THE SMASHED MACHINE

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B.A., California State University, Sacramento, 2010

PROJECT

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

ENGLISH
(Creative Writing)

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

FALL
2011
THE SMASHED MACHINE

A Project

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Department of English
Abstract

of

THE SMASHED MACHINE

by

Ryan Christopher Rich

“The Smashed Machine” is a collection of short stories moving toward a full-length fictional memoir about the descent of a love-struck writer (Ryan) into a life of crime and debauchery, following in the footsteps of his friend and crime connection, Vegas. As he falls further into this existence the narrative moves back and forth between the past and present, giving the reader instances of previous events and even some of the writer’s writing (from fiction to memoirs), thus explaining his movement into crime. Other characters, such as Fatman and G, offer conflicting advice with their presence and actions as his closest friends. The title is a play on the nickname of a famous no-holds-barred fighter, Mark “The Smashing Machine” Kerr, and the 2002 documentary of the same name, detailing his rise to fame and his crash and burn due opiate abuse.

_________________________, Committee Chair
Douglas F. Rice, Ph.D

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Date

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FRUITS OF THE FRAIL: A STORY OF THE DESIRE OF HER

“You’ll be best to sit along that cold basin, my friend. The river’ll turn over, passing you. Just sit there - shivering, squirming, sinking - waiting for the next morning. Right here, less you don’t want my daughter, my precious flesh.”

The fat man, Pa, stood there, Daniel sitting on the old stool, thick of the river passing behind them. Patches of clover remained untouched, growing in clumps about them. No one would pick those things; this the first garden.

Pa's fat belly pressed his overall straps, stretching them with each breath, and every word was a step toward another snap. On the way over, when he dragged him off to this place, he saw the fat man’s ankles bending beneath him, the leaning tower from all those postcards.

“I’ll tell you this much: Those pants of yours will rot straight off your behind by the time it’s up, that stool there just barely sticking outta the ground, like a wheel on its side. Boy’ll be out each day with a bucket of fish from the long part of the river. Grab the fish and relieve yourself. Sit back down and wait. Reach for the passing stream when you’re thirsty. It’s all for you. Your face’ll grow long and we’ll need shears to recognize you. There’ll be a night of snow and it’ll be done.” The trail took him back through the woods to the small house with the carved windows, belly sloshing and testing those straps with each step.

Waves of uncaught fish swam along before him but he couldn’t reach. One of the servants, a black mute, cut the field down early that morning. The bare basin now,
summer a week gone. When the little boy came with his bucket, he asked how many
days it’d be from then on.

“Ninety-nine I suspect.” He was no choir boy. “Paying me a quarter a day they
said. Gave me about half of it all yesterday, said if I didn’t see it through, they’d take it
all away and I’d get the switch for as long as you got left. Yesterday’s the first I worked
off, catching all these fish while you lay there in bed with your head wrapped like the
mummies from the market comics. My math says it’s ninety-nine more days for you.”
The boy checked a polished watch from his work shirt’s front pocket. He was covered in
dirt and handed over the bucket.

“Well there young man, I thank you. Helps me to draw lines in the soil or build a
stack here and there; even throw a blade or two into the stream each day while I watch
the field grow so tall as I sit here, sinking.” With a turn, the boy checked his watch
again.

“Sir?”

“Yes?”

“What’d you do for this predicament?”

“All by that girl.”

The boy grabbed the bucket before he could finish, rushing off through the
woods, escaping the switch. The black mute’s head moved to follow as he passed,
turning back to the tree he was working at cutting. The bucket swung with the boy’s run,
shards of grass sticking to the dents in the tin, swaying. The field dyed orange when the
sun fell behind him as his hands plunged into the bodies of the cold fish. His thoughts
turned to virginity when he took the first bite and his eyes closed tight.

“I don’t know the exact way it started. I recall sneaking up to her bedroom late
one night, the stars stuck in black places. It was to be like that story of the long-haired
girl; man came straight up her scalp. I fell out the window when her Pa rushed up;
scrambled and fell into the dark that holds the stars.

I aimed to surprise her, I know. Kiss her awake with snowflake lips. You know,
just bring the winter months into her hands. When I came to, I coulda swore that same
dark witch from the book stood over me. When she opened her black mouth to scream
nothing came out, thorn bush below struck and blinded me. They took me inside and
patched me up, scarecrow man I am.”

When the boy ran back home, the bucket’s innards stretched the trees away, fields
finally starting to reach out for the sky. The sun wiped dew from the garden. The boy
didn’t come – two days waiting.

To sit by a field, some woods, along a basin, a river sprawled about. To never
swim or climb trees or even hide in the brush from the eyes everywhere. Each day the
house they lived in drew closer with the black mute’s work. He could see the eyes of Pa
staring out at him. Waiting for a move, ragged chessboard of this garden. When he
stared back they’d wait a bit, those eyes and fade behind the fresh-drawn curtains. They
were so big, those eyes. The kind that didn’t really have color, just big black rabbit holes
set to small snow fields; impure blizzards. They were the unset world; the balance back
and forth; his pupils grew and shrunk as the day passed.
He thought about theaters, folks sitting there without a peep, eating and watching the players, all that hard work for a few cents. Sprawling out, forgetting the day. Sitting on the stool; sinking for his audience as parts of the world become giants, all along just wondering.

“Those two probably have a whole bunch of us out here. Sitting on these milking stools, and for what? Some girl I met at market last week? She let me kiss her cheek after I paid for her bag of oranges. Brought me home and I sat at their kitchen table, it was so small. Three old chairs pushed in with such care. In the corner I saw a matching one, covered in dust, just some hand-marks streaking and revealing bits of wood.

“While I waited she cut up a few of those unmarred oranges. No yellow rind; there was only smoothness. Perfect copies of stars. The skin peeled off in a twister, squeezing the fruit. Steel split the star and separated the universe. I didn’t move. As the halves split beneath the knife along the cutting board, I saw her move just right and knew I could sit there for the rest of my life.

Juice dripped onto the wooden board and sank right in like I’m doing in this garden. Once the pieces came to rest on the board, she cut them again and the sky divided. World after world, decay raising life; seeds sank to the floor and by then, the metal was tarnished. The second coming – right there in the kitchen. When it came to cool, she put them on a plate and brought out teacups with saucers. The boil finished and she filled the cups, the steam caressing her face. Mary, my Snow White. There weren’t words the whole time, just tea, oranges and our stares.”
The boy was back, his face marked by the falling leaves. Along groves of bent oranges that crushed with each step. He hung his head, coat stretched out - carrying two buckets and a couple of jugs.

