guttertalk:

"You're wearing a Satanical sign!" in blinding rage. Mark shuddered then, awakened from his sleepy reckoning without box compass, or the beacons of Oxford. Mark had paused from his lazy stride to Pentagon dorms where a bed was waiting for him, with feather pillow and flannel sheets.

So in this two particle universe there was that initial confrontation. But walking across a parking lot was hardly fodder for the mythopoeic pantheon he was creating. Don't always go for melodramatics, even if you almost got killed. Hindsight.

See, the fucking skinhead had a sheathed machete. At first Mark had thought it was a Samurai sword. But this was not the Gate, or the Stone wall built in 789 AD.

Yes, he had seen Rashomon. Yes, if there were several versions of truth, we could all go home. The Burmese Harp or Shishiku Endo's book about systematic torturing of twelve Jesuits could apply here.

This encounter could have been as civilized as Go, a Japanese game of chess.

The skinhead then finished his half-witted solipsism:

"You're a follower of Jimmy Swaggart." (then pointed to the Batman logo emblazoned thusly across Mark's chest that he had on now) And he pulled the sword out for Mark to taste his steel.

Mark sat here now musing about how he had built up the incident into Teutonic myth.

Battles are won, not wars. Six months ago in that Quatermass smoking pit of a parking lot was his particular Torquemada. Mark's brains had then turned into Shake-a-Pudding.

When a skinhead draws a sword on you, you essentially haul ass. If you are very lucky, you don't shit in your Hanes briefs while chugging along. The last time Mark had to actually run, it was high school gym class. He was far back in the pack then with asthma sufferers, fat boys, geeks, and other congenial nerds all hating every second of the torture.

Six months ago Mark had run for God knew how far? He remembered that the guy lagged, then stopped at a certain point. About by the McDonalds.

End of story. Rapid telephone calls in succession to his friends, after informing every stranger in Pentagon dorm. To get it off his chest, for walkingtalking Jesus's sake! That had edified into myth now. He had no reason to keep that edge, the cautious third eye, when leaving the International House of Pancakes.

So the Bullshit Quotient had been blown way off the curve by Miller Stevens exposing Century 21 Aliens negotiating with Iran (Persia), Syria (Babylonia), Mesopotamia.

Mark now looked around the vacant restaurant. He ate the last bit of the wondrous Patty Melt Sandwich. Good meal for a few ounces of plasma. The clock hung like the sword of Damocles above the orange beehive cashier reading Dean R. Koontz. The clock said 5 minutes till 5. Navy time "04:90."

Time to find that pillow. He gave Taenia a small tip and smiled at her. She had a happier expression. He walked out, knowing he would have to give some more blood tomorrow.

The parking lot was out there. The theater was showing for some obscure reason, Kurosawa's Rashomon.

Oh shit ... One foot in front of the other, on a Euclidean coordinate plane.

Take shortest asymptote ... to Pentagon Dorm. Fuck Pythagoras. He heard muffled shouts in the distant fog. Mark tried to focus. The coffee was coming up.

The shouts continued, he couldn't make them out. He braced himself as he saw a hazy outline in the predawn that was exactly what he had been fearing...

He would not see a resolution of the eternal questions posed before at the International House of Pancakes.

They approached him, breaking into a trot. The Highwaymen out of Thackeray. They drew their sabres...

And Now, the Wizard of Gore, May I Present the President

He should have stuck to being a horror writer. It was what he was best at.

Instead he had climbed up from King of Horror, in screenplays and producing cult movies, into politics.

And then he became a monster. First he stopped writing altogether and joined the city council of Providence. Then he decided to run for alderman. On up until he was a Representative of the United States, and his colleagues in the House were joking with him about his macabre attitude, or at least a reputation of having one. But he didn't let on.

Then, on Halloween, he decided to announce he was running for President. After all, if a Hollywood B actor informant during the McCarthy era could be Commander in Chief, then why not a well-versed writer, director, and producer, who was more eloquent in his left instep than Reagan ever was.

But then he got elected, and no one was laughing any more. The TV evangelists called it the "beginning of the Dark Ages again." But at first he seemed normal enough. Then the reign of terror began.

He ramrodded a bill through Congress making Halloween a National Holiday. He picked a crop of horror movie actors as his cabinet. Old British stars of the Hammer films, a whole legion of horrormeisters. He turned the White House into a haunted castle. He made it mandatory for all citizens to have all knowledge of horror movies, and took control of the networks and showed nothing on his fascist networks but Twilight Zones, Hammer Movies, Universal Horror movies, Slasher movies, and cult films. He declared The Texas Chainsaw Massacre the official U.S. movie to replace the national anthem at all sports activities, which in turn were eliminated, and only acted-out ghost stories were considered sports. Ray Bradbury became the Attorney General.

Stephen King was doing a hell of a job as Secretary of State. No one thought it was very funny when he gave his State-of-the-Union speech and then suddenly had a fake likeness of himself decapitated in conclusion. The economy was reeling and Russia was just sitting back and watching. He declared Hollywood the new Capital of the U.S. George Romero became mayor. More horror movies were being churned out to fill the vast space left by the removal of all normal programming. Children were being accused of becoming more violent and aggressive due to watching Herschel Gordon Lewis bloodbaths, but there was no MP code anymore.

Then he did something really weird. He launched a bunch of corpses into space. He dug up all graveyards, because it was now legal. Towns were full of corpses, and people just got used to them. All TV evangelists became eulogists, being out of a job now. He began executing criminals on television

during prime time right after a commercial for Feminine Protection. Newscasts became grislier than ever, and people began eating this up, catching on to the unnamable terror.

One day he decided to broadcast a news conference from the basement of the White House. But the newscast was recognizably old and a rerun, and people began wondering why this was being shown over. Rumors began going around that he had totally flipped his wig as a demagogue and was going to press the button to launch hundreds of ICBMs over the Arctic Circle which would mean certain instant sizzling death to earth, and everything in it.

People were demanding a new election. Then they found out it had all been a joke.

President H. E. Loveman had committed suicide his first day in office. He had given special orders to a group of pimply-faced teenagers in Westwood, California to run the country in his place. They belonged to a little horror fan club called the "Mystic Daemons Rule" and before had just had loads of fun going to one Sci Fi and Horror convention after another, raising hell and turning things upside down. But ever since he killed himself off in the most futile gesture of horrible inner evil, they had been running the country.

They had found out today, the day they were discovered, that Star Trek was never going to be resurrected as a television series. So Little Ronald Simmons pushed the button in the basement of the White House. The missiles are on their way.

The Great Find of the NonTraditional Computer Cowboys

To this day, we are still stunned by the discovery of the body and, even more, why we came up with the idea in the first place.

The corpse remains of Ambrose Bierce continue to lay propped up and contorted in the corner, next to the dart game display and amongst the nameless, stapled party pics. With his expressionless, eyeless-in-gaza stare and withered, toothless grin, he is now the official mascot of this watering hole.

At least until somebody rats to the campus police, that is. The coeds don't seem to mind because we have fixed him up and the smell from the bad plumbing in the restrooms completely covers any stench. Ontologically. I'm looking at him and he's kind of looking back at me. It all started like this...

We were all sitting around in THE HUT bar during finals and, of course, we all were considered nontraditional students who were basically bored out of our veritable skulls. I hated college more than Jack London did.

That's when we came up with the idea. To look for a famous missing person. No, not Amelia Earhart because Steve didn't know how to swim.

Specifically, we were going to go deep into Mexico to find Ambrose Bierce. The fact that he disappeared sometime during the last century didn't perturb us at all. As long as the tequila would hold out, we said, we would go and search. Papa Hemingway said to never trust a man who didn't drink.

"Another beer, darling." A pause and a swallow.

"So, Mitch, let's go looking for this guy," Steve said.

"I don't know. We have finals to take next week, you know. I know how you are. You're ready to go deep into Mexico but you don't even want to endure the trip to the Big Easy to visit the French Quarter so we could watch the oddities and imponderables. You won't even go the 45 minutes to get there."

"I'm dead serious," Steve said and then, odoriferously, emitted a large air biscuit which crept out of his mouth with tremendous velocity, spreading to every corner of the bar in accordance with Boyle's Law. The coeds at the end of the bar playing darts with the rugby players laughed for a second.

"Point A, THE HUT, to point B, Nueva Laredo." He must be serious.

"We can go down there in three or four days and be back with old Ambrose before you know it. Or, at least, what's left of him. Hell! We'll be famous.

What do you think the faculty of the History or English department would do if we wheeled his bones into the Humanities Building? This is the biggest turn on for women-kind possible. Bigger than party shorts or daiquiris or trim stomachs or Polo shirts."

"No it's not, Steverino. Not anymore than my oral arguments and engaging conversations with the cuties about the four American Nobel Prizewinning alcoholics in Literature do. That only sends them fleeing back to their darts."

"I hear the coeds remark all the time how grave-robbing has become stimulating."

Steve turned to Pam, our bartender and Sherpa guide. "Give Mitch another beer, darling, and make it a dixie longneck this time."

"Oh, we're alternating now, are we?" I said. The beatnik soliloquy from Steve's shrouded lips was noble enough, and when Ken showed up, Steve told him the same thing. That we were THINKING about going to find Ambrose Bierce.

I remember it distinctly. We had no energy nor inclination to rise from our stools, but then, one of us must have moved a bit, or something. Then, the next thing you know, we were all standing belly-up to the sprawling, cushioned bar. This close, (this close!) to getting away from THE HUT. Away from "Rolling Rock" and "Dixie" beer and the awful, bad-smelling plumbing and a perpetually growling rotweiler named "Audi." I had gazed into the lineage of the roman workdog of "Audi" and wondered if it was the inspiration for Malcolm Lowry's vision of a Spanish Loyalist who barricaded himself in a bunker with scotch while reading Carlyle to a dog named "Harpo."

We could just slide into the Buick and wheel out onto the Interstate, go past Baton Rouge, over the mighty Mississippi River, and through Acadiana as well as the Atchafalaya swamp into San Antone where we would take a left into Nuevo Laredo. That's what we were thinking about as we drank more beer, with its vitamins and its strong effervescent foam. Nobody got up.

Nobody even made a move for the door to start hopping across state lines and national borders.

I was, supposedly, the "literary one." I mentioned The Devil's Dictionary and quoted some of the definitions. "What about Owl-Creek Bridge?" I asked. Steve nodded, smiling through his wicked black beard, and pointed out the hind end of a coed who was thrusting a sharpened dart at a cork wheel on the wall. How carnal and Henry Miller-ish is his jaundiced eye. Her aim missed and pierced a party pic of some coeds beaming with red eyes from a bad flashbulb.

"...and remember 'The Andalusian Dog' by Bunuel and Dali? You know, the one where they slice an eyeball with a razor?" I queried.

"No!" said Steve and Ken in unison. Computer core-creatures, I concluded. Then, I mentioned the Chess Automation in Bierce's story "Moxon's Master." Hell, that was scientification, right? I got all excited and, suddenly, drank myself sober. I then began quoting Malcolm Lowry to a Lolita miniature.

Something about drinking only beer "because it has lots of vitamins." How I wished I was in Cuernavaca or, better yet, a hotel in Mexico City with Thomas Pynchon. But he was so elusive that he had jumped out of a twostory building just to escape Norman Mailer's huge ego.

The Lolita miniature disapproved of my diatribe which made me think of Camus's line:

"There is no fate which cannot be overcome or surmounted by scorn..."

"Uh-huh," she said, knowingly yet with a grimace.

"Yeah. Camus. Namu, the Killer Whale, Disney, I love you. Get it?" On the bulletin board hung a flier advertising a summer course for language students to earn credit, but it was in Oaxhaca. I had taken Spanish in high school, but all I could manage to remember was an unintelligible, mishmash of the German and French I had taken in college. The only quotation that readily came to mind was "Quando mi tia aregllian me quarto, no enquentro nada" which roughly translates to mean "Everytime my aunt cleans my room, I can't find anything..."

Mescal surely WAS for the damned. Was Bierce somewhere in between the two huge volcanoes down there in Peckinpah's hell?

"So, are we going to find a guy named Ambrose Beer, or what?" dumb Ken interjected with a quizzical smile through his genius mustache. Hart Crane had written to Stiglitz about his genius mustache. Steve corrected him.

"Bierce. Pancho Villa's men probably shot him during the Mexican-American war." He added, "The Crimean War was the first to be photographed but Hollywood filmed Pancho Villa's battles which would stop every evening because the light went away. If we could get a two hundred thousand dollar grant and about 20 men with guns, shovels, and radar, we still couldn't find him. Somehow, I think, that if you, me, and Mitch all got into Mitch's Beezelebuggy, we could root out Mr. Bierce and bring his bones back here.

We could hang him up in here on a hook, like he was Jeremy Bentham or something. What say?" Steve, the Mississippi, Franklin-County cyberpunk eyed yet another rubenesque dart-thrower. I said yeah. Ken said yeah. The coeds looked at us with complete incredulity. The maligned Buick was right outside. We could really GO down there. Steve, the cyberpunk-programming genius, who had read Pynchon, Kesey, and Barth, and occasionally used uncontrolled substances, could alternate piloting the wheel with me. We could, ostensibly, go to Hell in a Buick, fishtailing all the way.

I could see the gleam in Steve's blood-shot eye. Recognition that it was REALLY happening. Like Steve said, my mom's Mastercard had a limit of \$3K on it and, if we couldn't make do with that, we could just rob gas stations all the way from here to Brownsville.

Hanging around with Steve gets pretty "noisy." Steve sardonically commented to me that if we went

down there, we would probably find the missing planes and ships that had wandered into the Bermuda Triangle, the Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant, more Dead Sea scrolls, the lost continent of Atlantis, the Bismarck, Nessie, you name it...

"Yeah, everything but Ambrosia Beer." The coeds looked at Ken and laughed. They flung a sharp dart at a cork board and a pituitaried rugby player sucked back a Dixie while writing a chalky score to tally up something or other.

"Okay let's get up, if we are going. I mean it. If we don't get up now, we ain't going." Steve said.

Nobody got up. Nobody even blinked.

"Look. I've got a linked list program I HAVE to turn in for Data Structures,

"I said. Then Ken continued, "And I've got to finish that Huffman algorithm binary tree program. By the way, Steve, you were supposed to help me with that and the Monkey is coming by later."

Steve sighed. "Did somebody make a reference to Philip Roth?" No answer.

"Pam, darling. Figure up my tab, will you?" So, we stood up, said "Oh, what the shit!" and walked outside.

"Steve, remember about Dean Moriarty in Kerouac's book about heading all the way down? Remember when Jeff Bridges and Timothy Bottoms come back from Mexico in Bogdanovich's movie and Sam the Lion died?" I reminded.

Ken looked puzzled, but just for a second. He didn't really care about the literary references.

Thirty seconds later, we were heading down Mexico Way. There would have been no applause from the coeds had they been there.

Heading due west at a fair clip and, following a bright star that pierced the cumulus mattress over the Mississippi, we looked wizened and hearty.

The orange twilight met the green swamps of the Louisiana parishes and we kept going, confident that something wondrous would be forthcoming. Oh frabjous day, I thought as I churned back a swig from the communal bottle of Jim Beam amidst iridescent, orchestral palettes of Rachmaninoff's "Isle of the Dead." I had begged them to lay off the ZZ-Top for the nonce.

When we got to Lafayette, we stopped at the USL nightspots and spent the night in the car, but not before we had talked to everyone at "Mother's Mantle" about our quest for Ambrosia Beer.

(a few days later ...) We were on our way back east and NOT empty-handed.

Ambrose was in the back seat cozied up to Ken, and he did not smell as we had presumed.

"Is that really Ambrosia, or Ambrose?" Ken mumbled through a distilled version of reality. He had to sit next to it.

We made our finals in time as we had dead day (a day with no class, no finals. A study day. But I thought of it with the Mexican "Day of the Dead" in mind). This vehicle provided us plenty of time to

remember our programming skills and wrap up our final projects.

"That doesn't look like a corpse," the coed smirked innocently. Recently, rumor had shot round the campus about the disinterment of a famous literary figure. We had found a body in a rusty shopping cart resting in the parking lot of a department store located in Breaux Bridge and we were hoping we could pass him off as Bierce. We had brought him to THE HUT, formally presenting him as Ambrose Bierce.

He was smartly dressed in proper pants but no shirt. He was put in a corner and from then on, was a subject that never came up again. It was strange how Audi guarded him, though. As far as they knew, we had found him. No one could prove it otherwise. Atlantis was still buried under murky leagues of seawater; the Bermuda triangle remained unsolved except for what the tabloids said every week at the Schweggman's supermarket; the Bismark was still sunk and a statue of Elvis was still on Mars.

The coeds lovingly put a rugby shirt on Ambrose Bierce. He looked quite collegiate. He even seemed to smile at us.

Having successfully completed our nontraditional exams, Ken and the wicked Steve were consuming some sort of uncontrolled substance along with cuervo which was used to take the edge off. We began talking about Bigfoot (not the local tractor mud pull in nearby Falknerian Livingston Parish) and Elvis and Nessie in the famed Hut Bar, especially now that it had a writer-in-residence.

Our Sherpa-guide bartender warned us not to bring anything back or she would make us start paying our bar tabs. Sounded like a threat to me. They were acting like a pack of hyenas in there, simply dreadful.

It was after the Day of the Dead and finals too, that we thought about Oregon and fake footage of a ten foot high bipedal ape. Steve was reading a story in a tabloid, "I was Bigfoot's Sex Slave." Well, that was better than the

"Nine Month-old Baby Found Underneath Huge Anthill" story. Looks like we will be embarking northwesterly next time, but the bets are on us to not even make it to the state line. Whether these bets turn out dubiously accurate remains to be seen. Because you can always cover a mannequin with fake fur using liberal doses of crazy glue.

Rags to Riches to Hell

My father is the world's greatest living writer of horror fiction in the world. But you don't know the real story behind this. His early beginnings read like Edgar R. Burroughs's life before he hit it big with his John Carter of Mars and Tarzan series. My father has grossed over twenty million dollars in royalties off his Gossamer Venusian Star-Remnant Shovelers episodes that are now on Whistling Pig Cable. He hasn't written anything in twenty years but still has scores of would-be writer groupies fawning all over him at Cal-Davis.

But if he is lazy now, he made up for it when he made the big break. He churned out fifty pages a night for his first two novels, Hitmen of Hell and Sling Me Out Past the Belts of Orion. He drank incessantly. It looks like he has burned himself out. Like I said, he hasn't written anything in twenty years.

He doesn't even give public lectures, or teach writing courses, but sends everything through me, on tape or on paper. I have been covering for him for a long time.

You see, back in the forties, he hung out at the Garden of Allah, with Errol Flynn and John Huston. He wrote hit after hit. Screenplay after screenplay.

But before his first novel he couldn't write a complete sentence, much less get anything published. So, you ask, why is he so good and how did he get that way? One night he told me about it. He was drunk one night near the La Brea Tar Pits and saw a vision. It spoke to him, and it had a countenance of sheer outrageous horror. And he made a pact with it. He sold his soul to become one of the most famous horror writers in America. I know this sounds like a lie, but you don't know the half of it. You don't know the terms of his contract with this creature from somewhere bad, probably the inner circles of hell itself.

My dad tried to sell Fuller brushes before, tried to sell vacuum cleaners. Tried to sell encyclopedias. He couldn't do anything right, and all his business ventures flopped. But as soon as he came to, he went home and tried to write, knowing that if this agreement with this monster was on the up-and-up, then he would really be able to concatenate words together like Faulkner or James M. Cain. But he still couldn't write. He couldn't even spell words correctly.

So he went to bed that night and that's when it happened, for the first time, and has been happening ever since. His hair turned from dark brown to sheer white overnight.

The creature had promised him he would be the greatest horror writer of his time. But he hadn't told him how. Now my dad knew, for from that night on he had the worst migraine headsplitting ghastly nightmares that made H.

P. Lovecraft's horror dreams pale by comparison. The solitary ward at Bellevue "E" ward couldn't altogether match the illusions and ghastly visions etched in his mind. Here, come in here, up these stairs, and you can meet my father.

Watch your step. Let me get this lock opened. Don't get upset. Those chains aren't hurting him really. Yes, he's a brainless vegetable, you see, because those nightmares that made him a visionary of horror also turned the white cells of his brain into guava jelly, so to speak.

Dad, don't touch my friend, here. You haven't eaten your gruel. Stop shrieking, dad! Don't let his looks frighten you, but you've got to keep a secret, for he still has a lot of fans out there. Last week he broke through his chains and jumped out of a three story window. See those glass cuts? He only weighs forty-five pounds because he's too anxious to eat. We pump thousands of milligrams of Thorazine into his body, but I guess that devil creature kept his end of the bargain. Last night my dad chewed his tongue into a bloody stump.

It's too bad really, because I can introduce you to my new boss, who is looking for some bright enterprising man to write horror stories for him.

Where is he at? Well, just have a few drinks later on, and take I-34 north from here to the old La Brea Tar Pits. Just sit out there and he'll be along soon enough. It's up to you...

The Unwelcome Guest

He was the greatest horror writer to come along since Sauk City was the center of horror publishing and Stephen King gave up the art. His name was Phillip Walker and he was a veritable cottage industry for Doubleday.

"I had to give it up," he said. Why did he have to give it up? What fear plagued him that he couldn't deal with like all the others he manifested in other people?

"I had the devil inside me," he said, "and I didn't know it." Well, the end came to a brilliant career of a mind whose light shone so clearly and prose so lucid it didn't ensconce him to the bastard genre of horror alone.

And now he had tried to destroy every copyrighted novel or short story so it would be extinct for further human consumption. It didn't work, because those Hollywood and New York lawyersmen stopped that, for a while.

He stopped all talk shows, all interviews with reporters, and just sat alone in his loft and prayed to God. And still thought he was on Satan's side for all the violent crunching of whistling bones, all the sadistic destruction that never happened, but every time someone would open and read one of his books it would happen again, right inside their heads from the linear page, sprung to life as many times as they cared to reread it.

He had won accolades, had won Hugos for his crossover sci-fi/thriller, Asteroid, My Final Grave, had had an audience with the White House even, along with several other famous authors, for his literary efforts. It hadn't been easy, his innumerable accomplishments, but now he was willing to not only give up the profession, that wouldn't be enough. He had to denounce his life's work as that of Satan's. And now he was making his national tour, the religious network talk show circuit.

When he entered the Fantasyland Heritage 800 Club, there were special people to meet him. They made him up, asked him numerous questions about what he was going to talk about, he happened to be hot material for the

"community of Christians." They prompted him, fed him answers, and then the show was about to air in a few minutes.

He got to meet the head honcho of the entire multi-million dollar religious complex of evangelical miasmagoric, and with "Uncle Harry," the kind of Dr. Watson to Father Sherlock Holmes, on the show, that is, he met them in the upper prayer room. Not the lower, but the "Upper." And before the show, Phillip Walker told Pat Jacobson, the leader of the flock, that he had only read the Bible recently, but had memorized every single verse and the subsequent location of that verse, like a linked list in a complex Data Structural computer program.

"That's just great ... And you've renounced your horror and all that devilish stuff, right?" Pat asked. And Uncle Harry looked at him sideways.

"Yes, Jesus."

"Let's go tape this show now, I'm full of the spirit now," Pat said, commandingly, as he should be. "And we've got a surprise guest that ought to boost our ratings to the roof. We've been keeping it a secret from our own people even, for fear it would leak out."

On the set, the audience was there, full of blotchy-skinned potato spudheaded good mainstream folks who came down on their vacation time to Charleston, South Carolina, and they were smiling happily. The excitement was in the room when Mr. Phillip Walker, the former world famous horror writer came out, right after Miss Tammy sang her song falsetto.

