

you hurt me very much. So I said to papa, it is time the little girl should eat. She is not naughty, yet she hurts me. I have given her a crust of bread, and I must look for some other milk.

The cow has got plenty, and her jumping calf eats grass very well. He has got more teeth than my little girl. Yes, says papa, and he tapped you on the cheek, you are old enough to learn to eat? Come to me, and I will teach you, my little dear, for you must not hurt poor mamma, who has given you her milk, when you could not take any thing else.

LESSON VIII.

YOU were then on the carpet, for you could not walk well. So when you were in a hurry, you used to run quick, quick, quick, on your hands and feet, like the dog.

Away you ran to papa, and putting both your arms round his leg, for your hands were not big enough, you looked up at him, and laughed. What did this laugh say, when you could not speak? Cannot you guess by what you now say to papa? — Ah! it was, Play with me, papa! — play with me!

Papa began to smile, and you knew that the smile was always — Yes. So you got a ball, and papa threw it along the floor — Roll — roll — roll; and you ran after it again — and again. How pleased you were. Look at William, he smiles; but you could laugh loud — Ha! ha! ha! — Papa laughed louder than the little girl, and rolled the ball still faster.

Then he put the ball on a chair, and you were forced to take hold of the back, and stand up to reach it. At last you reached too far, and down you fell: not indeed on your face, because you put out your hands. You were not much hurt; but the palms of your hands smarted with the pain, and you began to cry, like a little child.

It is only very little children who cry when they are hurt; and it is to tell their mamma, that something is the matter with them. Now you can come to me, and say, Mamma, I have hurt myself. Pray rub my hand: it smart. Put something on it, to make it well. A piece of rag, to stop the blood. You are not afraid of a little blood — not you. You scratched your arm with a pin: it bled a little; but it did you no harm. See, the skin is grown over it again.

Sitting in the Silver Dollar restaurant early in the afternoon, straddling a shining stool and ordering a small cola, I dropped a black beauty and let the capsule ride the edge of my tongue for a moment, as usual, and then swallowed it. Then the sense of regret washes over me like whenever I drop something, a sudden regret at what might be the disappearance of regular perceptions: the flat drift of sensations gathered from walking and seeing and smelling and all the associations; and that strange tremor like a ticklishness that never quite reaches the point of being unbearable. There's a slow sensation of that type coming into the body, from the temples to the abdomen to the calves, and riding with it in waves, spurred on by containers of coffee, into the marvellousness of light and motion and figures coasting along the streets. Yet somehow that feeling of beauty that comes riding off each surface and movement

around me always has a slight trace of falseness about it, a slight sense of regret, felt at the occurring knowledge that it's a substance flowing into my veins that cancels out the lines of thought brought along with time and again and serious understandings of the self.

So there was a that feeling of regret, a sudden impulse to bring the pill back up, a surge of weariness with the self, the settling back and the wait for the sensations to begin. I smoked a fast cigarette and the door opened bringing with it sunlight and wind.

Restless walks filled with coasting images of sight and sound: cars bucking over cobblestones down the quiet side streets, trucks waiting at corners with swarthy drivers leaning back in the cool shadowy seats and the windows of buildings opening and closing, figures passing within rooms, faraway sounds of voices and cries and horns roll up and funnel in like some secret earphone connecting me with the creaking movements of the living city. Old images race back and forth and I'm gather a heat in the depth of my belly from them: flashes of a curve of arm, back, the lines of a neck, glimpses among the crowds in the train stations, one

that you could write whole poems to. I'm being buoyed by these discrete pleasures, walking the familiar streets and river. The streets were familiar more because of the faraway past than the recent past—streets that I walked in those odd times while living among them in my early teens in the company of deaf mutes and times square pederasts. These streets are seen through the same eyes but each time with periods of time separating it: each time belonging to yet an older body until the body smoothes out and lines are etched until it is a young man recalling the moments of a complicated past. I can barely remember the sense I had when viewing these streets for the first time. There's a whole change in psyche and yet there are slight traces that cut me with the wounding nature of *déjà vu*, filled with old sense of desire. Each desire, each memory so small a thing, becomes a small river tracing the outlines and the drift of your arms and bare legs, dark mouth and the spoken words of strangers. All things falling from the earth and sky: small moments of the body on the docks, the moaning down among the boards and the night, car lights slanting across the distance, aeroplanes falling as if in a deep surrender to the rogue embraces. Various smiles spark from darkening rooms, from behind car windows, and the sounds of the wind-plays along the coast sustained by distance and levelled landscapes, drifting among the bare legs and through doorways and into barrooms. Something silent that is recalled, the sins of age in a familiar place the emptied heart and light of the eyes, the white bones of street lamps and moving autos, the press of memory turning over and over. Later, sitting over coffee and remembering the cinematic motions as if witness from a discreet distance, I lay the senses down one by one, writing in the winds of a red dusk, turning over slowly in sleep.

In the last evening in the motel room, falling to sleep amid the sounds of splintering glass from a fight in another room, I found myself walking in this rural section of the country. It was dirt roads and a thick strangling brush and woods appearing over the tops of brambles that lined the road. There were groves of beautiful firs and leafy oaks and some beech trees.