“They said not to come and I took the switch trying to anyway. I told them you’d get lonesome and hungry. They said don’t worry. I brought you some fish I smoked earlier this week, that black taste. Some bread and jam. These jugs? Whiskey and water.” He took off his coat and handed it over. They nodded as breath began to freeze.

“What’s your name anyway, boy?”

“Cassio, sir. I hear them whisper yours some nights when the fireplace roars. Daniel, right?” There was another nod.

They sat together until the light fell. It had been at least an hour and they felt the eyes on them. Cassio set next to the bucket the whole time, not even noticing the smell, reclining against a few sticks, soiled by the mud. When he was ready, he sat up and grabbed the bucket. He went walking.

“Tonight I take the switch again, but it’ll feel right. I won’t miss again.”

When the stars passed the river slowed into glass. It began to snow. From the house he heard cries. Not the boy’s, but Mary’s. Her cries. Pa groaned. After a few minutes it was all gone and the boy’s voice heightened to the choir as the switch painted stroke upon stroke, screaming through the night wind. There were no sobs from him.

It was his last, everything was so high and it was good. He tossed frosted rocks atop the river, waiting for the sound of holes.
“These frozen things will never look like oranges, not when they’re perfect and round. Not even when the orange is straight from the ice-box. He saw the hot tea again, watching from his stool, his breath freezing again and again, the same dream that kissed Mary, a decade ago by now. It reached out to no one, the cold. The garden flowers, discolored and long-withered were deep and unnoticed by steps.

The snow crowded the crown of his head, collecting, falling everywhere, holding the land. When his eyes were opened the boy was holding his left shoulder, towering above him, holding a perfect orange in his hand. There were no stains on his clothes or marks across him.

He was finally sitting on the snow, the powdered dream becoming ice. Each season guilty, reshaping the land into the beauty of its desires, a discourse of canvas and spilt paint. What’s left is forced into hibernation in wood or rock, sometimes taking heed of holes in the mud or in the ice along the stream. This was the last night of life.

The black mute stepped out from the cut trees and with his hands, begged him to stay put. He saw Mary and the fat man called Pa, he was holding her to him while they were clothed and Daniel knew they felt nothing of the cold, death in their hands.

He didn’t say a word. He lived those kitchen memories inside one last time. Cassio’s orange split into pieces and fell to the ground, now tarnished by the soiled snow; it wilted there. He thought of the summer.

“This is what it is to be lonely. This absolute zero of God’s winter, all of us frozen solid. Here I am, waiting for this woman to rid me of all this. She won’t come. They won’t come. My wings agape.”
He stood up for the first night of his life. Rubbed his hands together, took the wilted orange in hand and as he breathed life into it, he was off into the painted sky. When he awoke in his easy-chair, graying hair covered his eyes but the world was still there. Wilting and blooming. Just spinning.
30 AD: A STORY FOR A BUDDING LOVE

In the room that Saturday night a girl sat across from me and her smile was so long that I smiled too. I wasn't sure about the room but for the paintings and the television glow. Everyone huddled around, it lit our faces, and I was alone on the ottoman. When I didn't see her, I'd look to the sliding glass door and watch us - she wouldn't notice. The light was backward but it all looked the same. I checked my watch again, the face so long and sad. When I looked up from the chair a little girl stood in front of me, her black hair swinging and I was lying on the gym mats on a Friday night, long past the party, a month I think. She looked up with her hands over her head.

“Your eyes, they're pretty.” My friend's daughter. Walking around the mats with her brother waiting for their father – my friend, to finish. Everyone was smiling too, they were working and panting and outside I could see the people walking and their breath hung in front of them through the fogged-up windows. My name's Ryan.

Behind me at the party there's a Japanese man hosting, he's twenty-six next week he says and he reminds me of my friend from Mississippi; dead over a year now and his kind face, I know, must be so different with the passing of the two spinning blades under the ground. He's showing us his friend's picture, his wall decoration. A painting, it took nine years. Not the painting, but the things on it, the symbol; it wasn't very impressive but the words explaining it were. The things he wrote on the canvas, his friend's work, came from when he was a boy, spray-painting on night walks, on the walls around the
city. He stopped when the cops snuck up on him one night and made him the District Attorney's assistant when he was all grown up so many years later.

The Japanese man has tattoos running along the lengths of his arms and he's showing us, redrawing them with his fingers; I think about the painting of hands drawing hands I saw at the museum last year. There's a portrait of his parents stretched along his left biceps and they're being pulled everywhere, like they ought to be escaping his flesh like they did from the work camp so many years back. His name along his right triceps, his Dad wrote it on a piece of paper he says, not knowing it'd be stained there after the next trip to San Francisco; Love/Hate, upside-down to right-side-up, he traces it and it shines.

“I want a few for my neck,” I checked my watch to hear the gears click. It might cost him his job, “but so what,” he says.

He talks a lot tonight and she and I are smiling back and forth across the room. I see the night beyond the glow behind the sliding glass door and he reminds me about working for the state because he does too. His friend, the artist, is there as well, in that tired work place and it's okay if it's only during the day, for the money. That purity and all come back for those couple of vacations and sick days, when there can really be life; hoping against the clock. Sitting at these desks, the years pass and we fade in them, “But it's okay, it's grown-up,” Mom and Dad say as I leave the house.

But that painting, the greens, they mark the house, walls so white – a rose extends off the canvas onto the wall, brushing it; growing life from the picture. Across is another and it's all purples. A face, his face and I see gold chains too; there they go, but he's not
wearing them now. He points back to his body, this time his right shoulder, the Japanese man, because he forgot to show it. It’s a boar – for 1983. He's a Scorpio as well he says and there it is, right below the boar. Took eight, no, nine years. Not the tattoo, that same green picture you’re looking at, Henry. Know what it is yet? “A caricature hiding a background hiding a life.” That’s what comes for his birthdays instead of cakes and paper hats. I wish I could see that day's party and when I look she's smiling at me again.

That big smile comes and she looks so pretty across the room and then I see that little girl in front of her and everything behind her goes away. She might as well have called me one like her, a girl, because of my eyelashes and I think of the things Father said over and over. Her brother is laughing in the corner, like from when I was a child. My Get is clinging to my neck and my friend is on top of me. He's squeezing the collar and I try to move my hand, slapping against the ground until the girl disappears.