"Hello," Mr. Pat Jacobson said. "Welcome to our show, Mr. Walker."

"It's good to be here, Pat." They went right into it. Pat was looking for mishaps, mistakes that could be vented as the eventual causality of writing for Satan.

"Now Phillip, you have made millions of dollars writing those horror books. And now you have realized that you were just a-courtin' Satan, closer to it than anyone, right?"

"That's right, Pat. The night gaunts, or nightmares I would experience, I would just write them down the next morning. I drank too much. And now that I see the way, that I really was influenced by little demons everywhere, all those teenagers I have influenced. You know, I began feeling guilty as anything, ever since my first story got published. All those famous writing people, and Hollywood, they were one hundred percent behind me, but I don't have to tell you that they are, too, disciples of the devil."

He continued. "I don't know why I did it, but now I'm Born Again!" Big applause from the folks out there in Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, New Jersey, all semi-retired, all sitting comfortably and smiling in their seats.

"Mr. Walker, I want to you to tell these people something that you told me in the prayer room."

"What's that, Pat?" I said so much, he thought.

"About fiction and truth..."

"Well, I have read more literature than most people will read in their entire lifetimes, and now I have come to the conclusion that ALL books ought to be burnt, everything but the Holy Bible! Fiction is LIES. All those books I wrote, the Reader's Digest, comic books, cookbooks, are all full of mistruths."

Applause. The truth shall set them free. They talked that way for ten or fifteen more minutes. Pat got into the subject of when Phillip Walker took LSD at UCLA, back in the hippie days. About his drinking, all those bookselling parties with famous Hollywood people.

"Well, I think you are going to enjoy our next guest," Pat said. "We have with us a person who has been in the news a lot these days, in fact, he just got paroled." The audience got quiet.

"We have been keeping his arrival here a big secret, and now he's here, and we can present him to you." The band struck up a jazz version of

"Helter Skelter" by the Beatles, which just happened to be the theme song of this born again new Christian.

"No matter how bad you've been, God will forgive all your sins if you say the sinner's prayer." Drum roll.

"May I present my next guest, Mr. Charles Manson." The potato blotchy skinned people stopped applauding, and a small thin man came out, with an "X" on his forehead and a Bible in his hand. And a three-piece suit. Yes, Charles Manson had gotten paroled a month ago, and people had been scared, but now he was a Christian.

"Welcome to the show, Charlie."

"Good to be here," Charles Manson had said, as he moved his hands to lower the standing people in the audience, not clapping at all, straining to see if it was really him.

"I really dug your stories, man, but Jesus is the only one for me."

"See folks, don't be alarmed, he has done a lot of changing. He has been studying and taking our correspondence Bible course for three years now while he was in prison. He is completely harmless."

They all got comfortable on the couch. Charlie Manson told of his horrible existence before Christ came into his life. It was tantamount to Adolf Hitler, had he still been alive, visiting the White House. All this was happening on national television. The phones were buzzing from all the press, the media, the people calling in to the show.

For twenty minutes Charles Manson told of the horrors of the Manson Family. Then Pat asked him one question:

"At one time you thought you were Christ, Jesus, right?" He stopped and paused for a minute and Uncle Harry laughed.

More silence, then audience waiting to hear his response. Then Phillip Walker knew he had made a grave mistake. Walker was no longer born again as far as he was concerned. He would go on writing fiction, beautiful words concatenated together in million-word length novels ... all waiting to be written.

"I am Jesus Christ, Man..." Charles Manson said.

Letters from Skitzo

It all started with one of those free subscriber ads in the back of FANGORIA magazine :

C.F. Howell, amateur novelist, wishes epistolary discourse, however antediluvian; author of derivative fanzine, BLUE AND COLD CORPSE; 1011 Tchoupitoulas, New Orleans, LA 70001

Then came a reply from Santa Rojo, California ... (scribbled hastily on a slip of yellow paper)

Hi cold corpses Do you mind if we make a song from your name. Its soooo coooooool. Do you listen to THRASHMETAL? In LA its cool.

We want to play there!

W. B. Soon Lance Ozone SKITZO

So C.F. Howell, amateur novelist wrote back:

My Dear Skitzo, Late of the Phantom Empire of Zoth: I would be glad to extend you the use of the title of my dreaded tome, CORPSE. I will take no denial, I found your letter warm and genuine. The thought of my letterbox transom not being empty for the slightest nonce leaves me with rendering joy like lucid dulcet beltones throughout the aether.

I have written a novel, Gershwin's Ghost, a most lengthy manuscript, which I have been unable to sell to

the pitched publishers. It is most interesting that something of mine could be woven into the fabric of a song, but I am unfamiliar with that codicil term THRASHMETAL. Is that not the dies irae of a lost restless generation of motley youths with crack pipes, shivs, tire irons, and GI Joe dolls?

I remain your oblig'd servant,

C.F. Howell A letter came from Santa Rojo, CA:

(with badly misspelled wordage ...)

To C.F:

How the hell are ya? Lance here! Got your letter a few days ago.

I am having fun corresponing with you! I mean your letters real take the reality away from my mind! It's like a movie. and its actually someone I write to who makes all this up! That's great!! You are a Pro!! It keeps my interist! My mom read a few of your sentences and she reads quite a bit and she thinks you are a great writer. As Slim Pickens in "Blazing saddals" said, you use your tounge prettier than a 20 dollar whore"!!

Well its a boring town here! We just got back from touring Texas for steers and queers!!!

And WE WASTED OUR BASS PLAYER KELLY GILLIS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I used to play with old GI joe dolls! I could never afford his vehicals from "Hazbro" so I made cardboard subs and got fukked up in em. I think GI Joe has a happy adventurous life with me as its puppet master ha ha! too bad I didn't have Barbie for the lonely gi blues man! With a scar on his face! He was a tough doll!! I use to write stories for movies-someday I'll make! I'm sorry I never had the patience to read a real book! My first book I ever read was "Dawn of the Dead" in 1980! I used that book for all my school book reports.

I read Fango and some comix. and I'm a die hard collector of FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND mag! I did do a comix book of KISS-my favorite band in the world, and Alice Cooper.! some various thrash bands too!! I'm spend 100's on my head doctor to fix me up! It's going ok! I feel like taking a rusty nife and slicing the breasts of virgin maddens who lust for hot sex! But you have to marry them first before you love em to death. And there fathers standing there with dobbel barrel shot gun saying "you'll make my little girl real happy!! (all that was bull, I just tried to make out a story. It sucked I know!! I was more or less copying your writting. Till next time.

Good luck-merry christmas ... your demented friend Lance Ozone So C.F.

Howell wrote back an amusing tome:

My Dear Skitzo, late of the quivering moons of Mercury, Did they teach you boys spelling in California?
Just Kidding!!!

Things are very good here in the crescent city, they are scurrying around through the rubble of the razed cemeteries, pillaging and making enlarged beastly pentagrams. I would like to hear more about your band. My tastes aren't exactly thrashmetal, more Sibelius and Rachmaninov. Enclosed is a tape of "Isle of the Dead," inspired by Arnold Bocklin's famous painting. You gutless wardheelers over there in sunny port-o-call bay area with your clubs and slam dancing and raping of the land, are sincerely demented no

doubt. But I am engaged in the throes of this correspondence because here it is boring also. I received your drawings.

They were all bosh, like most modern art, quite obscene. But then I am drawn like a moth to a flame to the works of Larry Rivers, David Smith, Jackson Pollack. Out there, you probably read various bibliographical journals like Archie Bible Comix, Penthouse deadmates, and other necrophilic sources. The Kaballa said once Lance writes, that Elizer of Worms is cautious, a man being can be created from the diabolism of Aliester Crowley, no other source admits this, except for Lovecraft's references to the NECRONOMICON, and the mad arab of the attributes and spatial gates ... Well I am rambling but I do want to hear from those other urchins of untidy origin, your band buddies, you caustic guitar rendering fools of modern claptrap! Just joking! Now what's this about wasting your bass player? Come again???

Now for a shot of bourbon.

I remain your oblig'd servant,

C.F. Howell

Then C. F. Howell got a letter from another member of the band:

Dear C.F.H.

Hello sir. This is Ozzy of the metal band Skitzo. Let me say, your letter was the most hardest, funniest, strangest on I ever received, and we receive quite a bit of mail. Your words you wrote were not clear to me but I understood them! I'm not too hip on big words so I had mom read your letter as well. She reads a lot of books like NECRONOMICON or any H.P Lovecraft but she wanted me to tell you. You write very good. Keep us up to date about your book when it will be reliest. You requested Lance's lyrics find them enclose w/ free sticker again.

Basically our lyrics if you read them clearly and cleaver enough there is a good old documenty message on the songs! I would send the whole tape w/ music but its not ready yet. I write all music and lyrics now that our guitarist Kelly Gillis is out of the band. We killed him.

I rewrote all the music lyrics stayed!! May I ask how old you are? From the letter you sent ups you made yourself sound like an old sientist that drinks cheap bourbon runs around in a giant gothack castle, and has women slaves or men slaves! (I don't even know if your male or female) chained up. Creating weird creatures in your lab!! Please take this as a compliment! The only writers I've really followed these days are Steve King, Debra Hill, NECRONOMICON, and now you, C.F. Howell!!

Please send a copy of your fanzine along with the cost!! I watch many movies do you???

I've seen dawn of the Dead 153 times I've seen Maniac, Blood Feast, 2000 maniacs, Satan's cheerleaders, Driller Killer, Tool Box murders, Love Butcher, Laser Blast.

Have you ever seen any of these?? Do you watching underground horror flicks? We really did kill Kelly Gillis, the Bass player, he couldn't play for shit!!

I'd better let you get back to your Lab, HAHAAAAHA!

Juz Kid'n, except that Kelly Gillis is dead!!! I know my words are sloppy misspelled are some what boring, How can I catch a copy of your book??

Take care C.F.H.

see ya pal, Ozzy Skitzo

PS: any questions? comments? Obsen message??

call (707)433-ROCK 12 midnight to 2:30 am Ozzy, Lance, and Dirk

C.F. Howell was stunned so he did not call the number though a few nights he stayed up after trying to write more short shorts ("Rags to Riches to Jupiter," "May I present the Wizard of Gore, Mr. President," "I Married a Star Eunuch," "Oozing Sebaceous Apertures from Venus," "The Dead Member of the Club") and drank much cut rate bourbon and thought about this subject of implied murder, and sat in his hovel. He knew he was thousands of miles away from Santa Rojo and was safe from these monsters. He stayed inside that rent house on Tchoupitoulas street. He picked up his novel once in a while and weighed it mentally and glanced through it thinking about a rewrite and was that assistant editor at TOR books just being nice when she said he could send it back if rewritten? He couldn't write that second novel, but his epistolary discourse la Lovecraft was amazingly aplenty. But should he write to these cretins anymore?

Dear Skitzo, of Imperial Rome, 7th Death Pyre:

Thank you boys for being so prompt with your wicked preponderance of the dread monster murder which the muck meet its feet on, jealous and green with envy! I received a tape of your group. The words "hellishly pyrrhic" are in the fore as far as your accusation of murdering one Kelly Gillis.

My tolerance for such raucous soporific schlock is ebbing. Your lyrics (lirics) are unusually sadistic, have you a meat cleaver at the ready for your parade of ghoulish fans and dreadlocked zombie groupies? Exactly how did you get rid of your bass player?

I have had much trouble meeting a female rendition of Byronic beauty to whom I can quote Rimbaud. A vision of splendor is what your aged grandsire requires. Do you know of what I speak? Quivering buttocks would be the term used to describe the coursing of my synaptical processes within the loblolly paddock of this mawkish existence. I have written two new short stories and am enclosing a fanzine, **THE BLUE AND COLD CORPSE**, as you requested. How it will quench that thirst for stench. California is truly a Gore Vidal dreamlike iridescent montage of mondo youths on the sly, juvenile delinquents, and girls a plenty. Crimes rampant o'er hill and valley, the dreaded cemetery and boneorchard smell quaking in the morass of foggy banks, dead and dismembered ranks of your devoted fans and ex musicians of skitzo. Tell me, have you ever heard "Le Sacre Du Printemps"? I think not. Just kidding. I don't mean to be philistine or patronizing my dear Jasper. Rather Skitzo.

If you guys ever tour over here don't come and visit me in the Big Easy! You supposedly waste inefficient musicians and all I know how to play is Ragtime. Mardi Gras is the time for carnal lusts and the seven deadly sins, but not any new ones, like MURDER!!!!

I myself have had to lock up my Aunt Sadie because of this!!

I remain your most obedient servant, Quid Dulcius on the backside!

C.F. Howell

And another misspelled response from the hellishness of Santa Rojo, California:

Yo Howell!! Lance Here! Whutz-up! Nothing here but hellish hicks from hades, sissor happy bastards!! Oh well, hey you said you went to Mardi Graws-did you like it? I saw movie called EASY RIDER and the Mardi Graw was filmed!

You asked about SKITZO's touring??Well we played about 50 to 60 concerts in past 10 years-not much but we went threw a lot of musicians.

We were set to play in CANADA Dec 29th but the customs bullshit would cost \$2000 bux-I didn't have!! So in the summer we are set to play San Francisco, Los Angeles, Arizona, Texas (San Antonio)!

Oh this girl in TX I gave yo address to !! She is different yet so cool!! (Yes foxy she is) but she not air headed!! Anyway we are trying to come to New Orleans and Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Jackson, MISS!

We play SF Oakland quite a bit! And High Schools! It's funny cause when we'd play high schools I'd vomit the school's colors to show we have spirit (happy face drawn!) I'm seriously involved in FX. I got in touch w Berman studios and several others they are very interested. I'm making a demo video for me regurgitating with control. What I mean by control is I can force the vomit out in one big heave or I can ooze is slowly and wave my tounge around and the vomit spews all over.

(enclosed was a polaroid of a twentyish long haired youth holding a guitar with gobs of blue jellylike vomit spewing out of his mouth with a wicked expression, a countenance of sheer maniacal horror a la Manson).

Hey pal don't get sick on me-cause you asked!! When I was born I was meant to be famous-cult following or even major publicity would mean bux!!!!

How's aunt sadie doing in her basement, she's not too tied up these days is she? Give her my love, hee hee .

Hey I'm sorry about the lushus babes not writting yet. What I'll do is next time I meat them in person is ill play out the movie "Bloodsucking Freaks" and if you saw it about the girl who wouldn't dance for master!! Same thing with writting for master, I'll have to cut off her hands on stage, and my little slave midgit is a sadistic son of a bitch. You don't even want to know what he does!! Don't get pissed off, I will get you free backstage pass let me know when we play Louisiana. You can make fun of us being not educated.

PS: I'm a fan of ELVIRA, are you???

Friends and Chainsaws Lance SKITZO

A response from that Lovecraftian scholar-fake from Tchoupitoulas Street, C. F. Howell, who kept putting off that second novel for stupid little first drafty short shorts about aliens landing at science fiction conventions, and comics who do friars conventions in outer space, with the lovecraftian endings

ARGGHHH, Chaos Ngarlathotep, and Yog Suthoth, the goat of a thousand young ... Too much blasÈ correspondence from a person who thought he was Norman Mailer and Faulkner rolled up in one ... Maybe it's because he felt superior to his correspondents ... like SKITZO...

He thought he would give them a sample of his horror craft in this one:

My Dear Skitzo, Malik Sultan:

I received your letter. Now the previous letters, from you and Ozzy indicate ambivalence about whether you are putting me on. What is all this about killing your Bass player? Why would you do that? I know my last letter could probably be ascertained as the weirdest mondo-frinkin one of the bunch, we may be literally repelling each other, especially me to you guys stalking the closed McDonalds in Santa Rojo. I am really not so much interested in blue vomit coursing through your esophagus. Seriously, what is going on in that state of mind called Cal. It is superb that you are getting involved in F/X. I saw "Toxic Avenger," it was good cheap punk fodder. Now:

You see, I was walking through the crisp autumnal air, the cool air of tombs vaporizing the dew on the freshly manicured graveyard, a double matrix of dead bodies. It was after midnight, all soul's hour, and there was a large looming beast-cat in the road howling in a voice that seemed to me the essence of satanic witchcraft itself, which any mortal man would fear. The cat howled near the reeking sewage ditches aligning the road that split the graveyard into two architectural sections. When I came upon it I noticed a longhaired spindly creature hobbling through a back section of the graves, a mottled countenance that almost made me shriek out loud with horror, I could hear the eerie dissonant chords of the Magic Pipe of Erich Zann harmonizing in the very aether itself. Suddenly the ominous figure came forward in the blackness, it had a strange mechanism around its bulbous suppurating death's head skull, and wore a cloak of night that swaddled the horrendous torso, as it came forward still more. My heart started beating, I had heard something to the effect that there was a nightstalker at large. An escapee from the Hammond State school, a man with no conscience, who had already mutilated twenty coeds after killing them, munching hungrily upon their flesh, as if he were in a nightmarish geek house of the damned. I shuddered with a cry of helplessness as the grotesque figure in the darkness came upon me, then ten yards away. I would probably now be throttled about the neck, until dead, a limp corpse who could breathe no more. In my head, I delineated nothing but fear in the foggy night. The misfit's voice tuned up and cackled: "Hi dude, I'm Lance Skitzo. I'm just listening to some tunes, have you ever heard the "Night of the Living Dead" soundtrack whilst walking through a boneorchard?" You see, it was you, with a silly walkman bejeweling your skull. I breathed a sigh of relief and walked homeward, only to be hit in the lungs with a gardening tool by my vicious Aunt Sadie who was just released from the snakepit sanitarium. There, she had been biting the eyes off poor cats and chewing them like Roloids ... Enough of that weirdness, unless you want more,

I remain your oblig'd servant,

C.F. Howell

Dear C.f. Howell:

I'm going to trust you for not telling on us. We did kill Kelly Gillis that last time we were in Texas. He was talking shit really heavy, and Ozzy starting hitting him. We were so fucked up on crystal meth (we took too many ones,) and that he was crying and screaming and we didn't know better. We were camping in the dessert and when Kelly was lying there, Ozzy and Dirk started stabbing him.

I guess they had scene ED GINE films too much. Kelly was just a hope to die coke and alcohol and pothead but we like him. But he didn't like us, he was evil, and then Ozzy said what do we do now? They were cutting his body up with a big cleaver, and machete. We put his body parts in a bloody heap. You have to promise not to tell anybody or we will be real mad. He wasn't the first one we got rid of, we have been threw a lot of musicians. We want to be like MOTORHEAD, Millie of CREATOR, and from Canada, VOIVOID and EXCITER and VENOM and MERCYFUL FATE from Denmark, there is quite a bit of big underground bands that I met and KNow. I dought you even hear of half these bands huh? Texas is near Louisiana. Don't mind me, "OK I'm just getting worried!!! HA HA.

I will send you a new tape with our new guitarist (Timmy Crowhurst), its much more cleaver than that last tape. Oh same songs but few different rhythms and much tighter sounding. I'll send it as soon as it's done?

Well take care. C.F. Send another zine they are god!

PS; call (707)433-ROCK 12 mid to 2:30 am Ozzy, Lance, Dirk, bye your friends Lance and SKITZO!!!!!!

Dear Lance, Late of Skitzo, Wipeout Guitarist:

Okay ... you are kidding right? I really can't tell. As for me, I am a sentient creature resembling Jello who dines on the mutilated torsos of children found at the mall, with four appendages of murky stench unparalleled since the days of charnel houses and glue factories and dog mulch. I have a slight birthmark running from my harelip to the amazing flat subordinal ridge near the vigmatic arches of my little eyeballs, and I lost my legs in an alligator attack whilst swimming for plankton in the cesspool in Amite. My mongoloidal face is offset by my webbed cheesy feet and instead of arms I have two little hands that stick right out of my armpits.

You see I was a Thalidomide baby. I used to be a geek in a freak show tent revival, I used to tour the states selling adreanal snake oil from ripped out spleens of small black boys. And yes, I used to eat glands myself. Have you ever been circumcised with a McCullough chainsaw? I am dwelling into the Kaballa and the dreaded NECRONOMICON that the mad arab gleaned from centuries of ancient lineage and beyond, back before Jesus was playing street ball and Julius Caesar was slamdance-jerking down at the vomitorium. Et Tu Brute? I've really got to go, write soon. Tell those babes to write your aged grandsire!

PS: I showed your letter to some friends of mine. Just for laughs. I know I am out of it, but you guys have the weirdest stories. They saw it and laughed. I really like you guys, I like your music tape you sent after I got the letter.

Please say you are kidding about that mutilated corpse, KELLY GILLIS. And any other ineffective musicians. That is really a bad way to get a good band together, don't you think? HA HA.

I remain your obliged servant,

C.F. Howell

Before he got a reply from SKITZO, he went to the college library and did some research on newspapers from the Texas area. He saw something that made him want to retch immediately ... small articles...

"The mutilated remains of a teenager were found on Highway 36 near Brownsville, repeatedly stabbed. Authorities identify the victim, a caucasian, Kelly M. Gillis of Santa Rojo, CAL."

What C.F. Howell found in his mailbox two weeks later made his heart lurch. It was a letter from Skitzo: Lance, Ozzy, Dirk, and Timmy.

He opened it up: There were photos, polaroids of some bloody entrails, arms, legs cleaved and hewed to the bone, separated. A highway, with Lance Ozone (he recognized him from the blue vomit photo) smiling, and two other long haired freaks, holding machetes and bloody knives. THE POSTMARK

WAS FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS!!

All the letter said was this:

Dear dead one, C.F., late of Tchoupitoulas street, New Orleans:

We told you not to tell anybody! We are touring now, heading east since last tuesday. We are coming threw texas, then Louisiana, playing clubs. We know where you live!!!! This is what I have to say for you, C.f . Howell:

These are our lirics for BLUE AND COLD CORPSE:

THEE I INVOKE, SERPENT

IN THE NAME OF OUR FATHER GFKI, BEFORE THE FLIGHT, OPEN THE GATE, LEST I I LEAP OVER IT BY WILL SERPENT OF THE DEEP, NINNGHIZZHIDA, WHO DOES NOT KNOW OF THY POWER? WHAT CREATURE IS NOT COMPELLED BY THY SPELLS?

OPEN THE PLANET GATE TO THY SPIRIT KURIOS

OPEN THE GATE OF THY WORKINGS?

IO ATHZUL IK SI NEBAT IO AHEAKU! JARWAS AI FINIAC KMEAA! MEBOS ATOS
KAMA!

IO LASH! IO GKSH! IO KOMANI WASH! IA AKALI!

(Preliminary invocation of the calling of those who dwell in Cuthor, of the Aimless, the Book of Seeking.)

He had his copy of the Necronomicon that he bought in B. Dalton, these kids' newest song was rife with the stuff.

The letter continued...

We are going to get you ... You shuuda shut up! We've been threw a lot of musicians this way, and now you, C.f. Howell! We are gonna get rusty nife and slice off your hands and yure feet and yure head! And maybe we are gonna eat your mutilated FLESH!!!!!!
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

That's what it said. He knew it had been a big mistake all along. Why had he bothered to keep writing? They were on their way, they were probably in Louisiana! Damn!

There would be a knock on the door soon. He would pack and leave, go over to his comic book buddy's apartment. Yeah! These grisly bastards were supernatural, he thought.

He heard a knock on the door, followed by more. He freaked. There was banging and hammering with fists, and yells and screams of a stygian nature.

"Lance here, you COLD CORPSE C.F. HOWELL!" He knew they had heard his stereo, Rachmaninoff 's "Isle of the Dead" had been blasting away. Rotten luck ... the door was giving way.

SKITZO had arrived, as timely as the letters had.

