

Proceeders' to Truth

By: Peter J. Ertl

To gain consciousness without understanding. To lose ideals and thoughts, the presence of the past and those associated memories. To discover a field surrounded by giant plants, the brown stalks made of unwavering strength, the petals still unformed, only thousands of tiny buds protruding from arms and limbs and twisted knots of scratching appendages. And to feel blood running over your fingers as they touch your forehead where the skin is peeled back and the flesh is sticky against the fingertips. This is how I awoke, with my identity gone and only the attainment of basic human knowledge: reading and writing, mathematics, and cooking. These entities, which were now almost useless in my situation, this was to be my life, opening my eyes to see patches of snow and a blue and sunny sky, to feel the rays warming my cracked head and the numbness of my limbs covered and hidden beneath a shirt of white cloth. Atrocities, death, murder . . . such images became associated with my feeble condition—lines of dried blood lacing my face, upon the eyebrows and the nose and crisscrossing at the chin, dripping and continuing down, over the adam's apple and residing in the valley of skin at the edge of my neck. This awareness enforced and helped me to create the belief that I was a monster. With such idealness where even the seconds were visible, time captured between the chirping of the crickets and the shadows as they distorted into reflections of nature passing over the landscape by the changing of the day into night,

these questions swamped my History. I had the mentality of a child in a man's body. So I would now fulfill this unwanted wish, to live as part of fate, to discover life. But not prompted by human contact and their rules and laws and groupings; instead to unravel the basics of myself, to acquire forgiveness for my conjured past, and to discipline my existence into hardship. Penance.

At first it was my physical needs that I adhered to, the wounds and bruises, the hunger and thirst; the context of my mind I would untangle and analyze later. I needed shelter and warmth as the battle between Winter and Spring ensued, the cold nights and warm days, the defeat of the snow and the killing of its death, then the renewal of life: the green grass and the thick organic petals of cloth sprouting forth; the reawakening of the animals, furry beasts with sharp fangs tearing into orange and purple berries and hard coated shells with soft centers; and the birth of the tiny mystical creatures (flying and buzzing and biting) adorned with yellows and reds and blues, hundreds and hundreds of identical actions, building tunnels and cavities in the dirt, and nests hanging from branches filled with sweet and sticky liquid; and their destroying of the dead beasts, cannibals with claws devouring flesh until white bones morphed into skeleton nests. Everywhere was wonder and beauty. The days and weeks passed, the smell of fragrances, the swirls of colours, dizziness, excitement, the taste of burned animals marinated in blood with flower petals, the soothing touch of cold water in weightlessness fighting against its struggles; and other newer and deeper experiences were also to be revealed. I craved within Nature's cravings. This is where I belonged. The intrinsic of life, the revelations, it was all so simple. I learned the hierarchy, the key to survival. And it was without trying, propelled by the struggles inside, the debasement of the other years, the other existence, and my promise because of those sins, I was absorbed by happiness, a tingling in my consciousness that resinated through my physical and mental faculties. After rediscovering society again, I used this understanding, not knowledge, since words were not the source or memorization, but a feeling, an experience of learning, and a satisfaction of that experience. I disproved the changing proceeders' that established and reestablished hierarchies over years and decades and centuries and millenniums: dogmas, Crusades, sacrifices, witches, truths and falsities, Kings and Queens, worthiness, rules, laws, power,

greed, slavery, fighting for love, killing for peace, murdering for religion, socialism, capitalism, dictatorship, democracy, control, media, money. But then parts of my History returned. And with it my ideals, and thoughts, and associated memories. Even now I struggle to fulfill my false promise, the bullet hole slowly relinquishing my energy as my blood seeps into the gutter with the millions and billions of other mangled and torn corpses. Children calling for parents. Parents lost in madness. Limbs scattered about with the smells of rotting flesh and the buzzing of insects. And armies of animals devouring screaming kids as their mother's and father's become insane, the last trickle of words echoing in their ear drums; then torture and madness and death; the bodies ravaged by packs of wild poodles. I still have seconds remaining. I have not yet been found. My words will last as long as I am safe. Or until the ink runs dry and my heart stops. There is a deep fatigue lingering. Oh how I desire that drawing. . . . Is it a touch of peace? I feel it. And yet it is not warm, only icy and damp. I don't know how peace tastes. Or solitude without consciousness. Or hunger and thirst minus physical needs. A clenching of memories distorted by time. To focus again. Why this stuttering?

And I began by noticing my skin was uncovered of the frost that rolled over the grass. I peeled my body from the clump of snow below my clothing, ripping the grip of ice from the material. A headache controlled my perception and only till it had dissipated did I realize the full extent of my condition. A purple bruise ran across my left side. There was my head wound also; and the tips of my toes were hurtful when I stumbled forth with agony leading me in exploration. I was at the bottom of a hill, a clearing in a forest of giant plants. ('Trees' I would title them when my memory returned.) I was not to find water or food the first 24 hours. And shelter was only within the forest: The calling of the wind numbing my arms and eyeballs and tongue and chattering my teeth, wrapping my body against plant skin and scratching my limbs with the coarseness of the bumpy texture. On the second day I saw the river, and knowing this to be the source for my survival, I searched for a home with the water as the central point, the middle, the core of everything. I had gathered fallen branches and frozen logs, even as they slowly thawed in the return of Spring. Later when some crumbled and tiny creatures were found growing inside, soft and plump and tasty, I used them to