I watched a film later that night when I woke up. With every scene I checked the time to see my watch was ticking. Their mouths and sounds didn't seem to fit quite right and when I asked, my friend said, “In Italy, they broke the films with their laws.” I wanted to know if Christ was why they made the laws that broke everything. Afterward, when I slept, I saw them; the men in their robes around a table, delicate model of the world sprawled across with every detail beyond them, even down to the freckles of children they didn't know, holding their crucifixes as close as they could, breaking everything with their long canes. World torn to pieces because of the crosses buried in
the sand that they wouldn't forget. I, myself couldn't forget the time either. Perhaps I was no better but at least, I thought, I knew it was passing.

There's a smile across the room at the party and now it's forging a picture, one for the walls. The table with the foods flooding the room in a rain. I cut a melon in the kitchen that they'd bought from the market in the city for half off; shearing the meat from the rind, still icy, I wondered about the pink chunks covering those black seeds like amniotic fluid. As I sorted them, a boy in the living room started to choke and there I am on the mat again, my friend on top of me. No, false alarm. He cried and while the others tried to console him, I rolled my eyes from the kitchen sink. When he saw he decided he'd just go to bed. He started to pass me and I watched him change through the stream of running water from the sink and it poured outside.

The Japanese man’s friend's baby's smile covers hers for a moment, the one across the room. When he passes, he makes zooming noises so that his boy can be a super hero for just a little while and now, he's like God letting them make the miracles for The Bible. Here, just for tonight, then the dream can pass in a few years.

I made my way to the café after work with a different friend on the phone; it was Friday, not even a week after the party. He's at a club but he hates those girls yet he grinds against them every weekend. He said I should try some cologne and take them to a real bar instead of that café or just the house.
“They don’t want to hear you,” he said. “Just to test you a while.” I wanted to know the time so I saw to it. “You’re a funny man but you mentioned that tattoo guy from last night, right? The one so high? Think for a second, Ryan, how he wasn't himself. They wanted him, right?”

“I guess.”

The girls around him, the Japanese man, looking at his pictures. He sat next to one and put his hand on hers. On her head as well. She looked at him and it was love. I think she even let him hold her bottom, his hand slid across; neither one of them turned red when the others noticed.

I can't do it without a movie there. So I asked one of the girls from the café, “What have you seen this week?” She doesn't see much. Works with the Japanese man at the state though. He touched her hand once I'm sure, his tattoo prints still painted like that nine-year tag; all along her palms - she must have held onto his arm for too long, had to have gone to a film for that kind of stain, the liar.

When I came back to the café next week I sat next to another girl. Not with a smile like the one from across me that night but she looked nice enough. “My name's Ryan,” I checked the two spinning blades to see if I was going too fast, my friend said I might be, I wasn't, I don't think, “Yours?”

She didn't like the book in my hand. I came back again in the week after, I left her sitting there at the table and then my friend's daughter came in with her dad. He was holding her hand before I checked my watch and then they were at the table with me but
her feet didn't reach the ground. They didn't have booster seats, but that would only make her fear of heights worse.

“No luck?” he asked me. She said, “You have pretty eyes,” again, pointing with her index finger and I remember it being so small. That night I sat in my room with the film I bought on the television, its glow the only light because the doors and windows were closed and covered. I wondered about the girls and why it wasn't working like all the films. I even tried watching the ones where it hadn't been working and they went from there.

I remembered that smile. I decided to call her because we talked at the party for some time; a while actually (smiling is always good I'm told). That’s what the number was for, I think to myself. When we talked we were both smiling over the phone and the checking of my watch, it was okay; I thought about the crosses sticking out in the desert.

I smelled the things growing outside on my way to the café and the neighbor mowing his lawn waved to me. They all knew it was okay, that smell of the growing things, except they noticed it too. My suit still had its creases but I didn't wear a tie. The café was empty and she'd be there soon but it'd be a wait, I know - I was two hours early. I checked to make sure the clock above the register was right and I got the table good and ready.

I ordered her drink and went to the shop next door to buy a book for the table. Some music for my car, the guy said, will help seal the deal. I didn't know so I checked my watch and I bought it. I made sure I was ready. Thirty minutes till and I wasn't too
sure. I wanted to leave but I remembered my first girl and the days we had under the trees, the growing air.

The doors opened and it was then that I wanted my skin to hold ink and that it'd rub off when she held my arm to make her mine. That permanent press - they come like the finger notches on my watch, the things that make the things we have ours. I wondered why the first had gone at that moment and I waited for the smile but saw the desert when the doors opened and it wasn’t her.

My suit's crease was going away and I sat there even after the man up front went off to his break and came to sit with me. I told him the cup across from me was for her and that she must be running late. He commented that it looked real cold. The time came as he talked to me and told me that I should give the cup to one of the other girls and try my luck. I told him that that makes no sense, that my friend has a method, a means; his way, now mine. That that was what I had for this; for her, for that smile - I only wanted to see her smile today, this week and so on.

The doors opened and I checked my watch, but they were already closing. I'll call her I think, but only after I wait a few days, my friend said, otherwise I'll come on too strong. If I wait, it'll work fine and I won't have to give the cup to the blind girl and her dog again. She sat down at the same table as me once, not knowing I was there, it was many weeks ago when I was mourning. She apologized and felt my face, saying that she was certain I had pretty eyes. I didn't even know what to say. I just waited for her to know me but I left and the cups were hers.
When I came back the week after I heard her ask the man up front that I was talking to about me. He said he'd speak to me for her and he winked in my direction. That was another day that the smiles didn't come. I just sat there with the cup in my hands to remind me of warmth before I left. I remember her, my first one, lost in the trees with my knife in her hands up to her neck like the Get wrapped around my own today while the little girl, replacing her, looks upon me with her brother and when the neck started to cut that's when I checked my watch; squeezed it so tight with my eyes wide-open that by the time she was gone my fingers painted the sides. I check and it still ticks and I go with Christ, he's etched into the face; blades taking his eyes. I want to see it each day as I do the smile. He hangs from the cross but from him there's no smile, just Anno Domini until the doors open in the café and I go back out to the desert, the party shone in my eyes and there are no shadows but for the spinning blades and crosses hanging in the sand.
A load of testosterone doesn’t turn average Joe into a superstar, let alone a killer. Estrogen overloading his blood, overtaking him, a her now, will. If men fought wars with their bare hands, syringe-loaded with test, drunk on anti-estrogen – that bring-you-back-to-Earth tonic that smells like straight-liquor, there’d be no deaths and the men would tire so quickly and do such little damage beyond the first minute or so to their bodies, hanging beneath the sun, that the pairs would stop to respect their common ground, Earth on their fatigues, and they’d buy one-another a pint of beer and go home to their wives to fuck like rabbits, leaving it to the suits to fight to the death. They might even barbeque together one day.