Confessions of a Ghoul: Apologia Pro Mea Vita

Chapter One

A filthy man sat inside a mausoleum. There were stacks of bound manuscripts around him in the darkness. The first page to this man's open manuscript lying at his feet said:

"I am Tiresias and I live in a charnel house. You, whoever you are, may think this odd. I am the Cosmic Christ of the Universe. The Macrosomametakosmos."

In the corner of the vault, blotched and once bulbous, a rat's carcass was stripped clean, even the internal organs. The manuscript continued:

"I don't remember the past, doubtless due to the schism in my head. The two hemispheres are fundamentally at odds, but you could say I am a lost man. I am an outsider, much like Colin Wilson's book of that name that was popular in colleges in the '70s. I am not sure about this, but I think I was a student at Proteus then. Proteus College, not too far from where I live, rather modestly."

Guts of every sort of night-creature lay in blobs of rotted carrion, mummified by oxidation. Flies ceased to buzz around the bloody, coagulated drippings all in the interior of the tomb.

"I must tell you exactly where this charnel house is. The college hubs around a circular drive. This circle protracts into a singular drive which threads through all the lovely students walking around, unaware of me. This drive is introduced to a red light, which to me is my lost beacon for me to find my way back to my cool tomb in the blackness. The drive continues after this arc light beckoning the city of Dis in which I have been ensconced.

It neatly splits this manicured graveyard." The stench was stifling in this bleak dark chamber. Insects crawled over worms which lay in the folds of his jacket.

"I don't remember this past much, I'm not sure if I actually had one. I try to grasp some thread of it, but my mind is simply too occluded. All I know is that I filch books from the library by ripping off the electronic tag within each tome. I live in an ephemeral world due to my hallucinations that impart their wisdom to me. I am a solitary stranger that walks the fog banks of this city in the dead of night. I have been pretty good about staying away from the policemen."

A train whistle far off. A caretaker mowing the lawn of the boneorchard. Dung in the corner, reeking.

"I am alone, lying prone on this slab of concrete that is chilling my bones with this dreaded humidity. Eternal Noes. An Eternal No as scribbled in my journal is something akin to this: ?NO! ?NO! Do you see? I must sleep and the knots of Morpheus are tying up my grey matter now."

When he awoke he went a stalkin'. He went through a dark, mysterious paddock, with foetid trails of his own hygiene trailing around him. Vegetation, overgrowth, thickets abounded in the vesper-like trail. A carcass awaited him. He walked through desolate tracts of varicolored dismality. He emitted a throaty

laugh to himself and looked behind him suddenly without so much as a pulse as if he sensed someone beside him was there. Without so much as a brief pause, Tiresias thrust his way into an immediate thicket of thick woods and unattended, overgrown underbrush of thistles, sinewy nets of vines, and large high weeds.

There was a sort of opening to the place, a path blazed somewhat. Tiresias had to literally be as quiet as a silent stalker, where one simple snap of a twig could rile Man.

The night was as black and dismal as midnight in the secret recesses of some sinister deep space. Whimpers whistled through the spooky paddock.

Tiresias stopped and hunched over something in the thicket with a clearing just ahead. He appeared to cut and thrash, and saw and hew away at a bundle of lifeless bulk which lay propped sideways on the very ground. Very much deceased since God knew when, but now Tiresias was hungrily chewing at a now-separated chunk of the meat of the remains. It looked like a frail body, perhaps that of a homeless bum or such.

A young man sat not seven blocks away from Greenlawn cemetery, who was investigating the ghoul Tiresias. In fact, he was doing his thesis on the cannibalistic freak. He sat lazily on his sunken couch with cartoons blazing away noisily, eating a flaccid stale burrito as he fumbled for the tape recorder:

"I am recording: Tim Meadows here doing his thesis: The matrix of grave markers are neatly trimmed in the evanescent moonlight.

Helixes of crickets surround the paddock of mist. Silent screams bob up from cavernous graves of the recent dead. The banks of mausoleums stand on the north end flanking a thicket of dark woods. That is where the man lies who is forever alone. For a change he is sleeping both day and night. Then perhaps he will trap himself in the brick walls for two days in a row, mouthing Gregorian chant. Yes, he is a religious man. He scribbles astral charts and makes little Christian fishes like the symbol from 1000 A.D. It is almost the millennium again.

Does that mark suffice again? Or will it be replaced by something else, something more arcane to fit these strange times?

"He lies in repose, he is thin, gaunt, with hollowed eyes and a slant of insanity about his countenance. He has no identity. Yes, he is a vast storehouse of knowledge. Is it polite to snore incessantly amongst your brethren? The dead don't argue much, he notices. His voluminous biblioth#203;que is filled with inscribed journals, diaries, and marginalia from a psycho. He himself is not sentient to regard himself in any manner whatsoever. So he is tabula rasa for his hubris. He is just a walking memory bank of intellectual debris. Harmless though, I am not sure. I am following him. I know who he is. I am a stranger too.

"I am a graduate student at Proteus. Hear the bell town chime out? That is my heart, all atria bleeding, gesticulating in my adventure here. The man is a formidable subject, you see.

"I first noticed him at Darwin bus station. He never speaks to anyone as far as I can tell. But that doesn't mean the Pantagruelian people do not speak to him. He is a quintessential derelict of the soul.

He seems to have no cognizant reasoning, no personality faculties left. I look into his journals while he leaves his little mausoleum hideaway.

He calls himself Tiresias. He was once a scholar to some degree it appears. Isn't it obvious? I mean to look into school records and registration, but Shades of Falstaff, I cannot get legal access to them.

Administration rules and so forth. I am planning on doing my dissertation on him, upon my soul. I am just embarking on this whole process, this project of the Divine. I will be forced to hedge a little to my supervising professor about the exact nature of the project. I find I am up all night, long, long into every night, and that is an incessant toll upon my daylight reasoning. I feel a bit of a voyeur. Lack of serotonin in my occipital lobe, and all that. It can lead to an artificial sort of Tourette's Syndrome, also a malaise of melancholia, depression.

Twitching of the eyes. They have done studies widely documented, on shift workers. Fortunately I was an insomniac before all of this was a gleam of insanity in my mind's eye.

"My name is Timothy Meadows. I received an undergraduate degree in psychology at a small state college fifty miles away. I have read all of the major influences: Freud, Adler, William James, Carl Jung, May. To tell you the truth, I didn't even want to pursue this after I got my degree. Then I consented, and now I have found my treasure trove, in this Tiresias. He must have once been a master of literature, letters.

His journals are filled with existential ravings and lunacy-I haven't seen hardly any of them-it's simply too dangerous at this point. Once I thought I had been found out through my entering his concubine of a vault-room, but it was simply a graveyard rat seeking a newer world.

His space is filled with the dead stacked up like cordwood, after all. And I have read all of Poe and Lovecraft extensively and they seem to be relevant here. I wonder if he delves into that bastard genre of literature.

He does have some paperbacks lying around the stench-ridden space. I am afraid that if I am discovered by this thing that I could be in danger at once. Right now I am in the safety of my modest rent house apartment at 407-B N. Magnolia, Darwin, LA 70460. It is catty-corner to a quaint innocent park replete with gazebo in the center of this backwater antediluvian, or perhaps better said, antebellum town. Darwin, Louisiana is one corner of an isosceles triangle between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. It is the heart of Tangipahoa Parish, a swamp for the reptilian, giacanda redneck, primordial in every way. But there is serendipity here, too. There is a pall of absolute quietude. And since a fortnight ago that I birthed this thesis project, Tiresias: A CASE STUDY, I have found literal silence of the tombs, the silence of the quiet padding of the walking dead. This Tiresias promises to be, if I am at all correct, the most unique schism of man in modern psychology and in exact attunement with modern issues of mortality. I am a bit afraid of him I fear, and I shall keep a holy distance.

I have only ventured this far, once into his veritable pit of loathsomeness. I have not yet figured out how he subsists and keeps body and wretched soul together. But before long, I shall find out everything about this prize, this somnambulistic zombie from some B-horror flick. It is truly akin to a tale of ratiocination from an old Gothic tome. Lovecraft is what it brings to mind, an early, rather juvenile tale.

Right now I am figuring out the rudiments of all this, and my unwilling participant of this case study." (end of recording)

Chapter Two

Tim knew Tiresias was now ensconced within his sepulcher, the grisly tomb. Timothy Meadows as

graduate assistant would continue to record at length his musing on the man-creature into taped diaries. Classes were now just starting for the day. He was due to attend an early graduate staff meeting with the faculty of the department at Angelle Hall in an hour. He just stepped out of the tiny fungus-ridden portable shower of the rent house and Rimsky-Korsakov was blaring. He barely had enough time to boil some small brown eggs, shell them, and eat his breakfast. The bright sun invaded his 407-B N.

Magnolia rent house in his landlord's back yard. It was just one of a set of houses that were a matrix of what could be construed as a garden district for Darwin. Trim lawns filled with crabgrass lined the four square streets. These lawns were struck by the sun and glinted gold from the new sun of the day.

Rivulets and cadences of bird chirpings foisted themselves just outside his blistered, dull window sills.

The stretch of oaklined, pine-festooned streets ran concurrent with the southernmost perimeter of the dreary campus. It would suffice to say that.

The town of Darwin was not necessarily proud of its two burgeoning slums on either end of town, but mostly it was pullulating with brusque Italian families, thus making it a predominantly Catholic town surrounded by KKK Baptists. This could be seen as rather unusual about this rectangular vast strip of sod called Tangipahoa Parish. Sinister strains of gnarly, but kind, country folk abounded and would annually crawl out of their particular woodworks to attend the Franklinton Fair, but many of the small towns dotting the parish, like Independence, a nearby burg, and Darwin itself were filled with names like Pizzalatto and Crapanzano. There were plenty of plain raw country stock, known popularly as rednecks, but the infusion of pretty young people gave Darwin its life's blood.

The local police kept their jaundiced eye on these students and frequently filled their ticket quotas only during each dim semester of dull Proteus College.

Thick paddocks of dense woods filled with dark, bizarre realms of undergrowth and thickets could be found anywhere on potholed two-lane flat roads leading straight out of town. The college itself was filled with a sort of respectable faculty and what was once considered a real backwater cowtown school had become one of the fastest growing colleges in the nation. What they thought about this down at the Sanitary Barber Shop on Railroad Avenue or in the parking lot of the various parts of the spread out growing town, filled with respectable people who deep down in their hearts desired to be considered Yuppies, at least upwardly mobile.... There were several honky tonks filled with trash, pool bars filled with crusty old-timers and both a Wal-Mart and K-Mart sitting stolidly as a tandem smart shopping outlet for all sorts of queer and grotesque people. There was even the Darwin Square Mall with its own Taco Tico and video arcade, and Cinema Fourplex showing dreary commercial movies. The fairly large mall was nestled between Interstate truck stop across the rubble-filled interstate from it, the mall. Acre after acre of Peterbilts and other big rigs sat still while the potbellied boys chowed down on a bowl of greasy chili, just watching women earnestly spend their waitress paychecks at the video poker machines because the boys could stare endlessly at these heifers' calipygian backsides.

Tim Meadows first heard about his treasure, Tiresias, at the all-night restaurant filled with foolish college kids jagged out on coffee discussing the details in the affairs of Mankind.

He had always trod the same path through the ethereal dawn skittering outside the IHOP slow glass across from the failing Dollar cinema. Past the Baskin Robbins to McDonald's to safety on the campus. It was always just the matter of getting across Pine Street. All the times he had been a patsy to punks bumming quarters on Pine street. The legendary street that bounded the eastern end of a campus housing both intellect and ignorance had led Tim to expect anything.

It was there he saw the terrifying figure of Tiresias. It appeared he might be after him. Tim's brains had then turned into Shake-a-Pudding.

Chapter Three

In the pallor of the cold textural concrete finish with bodies at rest stacked like cordwood in receptacles, the small interior of the mausoleum was glowing by a single wax candle. Tiresias lay prone on the tattered blanket. He had been outside stalking just a few hours ago. He had shoplifted a couple of items at the Delchamps about a mile away. His booty consisted of a bottle of Heinz Honey/Teriyaki barbeque sauce, a box of no-salt Ritz crackers, and three tins of sardines. The sardines were saved for later at all costs, special occasions. He used the teriyaki sauce to dip his meals in. He was a sort of ghoulish man. He subsisted on all manner of carrion: rats, bats, cats, dogs, mice, insects. Even human flesh, it seemed. But it was rather hard to come by. He had tasted it only a few times before. He did not bother to cook the meat much, just a bit of heat on it.

He seemed to have no sense of time. He did not really know what day or even year it was. His agile, troubled mind was a recent returned gift from a long respite of insentience. He, of course, liked his name he had given himself.

And he collected stacks of shoplifted filthy tattered paperback books. They surrounded the dim interior of his shunted vault. The air in there was cool this time of year, which year, again, he did not know. The unusual smell was familiar enough to him. He liked this home. He only knew this way of life. Right now he read an exegesis by Moses Maominides, an obscure scholar of high quality. Last week he finished a volume of Huxley's Point Counterpoint, published in 1924, quite dated and to him full of inconsistencies, a real snooze, he mused. The flame hovering on the wick of the candle wavered a bit in its translucence and cast a melt of vaporous light on the caches containing his neighbors. He thought of each of them as his roommates actually, or that he was their guest. Each of them he knew by the plaque marker on the outer seal. They were friends to him. This was his place of residence, though a humble one.

He put his dogeared paperback down onto the floor and began his entry in the journal with a faulty Bic medium point onto the waiting blank page:

"...each day I find myself in a paradiso of utter splendid filth in which I wallow within a slant of crepuscular dimness. Sophocles said: 'Wonders are many, but none is more wonderful than man.' My eyes alight upon this phrase as I trudge through quiet dawn-cutting fog banks. I certainly do not wish to harm any creature great or small, but I must continue to eat. Sometimes at McDonald's or Burger King their dumpsters are filled with the foolish, my diet of worms. For a while I subsisted only on insects, but grew tired of them. I feel safe in this chamber; I pray no one finds me out. This boneorchard is surely for the Divine, but then what is a wretch such as me doing on hallowed, consecrated ground? Upon my very soul. I speak to no one. The humans. They are not for me. I know what I said of Sophocles. But they are ignorant vessels, full of existential fury, signifying nothing. I never wish to engage myself in their sphere. Cheery thought: I have enough rat carcasses to last a while. And now I have barbeque sauce again. Oh frabjous day! Shades of Falstaff, the hallucinations are on again. I welcome them all. Any activity is a paean to my existence..."

Today, after the abnormally dull faculty meeting an hour ago, Tim Meadows trudged home to 407-B N. Magnolia. It was an uneventful meeting with the scabrous faculty. The other graduate students took themselves seriously.

They knew much of simply nothing at all, their wounded mouths full of sound and existential fury,

signifying of course nothing, and truly this is their tale told by an infantidal idiot.

He had trod this street traversed once by a slight hump or crest of rusty railroad tracks across from Holy Ghost Catholic School for Children. If only these gutless wardheeling residents knew they were living in the primordial midst of an anomaly such as beloved Tiresias. His name was familiar enough Greek; T. S. Eliot used it well in his organs of poems. He wondered exactly where his prize treasure of a ghoul was at this very moment. Was he roaming aimlessly around the mall being paranoid or convalescing with the dead within his tomb? Tim's school day was over with. He was free until his lecture tomorrow morning early. Perhaps he would continue the notes. He had compiled quite a volume of them on the strange one. He got out another tablet and set a pot of coffee. The room here was typical space, hardly any, for a rent house in such a town as this. Especially for one nestled in a backyard, the yard of a retired French horn professor, alcoholic, adjacent. The stray cats milled about on his front steps just outside the tattered screen door.

He went out to feed and greet them. "Hello, Graymalen. There you are Growltiger! Where's that piece of white trash, Old Nigger Man. Isn't he such a beggar? And here comes grand Rimsky-Kat with no tail, doubtless a herculean fight once taken place in some ditch. Do you all like your noon meal of Purina bits?" he said to them. He had gotten some of the cats' names obviously from T. S. Eliot's "Old Possum's Practical Book of Cats" and some from H. P. Lovecraft, that strange figure of past pulp horror. I'm wasting time, he thought, as he stepped back from the immediate sun into the hovel. He put a brand new cassette in the small recorder. They were on sale at Wal-Mart, the chief place of town worship. Actually the recorder came from there too, when he had embarked upon this strange arcane journey a few weeks ago when the semester started. There, it's in. Plugged in, too. He had now amassed about five ninety-minute tapes of material and marginalia, all on his thesis subject. Endless fripperies banter from a man incessantly following a ghoul around cemeteries in this town of Darwin. What could be more unnatural? Or natural for that matter, in this landscape of oddities and imponderables and intangibles, as in this place in which we live? This seemed akin to him, to that of joining the carnivals that come to town at the oddest times, such as the week before Easter Sunday, sinister in themselves, extolling forth the weirdness of midway rigged games and nudger machines. Why, I am practically extolling forth the memoirs of a one-armed tattooed carnival barker myself, or scripting the diaries of the fat woman in the lecherous side show. Okay, time to start once again ... He turned the machine on:

"I am recording, one two test. Ahem. This ah, tape will be devoted to the last time I ëdesecrated' the tomb of Tiresias, to sort of peek in on my subject. First, I only enter his tomb digs when I know he is far away. Goodness knows what cabalistic things could or would happen to me if he discovered me there. This part of my series deals with his vast, voluminous scrawlings, writings. The last tape I made ran down a list of all his books, paperbacks, filthy and tattered; his collection. It seems funny to imagine the interior of an almost subterranean mausoleum, fashioned into a sort of ashram or study. Textbooks and philosophy tomes of Heidegger, Hume, Comdillac, Dewey, Kant, even St. Augustine on one side, and rat carcasses on the other, roiling with a smell of decay. I plan on expounding on his diet more next time.

"But he has amassed thousands of pages of notes, most of which I quickly glanced at, which are philosophical musings. A compendium of scrawlings concerned explaining a sort of dialectic of mental decay. An exegesis if you will, of his muddled existence. There are even rather juvenile short stories, sort of fanzine one page short shorts.

I read one of them: his handwriting is overall haphazard and a good deal unreadable, or illegible. This can be important in making my conception of his psychological state of mind. He has causality and concepts of space and time, clearly, this is an early Piaget stage of sensori-motor existence, it is to be expected here. He has a hypotheticoduction reasoning and a clear capability for abstract thought.

"What sort of ghoul writes exegeses, especially if they are touching on the fictitious Necronomicon or Cabala? If his mental faculties are so acute, why is he in a virtual pre-operational stage as an individual, but with the mind of a wunderkind genius? If he is aware of Cartesian Doubt, then why does he munch on bloody rat carcasses, half raw at that?"

"I plan on going out there tonight to dip through his assortment of paraphernalia again. Once again, I must leave everything untouched..."

(end of recording)

Chapter Four

He lay on his single bed feeling more than extremely tired. His hovel was a disaster. Maybe there's a flu coming on, it's surely going all the rage at the university. He awoke sometime later in a somber quiescent pallor of this funereal, macabre quiet of hell. He took some over-the-counter cold and flu medicine and immediately felt a twinge of loneliness. He had come to the realization of his extreme solitude. Perhaps he himself was headlong into a quaking morass of a crackup. He needed to seek out some sort of social interaction. Perhaps he would be a bit more cordial and receptive to the walking warts and shanquers that perambulated around the psychology department, that were the other students. He had a brother, older, that was considered a classic loner, but himself, no. He had even belonged to a fraternity at one time in his own formal operational stage. He gradually saw in the psychological stage of Intimacy versus Isolation that he was shrugging off his peer group's mating and nesting instincts. They all had suburban houses and satellite dishes and a career or two and 2.1 yuppie offspring to nurture.

What did he have, he wondered as he sat on a mattress that had a wire protruding through it to pierce his flu-sick side like Christ's festering wound.

No, he wasn't following his teachings, the moral values that would have preordained him to sick a social worker on poor Tiresias. With this he chuckled.

I won't end up like that poor bastard, at least. I won't end up like that. Tiresias is my alter ego, he mused. The exact reverse image of Dionysian beauty. But he is a sort of tragic beauty, a quality to his own corporeal existence of juxtaposed texts and carcasses. The mausoleum is a perfect encasement, an hermetically sealed crypt. And now he's got the grippe of Agrippa himself. I've got to ... He made his way furiously to the small bathroom with an awkwardness accorded a Cyclops in a shoppe. He threw up three massive eruptions, all that huevo rancheros from the union cafeteria. He wiped his embrasure free of vile spittle and washed his gash of a mouth out. The faucet seemed to wink at him, mocking him as he thought he was now the derelict. No, it's just a sickness. No classes tomorrow for yours truly. No tomb desecration or burgling of the deceased. Not until I get over this.

He went back to bed and literally konked out into sublime unconsciousness with an accordance of pleasure/pain that cleaves to fluenzas. The stray cats prowled around outside, fighting over the last bit of dry kat food available as a sweep of sprinkling rain came down just over the town of Darwin itself, leaving the strawberry patches of Steinbeckian dirt farmers to their own devices.

The lone, spindly figure of Tiresias walked with a sort of shambling limp alongside the fenced perimeter of Greenlawn cemetery. The blacktop road which so callously cruel cut a rude swath of the heath-split cemetery seemed to be the raised lip of a sweltering necropolis above a chasmless pit filled with the pauperless dead. The limed dead below the earth laughed in mouthless screams. They went mostly unheard below the fresh mown turf, six feet of solid ground. But Tiresias heard these shrieks, he saw the

sights unholy and ungainly and because of this he sobbed intensely as he continued his shuffling sort of shamble through a Dantean picaresque blindness of pine trees and live oaks grappling in animated splendor with his very soul. He continued to sob and shamble. He wept his blood of charnel ducts, tubercles of black eyes in hollows. An existential crisis of a thing, a nothing person. A shelled exoskeleton which was snapping due to its rotted hollow interior. But this thing wept nonetheless, he was capable of feeling his incessant needles of pain, the pain of being what he was, if he only knew what that was either.

He skirted in the black through landscaped shrubs which had been carefully swaddled with excelsior-like pine needles of rust, to his destination.

The walled shrine was thoughtfully out of sight in the dim corner of the rectangular boneorchard. He had inside of him his biggest fear of losing his predestined and inordinate right to stay housed in the tomb, in the midst of the dead, in his realm of caked dust. He looked hitherto this way and that alongside the blackness of the wet pavement which, far over there, led to blistered wrought iron gates, immense in size and quite ornate for this motel town. It was the grand entrance to this consecrated land. He regarded these as the infernal gates of Kiev, or perhaps a metaphysical and spatial Ishtar, spirit of the swift planets. Portal to these catacombs, this City of Dis itself.

An infernal stretch of markers and smooth granite, stone this was, and he vowed he would never leave. This was all he could remember: how to get home and watch for policemen in uniform.

The caretaker of Greenlawn was Mr. Antonio Saia, from the Saias of Darwin who owned a chain of meatmarkets all through this dim parish blighted.

Tiresias weeping as he slowly entered his crypt of quiet doom, gripped the edges of the cold uncaring blank walls, stayed out of that caretaker's sight also. Tiresias once, after getting feverishly sick from eating bad flesh, mistook Mr. Saia for the Christ. Tiresias got sick often from a ghoulish diet of ichorous delights.

And now, though he did not in the least know what time of night it was, but did know the luster of this night, this night, he did not bother to wipe his lary blood tears that mottled his blank seething dirty face.

He lay on his sickly side, on the worn blanket of filth, and in his justified fatigue, slept the sleep of a wretch from hell itself.