I came into this area where the road turned triangular. The triangle had a stretch of sidewalk with small town stores. There was a coffee shop, a ma and pa-type restaurant with formica counter and shining stools and a gallon bottle of hard-boiled eggs in vinegar and maybe some containers of beef jerky. I stepped up onto the sidewalk which was built like a slightly raised boardwalk of slatted wood and in the shadows of a wall there's this fourteen- or fifteen-year-old kid with long black hair and a denim jacket with cigarettes in the top pocket. He's standing outside this open screen door of the coffee shop with one leg folded beneath him the sole of his foot flat against the wall of the building and hands in pockets. As I pass the doorway of the shop, I glance inside out of the corner of my eyes and see three or four teenage guys playing a couple of pinball machines, riding the flippers and machines with bucking hip motions and thrusts and they're actually in the process of breaking open the machines to get the money. I flinch a little in that moment, realising there is danger and I don't know where I am. I'm a stranger in these parts. My body is in motion as I take all this in and the kid leaning outside the door says what the fuck you lookin at? and before I can answer he whips out this long knife. It's about nine inches of thin steel blande and with a flick of his wrist slashes my bare arm open from wrist to elbow. I look down in slight shock and step back waving my hands in front of me saying, "Nothing man...nothing...sorry." He seems satisfied and lets me pass on down the sidewalk. I'm holding my arm to keep the wound as closed up as possible and when I reach a section of the sidewalk where there's an alley I step inside to lean shakily against a wall. I notice two other guys about my age all cut up on the arms, legs and bellies. I stumble out of the alley and suddenly this police man shows up. He's wearing tan pants, shirt and cap and black boots and he's holding a whip about a yard long. The kid spots him coming and starts running down the road in the direction I came from. The officer starts chasing him and I run after the two of them to see what happens to the kid. The kid is in the distance and the officer stops in the middle of the road. The kid turns while running to see where we are just as the officer snaps his arm and the whip elongates into the distance and wraps around the kid's head bringing him to a halt—his hands come up to his face completely wrapped in leather thong. The officer runs the distance and catches up to the kid and hog-ties him like a

rodeo calf. By the time I reach them the officer steps back a few feet and pulls out a shotgun taking aim on the kid. I'm thinking, "Oh man... he ain't gonna shoot him—he wouldn't do that." And as I'm thinking that, the officer pulls the trigger and blows a hole open in the kid's side. The kid's side is gaping open near the waist showing pulsating intestines and stomach. I'm crouching near the kid's head looking into his eyes as the officer comes up and squats down next to me. The kid is no longer a kid; he's some kind of stray dog with bristly black fur and frightened eyes. The officer takes the kid's knife from the ground and with the other hand carefully parts the flesh of the wound until the organ that seems to be the stomach is revealed, its delicate pink greyish bloat quivering like a lung puffing in and out. The officer delicately cuts it open and clear liquid pours out. I look into the dog's eyes and watch the terror and pain change into an opiumlike daze. A sensual pleasure passes beneath their surface, a strange state of grace in the flight behind the eyes speeding up, the fading of life into the pale glaze of death.

When I was a teenager I had a recurring fantasy that began after my first motorcycle ride. This was shortly after waking up one morning and realising that government and god were interchangeable and that most of the people in the landscape of my birth insisted on having one or both determine the form of their lives. I recognised the fact that the landscape was slowly being chewed up and that childhood dreams of autonomy in the form of hermetic exile were quickly becoming less possible. (I was also in the threads of a childlike crush on a guy I'd met in a times square movie house who'd taken me home for twenty-four hours of sex. He was a college student who looked like he'd grown up in some part of the country like Kentucky and in the anlgas of his chest and abdomen and face, I'd gotten him mixed up with the character in the movie we were watching when we first noticed each other in the dark seats of the balcony. It was a movie about sexy moonshiners who walked around half naked and eventually died in a shootout with the federal authorities. After carrying on a secret affair with this guy for a number of weeks, he

broke it off with the explanation that I was too young and when I got old enough I would understand the range of possibilities for different lovers and that at that abstract moment of time I would leave him.) I lay in a hotel room one night after selling my body to a customer who had gone back home to his wife and kids, and I wished I'd had a motorcycle and that I was in a faraway landscape maybe someplace out west. I saw myself riding this machine faster and faster and faster toward the edge of a cliff until I hit the right speed that would take me off the cliff in an arcing motion. At that instant when my body and the machine cleared the edge of the cliff and hit the point in the sky where I was neither rising nor falling—somewhere in there: once my body and the motorcycle hit a point in the light and wind and loss of gravity, in that exact moment, I would suddenly disappear, and the motorcycle would continue the downward arc of gravity and explode into flames somewhere along the rocks at the bottom of the cliff. And it is in that sense of void—that marriage of body machine and space—where one should most desire a continuance of life, that I most wish to disappear. I realised that the image of the point of marriage between body-vehicle and space was similar to the beginning of orgasm. I may be living a life that is the equivalent of a ride on an upside-down road but it is only to shake all the ropes off, even the ropes of mortality. Even in the face of something like gravity, one can jump at least three or four feet in the air and even though gravity will drag us back to the earth again, it is in the moment we are three or four feet in the air that we experience true freedom.

So what is that feeling of emptiness?