There’s a downside because we’d end up with way too many kids once the war quit half way through from all the ridiculous fucking that would take place shortly thereafter and unlike the usual gig where the fucking takes place with prostitutes and other men’s wives when the men are fertile and bacteria breeding grounds, the kids would be intentional because the ordeal would be one of those, “let’s have a hundred fucking babies, baby,” as the soldier, his knuckles still bleeding, face and ribs bruised from what little action he did see, pumps his wife full of super-sperm twenty times a day in a passion of desire he hasn’t known since his first lay when he simply couldn’t perform and she grips his shoulders with all her might because now, for the first time in their relationship she needs lube to deal with his continual cocking of her as his natural production of free-range test has exponentially increased and he’s a ticking baby-booming-bomb but he’s in the oddball bridge-stage where he can, and will, fuck anything
that walks and even some stuff that can’t, which means, in this case, that which he normally wouldn’t fuck so much: His Average Jane wife.

The juice, that formless swirl, it’s the kind of gig that makes anything bottled or pre-packaged into an artificial desert so wonderful. Take a step in and smell the citrus - it’s like venom if you’ve been so fortunate as to know both. Like a blooming flower, that which Gilgamesh had and lost, the kind that peaks just after winter once the snow’s cleared. You take a breath after a rain shower, beads of life clinging to your body, falling, and your eyes expand into an eclipse of the sun drooping down into the sky and everything is right. Moments like that expansion, it’s like coming, except this time everyone that matters gives a shit and you’re not alone or disappointing anyone.
NICE TO MEET YOU (HERE’S THE STORY OF MY LIFE)

Mark “The Smashing Machine” Kerr’s weighs in; his preface to the disaster that is life:

The bell rings and it's clear that the person staring at you from across the way is scared to death and you know instantly if they're gonna give or not. In the ring my thoughts are pretty pure: I'm going to hurt him before he hurts me, and if he hurts me, I'll hurt him twice as bad. I've gotten punched and there’re two reactions you can have to a punch: You can cower away from it or you can punish the person for punching you. I developed the second one. If I get kicked or punched I'm going to physically impose my will on this person until they let go and totally wither away. Yeah, you punched me, but you know what? Feel this. That's a powerful thing. When I started I was just having fun, I felt like I was on a whole different level and that I had this animal instinct that took over. Then it turns to a point where it gets twisted and at the end of this whole run here I was left holding absolutely nothing. What was I in it for? I don't really know why I'm in it.

She begat my decision. Vegas begat my decision. Everyone begat my sorry ass in one way or another, getting me into all this. Hell, we could probably trace it back to one of my grade school teachers or a song I heard on the radio once in the car on a particularly long ride if we wanted to. Let's blame all the reading, media-viewing, and arcade game playing I did. Fuck it - I did what I did, but they all begat me in a format that inevitably resembles some gangster-ass biblical shit - the real hard stuff, and that’s where I’ve been led.

It all started when I wrote a story about a woman, unto coming to love some broad myself beyond the one from the story, and it got all riled up and went the wrong way, twisted, like The Smashing Machine. Before Vegas, before I knew what was, I was on a spree. I wrote about the idea of her, then the interaction with her, unto a downward spiral once she’d left, me and Vegas, a series of tales – a diary of sorts.
Dead sure. Dead pain. Dead limbs. Moving but going nowhere. A life of escalator dreams as the injections stop portions of the body from dying. A prisoner of dreams. The pills gone awry, so crazy. Until every last ounce of contempt leaked out in a recovery, of contemplating the bathroom razor, staring into the mirror with each shave, wondering if this ought to be the last time as I drag the blade against this throat, blood spurting against the vanity mirror, the leaking his own twisted variation of make-up, a clown’s life. The split skin separating and rupturing into a deathtrap, a black hold tainted red and I fall, the gleaming razor, rusty with plasma and smelling of iron, hitting the counter and culling with the initial spurt, into the sink.

A smile, a broken smile, the body locked and going under – these eyes opening because there’s no scream to let out. Looking up, the body dying again, but with no donor blood to pump back in, leaving the world and seeing – there I am, shaving, dragging the razor correctly, sweeping the small, afternoon hairs from each cheek, and the burn is fair without cream.

I awoke unscathed outside.

This is a journey. A lesson in brutality. A pack of coliseum dogs tearing me apart in a lost arena, no one there to watch as the demons inside surge toward the surface, overcoming me as the dogs peel the disguise from my body. It got twisted even further and I was left with nothing too.
VEGAS SPEAKS, SO I LISTEN

There’s this “it” over at the strip club I work at. Started as a he and one day it became a she. Sometimes I wonder what it takes for a guy to cut off his wiener, then I think about all those he-she’s that are trying to be chicks but still have dicks. Chicks with dicks. I wonder about those things and how weird it must be for anyone that’s actually interested. I’ll tell you what, she’s fucking hot. 200K a year hot, just stripping – and trust me, you’d fuck her, not that you’d even know she was ever a man. Average Jane could pull in 100, more if she takes her work home with her.

I knew this guy, Vietnam vet named Bob that got a medal and shit, and even had grown-up kids. One day he decided to cut his shit off and become a woman. He’d wear makeup but was still masculine, like he wouldn’t always shave and dressed like a dude. Becoming a woman is fucking expensive. It was crazy – really, once you lose your wiener you’re essentially useless. I’d rather be put up against a firing squad with a blindfold, waiting for the shots to ring in complete agony - bring on the fucking darkness.