Chapter Five

In a lidless wink of half-eternity passed, the creature awoke, laying about in stiff garments. He began to pick a barbequed rat's bones clean to satiate himself. His lean, hard face dripped with honey-teriyaki sauce in a satisfying manner. Inside his "room" he wiped himself clean with a rag wetted down from a puddle just outside the entrance to the crypt. He thumbed through his book collection and found exactly what he was looking for: *Septem Sermones* by the Swiss psychologist C. G. Jung. He noted its very abbreviate size. He knew the title translated into "Seven Sermons to the Dead" and was credited by Jung "As written by Basilides in Alexandria, the City where the East Toucheth the West."

Tiresias was delving into Christian Gnosticism of the 2nd century these days. He proceeded to read this as it was in the original German. He had difficulty with some of the words, but managed triumphantly to muddle his way through. Later, he got up and tossed the rat's bones behind some sticker bushes which were to the immediate left of the little hostel. He then got up.

His five foot eleven frame would be just that, if he were able not to hunch over from his "affliction." His green trousers were frayed severely on the cuffs and his shirt, if it could be called that, was khaki. He had found that little discovery inside a ransacked bus station locker. His shoes were residual topsiders, long ago abandoned by some benevolent college student.

He regularly gathered his materials from rubbish placed out in the front yards of rent house/garden district neighborhood realms. He now sat down carefully on his flimsy wayward lawn chair, one of two pieces of "furniture."

Here he was led once again to face his prized possessions, his thickly manuscripts. Thousands of pages of notes were in a box to one side. Six bound volumes that had gotten xeroxed and bound at the copy shop for a few dollars each. The monies had been procured one way or another, mostly loose change amassed, found money.

The huge volumes were titled thus: Psychosis as Shamanic Intuition Memories, Dreams, Reflections Libera Me Domine Macrometasomakosmos: This Cosmic Christ Transmuted Logos: Theoretical Explanations The Memories, Dreams, Reflections was titled just as Jung's famous volume was. These were his children, his babies. It had taken him endless furious nightlong wrenchings and the most studious applications of some complex textbook references of the Gawds themselves to come up with this immense body of work. He wondered if ghouls or wretches got regularly published in the field, humously, not posthumously? With this thought, an unexpected smile came to his face which knew nothing before for several years but pain.

Here he sat in his lawn chair with his hefty (hundreds of pages each) manuscripts in his lap, his sensitive hands stroking their edges, flipping through the wondrous pages. His new baby, an ongoing manuscript was his Exegesis: Exploration of the Diabolic: Confessions of a Ghoul. He had been making extensive notes on this work in progress, but hadn't actually compiled them together into sort of a unified existence. They were scattered here and there, on makeshift shelves that stood on brickpiles between the boards. These shelves sat in place in front of the walls interring the dead, his beloved companions in his own state of supreme deadness.

"Someone has been a treading through here..." he said to no one in particular. How did he come to this knowledge? Some saturnine sense of misplacement, perhaps. He started the ratiocination put forth: if someone knows where I lurk, they are either hostile, unfriendly, but perhaps not. I have not had any problems with my citizenship of this cemetery. "***Random thought***Am I the Macrometasomakosmos, the Cosmic Christ?***" He was sometimes capable of quite lucid hypothetico-deductive reasoning.

But he was afraid. "***I am a schizophrenic manic-depressive, neurotic, despotic, paranoid classic case, I am the cosmic Christ ... Hmm, Christ paradox ... ***"

"Afraid he would lose his home. If they come back, I will seek them out. I will chivy them out of their particular woodwork. "***Cosmic Christ***" He carefully put his manuscripts back on the damp floor, stacked carefully in a magnificent clump, solid mass of paper filled with his guts, his insides.

He began scribbling marginalia to continue the outbreak of increasing information:

"...the Macrometasomakosmos, Cosmic Christ, is not me. So I've narrowed it down to three billion people minus one, (me). That's a load off my mind. If you apply Occam's Razor, and the Principle of Parsimony (the smallest theory to cover the facts) to my existence, what do you get? A load of shit or Pythagorean harmoniousness? A reconciling of my inner self ? Civilization versus barbarism? Conan

versus Herbert West, Reanimator? My existence is an end in itself, not something lying ahead, but an idle pastime. I am getting my education here in my Necropolis. Aristotle knows his thoughts for philosophy for real ends, but I don't know who I was, or what I was. Do I exist? To resort to the Ablative Absolute, I will act upon my improved ghoulish character after I figure out the reason for me being here. Symmetry, balance, harmony; are they better than chaos, disorder, and dogshit? Cumaean sibyls are not my oracles, I don't have Apollonian virtues, I am caked with dogshit. I am a slug on Occam's Razor. I'm getting a classical education from the dead."

Chapter Six

Tim skipped his classes for only one day, he thought to himself, *mirabile dictu!* Oh frabjous day! He had been zonked on every known over-the-counter bodykilling medication that the druggist had to offer for dry husks of men who are sick. And for once, he managed to get out of the prickly bed and repose himself on the sunken couch, *Le Cathedral Engloute*, which too was possessed with a lone 10 gauge wire to impale him if he did not account for it and move to the side.

"How Kafkaesque all this is, a tragedy worthy of Othello," he sniffed. He was finally beginning to get his clear vision back (he wore glasses but hadn't seen straight even with them wrapped around his throbbing head).

"What if I have caught something from Tiresias?" he wondered. Gawd knows what sort of vermin germs thrive in that hideous place. With that he looked on the fold-out table at the portable Sony recorder and cellophane wrapped tapes that he would surely fill up with the wickedest, vilest information unparalleled in the history of the human race divine. "Why am I being so melodramatic in my fever?" he thought. He felt plenty awful still, but definitely better than dead, and he had already called his graduate advisor, Dean Caligula. Pull myself up by my bootstraps. Whatever virulent microorganisms that are trespassing in my bowels and alimentary canal will be given its leave, by the power of that majical elixir, *Immodium AD*, which being 60% alcohol, has a real kick to it. And he had emptied four bottles of the vile *Sterno* stuff already. Each complemented by a continental visit to the john as a gesture to the nine century gawd of Yule, B.C. *Indiablo Incarnato*. "Do you know the proverb, Tiresias?" he asked to no one in particular.

In the soft warming hands of the rains came the mufflerless car of Tim Meadows, into the Katz & Besthoff Drugstore parking lot of the damned.

He was to get another supply of over-the-counter medicines, though his bank account could suffer again for this. The ocula-visions sky, a walleyed rainscape of dreariness which stole over him, illuminated the asphalt with a rancid sheen as Tim trudged in the store without an umbrella. These doors were his sybillic saviors beckoning his salvation and entrance to a newer world. There were suddenly things, products, glaring at him, each one of them hawking themselves towards his pocketbook: videotapes in cellophane, cheap key chains, obnoxious tabloids, tawdry romance novels, a child's stack of construction paper. Tim was in his own hurry, this was His world in His sickness. Down the sluice of the medicine aisle towards the grand rapids of the pharmacy like the Grand Wizard of Oz, King of Laudanum, the pharmacist looked as if to say, do you bear gifts for Bristol-Myers and Parke-Davis? *Rex Tremende Mate Sanctus*. His delirium was coming back, it seemed as he fumbled for the *Immodium AD*, elixir of antient Cycloids, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Minoans.

He looked down the scant aisle of phosphor lumens in the ether, and there stood Tiresias.

No mistaking him, and here I am, wondering what to do with myself. Where to run? Try to look inconspicuous. Try to look away from the Beast.

The beast which is looking back at me, staring into my Being, that which I see in myself. The metacognition that ran through his head at that instant in space and time ... the Wittgenstein's prerecorded universe here and now, flensed and focused on the two of us, one looking and searching, one hiding for cover. Now, he thought, as he is still standing there, I've got my Immodium AD, let me just get it to the child bride behind the register and I shall frolic in all the flowers of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And he went back briskly, leaving Tiresias there, oh blind warrior, staring into the bleak uncharted, unplumbed galactic space between the molecules of air in that drugstore aisle. He flew like Mercury to the front of the store as though it would topple without him to save it. Herculean efforts got him there, in his washed lidless eyes. There was his Beatrice, a vision of divine beauty, the banners of Faith, Hope, and Charity unfurled behind her in liquors.

Beside her was an essence of ugliness, a black fertility life-sized doll, dugs hanging and mouth agape at what she saw before her now, with five dollar bill at hand.

"Immodium AD, huh," said the fertility symbol. "Poor thing." Child bride wept tears of joy at the sight of the man, Timothy Meadows, who had such a frightful countenance and sickly ardor of pain wrenched from the bears of the constellations, that she said, "That'll be four sixty-three, sir."

Timothy nodded until his neck almost came loose. He looked behind him again and again. Nothing. Nobody there, a phantom blip of nothing.

No Tiresias, to hobble and shamle forth in this Reconstruction era drugstore like Lon Chaney or Glen Strange in mummy shrouds of ancient Egyptian times. No Tiresias to strangle the life's breath out of him-YET. The nanosecond after he got his change, he took one more look, and there came forth Lazarus, with rat in his mouth, Tiresias. Tim fled the scene, this picturesque paddock of pharmacy and delight. This depraved pit of hellishness.

Tiresias, did he have that gleam of knowledge in his aspect of his eyes, those charcoal pits of red fire banks, of the gaping maw of hell itself? Tim honestly couldn't tell, and now he was out the door.

Tim trotted-splish! splash!-through the clear visceral sheen on water, soaking his topsiders to rot away soon enough. He was escaping the Beast of a man, the diabolical Tiresias. Immortal man, eater of rats, a ghoulish tragic figure, odd penultimate. He nervously shook as he fumbled in the car lock, the golden key. There he was, Tiresias, emerging from the mirrored doors swung wide of the place. Coming towards Tim, as Tim turned the ignition to the rattrap. Is he coming forward? To me? Here and now? The car's engine turned over and finally started with a drowned sound, quenching itself with water invading everywhere. Tim was soaked. Tiresias just stood there, impervious to the rain, in his soiled, rank overcoat, underneath his trousers were tided together with an Oxford Tie, which Tim immediately recognized. It too was filthy stained as was his tattered oilcloth shirt with stigmata. In a word, he was himself a husk of a hollow man, a leaf of dusty ash, charnel clay rebourned from foul flesh cleaving to brittle, sour bones. And Tiresias stood there, not with hatred, in the rain on his face, but quizzical curiosity of the mentally defective: "Wonders are many, but none is more wonderful than Man: Sophocles." His eyes foretold. Tim sat in his car, his quasi-dead Toyota engine burning its rice, idling, as gushes of rain came in torrents, washing away this unsightly parish whole. Rain swept into the very pines, the mossy oaks bled from it, and Tim just sat immobile, mesmerized with his flesh moment of molasses stuck in time. Dilated eternities passed forth from beyond the grave as the Ghoul with his classic nomenclature stood and his ally stood also, watching each other in this time immemorial as no one else seemed to exist.

Sinister? With those sad psychotic eyes pained with the blood of rats? Sepulchered tombs, ionic

columns seemed to topple in his parking lot, if only in Tim's maligned sickly mind, imaginary. The sinister man was a pitiable sight, a vagrant of all mankind, beggar of sophistry and cannibal's dinner companion. Tim left him there, and as he wheeled out of the immense puddle of, lake of, fire, insanity, Tiresias waved to him with a feeble hand, with a glint of knowledge and perhaps even a gleam of knowing loyalty in the malevolent aspect of his good cockeyes. Alone, Tiresias stood there, as the car hummed its hum down the road in a Doppler effect of loneliness, and then Tiresias slowly turned around, and began his shambling walk back to the consecrated tombs, the tombs of Greenlawn Cemetery. His coat, mired in excrement, was getting a free wash from the iniquities of the rain as it pounded him into the ground as he trudged and limped off, around the corner, behind some pallets, and further still, down Highway 51, towards the direction of the Dead, which he thought he could smell from six miles away, his olfactories mannish and used to that wondrous smell.

Cars sprayed him with insolence as if to say, leave town, you rat-eating beggar, schizo affective cannibal. Upon this town's soul, leave, take your leave, and be quick about it gypsy beggar, shambler under the stars above, defiler of the recent dead in our consecrated ground of Christian burial place.

Chapter Seven

Tim careened into his mudpitted driveway that, too, was now a lake of sorts. Clutching his Immodium AD and his worn checkbook, he got out in the diluvian torrent and went inside his blistering backyard alabaster renthouse.

"Does he know? Does he know. Does he know? Does he know!" he found himself muttering. A run-in with the cannibal prototype. What a fitting capoff to this diarrheic illness. Marie Laveau died of diarrhea, it's right there on the famous witch's death certificate, 1895? Why did Tiresias have to be there? In that drugstore, in that aisle, for that matter? Why did I have to be there? Under the pastel ceiling and surrounded by his paneled minuscule den walls he began feeling a bit better as the storm raged on, pummeling the little structure. There was no other reasoning to it. He had been too careful.

Don't let the ob-comp paranoia take over. After all, if Tiresias had known of Tim's "breaking and entering" he would have done something drastic, desperate in that malevolent drugstore. He would have gone right for his throat, at least lunged for him, tackled him, something! And what did he do instead? Nothing. He stared just like psychotics are wont to do many times. And he waved at me as I took off! Hell and damnation, I'm a free, safe man! No problemo. Gawd save Freud! Tim was jubilant. He mixed one part Immodium AD (several dollops) with three parts K&B Sloe Gin, and another dollop of Coca Cola Classic.

This calls for a celebration, he thought. He smiled and turned on the Sony Trinitron TV. Remote control here, switching channels: M-TV, TNN, TBS, TNT ... ahh ... "Here we go, out of New Orleans we have a winner ... WGNO, Channel 26, CREATURE FEATURE." "British Hammer Film Festival..."

Dracula Has Risen From the Grave just started its titles. "Hammer Films Presents..." He lay there supine on his cathedral engloute couch and glazed over like a big fat sweet ham. Couch fungus now. Intrepid Ghoul Inspector.

Expert in Tomb Defilement. How can one defile a tomb that is already being defiled by a live-in tenant? He laughed and sipped his drink in the MARDI GRAS 48 cup. Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing, he mused. Perhaps Tiresias has seen Dracula Has Risen From the Grave? Perhaps he has made it back to Greenlawn Cemetery in time and is watching it as I am watching it now? But there certainly can be no Cablevision in Greenlawn. The bills would never get paid. So much for expanding your audience. Poor

Tiresias. He waved at me? Should have waved back, perhaps? The movie raged on in sepia blurredness and Tim enjoyed it as he took ever more sips of the monster cup with medicinal value. He remembered the Wal-Mart encounter with Tiresias a week ago; it bordered on surreal magicrealism: He happened to be sleepy-eyed and hungover that morning, Tim found his brand new Delco car battery dead. A good neighbor, Mr. Wormwood, jumped it for him with his truck battery.

Tim immediately took it over to the Wal-Mart automotive center. He parked and got out. The enlarged sun boiled brutally on him and the vast melting stretch of terminal pavement filled with cars, except for the slanted shadow cast by the obelisk building.

Why was it that all over the country on any particular weekend, people congregated unconsciously at thousands of these stores, he wondered?

"How long will this take?" Tim managed to say through parched lips. The chinless mechanic thumbed his greasy, clodhopper fingers through the well-worn car-parts bible to get verse, scripture, and part number. Chinless announced the cost to him as he felt like he would die.

"We got two or three people ahead a you, we'll do th' best we can," Chinless croaked. The pneumatic guns fired away, echoing in the carbon mist.

Tim walked into the store after giving them his car keys. From the lachrymose dank garage he entered some unclassifiable Gate and found himself in the auto accessories department. The car stereos blared epiphanies from some rural gospel station:

"God said it, God meant it, Repent of yawr Sins! Ain't that right, Brother Bob?"

"Amen and Amen!" said some other homunculus through the speakers named Brother Bob.

With every speaker in the department blaring this it sounded like Hitler at the Reich Chancellory, spitting into the microphone.

He would look at the merchandise and pretend to want it. He desperately had to kill time. He walked through the cross aisles towards the Deli. Who would possibly want to eat here, he mused? There was a girl ahead in stonewashed jeans, cute but not quite cute enough. He carnally savored her hind end with a mesmerizing stare honing right in on it. Then he remembered with the first actual thought in his head today: Get home right after this.

He thought that he saw Tiresias out walking again this morning. It was here in the infested redneck shopping center where Tim figured out how Tiresias ate to keep body and soul together. Next door to the shrine of Wal-Mart sat an Albertsons grocery store like some sort of national monument.

Tim was grocery shopping there a few months back when he saw the peculiar sight: Tiresias wolfing down all the little snacks laid out on trays for grazing shoppers. Tiresias didn't see Tim hiding from his vantage point in the spices/tea aisle, if he remembered correctly. Since then Tim often saw Tiresias walking to Albertsons to chow down. Walking all the way to highway 51 for cocktail weenies and miniature pizza slices. A further note to the riddle of this sphinx was when Tim recently overheard the bohunk Albertsons manager telling his deli wenches to withhold the snack trays if they saw Tiresias at all.

Tim found himself in the Wal-Mart Deli. The huge slabs of luncheon meat and olive loaf were sweating behind the glass, fit for Cerberus, the three-headed creature of hell, he thought. Gastric juices were coming up in his throat. There was one hugely pendulous woman idly shoveling spoonfuls of red beans

and rice into her gullet. Her cheeks bulged like she was a squirrel full of acorns. When he looked at her she painfully swallowed and a large odoriferous burp crept out of her mouth. She angrily said to him, "Take a picture, it'll last longer." He went along. An array of unfortunate boys walked in a line in front of him. Their heads were bent sideways as if heavy. Their lips protruded with happiness. A certain boy with a pineapple-shaped head was dearly clutching a piece of styrofoam with "BOBBY" written on it crudely with magic marker. The kid looked like he was in heaven with that styrofoam.

They also seemed totally unaware of anything, almost un sentient, as they regarded Tim. They chugged with glee towards the Hong Kong sweatshop toy section. Tim grimaced at the overall distorted unity.

A gangly boy with bad acne walked by. Upon second glance he was scrupulous. His acne had gone apeshit, suppurating and oozing sebaciously surely all the way to his cortex, Tim thought.

Tim walked into the Video/Record/Cassette section to browse, only to witness a reverse pilgrimage.

Two virginal pale teenage girls were toted by their mother, each wearing "Ponchatoula Pentecostal Lamb" shirts and blue jean dresses well below the knobby knees, standing by the albums. Tim, scouring their bodies with his eyes, saw that the girls' hair styles were nil, uncut, and straight. Everything about them was devoid of wit and personality.

The younger girl casually picked up a METALLICA album (or was it Anthrax?) and her hideous mother turned around and saw her. She immediately pushed the poor girl/lamb to her knees in one swift jerking motion, obviously frightening her. She held her hand firmly on the daughter's head firmly and looking at Tim started speaking in tongues: "Oh, shal a ka but ee o my a tee shale ridyyaaa ... a letter from Paul to the Romans ... ," she said trembling.

The wicked album had been thrown to the floor, possibly damaged.

"When I were a child, I spaked as a child, when I became a man I put away them childish thangs." The girl sniffled with remorse, obviously in pain.

Then she let the girl up, the old lady's eyes glaring with philistine white hot rage. She stomped on the album over and over. Whoops, Tim thought, time to go.

Misbegotten arcs of white light came from the blinking fluorescent square fixtures flush in the high ceiling over them, snapping and humming for a brief eternity.

Over the public address system a loud voice said blandly, "Attention Wal-Mart Shoppers, this is an allegory." At least that was what he thought he heard billowing through the air conditioned ether. He had drunk way too much poisonous Jim Beam and water over crushed ice the night previous and at such a late hour that his thoughts were at best cocky wobbly, not perpendicular.

He felt like the two headed boy in the circus. Was this an inner circle? Was he some perfect foil in a Divine K-Mart Comedy? If so, then he realized all along he had been searching for a Beatrice to his Dante. To his right some kids were hitting on the side of a large, novelty cage with a chicken dancing furiously on a hot plate. Dancing like it was the end of the world. One loopy kid was playing Tic-tac-toe with a rabbit, and getting hugely trounced too.

The saintly girl with upper palette got up and glowered at Tim, and then smiled up to Jesus. She wasn't any sort of Beatrice, he thought. Manageable tits, though. What did a Beatrice look like? Maybe he would browse the men's clothing to see the unfurling banners of Faith, Hope, and Charity. He strode, and crossed over the river Acheron with one step (an old black janitor was mopping the floor and there was

an insolent trickle beading up on the waxy surface seeking the Dead Sea). Ahead he saw mass-produced technicolor T-shirts sort of unfurling on the racks, with fuzzy Latin proverbs announcing the Second Coming.

Meanwhile Tiresias was in the Albertsons with the milling spudheads, good, racist, Christian, country folk. He had succeeded in catching the deli armory of overworked ladies off guard. What a victory! He devoured summer sausage and rye crisp with grey poupon dabbed on top of each, as black and white trash women in hair curlers like Medusas gawked.

Tim's head throbbed severely as he heard a blue-light special on little boy's athletic jerseys. It sounded like an ass-trumpet blaring a Dies Irae. The smooth white floor integrated with the ceiling. The rows of ceiling lights, the pastel colors on the fringe, the duplicity of simultaneous television in electronics, the occasional crooked smile of a stringy Wal-Mart-embled woman all made Tim snap back to reality from his hangover daze.

Was his car ready? Was it intact? Two bolts to tighten, five minutes of puttering around and he would have been free to frolic in all the flowers of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Tim was face to face with the assistant manager walking the house. His hair was a hood on his head, a pompadour gone flaky.

It was like a small rodent had fallen from the vaulted ceiling and passed away upon his pate. Tim was hungry but he daren't feed on any consumable this holding company conglomerate had to offer. One day people would come here to have cut-rate heart bypasses done. It would be like replacing a rusty muffler. Tubes were tubes. All around the country at this moment there were youthful men like him trapped in this stygian shrieking warehouse, of sights and sounds unholy! Of glaring capitalism at work. Something more, these people resided here it seemed. This pyre was home, compelling to everyone but him. They were invisibly trapped like in a Bunuel film.

The Elvis-lookalike assistant manager passed by him, reeking of cheap toiletries. Nice sportscoat, man! Does that come with the job, or do you shop at the Salvation Army as if it were London's Saville Row? Tim walked through the worthless toys. The plastic skulls and dangling skeletons danced like it was the Day of the Dead way down deep in Mexico.

He heard an excited tiny voice accompanied by a swift action karate kick from a small black boy, forearming his big brother with a Star Wars light saber still in its wrapper: "I'M a NINGER TERTLE!" His slightly older brother looked at Tim and then said to his brother, "I'm gonna knock you out!" Tim whiffled his fingers through his blond hair and wiped his brow. The phosphor dotted buzzing static of a row of televisions buzzed insufferably for the Damned. Cable TV just went off in hell.

Ah, a potential muse HAD arrived, fallen from the laps of the Gods above. She was a suave cutie, cream complexion and aquiline face. Her kissable lips creased with one left-sided smile-line revealing hidden pearls of teeth. No ring on the fourth finger of the left hand. That meant she was a high school miniature woman with a Debbie Gibson mind. But for now she could be his Lolita muse. He began to track her. Stalk was too harsh a word.

She would surely guide him past the sports section. Those Herculean pastimes that made Aeschylus shed a tear, were not his destiny. The gaping baseball gloves, bats, and leather udders of footballs and basketballs resembled discarded limbs and organs in a charnel house. Together they would row across the murky river with Charon to the Isle of the Dead. This was his way out of the maze.

The gargantuan fat lady in bulging, doubleknit polyester slacks that he had mistaken for Cerberus earlier, was spotted again in the Candy section. It looked like her unbridled happiness was bounded by the four

walls of the Easter display. Her huge, pudgy hands moved caringly across each decadent package with admiration. The gilded Gold Brick eggs shone brilliantly like a wall of sacred Byzantine Icons. But now, ahead on Tim's quest was the vast outcrop of foreboding Herkan Wood. This black forest of bamboo and fiberglass fishing rods formed a path like melting palms before Easter. They simply wouldn't bend backward for just anyone who dared trod through. This challenge beckoned him to veer from his Beatrice he had been stalking. He strayed to seek a briefer exit. The muse and her little, perfect, sweet ass, together walked past Hardware way down the long corridor. And on past to the hazy horizon. Right by the continuous stream of jugheads she went, the seven furies of Tim's soul. She didn't even notice them, didn't bat an eye.

Tim wanted her to bat an eye at them, to be surprised, he thought Svengali-like. She'll be back. With a twitch upon the thread with an unseen hook, she'll be back even if she roams to the ends of the earth.

The chinless unfortunate saw Tim just as he crossed the threshold into the greasy bowels of a hunching beast. Husks of cars were a just penance, being perpetually attended to by the Damned, uniformed slack-jawed everymen.

"We just started on yours, sir," mongrelized Chinless replied with an edge. Go toot an ass trumpet, Tim thought. This was that particular inner circle that always got bowdlerized in English Lit: The grunting descent into an ashened melancholic purgatorio ... the rites of Holy Unction on these mechanics the grease marks on their foreheads.

As he entered back into the realm of the Dark Prince, Tim realized it was the assistant manager with his hooded mane who determined exactly who shall pass. It was the Doctrine of Free Will that brought Tim back inside.

The sign of something ominous was indicated by the unlucky passing of the wall of human deformity. The unfortunates went their merry way, but the particular one clutching his beloved styrofoam leered at Tim bewilderingly.

The aisles suddenly flashed separately, each hawking a particular deadly sin. He would strike an attitude with the masses by walking into Lingerie on the slight chance that another muse with ass was in the vicinity. Surely it could be Paradisio. It wasn't, and Lolita was still long gone, out of sight, in the spavined horticulture.

Two blue-haired pale grannies were snickering at each other as one held a flimsy nightie to herself. When the world was young, half a decade ago they could have been lurid, wanton Flappers or even Gibson Girls. One foot in the grave now. Via autosuggestion they looked in the three-way mirror at themselves like Flappers but all they saw were transient images of undefined illusion, perhaps a piece of their own deaths.

At a panty hose rack stood gallant Tiresias, his malevolent shunted albino head gazing at large panty hose embryo eggs. Did he see me, Tim wondered? It was better that Tim remained distant. Only Tim knew the terrible secret of horrific lore, oblivious to the masses. The widows were bookends he thought, to this creature of death in his mausoleum. If one were to lift the golden log to reveal the maggot swarm of the suburbs, here was an unfortunate archetype bent by too much brains. Tim ducked behind the flaxen teddies. He was safe in the bosom of dire capitalism and smart shopping of painfully ignorant ladies from Springfield.

Tiresias then saw Tim, and Tim's heart leapt into his throat. Tim managed a friendly smile to Tiresias, but it only added to the increasing paranoia welling up, brimming in the helter skelter eyes of Tiresias. The

hooded figure of the assistant manager looked increasing apprehensive, as if to say, none shall pass.

Tim's distilled form of bleary reality was that of walking the hell away from the situation. Back through the melting palms he went when the crowd began to form. Shadowy nightmarish forms silently materialized.

He got his car from Chinless and the boys. Through perpendicular reasoning he now felt that his universe was coming apart. If Tiresias was of divine origin, then he was now in Limbo with the Greeks: Caesar, Aeschylus.

The pavement was melting liquid now, metaphysically. As he drove back to the manicured subdivision in a day-gaunt fever dream, he pictured his facial portrait dangling among many others with Archaic Greek smiles who were doomed to Limbo because Christ came along well after their time. He vowed never to drink again. What silly premises, what thoughts ran through his mind. A poor insentient creature of a benevolent but entropic, unplumbed galactic cosmos may be dead, rendered silent, soulless from blessed ignorance itself, for all he knew. What a bad deal for those in Limbo. What was to happen to the ghoul, Tiresias? Ah, those catty near-death widows would have more sinister stories to tell. They will probably be silent in their graves within the year.

He pondered the events of the millennium as he poured himself a glass of water in the kitchen.

Chapter Eight

Dr. Angus Vice, after arranging his doilies just so on top of the pianoforte, an old Washburn, elected to sometime later douse himself in Ravel. He was soon having a guest over, in spite of the waterworks of a thunderstorm that was at this very moment crescendoing in the curtains of heaven. He, Vice, taught film and literature at Proteus College here in Darwin. Vice had an uncommon name that he relished somewhat. He had just gotten tenure but loathed the little beasts of children, the monsters that stomped on the campus grounds. He wished that right at this very moment he lived in an Italian villa, but would settle for a Crete summer house. He was a lisping, effeminate but very flagrant bird, above all now a confirmed bachelor.

Tiresias is coming by, I must get my houseboy dressed sooner or later. Where is that Troy? He must have gone out. His bronzed buttocks must stop marinating their callipygian selves everyday in cheap sun tan oil by my humble pool. And I'm going to certainly put a stop to that vulgar rock and roll. But what delicious beef it is ... hmmm. He is certainly worth his delicious weight in gold, that lad. Ramon Navarro would have wanted him all for himself, the poor bastard.

But today, alas, there is no sun worshiping for my houseboy and his little friends. Down come the glistening droplets. And I must check on my pimento meatloaf. Tiresias will be here soon. If I can only persuade the bright psycho to let me bathe him. I almost did it last time he was here. One of my mute wonders I have discovered in my hilarity. Poor, poor Tiresias. So formerly brilliant, now my precious little cannibal. Quandam cannibal.

Dr. Angus Vice, Professor Emeritus in the Proteus English department, lived on a small corner of South Gladiolas. The most horrid clodhopper neighbors abounded all about his cupulated, balustraded, gabled, turreted house. By the way, my gambrelled roof of my Georgian structure seemed sturdy enough in this Biblical flood on this particular Sunday afternoon. Maybe this rain will wash some of the commonness off my bohunk neighbors.

Tiresias's filth also. Tiresias would be arriving soon. He had to arrange his videotape archives.

Let's see, he simply adores nothing but Lon Chaney, Sr.'s silent films. What do I have here? His slender, moisturized pink finger ran along the spines of his video library: *The Oubliette*, 1914 *Shadow*, 1922 *Nomads of the North*, 1920 *The Trap*, 1922

"The one I favor," he mused, "is *The Shock*, 1923, with Virginia Valli. The effect is to die for!" He muttered something about H. R. Mernau's *Sunrise* which was just ending on his 32" television. Perhaps I am Emil Jannings and Tiresias is Conrad Veidt. Terror and mystery surround the waxworks display on a carnival midway. With musical score, of course, *Waxworks*, 1922.

I'd better chill the port, it is nine years old; I got it at the Wine Cellar on West Morris for twenty dollars. That ought to take some of the chill off Tiresias's rat-blood stained bodice. Why am I fascinated so with this little discovery of mine, so? He lives in a mausoleum that houses my dear departed wife. That's how I discovered him. *Quelle Disgrace*. I never loved her anyway; we never had sex. She would permit me my "Unspeakable Vice of the Greeks." He cautiously ejected the *Sunrise* tape out of the VCR and put it back on the shelf. When is that poor ghoul going to get here? He again checked on his pimento meatloaf casserole. Poor Tiresias doesn't even own an umbrella and Noah should have built an ark and brought them two by dreadful two...

The Chinese door chimes rang in his rented home.

"Oh, Troy! Troo-oy!" he warbled. "Where is that beef on the hoof?" He got up off the plush velour futon sofa to answer the door. The door was a one-of-a-kind Polynesian batik, a special artwork carving monstrosity.

"Well, Tiresias! Come in, my dear. Comment allez-vous?" Tiresias said nothing. Tiresias stood there and stank, as usual. He was drenched with rain. Dr. Vice made sure not to touch Tiresias in any way. And he motioned him to sit on the shag rug. His furniture set would reek to high heaven if he were to even touch them.

"Can I get you a port wine and 7-Up? Oh, yes, diet." Tiresias managed to nod and made no attempt to take off his trench coat. His face was sullen with what looked like a death mask of sadness.

Vice brought his guest the drink in a fluted champagne glass, Waterford crystal.

"This rain. It's good to get out of the house, isn't it? Let's see, how about let's put on a movie, shall we?" He went over to the entertainment system and picked out *The Shadow* with Lon Chaney, Sr. His silk robe hung open.

"Chips?" Tiresias grappled the nacho chips with his grimy hands. He immediately crammed them into his mouth and crunched profusely. Tiresias hadn't said a single word ever in the whole duration of his short relationship with the decadent Angus Vice. The movie had a musical soundtrack, dubbed in synch with the silent flicker of the celluloid image. It sounded tinny, melodious.

Tiresias clearly enjoyed those little get-togethers. Cinema and food and drink. He needed some more port concoction. Dr. Vice quickly noticed and began to fetch him another.

"The meatloaf will be ready soon, my dear fellow," Vice told him. Vice went in his robe, to the bedroom and sat on the bed. He reached into a medicine bag and retrieved a large capsule. He popped this amyl nitrate capsule under his aquiline pointed nose. "Ahhhhhh," he said in joyous rhapsody.

Tiresias, in another room, ate his chips, his beady eyes glued to the silent screen film.

"Pop" went another capsule. There seemed to be at least five hundred dollars worth of makeup on Vice's glorious pink divan, or bed, surrounding him in attractive little cases. He had himself stripped down to his thong. His little belly protruded. He began meticulously applying Maybelline, L'Oreal makeup to his face, holding an opulent left-handed mirror. Carefully a base of pure white greasy paint with coronetted black border around his very weird countenance. In ten minutes' time he had dolled himself up. His round face resembled that now of a geisha girl or kabuki doll. China doll face. He began masturbating furiously, holding the mirror to his face as he flagellated so he could see his gorgeous countenance.

After ten minutes of this exhaustion in a fervor, and a climax onto the bed he wiped himself off and put his thong bikini from around his ankles around his bits and pieces.

He walked down the corridor into the den. "Well, Tiresias," he said, still breathing heavily, "I've made a pimento meatloaf casserole. Can I get you a plate?" Tiresias managed to look at him, at his immaculately white kabuki dollface and was not shocked. He saw the thong and nothing else, and he sort of muttered and nodded. Dr. Vice's stretch marks extended from his navel to his groin and were quite visible in the bulging flesh between the thong bikini. He brought Tiresias his plate.

Tiresias ate sloppily as would be expected of a ghoul, and left without saying a word.

"It's been nice having you over, my dear," said Angus to him. As the thick unwieldy door closed, it appeared that the gushing of rain had ebbed from the sky. It was night-blue dark of mascara of Garbo.

"The least you could do was wipe your sad face, you little cannibal," the man in the slight thong said from behind the confines of his door. The delicious, dangerous derelict was off now, gone to see his dead wife, Mrs.

Vice, in her resting place.

"Say hi to her for me, dear," he giggled as he began to clean up the morsels that fell on the floor from the diabolical sitting place where his friend sat and left a mark of sorts. The mess. Troy came in later on while Vice slept.

Troy stripped and crawled into bed with the man.

Chapter Nine

Tiresias shambled off to the home he had always known since the memory began for him. The graveyard was now a shallow lake in which he drenched his dirty pants legs as he strode through the markers, emerging like monoliths from the water's surface. * * * ***Macrometasomakosmos* * * **a priorio realities such as space/time; causality of these. I am the Cosmic Christ* * * **I am not the Cosmic Christ* * * *** He wrestled with the door of the mausoleum, his abode, and went inside.

He looked for the lighter that was on its last gasp of fluid. He managed to light the candle that sat on the shelf. "Somebody's been treading through there." * * * ***Lon Chaney, Sr.* * * **
Macrometasomakosmos * * *** He lay down and went to sleep, completely satiated from the meatloaf that sat in his stomach.

He would not have to catch any rats until tomorrow. And once he'd had a taste of such delightful human food at his special friend's home, he would have to discipline himself to adjust back to slow-heated teriyaki rat carcass.

He slept the sleep of derelict gawds, the knots of hypnos and Morpheus, Sleep and his brother death...

When he awoke he went a stalkin'. He went through a dark, mysterious paddock, with fetid trails of his own hygiene trailing around him. Vegetation, overgrowth, thickets abounded in the vesper-like trail. A carcass awaited him. He walked through desolate tracts of varicolored dismality. He emitted a throaty laugh to himself and looked behind him suddenly without so much as a pulse as if he sensed someone beside him was there. Without so much as a brief pause, Tiresias thrust his way into an immediate thatch of thick woods and unattended, overgrown underbrush of thistles, sinewy nets of vines, and large high weeds.

There was a sort of opening to the place, a path blazed somewhat. Tiresias had to literally be as quiet as a silent stalker, where one simple snap of a twig could rile Man.

The night was as black and dismal as midnight in the secret recesses of some sinister deep space. Whimpers whistled through the spooky paddock.

Tiresias stopped and hunched over something in the thicket with a clearing just ahead. Tiresias brandished a sort of utensil, which looked much like an ordinary kitchen steak knife. He appeared to cut and thrash, and saw and hew away at a bundle of lifeless bulk which lay propped sideways on the very ground. The man was cutting away at a body. Very much deceased since God knew when, but now Tiresias was hungrily chewing at a now-separated chunk of the meat of the remains. It looked like a frail body, perhaps that of a homeless bum or such. He wrenched more bloated flesh from it with a steak knife, digging in as it were.

The next morning, Tim took avid notes in Abnormal Psych. Got right back into the swing of things, caught up on his notes from a buddy. He really was using his thesis subject as a wholly different approach than they would expect. The typical response would be as a criminal abnormal psychology experiment.

But Tiresias was akin to the Criminal archetype about as much as Albert Camus himself sat around contemplating the innermost workings of a criminal's mind. "Hi," said a fellow graduate student, a Missy something-or-other, perkier than most. "Hello," Tim said, and realized something.

He felt, if only for an instant, less comfortable around so-called "Normal people," than the so-called "Derelicts." He was thinking about Tiresias. Every detail, every movement of his being and life process. Tim walked out of the lecture room as everyone filed out, when she hesitated in front of him and greeted him. "What are you doing your thesis on, again?" she asked him, smiling at him. Tim Meadows stopped for a moment. Not even his advisor, Dean Caligula, knew what he was actually up to down to the gut of it. He didn't say anything, but flashed a smile-grimace of sorts.

"Cause I'm having trouble with mine," she said, this Missy something-orother, a bit too perky.

"Oh, it's coming along, but I'm sort of keeping mine under wraps right at the moment, that is ... until I get it all organized," he managed to say.

"Weird," she said nicely. "How much data do you have?"

"I'm building up a good bit, actually." And they parted ways. He actually did pride himself on the vast compendium of notes, marginalia, filigree of thought. He, like a goodly grad student, had a boxful of

cassettes on his subject. And his thesis was writing itself, practically.

He went home by walking down to the perimeter of campus, to the invisible edge of education itself. Maybe I should try and barbeque a rat. Tiresias had rat traps with Bleu Cheese nestled within each, all swiped from the local Delchamps. This impeccable choice in fine cheese netted the amiable ghoul's lots of rat, that was for sure. He used to use, instead of the bleu cheese, a hunk of Roquefort. Tim guessed this was to atone for his killing to give his rats a good last meal before the trap swung.

Tim knew that Dr. Vice had some sort of weird connection with his subject. Why and how did Tiresias ever strike up such a friendship? All Tim knew was, in all his skulduggery of following the ghoul around town, many times it had gone to the decadent professor's house. It wasn't very far away, just around the block from Magnolia and down towards Elm. They were friends of sort, because the professor let him in on every occasion that he was home. And Tiresias would stay no longer than an hour at a time, tops. Tim wondered how the origins of this came about. Birds of a feather ... Dr. Vice was known around campus as an odd duck, for his flagrant, aesthetic personality.

Determinably homosexual, no doubt. The last time Tim had entered Tiresias's crypt he saw the man's work in progress. A massive manuscript. He knew that Tiresias was extremely prolific, evidenced by the massive bound manuscripts lying around the place.

The work that he had had a lot of effort in it. How could he afford to have those manuscripts typed, and bound and xeroxed? How could someone not hear a manual typewriter pounding away in the middle of Greenlawn Cemetery? Tiresias had a specific route he seemed to follow on a daily basis. Usually he would leave the home base of the boneorchard and head east, down East Morris. He would sometimes stop at the Junior Food Mart, where he would then be summarily thrown out. Tim was not sure if this was for shoplifting or panhandling, the art of bumming quarters from the good patrons that came in there for a Big Gulp or a Slurpee, or a loaf of bread. These convenience stores were magnets for vagrants all through Darwin. Then Tiresias would go next door to Elly's Drive-in. This was a sleazy little hamburger joint, rustic, that served softie ice cream and diabetic sugary malts. Sometimes the waitresses would feel sorry for him and give him an old chili dog or whatever they felt like. This was not an everyday occurrence; sometimes he would go there and they would just be too busy, and neglect him. Sometimes the one waitress, Miss Gene, a pendulous creature who had across half her face a blotched birthmark or superior nastiness, would be his benefactor. The days she was off, though, he would walk away hungry. Tiresias would then cut across by the local telephone company, heading north. This would lead him back towards the campus, though it was still several blocks away. His next destination here was previous to this, the Bus station. This Greyhound station was connected to a Junior Food Mart. That meant one thing: panhandling for quarters. He never seemed to say anything, he just held his grimy hand out. There was always a note in the hand that said:

"PLEASE DONATE A QUARTER FOR THE COSMIC CHRIST CHURCH" The sociological makeup of the bus station patrons was that of Franklinton, Kentwood, Bogalusa stock, Baptists and Pentecostals from Ponchatoula. They were Christian patsies and suckers for his diabolical cloaked ministry. Little did these noble peasants realize was that he himself believed every other day, that he WAS THE MACROMETASOMAKOSMOS HIMSELF, the Cosmic Christ. Tim knew this from a thorough reading of Tiresias's work in progress. It was a typical schizophrenia affective tendency to be sure.

How many poor bastards went around telling people that they were the Christ? In Tiresias's case, though, his obvious philosophical background and immense intellect, now decayed, certainly put a different slant on the usual psychosis.

The bus station was always a breaking-away point for the indefatigable Tiresias. From there he could literally go to points unknown. Tim had seen no particular route after this stopping-off point. Tiresias didn't always write only ensconced within his tomb. He carried in his soiled trench coat a few sheets of paper, where he got it from Tim didn't know-garbage cans perhaps.

He kept a Mont Blanc pen that he must have swiped, those babies cost around a hundred bucks each.

He would sit at the bus station as if it were the streets of Schoepenhaur's house, and write away furiously. Of course the tomb was still the main source of his writing activity.

Tiresias would sometimes walk the entire length of Railroad Avenue to the Darwin Square Mall, a lone figure trudging along the shoulder of the reconstruction road, now accessible to ghouls like himself, with the burthen of the cosmos upon his shoulders. Sometimes he would head east again, in the direction of Covington Highway, and forge out that area. He could traverse an immense amount of ground and it was a wonder that he had never been picked up by the local police or sheriff 's department. A lot of times he would just house himself in the tomb and study his books. Tim knew from an entry he himself had recorded with his own lips into the tape recorder, an idea of Tiresias's intellect:

"My delight was in Hawthorne's WONDER BOOK until began an undying passion for classical mythology. Bullfinch's AGE OF FABLE was central to me. I think of ancient Greece; everyday I look for the Naiades in the pond by the cemetery, and do not trod over pine for fear of harming Dryads. I have declared that I am a Roman pagan. I regularly write rhymes with triplets and Alexandrines. Everything I love is dead, as I myself am. I am not a participant in the business of life; I am, like Voltaire, an impartial spectator, who finds amusement in watching the antics of those strange puppets I call men. My thoughts run through iambic octasyllables of Swift, in quatrains as in Gray's ELEGY, and even in anapests."

Tiresias had been known to hibernate inside his hovel for up to a week at a time. But when he did make his appointed rounds, he could be found roaming at all points North, South, East, and West. Time had seen him all the way in Ponchatoula at the Danny's Fried Chicken joint, rifling through the dumpster, and all the way towards the verdant glades of Loranger to the other side of Darwin.

Just why did Tim call the man a ghoul and not just a derelict? A derelict would still be just that even if he slept in a cemetery, nothing really macabre there, really. But he had reason to believe that Tiresias had actually killed people before. There were unsolved murders still, and Tim remembered the newspaper accounts of that mutilated bum's body found out by the Darwin Square Mall, behind some dumpsters.

There were some references, however obscure, in Tiresias's notes about his acts of cannibalism. The bum might have already been dead; maybe Tiresias didn't necessarily murder him, but nevertheless it was highly likely that he had subsisted on human flesh, however ghastly that was.

Whatever Tim did, he knew he was delving deeper and deeper into the strange world of the man-thing.

It did not matter how brilliant Tiresias was at this point, he was not human anymore. He was the consummate, penultimate, outsider. And whatever Tim did, he'd better not let that thing find him in his crypt, find him out. What horrors could occur if that happened.

Chapter Ten

The next nice day Tim went to the usual class seminars on his schedule, and stopped by Dean Tiberius's office. The pantegruelian, pendulous secretary let him wait in the office facing framed degrees on the paneled walls. She seemed to attempt a rictus-like forced smile here and there as she went about her

tasks but was clearly damned, the most overworked secretary of the Philosophy department. Dean Tiberius greeted him but clearly did not recognize Tim.

"Hello."

"Hi." Tim shook his thin hand. "My name is Tim Meadows; I am a grad psych student here..."

"Yes ... yes, is there something I can help you with?" Dr. Tiberius was a tall, bony man, a human skeleton who clearly had a long career in teaching philosophical matters. It was etched, evidenced in every wrinkle of his face, every bristly hair on his pale head, in every furrow inside his head.

"Well, yes ... maybe ... I was wondering about a former student here. His name was Paul Lipscomb. Does that name ring a bell? Paul Lipscomb?" (Tim knew that Tiresias's former name was Paul Lipscomb. It was somewhere in his notes, under Cosmic Christ ...)

"Paul Lipscomb. Lip-scomb ... Hmm." He looked quite quizzical for a brief pause.

"Oh, yes! Yes..." Suddenly his face beamed with illumination like a Japanese paper lantern with a candle behind it. He shook his head to the side and then back. "Sad story that one is. A tale of pure woe."

"Yes?" Tim said.

"A tragedy worthy of Othello himself," Dean Tiberius found himself actually chuckling from the very unusual occurrence of that name coming up.

"I haven't thought of that man in years, I must admit," the Dean said to Tim. "Yes, well, is he still alive and kicking?" the esteemed philosopher asked.

Tim sort of lied. "I don't know. Yes."

"Well, I must say he was one of the most brilliant students I ever had, ever!"

"Um."

"He had a nervous breakdown of some sort. Right before his thesis was going to be presented, and right before his final masters oral exams. If I remember right."

"Oh, I see."

"He was a brilliant man. Nonpareil."

"Um. Did he ever graduate?"

"I don't think so. He was a scholar, though. We never heard from him again."

He looked at Tim from behind his desk. Massive textbooks were stacked sideways on rickety shelves.

"Do you know what happened to him? Are you an old friend of his? Tim stuttered. "Uh, well, somebody told me about him a while back. I was just curious."

"I see. I hope wherever he is that he is alright."

"One last thing, Dr. Tiberius," Tim said, almost ready to leave.

"Yes?"

"Do you know how long he had these mental problems?"

"Let's see, he was probably getting his masters around 19-, I would venture to say."