I mean those guys becoming bitches aren’t really different from you or me. You’ve used testosterone; it’s in your walk. You know how many bodybuilders eat dick for test? One dude that’s about to go pro, his girlfriend sets up his sessions for him. He eats dick, dudes oil him up and touch themselves while he flexes, and even got fucked by the guys that started Abercrombie and Fitch. Seriously, those dudes love fucking bodybuilders. No oil and touching, straight-up dick-in-the-ass, it’s disgusting. The power trip of power trips because all those pretty boys running those cookie-cutter shops isn’t enough ass for those guys, and the kids just aren’t big enough to start the trip. Lots
of people are like that, you know, just into fucking. I mean I know gay dudes that don’t like eating dick and they’re fucking gay, but they’ll do it cause their man likes it – who the fuck doesn’t like getting a blowjob? That’s a whole different level of queer right there. Anyway, test is no different from what those broad-wannabe-it-things are taking, estrogen. Their goals are the opposite of ours, except our gig is illegal, ha, I’ve always wondered why.

Think about it, how way back when, the trials that tried to kick the stuff from the streets. Steroids were legal then, even the FDA went off and said it was all good, but suddenly they locked that shit the fuck down. I wonder, I wonder – a chemical substance that makes your skin nice, keeps you healthy, makes you live longer and better, and beats the shit out of Viagra to where there’s no comparison and no risk that you’re gonna keel over as you’re fucking some tight eighteen year old whore from a store window in Amsterdam when you’re over sixty. We’re talking multi-billion dollar industries killed off by an easy to produce shot you take once a week. $10 a week and you’re good for life? Sign me the fuck up. Think, think, think. Never experience the downfall of your own hormones, work out as hard as you want, get the body you want, recover fast from surgery and accidents or forego surgery all together, never get sick, Jesus-fucking-Christ why wouldn’t they ban it? I would too.

They argue that it makes you violent and shit, but we’re not factoring in everything else that vast minority (and even the majority) is doing to account for their aggressive behavior. The cocktail parties – PCP, coke, heroin, pills, whatever. They’re creatures of extremity and addictive behavior, bodybuilders. Take one look at one of
those dudes and tell me that’s normal human behavior. Fuck no. Dude would get eaten by a pack of lions and they wouldn’t worry about being hungry for at least a week. I don’t do anything but steroids but you’d be shocked at how often and how long they’re fucked up. I mean, if I were sucking dick and getting fucked for drugs, I’d do more drugs and try to come out even. It’s hard to gauge, you know, when you’re in control and managing addictive behavior and when you’re out of line. Get hurt and get oxy and a month goes by where you’re popping once or twice a day, and you forget to take them (bullshit, you’re trying to quit, you’d never forget) and you’re all shook up and pissed off. It’s a fine line, everything a fine line.

How much would it take for you to suck a dick? I figure twenty million and I can get my lips and esophagus replaced and I’ll never even think twice. But it’s gotta be twenty million – we’re all gay-for-pay, see?

Regardless, some dudes are just assholes and most of them never get in trouble anyway, and it’s not like we can count stuff like that in bullshit statistics, we don’t know what they do in their personal lives – shit, most drug tests outside of athletics don’t test your hormone levels and even if they did, there’s no real standard on what’s high and what’s low – not really, it’s arbitrary like every other half-assed crock of shit in this world. All the smart people make money without really working, that’s when you know you have a great idea, so everything’s made up by a bunch of square-ass motherfuckers that are half-assed creatures of God. If anything, steroids mellow me out, I just want to work out, eat more, and fuck every girl off the street.
More guys should try at least test, they wouldn’t take shit from any goddamned woman. I’ve never once been burned by a bitch, because I’m the one that does the burning. She gets jack shit from me, and you know what? It keeps her working, trying to get her claws in, and by then she’s done. I spent a week setting up a threesome with a female friend of mine that’s into girls solely so we could make fun of my new girlfriend’s sloppy pussy. I showed you, look at that fucking thing, and you know she’s probably been privy to a situation like that and would love to be on the action-end instead of the short-end. She’s like every other fucking woman, they’re all the same, and I can’t tell one from another. These broads send me naked pictures and half the time I tell them they’d look better in underwear and to stop sending me pictures of their deformities. After a short spot of irritation they’re trying to fuck me and make my dinner. Do my fucking laundry you dumb cunt and within a month you’ll be gone and a year from now neither of us will remember the other so why not? It’s my responsibility to burn these bitches so I can balance out the world while other guys are all nice. Hell, maybe I should introduce you to that It-girl, she brags about her fake pussy all day long and really, she’s probably really cool, cause, yeah, she’s a dude.

Last year I was fucking this bitch and she had this occurrence, this freak medical thing, not like I pushed her down the stairs, but she was fucked up and had to have surgery. Maybe I fucked her up while we were fucking but she was bedridden for a while and can’t have kids now. I don’t know what the fuck happened, and that was the last time I took a girl home from the strip club. Dancing for all those fags, middle-aged broads, and whore younguns that don’t charge, so their behavior is all good. I’m
debauchery for debauchery’s sake on some semi-ironic level. You’ll never see a girl on my shoulder; you’ll see her tailing along like a dog on a leash because that’s what she is.

There’s no one in this world but “you” and as far as I’m concerned, I can take care of myself. Got out of the home and rented my first apartment when I was twelve. I found the best looking bum I could find to do the paperwork for me and I gave him twenty dollars for the whole thing, like he gives a shit about diving further into debt if I don’t pay up, what’re they gonna do, take his cardboard box? Please. Soon enough the place was mine and I worked my way through school, a biology degree no less, which I apply to my life every day as I strip off my clothes for money and provide other dancers and bodybuilders with high-quality supplements that are so illegal that I’m probably going to prison soon, I already know I’m being watched.

But really, what is prison? I look around myself and see nothing but incarcerated motherfuckers that are too dumb to know that they’re prisoners. They don’t go out because they can’t afford it, they wake up next to someone they never even liked to begin with, and really, I figure for every ten years of living it up that I do, I’m better off for it and maybe doing the occasional nickel or penny once in a while. I never planned on dying old anyway, so if I manage to kick the bucket beautiful and have only been imprisoned on the literal level for the aforementioned living it up, it was all worth it. I barely work as it is. Collecting money for some gangsters here and there way back when, selling drugs that don’t hurt anyone, whoring out the so-called escorts, taking my clothes off in front of people, working out and eating right…really I can’t think of any other scenario I’d prefer except for getting a grant for my general existence.
It reminds me of how it all started, when I got called in for fitness modeling, and I was all, “fuck that shit, it’s for fags,” because it is. I went in and a few grand later it was all good. I did it for about a year, these companies do all sorts of marketing for small companies that produce obscure supplements that are probably mostly fillers, but the dudes put up about 250K and it’s history – they tell me what I’m supposedly taking and we take the pictures and all of us are sticking needles in our asses, some of us twice a day, plus some subcutaneous injections. Hell, I never even tried the supplements I was allegedly getting huge and ripped off of. They didn’t renew me, but boy oh boy did those guys try to fuck me. Literally. You’d get told you’re going to a meeting or a party but oh golly gee, it seems no one showed up, “want some wine?” the fucker would ask me, and I’d get what I want out of him, avoid getting fucked or fucking, and make my way out, like the Goddamned girls try to do all day long. Soon enough my buddy that’s built like a Greek statue gets me into stripping, and that’s what I’m doing.

Don’t get me wrong, I know that the train ride ends soon, but males last way longer than females in the taking-off-your-clothes-for-money type-gigs. Yeah, we get paid less, but men age like fine wine, women like milk. I can’t dance for shit but I’m sufficiently handsome and cut up to where the bitches don’t give a fuck. Last night I brought a girl home, a cute sorority bitch. I hate them, all of them, so I make sure to get the money up front, fuck her brains out after we exchange pleasantries which include, “I’ve never done this sort of thing before,” to which I respond, “me neither,” and then borderline disappoint her, intentionally preventing her from orgasm, but it’s still sufficient – better than any boyfriend she ever had.
I hate them all, and you should too. Like I said before, it’s better than just about anything else out there, this life. Long term, yeah, I got them, but what can you really plan for? Not much, because you never fucking know anyway.
I fucked her, yes. I knew within the first attempt at initiation that she’d be needy as fuck and fuck I hate needy. Can’t deal. Deal breaker. Done. Finished. Whole nine-yards-gone. Love across the world? Fine. Different language? OK. Needy? Fuck. No. We’d kissed, and she’d insisted on her last night that I sleep in the bed with her before she left. I’d felt her, started to try further. Her hesitance understandable. I don’t like whores anyway. But it’s a step forward, two back, and one to the side. It’s been a week and I’d gotten no sleep. Constant work, then her; all over the place to make her annual trip out worthwhile. She annunciates, “kiss…me” and I do and she goes further but nixes that shit and Jesus Christ, enough. I play it cool, all good. Next? She fidgets and prods and makes for my attention. Finally I’m almost there and she insists the lights go out and we cover her. What the…? Nah, I’m good. All comes off and I’m fucking her, irritated by her sounds, her movements, her lack of a spine from a lifetimes of cultural training and everything it took to get her here from out East. I’d rather sleep. She gets the ride of her life and after she was too tired and beat down I’m ready to sleep, hopefully she’ll finally give it a fucking rest. No, I should wash my hands. Jesus. My eyes close and we’re at the airport. I’m her boyfriend, apparently. Maybe it was just the lack of sleep. Maybe the juice has made me too sensitive and irritable. All over. Everywhere. Now I’m off to Vegas again to see Vegas about a bitch and some business. Dumb.

“G said they’re like that though. A step forward, two back…side-step and repeat.”

“Unbelievable.” He gets the baby from the car, her smile everywhere.
“Apparently they all resist - the oriental broads. I can’t deal. I’ve rested on it and all she’s done is call and message. Jesus. What the fuck will the phone do? We communicate via translation software, interpretations of one-another’s broken attempts at the outside language, or the other’s pointing and motions. THE PHONE WON’T FUCKING WORK, HO.”

“Ha, G’s a fucking Asian love guru now? This conversation’s a fucking movie in the making,” Fatman shoves another slice of cheesecake into his mouth, his chicken parmesan unfinished.

“Too bad, Brother, I liked her.”

“Yeah well I told her it’s too much and she cried. Cry about what? We dated for a week. Told me she loved me and shit. Stage five clinger, too quick, too much.”

“Terrible. Cheesecake’s melting, you gonna finish that?”

“No, go for it.”

The baby’s asleep, ignorant to the doom that befalls her gender, the poor, little girl. I can see Vegas in the booth with the usual girl, the rant about to begin and she looks so uncomfortable. Him smiling as I recite the events, “They’re all like that,” he’ll say – no matter what you do. Best thing in life is a dude that’s decided to be a girl, he’ll get it. Then we’ll laugh over coffee.
THE HIT: A MEMORIAL

A dead stand. Gather up these organic hypodermics. Looting God’s garden of every last gift, this Eden as Satan’s children crawl and he is the cleanser, a new rain, the black fluid, Earth’s grimacing willingness, a smirk, a mockery, we’re all born dying.

The guys at customs don’t know a king snake from a cobra. He could ship rattlers and call them Komodo’s and they wouldn’t ask a damn thing if I flash my book, lucky me for self-publication and our low budget – no pictures, just vague descriptions.

I’ll muzzle each one and shoot it with sedatives, keep ‘em with something still on top, some Horridum that doesn’t need a permit, even though those fuckers aren’t native. Alas, the milk factory is mine, the portable, biological pharmacy curled up in a crate, the people unaware it’s even there and we’ll try not to laugh the whole time.

Remember the desert. The ride out with Randy, waiting for snakes in Mojave, always best after some long rain when they crawl out to celebrate with everyone else. Mating balls, dead rodents, and the only evidence is a corroded skeleton, fur-encrusted shits everywhere. Water the almighty aphrodisiac. They speculate several different types of Bitis store stool in order to anchor themselves, their strikes up to completely accurate – dead-on every time, only releasing said stool upon the ingestion of a good, thorough rat or equivalent that will nourish and allow for that same hulking weight. Like a month’s pay up front – now back to the cave, let’s make some more.

I drove down to Las Vegas to see Vegas about his dog. Found that G’s girl was in town after I dropped a line to everyone as to where I was. I took several psychoactives to keep in tune, my timing all good.
My eyes were bright, thinking about that bitch as I went to get a bitch in the land of bitches.

Any man that trusts his woman with her ho friends in Vegas is a fool, Vegas told me once. I know. Half those ho’s pay him to fuck their friends because they really hate her, her man, or both. They just want to watch the world burn. Sorority cunts – just stay the fuck away, he always tells me.

“Can’t tell you how many times I’ve collected for gangsters and what did the fool owe for? Getting one of those ho’s beat up or raped for one reason or another. This one guy in particular wanted it brutal. His girl put out an ad with her picture and everything and her man had a hunch, saw she was looking to get fucked in front of her whore friends by at least half a dozen dudes. It was straight-up too unreal. He could taste the semen on her tongue already, and could see the friends, their faces, her face. Envisioned her taking it in the ass from strangers, swallowing, eating a man’s dirty ass when she wouldn’t even break it off for him on the regular; holier-than-thou, not even some head. Fucking bitch.”