"Okay. Well, thank you very much."

"Sure thing," said Dr. Tiberius, and went back to whatever he was doing. Tim walked through the golden aquatint of the season that it was, the coolness of tombs. This immemorial year of Tim's graduate thesis. This halcyon incessant yearning to enact the truths of the facts regarding the man-thing.

Tim wondered if Tiresias, a.k.a. Paul Lipscomb, remembered his commitment to a mental hospital? What, in fact, did he remember? An amnesiac state of total mental blockage stood around the thing like a thick fog. Does he have a family somewhere? How long will he, how long can he go on like this? The mea culpa of Tim's little psychological study was weighing heavily upon his soul. Shouldn't he go to the police? There is actionable, criminal evidence of Tiresias munching on a bum's corpse at the Mall. It is buried in his notes, along with whatever else is on Tiresias's mind.

Under scintillae of silver clouds atomized in the clime of the sky, Tim, breathless and shuddering, waited patiently for his thesis subject to crawl out of his crypt. It seemed yet another eternity after another, for doubtless the ghoul was napping within. Tim squatted on his thin haunches now and was growing tired of even this sitting position. The soft grass of this place was damp, wet in the night mist. Tim looked around the consecrated acetylene skyline of stolid, cowering pines crouching in the distance. These smooth interments were textural integration of the Dead, all inside muffled with silent repose. Once every few rows were overturned potted roses, malignant with wither. The bright magenta foil of these graced poseys shone like signal flares from beyond. The mausoleum in the far corner of the tombscape jutted in guilty silence as if there was nothing remotely alive contained within it. But there was a melancholy, sick heart beating irregularly against the intolerance of this harsh universe. He lived in unplumbed cosmic planes of Azothoth and Lord Dunsany's fields of whimsy. Sidereal time was counterclockwise to his abject cosmos, for he lay on Cartesian coordinate planes hovering between clusters of faint star remnants. He was totally alien to this Earth, he did not remember what it was like to be mundane and ordinary. He was a star traveler without cognitive reasoning, but with only an essence of insane grandiosity, the grandiosity of the unmitigated gall to presume that he was the Cosmic Christ.

As he slept in musty, moldy crumbs of Death, the beastly man lay not forty feet sky from his arbiter of sanity, his Boswell. Not a scuffling, shuffling sound came from the beveled white walls of embalment.

Was Tiresias alive at all, here in this world? What is this world, anyway? A priori mechanisms of noumena, causality, space, time, and perambulating shameless walking ignorants. The Mayan veils of illusion were shrouds on the countenances of the bored and boring. Did Tiresias, formerly Paul Lipscomb, brilliant promising unchallengeable doctoral student, foresee his ghastly fate? He seems to be lifted above the ordinary turf of charnel dirt through the warped, clanking cesium clock, however faulty, in his own maligned skull. He is in silver corridors through time portal gates, spatial entities of eternity abounded around him. He was presumed by bohunks to insentience, and yet he may, through his blind ignorance (the very name Tiresias, that of a blind warrior) to the laws of Man, be some eternal distressed genius not of this earthly existence.

Chapter Eleven

Like Lazarus, but lame, Tiresias climbed forth from the door of dread as Tim hid behind the Wascom family plots. He quietly shut the wall behind him, and shook off the caked dust of death. He did not see

Tim at all, and Tim, with tape recorder and notepad in pocket, dressed in dark clothes, would be damned sure he would remain so unknown. Tiresias looked about his property co-owned with the Devil, and began shambling down the middle road after traversing the outer edge of the fenced graveyard, exiting it. He was heading directly for Proteus College, little cowtown sleepyeyed coeducational pot-boiler semblance of higher learning. Tim waited a good while before following, letting Tiresias go well ahead of him before he began shambling and stalking his treasure, his prized precious thing of the gaping maws of hell.

Tiresias the limping ghoul walked all the way to the rotted tracks parallel to Railroad Avenue due south of Cate Square and Tim's apartment, Tim noticed as he too followed. It seemed to be not exactly an aimless trek, but a determined direct path. Tiresias muttered to himself in what Tim could barely pick up but recognized as various and sundry Latin proverbs like "In Diablo Icarnato," "Caveat Lector" in a sort of guttural spewing in terse syllables such as a person afflicted with Tourette's Syndrome would say. He walked through desolate tracts of varicoloured dismay. He emitted a throaty laugh to himself and looked behind him suddenly without so much as a pulse as if he sensed someone beside him was there. Without so much as a brief pause, Tiresias thrust his way into an immediate thicket of thick woods and unattended, overgrown underbrush of thistles, sinewy nets of vines, and large high weeds. There was a sort of opening to the place, a path blazed somewhat.

Tiresias had to literally be as quiet as a silent stalker, where one simple snap of a twig could rile Man.

The night was as black and dismal as midnight in the secret recesses of some sinister deep space.

Wimpers whistled through the spooky paddock.

Tiresias stopped and hunched over something in the thicket with a clearing just ahead. Tim waited, and then saw Tiresias brandish a sort of utensil, which looked much like an ordinary kitchen steak knife. He appeared to cut and thrash, and saw and hew away at a bundle of lifeless bulk which lay propped sideways on the very ground. Tim gasped as he realized the man was cutting away at a body. Very much deceased since God knew when, but now Tiresias was hungrily chewing at a now separated chunk of the meat of the remains. It looked like a frail body, perhaps that of a homeless bum or such.

Tim then hesitated a moment, for the man ahead, after crossing and almost comically stumbling over the railroad ties of the tracks, Tim felt in his gut a vile dull pain of acute sickness. He thought he was going to dry heave right then and there but managed to hold it back, barely. Tiresias finished the fleshy, dripping bloody piece and continued sawing away at yet another portion.

Tim watched the ghastly process go on; now mostly the ghoul was gathering up a pile of several chunks of the body, including various organs, and stuffing them into a dirty pillowcase which he had been carrying under his filthy overcoat which was already bloodstained as if used for this very purpose before.

Staples for a ghoul's larder, evidently, Tim thought, and was simply amazed at himself that he could remain so calm and clinical after the initial reaction and shock seemed to wear off. It was simply the same as a young teenager watches those vile video rental movies called Faces of Death or Traces of Death, where actual suicides of people, car crashes, and dead carrion are all over, including a man disemboweled by a lion on a safari. I have entered some sort of realm Tim thought, I am now living a ghoul's life myself, sort of. What am I doing out here? God help me! Tim was now definitely used to such inhuman tactics of what was clearly this near-genius who happened to be beyond the realm of the

ordinary psychotic. Tim left the grisly scene carefully as not to be discovered. He somehow managed to make it home, and in actuality he hadn't been that far from home. He was sure that he remained unknown to this person, even though he himself clearly invaded this world of the strange. When he made it inside, after looking over his shoulder so many times he could not remember, he ran into the small bathroom and quickly tossed his vile supper into the toilet, as if he too, had supped on the same meal as his friend
Tiresias.

Chapter Twelve

When the weekend came, Dr. Vice held a barbeque and felt it just wasn't a decadent enough party, so he had fetched Tiresias to join the frivolity.

"Jeezus Christ! Who the hell is that, Dear?" an aging hideous drag queen asked the host, Vice, when the vile smelly figure walked through the back door into the airy wafting of cooked sweetmeats and steaks.

"Why, it's my own special friend, who calls himself Tiresias, old dearie."

"You mean like Homer, The Odyssey?"

"Yes ma'am." The drag queen rolled his eyes. Angus looked at him and smirked.

Vice said, "Why, you don't like the way he dresses? How gauche you must be thinking."

"Well, he IS in need of at least two bubble baths, for one thing."

"Did you know he lives in a mausoleum, dearie?"

"Oh really? Home is where the heart is, I always say," the heavily made up drag queen muttered, holding his cocktail glass sideways with a fingernail varnished withered hand. Dr. Vice knew all the best queers, all out of New Orleans. This girl wore a staggering amount of gaudy faux jewelry and gold bracelets like a Cleopatra, a tight miniskirt and cha cha heels from which he scuttled about the decadent ashram of Dr. Vice and his hunky menagerie of bruty houseboys. In fact, one of them was in the process of burning the steaks on the too-hot fire in the pit out by the swimming pool. Troy, prized houseboy now advanced to the position of chef, was eyeing the strange and suspicious movements of Tiresias, whom he had seen around before on visits, God only knew why. He disliked this thing of a man, this mute, and was even rather afraid of him.

Tiresias walked near the barbeque pit when Troy left for a second. He pulled out his bloodsoaked stenchy sack of human carcass pieces. Troy had gone into the house for a bottle of tap water to cool the grill's fire down a bit.

This left Tiresias to putting his carven meat chunks onto the pit where they promptly began cooking with sizzle. A strange, even delicious aroma filled the air when Troy arrived at his cooking station again to begin spritzing water on the hot coals as they flamed up, him using his right thumb over the stem of the pop bottle. He looked at the ghoul.

"Oh, you brought your own, huh dude?" Troy asked a pale-faced Tiresias, standing a bit away in his full-length overcoat which was now stained with dried blood, and who didn't say anything.

"What kind of meat is that anyway?" Troy continued to ask the man. Tiresias still said nothing.

"Looks like beef to me. I'll put some special barbeque sauce on them if you want me to. Is that OK?" Tiresias, miracle of miracles, nodded. But he was thinking at the moment that he was the Cosmic Christ, "Metasomamacrokosmos," he thought and muttered over and over; this word burned through etched lines in his thoughts. The meat continued to cook evenly; it had been a bit gamey due to lack of refrigeration. It was doubtlessly hard to keep a cooler in a dismal dripping crypt. No outlets and there was no need or room.

The drag queen peered out the back door at the mingling folks, but mainly he/she was looking at the humorous-looking man. "Quel pathetique. That poor creature! I'd say he's in need of one of your make overs, Angus dearie."

"No, he just drops by here now and then. I generally leave him be. It's good to have variety at my humble cabana in this dreary redneck paradise."

"I'll say that I don't feel at home in this backwater burg either," the aged queen said as he held a French cigarette and adjusted his slip and lacy underthings. "How do you like my new heels?" he asked his friend. Another drag queen came over and said, "Oh, you saw mine last time and ran out to Payless Shoes for a cheaper pair," and laughed.

"Oh shut up you heifer," the queen said to the other. He clinked his cocktail glass, now empty, at the host. He pointed at the houseboy bartender in leather chaps and bare buttocks protruding. Angus saw him with empty glass. "Oh, have your little self another drink. Oh, look.

Here comes Tiresias. I've got to show him where the plates are. Excuse me, you little bitch." That brought laughs. The two queens cattily whispered about the ghoulish-looking fiend coming through the sliding glass door. Angus waved sissily at Tiresias. "Here's your plate, dearie, and here's all the stuff.

We've got the relish, salad, veggies with dip, over here is a casserole, and there's still a bit of onion rings left. Oh that Houseboy, he overcooked the squash. Now just help yourself, sweetie."

Tiresias piled on the condiments and tons of side dishes, but left room on his plate for what he wanted the most. He walked to the door to the outside at poolside, where Troy speared for him onto his plate the better parts of some unknown person, perhaps a wino, a homeless bum, his flesh, now well done, succulent almost, and branded with the marks from the hot grill.

Tiresias walked after watching the hunky blonde-haired Troy pile on the weird and crudely cut hunks of browned meat. "Enjoy," Troy said enthusiastically to him. He found a place to eat, he sat and made a complete pig of himself on the diving board of the pool, literally devouring human flesh. As he caught this thing out of the corner of his eye, Troy tried not to look at the sickening sight.

Chapter Thirteen

Tim went along to his graduate classes and seminars. He tried to make up for frequent absences. Dr. Tiberius asked him how his thesis was coming along.

"I'm still gathering my data. I've got my notes and am making quite a pile of them. And I'm trying to organize them."

Dr. Tiberius smiled and put away his cigarette. He looked to Tim just like the famous psychologist

Alfred Adler, once a pupil of Freud, but who branched out on his own. He said, "Well, just keep at it, my boy, you are doing just fine."

"Thank you, doctor, I'll see you later," Tim said.

"Good day." Tim was starving and needed to get sustenance, which meant walking to the nearest fast food place to grab a gristly burger. It was just a block away, conveniently located right off campus, near the University Theatre. Tim had made up his mind: he would not breathe a word about the despicable acts, the cannibalism of the bum's carcass. He hadn't heard about it on the news yet.

Perhaps the authorities hadn't discovered it yet. How the poor man died he did not know. He very well could have just died of natural causes, and the body defiled later. Happens all the time. Tiresias probably didn't do it; he didn't seem to be capable of it; he did mutilate and eat some body parts though. That was the point of it all. If he as a grad student wanted to complete his case study and evaluate his hypothetical constructs out of observations and assumptions, he wouldn't go running to the cops. That would be the end of his subject who roamed free, with those unconscious forces working on him from this environment, influencing his behavior. And the darker forces bubbling within him were involved very much, so Tiresias would be a contextual-dialectic model. It involved a mechanistic model with quantitative observable behavior (Skinner, Bandura) as well as an Organismic model (Adler, Freud, Piaget, and Erikson). So he could follow up and conclude with Broffebrenner's Ecological Model of Tiresias in a meso-system of this cruddy town of Proteus. And incorporate also Reigel's ideas of change as constant instability.

Tim ate his bacon cheeseburger at the Mr. Cook restaurant, surprising himself in the fact that he could have this much of an appetite after all the grisly events that had just taken place a couple of days ago. Now, who is that over there, right outside? In the parking lot-why, he does get around a lot for a limping ghoul. My nemesis, my treasure, Paul "Tiresias" Lipscomb, the shambling walking Dead. Still the fear of himself, Tim being discovered-he wasn't followed here by this cannibal, was he? Paeans of paranoia.

Naw. No way in hell. Tim continued eating and watching. Tiresias was WITH SOMEONE.

A young girl. A punk rocker looking thing, a bohemian looking waif. No more than sixteen years old, no doubt. I am so glad that I happened to be here, because Tiresias appears to be involved in some sort of one way or mute conversation. She's even giving him a bite of her hamburger. This will radically change my social constructs of Tiresias' life. I must find out who she is. How did she meet him? Who is she?

Since when did Tiresias ever talk to anyone? For all rights he should be down at the bus station panhandling for his charity for the Cosmic Christ Church where he usually netted a bit of change. Maybe that's his next stop. But I can't follow him.

Tim watched these two strange bedfellows; Tiresias didn't exactly talk to her, lots of nodding though. She is avidly talking to him and laughing and obviously enjoying herself a good bit. Tim had long finished his meal when he saw Tiresias walk off, and he was gone. Now was Tim's chance to ask her some vital questions.

She was nothing more in size than a mere waif, a wisp of a very lovely creature. She was wearing Birkenstocks with accompanying socks, a frail thin cotton dress from which her breasts revealed tiny revenants of nipple bumps.

Her arms were slender as were her legs, her hair was flaxen and flat, but quite nice. In short, she looked perfectly lovely, including her aquiline features which showcased a wry grin. She was just standing around the edge of the small parking lot like she was alive on this very earth, and bedamned with the spudheads. She was a tiny creature of the universe, as waddling fat beasts of housewives made their munching ways

to their vans and cars, with their filled porked bellies over untucked pullovers and mundane blouses.

She looked right at Tim with hardly an unfriendly bone in her formidable lithe figure.

"Hi," she said as cute as a button, in a bohemian undertone.

"Uh, hello," as he came up to her slowly, making sure as not to frighten her.

"Who are you?" she asked him plaintively. Tim didn't manage to say anything for a moment, and then said the only thing that would ensure his continued discussion.

"I'm sort of, ah," he said, stammering around, "I kind of, know Paul."

"Who?"

"You know. The guy you were just with. Um, Paul Lipscomb." She wrinkled out the prettiest smile as if the gates of heaven just swung wide to receive Tim.

"Oh, you mean Tiresias. I don't know any Paul. Yeah, I know Tiresias." Tim nodded. "Do you like him? Is he nice?"

"He is sooooo coooooooll!" she exclaimed and twirled her skirt.

"I see," Tim said, watching her twirl and then she settled back to her spot again.

He continued. "Would you mind if I asked you about him? That is, I'm kind of worried about him."

"Sure." They sat down at one of the Mr. Cook tables, the ones for outside dining.

A porcine, pendulous lady leered at Tim, while devouring a chili dog and cut eyes at him with hatred.

"So, what's your name?"

"Julia. What's yours?"

"Tim. Tim Meadows."

"So he's your friend too," she cooed.

"Sort of. Well, he is hard to talk to."

"I know. That's one of the neat things about him."

"How did you meet him?"

"Oh, at the bus station. I was playing Centipede, my highest score ever. It's just a game for automatons and kids."

"Oh. Hm."

"I'm in his church, silly!" she cheered. "I'm in the Cosmic Christ Church! Hee!" she giggled.

"That's fake, though, right?"

"Nooooo. He told me—"

"He talked?"

"He writes it down on post-it notes."

"Ahhh." She continued. "He said that he is the Meta ... somasomething."

"The Metasomamacrokosmos?"

"Yeah. Will you buy me a Dr. Pepper?"

"Sure. Wait here." He went inside and came out a moment later with the drink. She grabbed it and sucked. "I'm so thirsty."

"So, what's your name again?" Tim asked discreetly.

"Julia, silly! Don't you remem-?"

"No, I mean your last name."

"Oh, um, Saia. I hate Italians. I don't think I look Italian."

"Saia."

"Julia Saia."

"Where do you live? Well, you shouldn't have to tell me that."

"You don't really think I look Italian, do you?"

"No, not at all."

"I go to Proteus High, I'm a junior. We live in Woodland Hills. You know, by the cemetery."

"Uh huh." She gleefully added, "That's how I met Tiresias. My father is the caretaker of Greenlawn. Greenlawn Boneorchard. That's what I call it. He hates it when I call it that."

"So ... ," Tim said as his mind ratiocinated on the whole scheme of it.

"Daddy doesn't know where Tiresias lives. I keep it to myself."

"You mean, in one of the mausoleums."

"Right. Daddy would definitely kick him out."

"So why do you like the guy so much? Don't you think he's ... weird?"

"Noo..."

"Really?" Tim asked.

"That's what's so killer cool about him! He's cool because he's a great thinker. He's a writer! I've seen his manuscripts. They're like THIS high!" She motioned with her delicate hands how high. Tim decided he couldn't keep her anymore than he already had. He did have to get back, too.

"Are you ... going to see him now?" he asked.

"Naw. He sleeps during the day, mostly." She finished the drink, holding and slurping air from the bent straw now.

"That was good. Thanks!"

"Do me a favor, okay Julia?" Tim asked of her.

"What?"

"Um, please don't mention to him that I was asking about him."

"Why not?"

"Well, he might not remember me. Please, just don't say who I am either.

"She smiled, more beautiful in her youth than he could imagine." "Well, I gotta go now," she said in a nice way. "It was nice to meet you."

As she walked off, she made a motion with her finger to her lips like throwing away a key, "It's our little secret." Tim went home to compile this new information into his existing data.

Chapter Fourteen

Tiresias sat in the stench of his tomb, in his own filth. I suffer endlessly, he mused in restless grief. I have to prophesize with bird entrails at the feet of Oedipus. He vaguely thought of his friend, Goddess Athena, Julia. She was his Beatrice as he straddled these steps of Purgatorio, observing the sinners, with Dante.

Julia had given him a Sony Watchman, a small television, for his home here. Tiresias watched the local news mostly: they found a mutilated corpse, another so-far unsolved crime, the man says. But Tiresias didn't connect this reality with his own munching on his homeless comrade's flesh, of which they spoke on the telly. He was seemingly above the laws of these apes. Ape and Essence by Aldous Huxley was one of his favorite books. Alexander Pope's quotation, "The proper study of Man is Man" which Huxley himself used for the title of another book, Proper Studies ran through his head. Tiresias, the so-called blind warrior who was not at all blind but did consider himself spiritually blind and lacking, decided these apes of this hamlet of Proteus, Louisiana were a study in themselves by him, that of "The proper study, that of apes, which is apes."

Tiresias found himself staying inside more since that television came into his possession, which he did regard as a prized piece of property which surceased some of his abysmal loneliness. Unfortunately, he had no normal cognizance of any reasonable thought processes, so it was all a bit of insane folly, this

phosphor image inside a dead and lifeless place.

Tiresias suddenly heard Mr. Saia start the lawnmower outside. Mowing the consecrated lawn, manicuring the cemetery much like that of the local country club's putting green. Tiresias thought back to Julia, her flaxen hair and face, his friend, his little Beatrice with pearly teeth to guide him from this sheer hell somehow to a newer, more hopeful world. What a goddess, her beauty is arresting, he wondered. She is certainly no ape, he thought with some amusement. She fed him a tasty double cheeseburger, the meat of the apes. His belly was full with this; he had been used to his special diet of rodent and human flesh which he got on special occasions. He had to admit the cheeseburger tasted quite good. He heard ape voices:

"Hey, daddy." It was Athena, Julia. She knocked on his crypt door. "Tiresias," she whispered. He let her in, shunning the light. Her father, the caretaker, was across the street that split the cemetery in half.

"Tiresias. Hi. Were you sleeping?" she cooed. He shook his wicked head no.

"Good. Can I sit with you?" He nodded yes and sat up on the dingy floor. He took a post-it note and drew an eternal yes, which was this: ?YES!

"Oh, an eternal yes, that's what you taught me," she said.

"Watching TV?" He didn't say anything but changed channels on the tiny device.

"I met a friend of yours," she said mysteriously. "He likes you." Tiresias looked at her like a blind warrior. "He is a nice guy. He watches you." She talked on of her recent conversation, her secrets with the new guy, a Tim.

"Tim Meadows. A grad student in psychology." Tiresias raptly listened, his back hunched. He still said nothing.

She finished her diatribe. She sat up. The TV buzzed with a used car commercial piloted by an ape man.

"Well, I gotta go now. Let me make sure that daddy isn't around our little secret area." She peered outside. "Good.

There he is, over there. Bye sweetie!" and she left, leaving Tiresias sitting in his own filth.

Who is this man in this vast conspiracy against me? Tiresias mused, while scratching himself. Paved inroads of paranoia incredulity flensed through his consciousness. Not a friend of Dr. Angus with his chinadoll face? No.

Perhaps he is the one who has been seen about the place quite a lot. He grazed his fingers over his stupendous pile of manuscripts, grazing with a definite fondness. Oh grave, where is thy victory? Oh Death, where is thy sting? The Dies Irae of this less fashionable shelter of the recent dead. He looked in the damp darkness with but candlelight from a solitary scented candle, one of many supplied by his Goddess Athena. She has equipped me with human food, also.

He had recently been unfaithful to his beastly appetite by eating canned spaghetti, chunky-style soup, and spice canned Hormel chili.

I've got to continue on my Exegesis. I am getting closer to absolute truth, one way or another.

He lay down in the blankets and adored his protected tomb that he shared with a host of encrypted

corpses. They seemed to talk to him sometimes. It was like Cold-Pack in Philip K. Dick's UBIK. You really aren't dead, you know. There is a higher state of transcendence.

I myself suffer endlessly. There is nothing else, really. All I ask for is a moment of sanity. He found himself asking himself this very odd thought.

Why, I must be seeing some wondrous beatific vision: but no, I see and smell nothing but the deepest inner recesses of my heart, which is as black as midnight on Neptune's ice-plumed surface.

He often dreamt of chasmed gulfs of uncharted, unplumbed galactic space. He was quite familiar with the fantasy literature of Machen, Lovecraft, Lord Dunsany, Bierce, Algernon Blackwood, and all the rest. In fact, he was more well read than any professor at Proteus College, that was sure.

More knots of Hypnos and Morpheus. Death and his Brother, Sleep, from Shelley's "Queen Mab." He looked at the mass of books stacked on top of each other in rows. Was he in the mood for a quick read before sleeping? Some science fiction, perhaps? No, these didn't excite him anymore. He knew they didn't suit his temperament. Nothing really did, anymore. What nihilistic pathos.

Chapter Fifteen

"Welcome, my precious," Angus Vice exclaimed when he answered the knock at his batik antique-carven door. "Oh, my dear Tiresias. I see that you've brought your little friend."

Tiresias and Julia stood outside the foyer of Vice's exquisite lodgings.

"I'm Dr. Vice. But do call me Angus, dear, please." All she could do was manage a smile, shake his frail hand, and say, "Julia."

"Julia. Ah, I can see that our little Tiresias has quite a friend in you, my dear. You're quite obviously a little goddess."

"He (Tiresias) thinks I'm a goddess. Athena, I think." Tiresias, oblivious to reality, barged right in. "Oh, yes, enter, little ones."

They sat down in the heart of his plush den.

"We are all going to be drinking something light. Can I get you a spritzer, my dear Julia? You're a grownup, I take it?" Julia mumbled out a "Sure."

"Tiresias?" Tiresias said nothing, as expected. In a chiffon, crinoline cocktail dress with matching sash and white satin pumps, Vice sashayed into the kitchen to prepare the cocktails.

"This is nice, isn't it Tiresias?" He said nothing. He went to the giant screen television and VCR and put in a Lon Chaney, Sr. film.

"What are we watching?" she asked. The titles appeared on the screen: The Shock. It seemed awfully grainy. Tiresias watched with rapt attention even when drag queen Vice pressed the large plastic cup into his filthy grimy hands.

"Do you like my new Little Mermaid cups, Dear Tiresias?" Julia grimaced a frown. "He doesn't know

what that is; you should know that," she droned in a pseudo-authoritarian way in spite of her waifish and slight presence.

"Well, my dear, you don't know a damned thing in this big world, I'm afraid. Now drink your drink like a good little girl. I might get you another one if you finish that one." He laughed wickedly.

She clammed up, seething. She did not like this man at all, this thing. They watched the silent film for a good half hour. Vice brought in a batch of tasty nachos with peppers and melted cheese. Tiresias devoured every one of them.

"Oh, you like them, do you, my treasure?" Vice laughed again. Julia despised him.

Suddenly Vice got up. "I've got to go into the bedroom. To put my little kabuki face on. I won't be but a minute."

"Sure, dude," the waif said to him. Vice went in his master bedroom and kneeled on the bed, taking his pumps off. He held his pocket mirror to his now white blushed face. The thick makeup was being applied in massive brushes and strokes. His wig, a red one with flat bristles like a sort of Clara Bow coif, lay to his side.

Julia tapped Tiresias on the shoulder in the den. He looked away from the television and saw her put her finger to her petulant red lips as if to say,

"Shush" or "Quiet." She cupped and whispered into his filthy ear: "I'll get you some more food to eat. Meat." She giggled and grabbed the iron fireplace poker, stroking it, wielding it, and judging its weight. Tiresias again said nothing. "A victim for our Cosmic Christ Church to sacrifice, coming right up," she singsonged. She tiptoed down the dark hallway with the poker in her left hand. Vice was facing the wall, his back to her, peering into his mirror and humming and singing "Too Darn Hot," by Cole Porter.

"Too Darn Hot," he sang, quite off key but kind of lovely. He was diligently applying purple glossy fuckme lipstick to his pouty drooping lips.

"Too Darn Hot!" he warbled. She was now right behind him, breathing heavily. She raised the poker slowly behind her head, cocking it. "Too Darn Hot, Too Darn Hot."

She brought it down in a swift hard motion on his fragile skull with quite a deft stroke. "Too, ahhhhh!" he cried. A thud, squishy and blood flew everywhere kind of scattershot. All over her tie-dyed t-shirt where her tiny nipples protruded. His skull was mush as he slumped down onto the bed.

He lay there, now stone cold dead. What a big mess. She raised it again and proceeded to continue the flurry of blows with squishy hard hollow thumps.

She threw the bloody poker on the bed.

"Oh Tiresias! Tiresias!" She waited for him to arrive. It took him a minute. He shambled through the dank hallway that now reeked with death served cold. He looked at the body. He showed no emotion, but just blankness, as if he were dead from the neck up and were unable to do or show anything; apathy, remorse, shock, surprise, boredom, just nothing.

She smiled, giggled, and looked up at him. He looked at the body and then to her.

"Dinnertime, Tiresias. Chow down," she giggled out and then laughed uncontrollably. Tiresias said nothing.

"Let's cut you up some pieces. She went into the kitchen, grabbed a towel, and a butcher knife, serrated. She went back into the death chamber of poor Vice and carefully wiped off the end of the poker where she had handled it, put her hands on it, to remove any trace of fingerprints.

"There, now we can carve. White meat or dark?" She pulled the dress off the corpse. She began carving. The mutilation wasn't an easy job. Tiresias leered at the bloody ghastly sight. He grabbed a tupperware container with lid in which to put the prime cuts. She kept at it, hewing and cutting away bluntly at a flabby, awfully dead man, or what was left of him. They continued this for a good while, and got another container to fill up also. After the body was sufficiently mutilated and plenty of flesh was gathered to be cannibalized, the ghoulish and his little girlfriend left out the batik antique carved door, and shuffled off into the night.

It was a splendid night in the town of Darwin, just immaculately beautiful with a splash of orange twilight, once a sad time of night and now to the pair, exciting and wondrous indeed, as they made their way back to Greenlawn Cemetery in the way of darkness descending.

Chapter Sixteen

Tim sat in or rather sank in his pathetic "couch engloute," a sunken cathedral that was his furniture. He was safely hiding away in his backyard rent house on N. Magnolia Street. His television was on. Tim waited to hear any news reports coming out of Baton Rouge or New Orleans stations regarding any skullduggery with mutilated corpses and such. They had mentioned on KinZ Station that a mutilated corpse had been found last week (Tim reckoned that it was sniffed out, rather) in that stretch of wooded thicket where Tim had followed Tiresias and watched him cleave away at some poor homeless old man's corpse. But had they found any leads yet? Tim knew he did not want to go to the police—that would be the end of his little thesis project.

And Tim knew that this was not the way he usually felt about criminal matters. He was now, simply put, a coward until Tiresias came about. For some reason, he felt unafraid of being implicated in this little subtext of weirdness that was his life.

Ah, here comes the five o'clock news ... A bit of stuff here about crooked Darwin city council members. And here was a story about the State Attorney General and his upcoming racketeering case. Ah, here it is:

"A report just in ... Dr. Angus Vice, a professor at Proteus College, was found brutally murdered, bludgeoned to death at his home on 1219 S. Gladiolas Street.

"The assailant or assailants are unknown. His young friend, a Troy Cumak, told reporters that he had found Vice in a pool of blood Thursday night.

"An autopsy is being conducted and Darwin police are continuing their investigation into this matter ... It appears that this body was dismembered just as another body of an elderly homeless man was found last week was also dismembered in the same fashion.

"In other news, in the child molestation case of Father Garrett..." Well, Tim thought. He continued snacking on greasy potato chips as he was wont to do in his now neglected diet, sunk deep down into

the rank bowels of his rotting sofa. So Tiresias is leaving a trail of ripped out human flesh ... He wondered if the little girl was in on it too. He remembered that the professor was a frequent host to Tiresias. He knew that this fellow was notorious in homosexual matters and was the biggest pervert on campus.

Tim thought about it long and hard. Here he was, privy to the biggest serial murderer or cannibal in Darwin history. And he himself felt he was losing his mind. The stress of all this, the keeping of the dread secrets of all of this. He had stated earlier in his own notes and tape recordings that he, Tim Meadows, was not much better off than this ghoul himself. He really must come around. Tell the police, perhaps. That would be good to do the correct thing, that was sure.

How about a little drink to celebrate my new found courage, which was really cowardice? I can give up the mess. I can call off my thesis, drop out of grad school, unless of course they let me take on another topic, or I can finish the topic as it is, and still perhaps face criminal negligence if I don't turn this bastard in. How about that drink? He went to the ransacked kitchen to fetch a half a bottle of cheap red wine, Gallo, he saw it was. He sipped it right out of the bottle-how's that for being a derelict? But I am not a ghoul...

There was a knock on the door. Tim went to answer it. Who could be knocking for me, he wondered...

Facing him when he opened the screen door was none other than a little goddess Athena and Tiresias. The little girl/goddess was smiling.

"Hi!" she said. Tim's heart leapt into his throat. Oh my God, they found me. "Umm, yes, how are you?" Tim said half-heartedly. Play it cool, he thought. He was holding his glass of wine. "Do you want to talk?" Tim asked them. Of course, Tiresias said nothing and stank to high heaven. "Sure," Julia said. "Can we come in?" Tim shuddered a shudder that he felt deep in the root of his bones. They came in.

"Well, sit down, please." Tiresias sat on the floor, cross legged, his overcoat filthy as hell. Julia was just hanging around. "I've talked to Tiresias. I know you told me not to tell him about you. But I did anyway."

Tim smiled half-hearted, rather faintly. "I guess no harm done." Tiresias said nothing.

"So, what are you guys up to?" Tim found himself asking and rather not too interested in finding out, really. Julia managed to smile soo sexy to him.

A cherub like those Dryads that Tiresias talked about from his wondrous childhood of genius.

She was wearing a low cut see-through blouse and her right breast was exposing a brown little nipple that was driving Tim crazy, and that is just what it felt like, that Tim was dying and going to heaven watching this pert little sixteen-year-old's slight breast, and about to die in total agony with Tiresias ripping out his vital organs. Julia knew and seemed to want Tim to look at her little brown flesh of breast. She looked down her shirt, and looked up to Tim, and smiled again. This was getting Tim aroused in the most surreptitious way, and she was a goddess Athena in Tim's book, that was for sure.

She seemed to be exposing it more as she pretended to sit there in the most casual way. Tiresias didn't notice, how could he in his severe psychotic state of depressions and Gawd knew what else, schizophrenia, paranoid obsessive compulsive, nechrophic aspect of himself.

"We've been very baaad," Julia said coyly. Tim wondered. "What do you mean?" Tim asked. Julia looked at him with her breast displayed very prettily.

It was a stupendous little thing, and not often seen by adult men. Tim wondered why Tiresias didn't get as excited as he was; he was hiding an erection.

And Julia knew he was.

"We can't say. But Tiresias knows you are interested in his life." Tim tried to shush her, but noticed that she wouldn't comply. Besides, Tiresias was in his own world of phantastical and phantasmagoric. Julia continued.

"We want you to come with us for a while, to study him. You like studying me, I see." Tim blushed; here he was with a stud of an erection, and could go after her in the worst way. She fiddled with her blouse and kept it open for all to see. Tim barely could keep his eyes off the divine creature of wondrous origin. "Where do you want me to go to? Tiresias's crypt?"

"Yes, I'll be there too. And we can have some fun..." she said, and Tim was about to go absolutely crazy with lust. The nipple was a thing of beauty.

It looked supple, the entire breast, and now she moved to the other side so he could see the other one. She was an ectomorph in the sense that females of slight build, with skinny limbs can be quite attractive. And here he was, getting his eyes full. He absolutely memorized her breasts. They were gorgeous.

Light tan but definitely coffee brown little nipples. He wanted to pluck them into his mouth. He was salivating, he was as ripe as a monkey in heat, a racehorse, a dog in heat. Tiresias seemed to be watching television.

And Tim could see that he was basically well-fed; no doubt off the human meat. Tiresias seemed to accept him, he didn't seem to be antagonistic at all.

But one could not judge such things, for the poor ghoul was censorious to the entire world of people, and one could not guess what was going on inside him, unless one was reading his manuscripts. "Ask Tiresias if it is okay with him." She whispered in Tiresias's ear, and Tiresias produced his dirty post-it notes to write upon. His handwriting was shaky and here was the response when he showed it to her and she handed it over to Tim, her blouse gaping outward inviting him to just put his face all over her beautiful little chest.

Here is what it said...

"?Yes!" Julia, the goddess with breasts, explained, "It's his way of stating the eternal yes or no. He is such a philosopher, you know."

"Ah, yes, the eternal yes," Tim said. "Well, let me pack. I would like to bring my notebook and tape recorder, if that's all right."

She gave him a little fake kiss in the air, and said, "Of course, Silly Billy."

"I mean, you want me to go stay with both of you, like ... right now?" Tim had yet still to adjust to this sudden incursion. He went ahead and gathered up his notebook (carefully stashing away his old stack of piled high notes for safekeeping). He got a few pieces of clothing and his small tape recorder with a couple of blank cassettes, although he knew that he could not get even one iota of a syllable out of the man, but perhaps he could get some peripheral information out of the girl.

"Ready to go, Master Tiresias?" the little brazen girl asked ever so sweetly. Tim thought, she surely believes she is in total control of us, doesn't she? At least it would be all three of us, he rationalized. Whatever lies ahead will surely be interesting, and I can finish my notes, get out of this situation, and proceed to write my thesis from organized stacks of info.

They walked out, Tim locked the door. They were surely the oddest looking trio, walking the length of shady, quiet suburbia that was this haven of several blocks. Down the road of N. Magnolia, past the Holy Oaks elementary school, the gazebo in Cate Square, past the post office and a bank.

Tim walked side by side with the girl, with the ghoul trailing behind in his awkward poor limp. Julia chatted away her little sweet pretties, her bon mots of idiocy, her nonsense and frivolity. After all, Tim thought, she was only sixteen years old, and quite a wicked sixteen-year-old. And she called Paul Lipscomb, "Master Tiresias," as if trying to please him at all costs. Tim definitely had quite a lot of trepidation about this whole turn of events; after all, how did he know they weren't planning on doing away with him, mutilating just another corpse in an endless series of horrid killings? That was something to keep on the forefront. The breasty little creature lured him out and into Tiresias's world, and gawd only knew what that was like. He would know now first hand, using all his skills in psychology to finally get at the root of this whole matter, ferret it out. And it could cost him his pitiful life. And here he was, walking to the graveyard. The boneorchard of Greenlawn Cemetery loomed ahead just at the fringe of the college, which now that Tim thought about it was certainly a strange place to put such a thing. The consecrated grounds beckoned all of them, it seemed. Julia now strode ahead, as if to point out the humble dwellings to the back side of the neatly manicured consecrated grounds of Christian burials.

Mr. Saia, her Italian gruffy father, the grounds keeper, was off today, doubtless. Tim didn't see him, nor anyone else, after all it was nightfall. Here they were, cutting between grave markers of marble with dried flowers askant on them from mourners and beloved, and Tiresias opened his front door, which was the only door, just to seep out the smell of gloom and death into the very ether of this darkened place jutting against the pine treed skyline of acetylene and gray misty gunmetal blank.

Tiresias entered first, then Tim, followed by Julia. It was a bit cramped in there, to be sure. Tim stood crouched down, as Tiresias sat crosslegged on his sort of security blanket, again it was too filthy.

Julia began taking off her clothes: first the blouse, then the pants, then the bra, and panties. She giggled as she did this. Tim thought in this rapturous moment, I am in a sealed deathless crypt with a cannibal and I must have somehow arrived in heaven. If he would have known this was part of the bargain, he would have come knocking a long time ago.

Tim gazed longingly at this girl; she was in the post-relational stage of womanhood, and her lithe body in all its magnificence was really just right in its existence. She was quite daring in her outlook; she really took charge of matters. And she definitely seemed proud, unabashed and unashamed of her wonderful little body, quite unlike post-menarcheal girls. She had nice breasts, and there was evidence from her pubic hair that she was completely in her womanhood. But she had the will of a free-spirited adult, way past any youthful stage, or at least in the very midst of it.

Tiresias remained steadfast and unmoved by this girl's sudden whole nakedness. It was as if he was in such a severely depressed state that nothing could lurch him out of his orbit. Tiresias just sat there, his face disheveled and wan, pale. He appeared by not sporting a long growth of beard, to have shaved not too long ago; boy at that time he must have been halfway presentable.

His thickly pile of manuscripts sat by a previously lit candle, itself sitting on a stack of hardback tomes.

Tim desperately wanted to get his hands on this stupendous amount of personal writing: the Exegesis, the other philosophical works, the piles of notes and works in progress. It would prove invaluable, and to think!-to read them while cuddling up to and out of the corner of his own eye, to gaze upon the mellifluous, insalubrious silken, smooth pliant body of the Goddess Athena, Julia, who sat there as if posing for a portrait or nude study.

"Julia ... do you think Tiresias would let me take a peek at his writing, his manuscripts?" Julia smiled sweetly at him and when he looked at her, he looked at everything, the holistic approach to admiring her entire body, a gestalt bit of flesh. Her legs rising up to a supple torso, the genitalia, the secondary sex organs, the face, all just a misty dream.

"He wants you to. He wrote his eternal yes when I just happened to ask him earlier, because I knew you wanted to for your project."

Tim relaxed, already much sexually aroused and simply drinking in Julia's nakedness. Tiresias, appearing much tired, moved and lay down upon his blanket, shifting his worthless body to some comfortable position. He soon went into a deep sleep, as Tim crawled to the manuscripts which were not too far from him anyway, and grabbed a bound manuscript which was the first volume of Tiresias's mammoth exegesis: AN EXEGESIS: AN EXPLORATION OF THE DIABOLIC APOLOGIA PRO VITA MEA PAUL LIPSCOMB Tim marveled at the serious text, and gazed immediately through its pages.

This is publishable material! he reckoned. This is good stuff! It rivals the best of them. How did he stamp his "real" name on the cover page? Tim wondered. He thought that the ghoul-philosopher had abjectly forsaken his Sir and Christian names for the other.

Tiresias now slept, which was an irregular schedule of insomnia most of the time. What was new? Nothing else in his so-called life was ordered. And Julia waited patiently for Tim, crossing her legs in a sitting position, completely exposing herself. Tim watched her with one eye as he read with the other. What an incredible feeling, he thought. Sheer bliss on the one hand and a delving into a kabbalah of death on the other.

Tim read and read. The typing was erratic, but the spelling was remarkable. Tiresias had written just as a Ph.D. scholar had. The Exegesis was divided into several parts, was well-ordered, and coherent, completely, in fact.

Tim turned page after page. It was in single space type, with diagrams of the Tree of Tippereth, from the Caballa, the rigging of the tree, references to the Egyptian Book of the Dead by E. A. Wallis Budge. There were numerous references to Christian and Jewish philosophers, and an extensive cross referenced index. He had really done his homework. This was a fabulous occult text or tome. He had really outdone himself. This was a masterpiece.

Julia said, "Can't you come over here while Tiresias is sleeping?" Tim answered, "Okay."

Julia said, with the tone of the Pentecostal overtone of oversexed libido but nonplussed with innocence, "Would you like to kiss me?" Tim said nothing but nodded and scrunched over there and kissed her, so close to her skinny naked and sweet smelling body. He thought about the age difference, and that he was committing statutory rape with a minor, but his baser instincts overwhelmed him. Her little biscuit of brown pubic hair was between her legs, beckoning him. He made out with her, squeezing and caressing her breasts, and touching her all over.

She moaned with pleasure, and Tiresias snored. Tim was bursting with an unparalleled freshness of raw

animal sexuality. He was overcome. He took off his clothes as she waited, and they lay down together, and he mounted her. He thrust against her little hips and her back arched, and then she rolled over on top of him. Above them in the flickering candlelight were the names of the deceased in the mausoleum, participants in this savage weird sex. Those, McArdle, Threeton, etc. This crypt was fairly diverse. It wasn't just one family. It was like a time-shared condo, but one had all the time in the world.

Tim came inside her when he could hold it back no longer, and he hugged and kissed her with every breath he could muster, as she too had come. She throbbed against him. He withdrew from her and they lay there, puffing and breathing quite hard.

Tiresias continued to sleep the sleep of derelict gods, the sleep of the truly damned. He had not witnessed the ribald pleasures of orgiastic carnality in a desecrated tomb. Tim looked at the ceiling and wondered, "What am I doing here? How long do I have to stay here?" and then he remembered that his tape recorder and notebook were waiting for all kinds of relevant and arresting information that he could get out of these two maniacs. What did this sexual act mean? Was he involved in their sinister activities? He just had sex with one of them. It was worth it, he decided. They can't make me into a cannibal. He slept and Julia did too. Tiresias slept so they all slept now as one in the decadent rotting tomb as the candle flickered and went out.

Chapter Seventeen

At the local Wal-Mart, a cadre of fat women were astonished to hear about the news. They showed their anxiety by attacking the free samples of Hostess Twinkies, cornpies, twister-rice cakes, and zingoo fruit pops, near the entrance of the store.

"Did you hear about those dead people?" a Pentecostal splotchy creature in a plain white jumpsuit girdered around her immense loins, exclaimed in a heap of foodstuff in her maw of a mouth.

"Sakes alive, I heard about it. Mutilated and stuff," one lady in a misshapen wig of red curls and a bad case of goiter, said.

"Somebody's gone ta eatin human flesh!" the Pentecostal said. She waved her arm as in a prayer meeting.

"Am keepin my house locked at night. Don't want my little Tiffany and Brittany ta get mo-lestet and eatin by no monster man," a third lady said.

"Yeas lawd," an old black woman said, who in just this one instance was allowed into the conversation. She really didn't belong, now. The women continued gorging and regurgitating their confessed fear. The Wal-Mart greeter man was an gimper of an old man, half-retarded. He came over, after putting away about twenty shopping carts all stuck together, through the front door.

"Yall talkin about the murders?" he asked dully. The women tried to ignore him. They didn't trust him, after all, how did they know this retarded man didn't have nothin to do with it? "Yeah, them murders is all bad," he said, walking off. They whispered in shunted relief. "We can't trust no one nohow these days," one said. Another added, "Yeas lawrd, used to be Darwin was a nice town. I think it's a one of them college punk rockers or sumthin.

Those rock-n-roll freaks." "Yes, amen," they said. A policeman walked into the store, appearing to be off duty. "Officer, oh officer," one of them begged. "Yall know anything about the mutilations goin' on

around here?" "Y'all find anything out yet?" they pleaded.

"No ma'am, I can't say we have. We don't know who is behind all this yet. But we're workin' on it." He smiled.

"Y'all sure got your work cut out fer ya," the Pentecostal woman said. He nodded. "We are gittin' right on it, ma'am."

"That professor who was the last one murdered," the lady said, "He was a homosexual, wadn't he, now?"

"Yes ma'am, we reckon he was."

"Oh, you know how them are." "God struck him a down, yes sirree?"

"I guess so ma'am, but we still gotta find out who is a doing all this killing, you know." He walked off, in a hurry to buy some ammunition for his hunting trip coming up.

"I feel better knowing they are a after this kind of monsters and all, yes lawrd."

"Yes, lawrd, that's what they get paid fer, ain't it? Not sittin around eating up all the breakfast buffet at Shoney's, huh?"

"Yes, lawrd, yes lawrd, I do love that breakfast buffet," one lady said, raising her left hand to god almighty. "Yes lawrd" they laughed in the face of Satan.

The whole cowtown of a town was in a panic about this matter. The women's garden clubs suspended their nightly magnolia and camellia blossom coffeetimes. The pastors of the churches got together to form a lynch mob soon. The sheriffs, deputies, policemen, national guard were all getting briefed and talking about how they would like to get their hands on such a person or persons, except that they were kinda glad that that fagotty professor got eatin all up.

The college was sponsoring safety groups for night class students to walk within on their way to their cars. The city council argued for an earlier curfew for the children. The mayor's office offered a reward for the uncovering of such a killer by anyone, and they did not have to give their name. The NAACP was even in on it, promising safety measures in their communities. The Catholic church argued vehemently against cannibalism and all that it stood for. The Methodist, Pentecostals, and others prayed really hard for an end to killing of innocent people, and especially prayed for the cannibal who would eat the very flesh of some poor soul.