Had her raped by six guys in an alley, cutting her, beating her until she couldn’t walk, then, infections starting before the eyes of God, had her shot in the stomach and set in a dumpster outside of some dog food cannery. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas cause you’re a ho, but rest-assured, it all stayed. She was so mutilated the kids growing up out there can show you the unmarked grave they buried her in. No teeth nor fingerprints. No face. No tits. They’d cut off her clit and nipples before she’d died. Everything so wrong. Never, ever fuck anyone over too hard that knows people here. You’ll get yours eventually and it’ll be ironic.
I sit down in front of him and he doesn’t even look up, “Fatman sent you. I know. He’s good people; the only man I trust but fuck he’s looney. Love him. We found some cobras, spitters, these guys were gonna buy and were gonna fork over babies but who knows when or for how much. I called up my buddy and got word on the source – old zookeeper from Germany that stole out the little buggers over the course of a few years. Super rare. Unavailable in America. I don’t want to be number two, three, or four.”

“No, I want them all and first, but when I call he’s made a deal he says. I agree to buy the eggs he’s got brewing, another fella ditching the business for good. The economy and old age, he told me. Fatman says we’re getting a deal but at eight grand for ‘probably?’ Fuck I’ll spend twelve and get them all. Well, he agrees but a deal is a deal and I understand, otherwise I wouldn’t be down with this old timer. He says if those guys don’t pay on time then it’s all mine, it works out better for him anyway. “Yours,” he says, “all yours, but I need payment ASAP.”"

“Word comes and the guys didn’t pay on time and he chose not to remind them so it’s all mine. I drop off the twelve g’s and I’m done. I dropped one last line to the guys that we cut out and they won’t respond to anything, even when I offer them a real good deal. The whole thing pulled out from under them, I’d be mad too. Now I’m upset because our storage in Oregon fell through – I’m never dealing with non-Italian’s again when I need something done, that’s for damn sure.”

We got them all, they’re sitting in the box still, but I need those hooks from Fatman to handle them. One drop and I’ll be gone forever. Lost in time, in a grave like that bitch, fuck it – looking back, we’re whores too, but at least we admit it and it’s just
for the pay. No harm, no foul. Time to breed, milk, and get that paper; just a different method this way around.
A DINNER AT DENNY’S (BECAUSE IT’S FUCKING MOJAVE AND WE COULDN’T FIND SHIT)

The bitch, Imperia, waits in the car, resting, guarding, on the job as her nose bleed, long-healed, starts up again. Digging down and spilling lower-than-truck-stop-grade coffee down pink throats, the world starting toward the bathroom stalls for the series of caffeine-induced shits to get going in a roar. Becky-the-Pissed-Off-Server walks up, finally, asking what the fuck Vegas means when he wants something, anything, from this goddamn dump that's got even 1 gram of fiber.

"Just give me something, anything, with multi-grain. Give me something to work with here you broke-down cunttress."

He goes on as she leaves the table, back where we started:

"Not one cunt would be with me for any reason other than I'm built like a statue with a straight-up nigger-dick, or Jew-dick if it's Hilter-era-Germany. So I'm with these girls for one reason - the same visual perfection, except maybe it'll go better if she can cook - if so, primo. Regardless, take away the weights and I'm getting smaller by the day, depressed by the second. As such, I'm eating her good cooking and shriveling but getting fat as fuck, and she's losing interest, about ready to poison my food if she loves me, the ride's over and the dick's so much smaller by the looks of the fat folds folding and the athleticism bounding away. Fuck. Back to the college days, biology nerd hunting snakes and not worth fuck for the moment to any vagina walking around." Walking through his house, the doors all broken up, making for the couch and imagining the scenarios, the why's and how's, watching him inject obscene amount of juice twice a day,
every day – it all makes sense now.

"About the third-world business, if you don't mind."

"Yeah, I thought about that, Thailand for sure. Some bodybuilder pumped out a shit ton of pharmaceuticals from there, made millions but didn't make enough good friends - got sent back home and went off to prison. Education isn't a guarantee, you see, just better chances if used properly - I suggest you take that to heart if you're going through with this, especially if you’re going to include snakes."

Scarfing down the cold egg whites and whole grains, throwing a fit all the way. Snake hooks waiting in the car, Imperia waiting inside for Vegas once more. He hands off a few dozen vials, these oils - Viagra killer, the dick dozers, bench bilkers, fat fuckers, etc.

All the women crying as Vegas fucks them to death one by one in his dreams and in their bedrooms, they're stepping further into the grave with each thrust. The AA kids talking about the inevitability of death and in the same breath they yammer on about how the bottle would be the death of them.

“I remember just before I quit boxing, moving on to only bodybuilding and fucking around with weights, since I was done breaking thumbs and whatnot, I boxed a contender. It was a Beowulf moment, you know? This guy, I couldn’t hit him once, and I was good too, and it was like, I’m this bad ass soldier and Grendel’s tearing me limb from limb and I’m screaming as he starts letting the blood from whatever limb he’s onto now crawl down his throat and it looks like pure horror. This guy is all about bad things, hungry, repping every bad, foul, wretched side of humanity or lackthereof within him and
I can’t touch him for even a second and he just laughs because what else is he gonna do? And he clips me, like hits me just once and I’m falling down. This guy, this Grendel, found his Beowulf when he got his title shot and got fucked like when his arm gets pulled straight off – remember that part? Yeah, clean off – monster blood everywhere, nose a sky-born skid-row of river water, washed over as Egyptians nearby pull their first-born sons from the Nile. A Moses doppelganger floats by, his skin dead to the touch, spreading necrosis like a disease, viper venom airborne pathogen of the righteous, spelling doom for everyone; listening to the crying, the drowned. He was put away in one round, not even a half-second of glory. Fuck, at least I only lost in the gym – this guy saw defeat in an instant and was never much of anything since, and no one would remember. It’s like the first few days of war, maybe some victories here and there that the soldiers think will play right into history books and they’ll be forever remembered – nah, because those were just moments, drops of time along a waterfall and it’s gone in a flash and looking back it’s like the start of a joke, the punch line went bad though and the crowd’s turning on the sap with a microphone.”