So, indeed, the town was at a standstill. No more gazebo singalongs with the barbershop quartet, no more outdoor choirs singing the Mozart Requiem in the Cato Square Park. No more mothers seen swinging their toddlers in the swingset swings. No more dining out at the local beaneries and eateries.

Motel business was in a lull. The community activities that normally went on were canceled. Redneck men were seething about being held in such a position.

The townspeople were playing it safe, until the FBI and police and others could grab the perverted people doing such a thing. A couple of years ago, some cows were found mutilated, and they never did catch the satanic cult that did that, but everyone figured it was crazy evil college students, too much into Judas Priest and Black Sabbath.

The town knew this was far worse than some poor cow in a Ponchatoula pasture. This was the evil walking zombie dead knocking on their very doors, for Christ's sake. This was Armageddon. It made for lively sermons at the local churches, that they deserved such a thing brought upon them for committing too many sins.

The town was in a squall in the middle of hell itself with such monsters running on the loose like this.

Chapter Eighteen

When Tim woke up from a deep, heavy sleep, he had no idea what time it was; there was no way of knowing. He saw through a blurry veil of illusion of its half-opened eyes that which he feared the worst. Julia, still naked, was huddled around a can of Sterno, which was lit. In her hand was a sharp wooden stick, and on the end of it, pierced or skewered by the stick was raw meat which looked like the breast of a chicken. He didn't have much trouble guessing what kind of meat it was. He spoke to the lovely girl.

"What are you doing, Julia?"

"Oh, cooking."

"What are you cooking?" he asked. She smiled.

"Your supper. I mean breakfast." The meat smelled good. Savory, almost.

"What is it, exactly?"

"Um, I don't know..." she said coyly. The meat was sizzling well.

"You know, come on. Tell me."

"Well, if you must know, it's a piece of Dr. Angus Vice."

"The English professor?"

"Yes. He's dead."

"I heard."

"Want a piece?"

"Why are you guys doing this?" he said, not being firm.

"I just do what Tiresias does."

"He killed Vice?"

"No. I did. The guy was an asshole."

"So, you killed him."

"Yes." Tim said, "You know, the cops are looking for killers. It's all over town.

The whole town is in fear." She giggled. "So?"

"Doesn't that bother you?" he said, his face ashen. She started to cook another piece after putting that one down. "Aren't you doing your report on us?"

"Well, I was just doing it on him." Tiresias woke up. He yawned. Tim looked at him and he looked at Tim.

"But I guess I'm doing it on both you and him. Now."

"So eat a piece. Here Tiresias, here's your piece." Tiresias took it. Tim took his, much to his surprise. I'm about to eat human flesh. It looked weird, gashed, mutilated flesh now well done. He tried it. It was good. But he vowed that this was only for the project.

He and Tiresias gulped theirs down, finished their pieces together. She cooked some more. "Tiresias usually just eats rat."

"He does?" Tim said.

"Yes. And I won't eat that. No telling where they've been."

"How did he catch them?" Julia pointed to the traps.

"Have some more," she said to both of them. Tiresias took no notice of the girl's nakedness.

"I've got to go to class pretty soon. I've got to meet with my consulting professor about my thesis," Tim remarked to Julia. She curled up after putting her clothes on. Tiresias began scribbling down some more philosophy, no doubt. Tim got up and said, "I'll be back, okay?"

"Yes, we'll be wanting to go out roving again, soon," Julia said to him, and he shuddered.

Tim wondered, "What does she mean by that?" He cautiously left the tomb. Tiresias continued writing as he left. Julia smiled at him and waved on his way out.

Chapter Nineteen

"What is this you are doing, Mr. Meadows? I never authorized this!"

"But ... Dr. Tiberius, I gave you and the other sitting faculty my general outline when I first started!" Tim began shrinking like a withered rose petal.

Dr. Tiberius shuffled through the notes again. He had been frowning during the whole appointment with his grad student. Tim looked around the office, first at the family pictures of Dr. Tiberius and his wife and children.

Then to the bookshelves of credible texts on everything ranging from Sartre, Hume, Addison, Freud, Sophocles, to Foucault. Then still feeling horrid and sickly, to the plaqued degrees on Tiberius's walls. Nice office. Looks like I'll never have one of these.

"Mr. Meadows, I'm terribly afraid that we just cannot accept what you have so far as an acceptable thesis. As you know, this is a rather small, mostly conservative college."

"Yes, I know, but—"

"We, I ... know they just won't go for it." He frowned again, even clearly disappointed in all this himself. He was being quite civil, Tim knew.

"So my notes, my work, is substandard," Tim begged.

"No, on the contrary, it is quite extensive and good," the square-jawed, scholarly-looking man said. "It's just the actual subject matter. You know—"

"

"Doctor, what if I make an appointment with Dean Caligula?"

"Tim, listen. You know that our department has gone through some radical changes last year. I fought them at every turn. So did Dean Caligula.

But we had simply no choice."

"You mean, making the psychology department into one of half-philosophy, half-theology?"

"Precisely."

"But we cannot let a bunch of these staunch holyrollers tell us what to do."

"Son, I'm afraid you are going to have to start over next semester. Just come to us and fill us in a bit more on something a bit more relevant, not too far out on the fringe. You can do it."

"So that's it."

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"Okay, thank you, Dr." Tim got up to leave. "You know, Dr. Tiberius ... you and your committee will never know what it is like to consume human flesh," and Tim walked out.

After he left, a stunned Dr. Tiberius just said, "What a thing to miss," and went back to pushing memos and other assorted papers.

Tim started walking. Just walking anywhere, just away from campus. The funny thing was, just about anywhere in a Euclidean coordinate plane he walked, he found he was on the fringe of this landscape of the dreariest, ugliest looking buildings he had ever seen. He hated with a passion unparalleled in the history of the human race, this blight upon this Tangipahoa Parish hell. He was not coming back. He knew exactly what he would do. He would go along with the girl and guy ghouls, hang out with them, and take notes furiously. He would transfer to Louisiana State University. It was a much better college, even though they too, had to rearrange their psychology department to accommodate into their schemata, the theology doltish scholars and professors. Even if that meant spending months with Tiresias in his crypt watching on the Sony Watchman television, Charles in Charge episodes and Full House. And Julia, his

statutory goddess, the jailbait from beyond the dropping off of the veil of time itself in the realm of mortals, was his joytoy gal for the epoch of mankind.

He realized he was in a whole heap o' trouble. He had subsisted upon the remains of a murdered man or men, or woman or whatever, he had committed Misprision of Felony, he was an accomplice, unwittingly, or not. He would not escape from his fate now. He seemed to be losing his own sanity.

He had felt that way ever since he had taken on such an assignment as this. He continued walking, down the trod path of coeds smiling on their way to class, and realized just how he had estranged himself in his own schisming mind, and through hanging around the local haunts of a crypt. He walked to the edge of the campus now, and looked back upon it. The buildings were ugly as physical structures; it resembled more a high school, and the curriculum seemed that way also. Louisiana State always had that air of academia with themselves. This place was barren, a desolate place. This place had no more room for real education; the mind of a brilliantly evil person, a philosopher's stone of a mind set. He waved goodbye to a smiling dull coed, who looked just as pretty as his Julia, the Goddess Athena who sprang from the brow of Zeus to radiate beauty.

Tim amiably walked, regardless of his contretemps with Dr. Tiberius, down North Magnolia Street. But somehow along the way he veered away from his raggedy rent-house in that backyard, towards another place, his new home. The boneorchard was that way, he could smell the smell of Death and welcomed it with open arms; his delirium commenced now as he became a fellow traveler in ghouldom of the grand Guignol.

Chapter Twenty

There were more police cars patrolling the entire city of Darwin. This backwater place was now a cop convention of redneck patrolmen and illequipped dimwitted sheriff 's deputies (of which most were the dullard nephew of somebody in the know who knew nothing about law enforcement and everything about testosterone poisoning, arrogance, aggression, bullying, guns and ammo, and militaristic endeavors). Every Shoney's, steakhouse, truck stop, mall entrance, donut shop, strip mall, Wal-Mart, subdivision, honky tonk, had a man in blue or khaki with armament lurking around looking for the despotic maligned criminals mutilating their good citizens. It was a red menace conspiracy, they guessed. A fifth column creeping along, a red pinko freefor-all. The chawing, jutjawed Cro-Magnons with night sticks rattling through the various ghettos of Darwin were out to crack skulls until they solved the mystery of the cannibalism. They questioned the lowlifes, the gangster boys, the white trash evildoers but came up with nothing. Neither did they see that there was cattle mutilation, UFOs, crop circles, satanic black masses, and the cemeteries were just as ever clean and dotted with flowers and good Christian folk who mourned for the loved ones on the manicured grass, all well kept, all tombstones polished and unchipped.

The good old boys, the gutless wardheeling politicians, the scions of the slavery-ridden plantation stock were all on the lookout for this dreaded blight of evil. The churchgoing Bible thumpers loved the satanic evil; their attendance grew steadily during the entire ordeal up to this point. The pastors in their glowing polyester suits of ill taste and cut and cheap material and pompadoured hair cried out, shouted to the heavens in a hayseed accent of uneducation and righteousness for God to kick ass and take names.

Darwin was a nice town; they didn't need this chickenshit stuff going on. There were too many good Christians busy believing they were on Gawd's holy side and fighting in his army to have Lucifer, the fallen angel and his daemons of hellishness descend upon what had been a blessed burg. All the bums were questioned near the bus station and Elly's Drive In, the YumYum Drive In, the airport, the diners, outside the Wal-Mart bumming quarters from fat warty ladies on their way to the Albertson's to buy their tripe and chicken feet and buttsteaks.

There was an upsurge at the local video rentals like Sam's Cheap Rentals by the mall next to the world's worst chiropractor, and Gladys's Celluloid Palace near the Negro section of town: namely the schlock horror, the splatter thrillers mostly. Tapes like Bloody Mutilators, The Curse, I Spit on Your Grave, The Corpse Grinders, and that all-time favorite, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, not to mention The Night of the Living Dead, Dawn of the Dead, and Day of the Dead, most of these dealing with cannibalism of some sort, were hot items, mostly always gone from the shelf. Could it be that these good Christian stock were ghouls in and of themselves? Tim opened the crypt to see in the gauzy haze of the backgrounded twilight gleaming, Julia stroking the unloved one. The poor, suffering ghoul for our times, Tim thought. The tomb actually felt like a harbor of safety when night fell. Tim had not bothered to go home; this was to be his new home now. One big happy family. He was a dismemberer, a mutilator, a desecrator also; at least until the thesis would be written. Tim knew he could get it published. It was the good stuff, the frisson for the times of the world.

Tim, carefully making sure that Tiresias would not seek umbrage against him for doing it, read more of the massive and wonderful exegesis. He sat there as Julia tenderly stroked the falling man in his own filth. As Tim read on, he wanted to send off these manuscripts. "We'll get Tiresias published. I want to get these Xeroxed and mailed off. We can send them to some formidable people."

"Okay. You got money?" she said. Tiresias showed no sign of understanding or acknowledging their conversation. It would be quite a job of Xeroxing all the manuscripts. Tim was glad that Tiresias had followed manuscript form perfectly. No spelling errors, no syntax errors, and he possessed quite a beautiful and lucid prose that was arresting in nature.

Tim stacked the ones he wanted and checked the money in his wallet. He left his checkbook; people don't write checks who live in a graveyard. He reckoned that he could hit the money machine by the Circle K quick stop and then walk over to the Kinko's copying store right next door, all this not a stone's throw from the university.

Tim felt a freedom unsurpassed; he was totally severed from any responsibilities from any faculty, Dean Caligula, Dr. Tiberius, any of them. He would doubtless be the subject of weird conversations and gossip. He didn't care. He would be chaired through the streets of cities and interviewed on talk shows from here to eternity for his best seller status to be.

Tim's notes sat in the corner; Tim hoped that Tiresias didn't go through them. Tiresias didn't seem to mind about anything; after all, he was a psychotic but suffering silently and to himself. A seer, a soothsayer in the philosophical world. A prophet for our times, Tim thought.

Julia spoke up. "We are going out tonight. You are coming with us, right?" That Gioconda smile that was simply arresting, which Tim totally focused and zoomed in on with accuracy and it pierced his heart.

"Yes, I am with you guys all the time," Tim said to her. He added, "Let me get these Xeroxed off and sent to some publishers. I've got some markets that I can send these off to. You don't think that Tiresias would mind, do you?" She looked over to the poor lad.

"No, he wouldn't know the difference, one way or another."

"Hurry back," she said to him.

"Okay, sweetie." He smiled back at her, genuinely happy. Tim had quite a bundle of quality stuff under his left arm. He figured it would take a good bit of cash to get this stuff copied. He went to the money

machine first, a Gaulfnut which his bank, the Bank of Nietzsche, was connected with. He withdrew two hundred dollars. He wouldn't use that much on mailing and Xeroxing, but he figured he could treat the unholy three of them, Tiresias and the Goddess Athena to some decent food. If not, then they could not go into any restaurant, but get take out food. He wondered if Tiresias liked Indian food, or Chinese? Tim picked the manuscripts up after getting his money, and walked from next to the Circle K mart parking lot to the Kinko's. He brought quite a smile from the goddess behind the counter.

She had a nametag: Beatrice. Ah, Tim thought, this blonde haired, aquiline creature will lead me the way out of my nightmare of ecstasy.

"May I help you?" she bubbled over to Tim.

"I need to unbind these manuscripts and make one copy each of every one," Tim effused.

"Okay." She took them a stack at a time. Tim carnally stared at her rear end. You are really a hound now, a skank bandit since you had Julia, aren't you? he mused to himself. She gave the manuscripts to some other beautiful young people and Tim waited patiently, first walking the store, looked at the envelopes, the manila folders, the stationery. Then he sat down and people watched. The intrepid reporter, the Boswell of a monster. Pretty soon I will be creating my own manuscript for all to see. Published by the best of them, and lauded, sixty weeks on the bestsellers list, the New York Times, lauded by everyone from Norman Mailer to William S. Burroughs and all in between.

What extemporaneous free-for-all delusions. Tim realized he had not quite sunk into his own psychosis, though the entire mind-numbing trip he had been on since he started his project was putting its toll on him. He was more in a Dionysian state of unchrist ecstasy. An orgiastic feast for the senses.

He continued to wait. Then I've got to get these mailed off. He could borrow the Kinko's computer and write out a few cover letters. He had brought along a list of addresses from when he had first gathered up a minuscule amount of belonging and his notes in a booksack to enter the realm of the ghoulish ones. So he was set. He needed to get to the mail, ship, and copy place after coming from here. He needed a cardboard box to carry all this.

He could buy the large mailing packets at the mail, ship, and copy; they weren't but a block away.

Beatrice, his guide through nothing in particular, brought his original manuscripts of Tiresias and also the copies. The manuscripts were faded, but the copies looked wonderfully fresh and quite good for mailing off. Tim asked her for a large box. "Not too large," he said.

"Sure." Beatrice produced a box. It fit perfectly and was a bit heavy.

"Thank you, Beatrice."

"That looks like quite interesting stuff," she said at last to him.

"Yes it is," Tim said to her and walked out after paying in cash. He walked steadily, balancing the box of valuables. Like Sisyphus finally succeeding in rolling a rock up a steep hill, Tim made it to the entrance of the Mail, Ship, and Copy store. It wasn't crowded, thank the Gawds of the cosmos, he thought. He walked in and the pendulous lady with a patch over one eye like Captain Bligh, exclaimed, "Good Lawrd, you gotta lot a stuff, there, Junior." Tim, panting heavily, his body aching, dropped the box, and said,

"I'd like to mail this off."

"Okay," said the blob of tenebrous flesh, almost at the point of her folds of fat having gangrenous nodules of distended blubber. Tim got his cover letters together. He was sending them off to: Gotham Press was getting *Psychosis* as Shamanic Intuition Harcourt Brace was getting *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* Chatto and Windus was getting *Libera Me Domine* Simon and Schuster was getting *Macrometasomakosmos: The Cosmic Christ* Macmillan was getting *Transmuted Logos: Theoretical Explanations*

"My word," the hog woman exclaimed, "These are a whole hecka writin."

"Yes, I need SASE postage for return mailing of these," Tim told her.

"Okay." She weighed each one as Tim wrote out the UPS labels. They were going UPS out and Parcel post back. "I never seen nothin as much as all this," the pig lady said. "Is these about teaching of Christ or sumthin like that? Sumthin Christian like?"

"Oh, not really," Tim said casually, finally getting his breath back.

"Okay, we have got all the stuff we need, and the total comes to ninety-six dollars."

"Even?"

"Yes sir." He paid her. The manuscripts were on their way. He walked out the store into the spilled sunlight. Back to the tomb. But first I've got to take out some more money. He carried the half empty box, now only containing the manuscripts. He went to the money machine and got another two hundred.

Now we are all set for something good, seafood platters, fried oysters, catfish, steaks. Julia will appreciate this. It will be our first date. With Tiresias tagging along like he always does.

Chapter Twenty-One

It was way past nightfall now. Tim picked up some cheeseburgers for the others; he just dropped the sack of fast food and french fries into the box along with the withered well-used and blotted manuscripts.

The boneorchard of Greenlawn was chirping locust noise into the sweet ether. The tomb beckoned him. He was starting, his belly and digestive system not used at all to the human flesh, half raw over Sterno.

That was not his idea of good eating. All part of the rigorous job.

Inside the tomb Julia was napping, Tiresias was scribbling furiously his manifestos of psychosis. Tiresias actually smiled to him, a familiarity of belong that they all had now. Perhaps there is a warm side to this maniac, Tim thought. He smiled back and Tiresias resumed his writing. Tim wrote also, accumulating more notes, as he and Tiresias both munched on their cheeseburgers as Julia slept. Tiresias really liked those greasy french fries.

Julia awoke like a Scandinavian wench, her aquiline features gleaming by the dripping wax of candles lit and evanescent. She yawned. Tim saw her and came over and kissed her, ignoring Tiresias' blank stare.

"We are going out tonight, aren't we?" she asked him.

"Yes, I've got to document all this. We are."

"Oh, you got me a cheeseburger." She gobbled it up, barely fitting each bite into her small beestung mouth of petulance. Tim groped her, hardly containing himself, he reached his hands inside her shirt, kneading her breasts while she continued to munch away. "Oh," Tim ecstatically said. Tiresias finally finished writing. They were safe against the cave of darkness. Soon they would be roving amongst the living.

"Let's go." Tiresias got up. Tim got up. Julia adjusted her blouse, having her breasts adjusted inside her shirt. Tim had an erection which he adjusted.

He really pined for the goddess. They walked amongst the matrices of tombs jutting against the moonscape: their destination, the bus station. The Cosmic Christ Church was underway on a campaign drive. "I've got money, dear," Tim told her.

"Well, we know we have money, and I want Chinese and seafood and all that, but we've got to get Tiresias off his diet of rats, and continue his balanced meat diet of human flesh."

Tim shuddered. No. I am going to be implicated into murder. * * * **COSMIC CHRIST Metasomamicrokosmos* * * ** began to dilutely filter through his psychotic head. Tiresias shambled along, fallen from grace.

They occupied the bus station. They panhandled. It was late. It was filled with cretins and codgers and coots and old and the dead. A homeless bum walked with them behind the station, lured by Julia's bare breast taunted in front of him. Tiresias bludgeoned him with a large pipe. The homeless man fell. They dragged him into the thatch of woods. Tim vomited the vomit of helplessness and fear. What have I done? What is going on? He was losing his mind. Something was snapping. The murder was gruesome.

Julia began to carve him up. She dismembered him, the hollow sound of crunch and snap of cartilage, the bony breastplate and the vital organs underneath.

Tim watched, leered at the gruesome process. It was like a splatter film. It was simply awful. Tiresias consumed the heart and offered some to Tim. Tim retched some more. Tim took a bite, oblivious. He fainted.

"Oh look, he fainted."

"Wake him up, I've got to wake him up." Tiresias wanted to eat some more. They packed up the pillowcase with carven flank steaks of muscle, fat, and choice lean organs and bits and pieces, the marginalia of a fresh corpse du jour.

Tim woke up. Julia was kissing him, her mouth covered with dark blood. The blood smeared on him. His entire face was covered in blood. A kidney was laying next to him.

"Eat it." The buses were leaving for all points unknown.

"Okay." Tim was delirious He munched on the urine bloody smelling kidney. He thought of Ulysses by James Joyce when he eats the kidney pie. "I am insane, I feel crazy," Tim said.

"And so you are," Julia said. In her blood mask, her bloody hair, she was a goddess. They left with a pillow case full of bloody meat. The corpse left off a ghastly image in Tim's head. Tim shambled now, just

like Tiresias.

They made it back to the tomb. Greenlawn Cemetery was his home now. He began to see his own demise, like a tarot card for him, the damned. The hellish one. The doomed.

Chapter Twenty-Two

"So, let's all have an orgy drenched in blood," Julia said. Tim just needed to rest. He hated both of them. He had to get out. This was a mistake. His notes were destroyed.

"What happened to my notes?" Tim demanded. Tiresias smiled the smile of rotted teeth, a psychotic made exuberant.

"We destroyed them," Julia said. "You aren't fit for us."

"But my darling, why did you do that?" Tim beckoned to her. It was useless. Tiresias had flesh in his snarling teeth. These are the carnal animals, rolling in their own coyote shit, randy with death. Tim knew he was about to be killed.

Tiresias produced a knife. He showed it to Julia. Tiresias spoke:

"I am the COSMIC CHRIST ... METASOMAMICROKOSMOS." He continued, "I hope my books get published. I hope I go on talk shows with my goddess. I will be lecturing at Harvard, Cambridge, Yale, UC at Berkeley.

"Tim laughed. "You are a loser. He's a murderous cannibal! Don't you see?" Julia laughed. "Come on. How can you hang out with a loser like that?" Julia remarked, "Because nowadays, the celebrities are all killers. I am a killer. I like ghouls. You are nothing more than a noon meal for us." Tiresias lunged at him and penetrated the knife deep into him. He was already mortally wounded. He cried out in agony until the repeated stabs cut and cut into his dead body. Tiresias gorged himself on the dingy poor body of Tim Meadows.

Julia joined him in their Dionysian ecstasy of a cannibalistic banquet. They sat there up to their eyeballs in blood. The entire tomb was a slaughterhouse now. Body parts everywhere. Tiresias and Julia made some sort of dingy pathetic fake love in the swirling feral blood and guts. Ahead for them lay nothing but the national news, the Larry King show, pleas for insanity, and endless talk shows and book deals.

Hollywood movie deals, tie ins with McDonald's, Burger King. Massive agent sells to every form of media, newspaper profiles, the works. The fun was just beginning as Julia and Tiresias lay there, suffering in Dionyssistic ecstasy of the very naughtiest kind in the humble little town of Darwin, on a night such as this where killers roamed free and Christian folks dreamed their useless chattel dreams of nothing in particular.

About the Author

M. F. Korn has written eleven novels and had over 210 story appearances in magazines worldwide. Currently available is the paperback collection Aliens, Minibikes, and Other Staples of Suburbia and his first novel Rachmaninoff 's Ghost.

A collection of four science fiction novels All the Mutant Trash in All the Galaxies is forthcoming as well.

He resides in Louisiana as a programmer and has a daughter, Savannah, six years old. Mike has a degree in Piano and enjoys playing Rachmaninoff, Gershwin, Chopin, and ragtime, and listening to Requiems, Sacred Masses for the Dead.

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