“Like it’s fate, all fate – fated to lose. Train hard every day, beat the best of the best and still this one roadblock will lop your head off like it’s a joke, you’ll wish you’d been miscarried, curse your father, your mother, God…whoever that moment dictates most responsible for your existence. We’re lucky we don’t have off-switches, or everyone with a spine would lose it and be lost after it gets real bad. No one would make it to twenty, that’s for sure.”
Think about Church candles lit for each person, as each Grendel crawls along with the hope that the kings of kings will spare them as they are taken apart one after the other. All of time comes to a halt and soon everything becomes a snake, dreading existence, praying for Beowulf but aligning with Satan because the suit fits.

All right, we work toward Beowulf but prod along the way as Grendel, convinced that we’re Beowulf until he finally comes along to set the record straight and our path ends forever.
THE HIT: YOU’RE NEXT

“Sorry it’s been a while since I’ve called and all.”

“What are you apologizing for? You don’t owe me money.”

A snake, an elapid to be specific, had escaped. Vegas furious and full of denial. From Vegas to Texas, setting up camp at Sim’s place, the escape from the life as a man-whore. The Cunt was out the door within seconds with her three bastard children while the two men searched for the infant snake.

Fatman called up, apologizing, talking about how he prayed and twenty-minutes later, after days of searching, they’d found the little fella, the fucker had squeezed right through the tiny gap in the sliding glass. World’s dumbest creature, outside of penguins, so dumb their stupidity warranted signs all over the zoo on a fucking Saturday, the exhibits closed that had goddamn advertisements all over the city and plastered about the internet. “I’m here, now where are those fucking spiders?” They put all kinds of signs for the penguins - nature’s glutton for punishment, can’t resist a fucking penny in the belly – especially when the shine is just right, a nearby vet rolls his eyes as he spots a scar on the runt’s belly, remembering peeling open the little fuck for a cent, praying it’s an old, all-copper penny, that way he isn’t searching for a damn piece of shit with a small copper film covering it, a turd covered in gold. Toss it. You know it’s pointless when the homeless turn their nose to them from their used coffee cups. Maybe, just maybe, it’ll be an old one and the procedure will produce what the whole operation can’t: A profit. That shiny but aged Abe, a new-age prophet for the greedy bastard in all of us mere mortals.
But really, why run or crawl away from guaranteed food and water? Seriously? Dumb fuck that shouldn’t breed – that’s why. Sell that little fuck to a sap and say it’s the pick, they’ll buy it; they always do.

Sim’s old lady, The Cunt, like the vampire, The Count, Dracula – she remains simply titled. She pulled up in Sim’s minivan into Sim’s driveway, opening Sim’s door into Sim’s house and saw Vegas, his snakes in containers. She threw a fit, picking up Sim’s television off Sim’s stand in Sim’s living room, tossing it at Sim’s head, missing, smashing the box to bits on Sim’s floor.

Fatman recites it to me, the word “cunt” repeating again and again, breaking up reality.

The snakes call of death to all.

There’s really only nature, that which we base everything on, mapping reality at a terminal somewhere – reaching out to the network, hunting for snakes within the deep web - ocean of information, all material squeaking through pipelines of source code, raw data, in an unending descent not unlike the water of the Earth; down, down, down.

Everyone: Pornographers, snuff-filmmakers, freedom fighters, Joe Schmo that won’t pay for a song but’ll watch the damn music video on repeat, ad infinitum because it’s free – all things go, all things go; we’re all together in this on some level.

Elapids, great for testing, for pharmaceuticals, for something other than, “aren’t they cool-looking and pretty?” It’s all about neurotoxins these days. Extract some venom as best you can without getting bit, move onto the centrifuge to remove the skin and blood cells, impurities and whatnot. Upon success, dilute one concentrated drop until
it can be injected clean and somewhat safely. Now, draw the stuff up into, say, a subcutaneous injectable needle, like the kind for diabetes or growth hormone. Tap a vein and get ready to become invincible to God’s most efficient killer. Old Bill, he did this all the time and survived a hundred-something bites, dropping dead at 100 from being a triple-digit-geriatric.

A bite begins with some bleeding unto projectile vomiting, and soon the body is destroying itself in a rush to manufacture antibodies, puss everywhere. Squeeeeeeeeeeze. Laugh at the tossed television and Sim’s dumb ass. If it was cytotoxic, pray they don’t take the limb if you don’t die within twenty minutes.

Imagine evolution, how long did it take for the venom to work as it does? Really work, where so many are carrying enough venom to kill many, many strong men; soldiers even. At what point did the fangs become syringes for delivery of the hardest drug there ever was? Did the Earth, shaped by a galaxy shaped by a universe shaped by God, shape this creature which shaped a method and even further, this madness?

Soon enough, man is running from them, later caging them with minimal hesitation barring the exaggerating films, the weak screaming as a rattler rattles, the cobra nods, puff adder breathing in and out, merely warning them to stay away. Like a dangerous man in an alley saying, “watch out, now get or die,” and somewhere, an elephant crashes head-first into the dirt where it will decompose for a decade from a bite in the bush in mother Africa.

Data everywhere, everyone shook up, the fellas crying at the bar as their relationships with their young ladies unto old ladies starting and ending in cycles, a life
captured along the table like a painting that shows a process as you walk along the corridor, stretching. The old men shake their heads, their wisdom lost on a generation that swears by online dating, along the grid, the electricity shooting up in sparks like old-time fireworks, back when the free were free.

    Loading a syringe with meth before the whores unzip and start sucking, the starlight in their eyes, crawling attention to this house of ice on the corner, their tongues splitting as the power culminates from a nearby storm, their bodies shriveling, scaling into lost tubes and wires, slithering at light-speed, a trail left for all to read their crawls, their mouths evolving teeth becoming fangs becoming the IV hotspot for venom, the meth shot into a vein tapped up in the middle of the arm, elbow on the other side, as the band snaps before a watching God, shaking its head from side to side, crying for all sins. Apologize, because you owe it everything but you never even call.

    Laugh at Sim because you know you want to, Ladies, but remember the Italians, the talk of the soldiers, Grendel, and Beowulf always coming - and all those poor girls too as you stare down a barrel at night for all those sins you never thought to apologize for. Just think - the guy that got paid to fuck you might just be the one to bring you closer to God because the fix is in. Remember that I’m sorry as I say, once more, tears running down my fresh-shaved cheeks, “well fuck you…bitch.” And it rings. Ring-ring.