marinate my decapitated animal carcasses, the flesh of which I roasted and cooked upon rocks, wood, and flames. Now darkness was descending and I was yet to stifle the stomach pains, the volume containing only sloshing liquid. As I trudged onwards and searched for edible plants with the evening encompassing my environment, I struggled with the craving, jumping at a darting creature as it hopped into a hole, looking under rocks for armies of bugs, and climbing trees for the nests of flying beasts; luckily I discovered two blue spheres speckled with brown dots which I plopped into my mouth without breaking the shells first. To satisfy the saliva buildup, I developed images of past feasts: chicken legs coated with bread crumbs and sprinkled basil, broccoli covered in melted Mozzarella cheese with carrot circles retaining turkey clumps, and mashed potatoes and bacon bits with hidden spurts of hot butter; through these returning memories I was able to discern the desire I had for animal meat. It was then, standing under the tree tops as the trickles of lights faded, the cold recollection of the previous nights, the strands of dirt and dust and blood laced hair follicles stretching up, and the numbing of the inner nose walls with the icy breeze causing dribbles of snot, that I searched for sharp objects, objects to throw and gouge and stab, rocks and sticks with pointed ends, any item that when released would pierce into the fur and flesh and meat of the flopping and stuttering and flying and climbing animals, that would halt their movements and stop their hearts from beating. This endeavour would last until the glistening point of my spear had traveled through a beast, until its spasms were no more, its tail silent upon the rotting and decaying leaves. Back at my hut, I skinned the creature with rocks, using my hands to tear and peel the fur from its body. Blood ran over my fingers and palms, rolled to my elbows and then dripped onto the ground where in the daylight the mystical beings would gather into groupings for the feast. So much inner desire! I flung the animal's flesh against my lips and clenched my teeth into its belly. The first flavour I encountered was bitterness; the texture upon my tongue was cold and slippery; then I was nauseous, and the hot contents of my stomach bursted up my throat and covered the creature. I threw it among the trees as dry convulsions and retching and watering eyes mixing with the mucus from my nose overcame my hunger. I lay crying, weak and delirious, still unsure of my place. The remembrance of my cooking skills, the sauces and stews and soups and pastry puffs, all but

hidden. And then jargon fell into my thoughts: chef, cook, fryer, french fries, marinates, hamburger, apple pie, drive thru, Big D, DcChicken, Cheeseburger, tellers, school girls, teenage boys, Herbert, Philis Dc, DcFlurries, Milk Shakes, Dc D's restaurant. The memories of working, of cooking, of being employed at this magical place, this Dc D's, were recalled. And I smiled. 'It is fire I need,' I shouted into the darkness with silence echoing back. I had recalled fire again: burning, sizzling, bubbling fat, flesh, roasting meat, flames, heat, red, orange, salivating. I now had water and shelter and food. But I knew that without fire I would not survive. It was then that I searched for this fire, waiting till the light had dominated the shadows. I scoured the forest looking under rocks and in holes, and climbing to the tops of trees, eating the occasional birds egg as stomach pains flared up; and I ventured to where my damaged body first lay, and there I was also unlucky. At the river my hands moved stones and dug under the pebbles and into the mud. Even when they became numb I continued my search, creatures darting around my arms, and my fingers clawing back at the silvery flashes; but there was nothing. Where was this fire? It was dark and in my hut I curled in the dead vegetation, wrapping the white shirt around my emaciated body, the bones protruding forth, layered by skin and shrunken veins. During the night I had a dream associated with eating meat. When my appetite was satisfied and there were only the bones of the animal left, I stepped back in madness . . . realizing that it was my own leg I had devoured. As the darkness shuddered, I shivered, my teeth chattering, my mind filled with thoughts of self cannibalism, my eyes subjected to the torture of insomnia. Sleep did not return. At dawn, the first trickles of rain splashed upon my shelter, and my delirium pushed me into a frenzy. How could I suffer more so? But it had begun. And a downpour fell from the sky. Then loud bangs were heard, and bright flashes careened across the clouds. Water stuck the decaying leaves to my body. My energy was all but subtle. So I lay with the puddles of precipitation. I had given up. Cold and shaking and wet—a child lost in a foreign forest, trying to survive, trying to live, with no memories, no understanding, no knowledge.

Then an amazing thing transpired. My mind snapped. It had achieved its pinnacle, the highest point available. And instead of tumbling from the edge, it reached above and through the fog, climbing onto the next plateau. I then started from the bottom of that level. I had not

given up, but created. Tiny waves of energy relinquished my sorrow. I sat forward. Then I was crouching, and I found myself among the trees, my feeble limbs able to swing and rotate and scratch. But this would not last unless I discovered what my instinct foretold: I needed this fire, and I would lose change, and all my physical powers, my five senses, the use of my limbs, and the animals would enjoy my flesh and skin, the tiny mystical creatures eating the remains to the bone. Death awaited my life. I was jogging between trees, jumping over holes and bushes, causing the forest to become silent, except for my own destruction—the breaking of twigs and the snapping of branches, the crunching of water laden logs under the soles of my rubber sneakers; the sides crumbling with implosions of shoe prints. There was lightening and thunder and I was running. My nose whiffed pockets of smoke and burning; soon the smell was more prevalent, and associated recollections arrived. This was the fire I sought. The clawing of death loosened its touch. I was elevated. But fate played a trick. I lost my footing on the leaves. And I ran into a tree. My forehead connected, and it split open; the healing wound tore apart, the skin stretching and flesh and bone visible. Then my vision left, and my thoughts, and my immediacy. There was blackness. Vanquished.

Through fits of coughing and yakking, I regained sight, a migraine drawing my perception into a narrow band; and I saw fire melting the trees, enveloping its life into the bark, and consuming the wood and the branches and the tiny red and brown buds. There was screaming. And crying. The long stalks tortured. The flames relentless in there eating. And I yelled: ‘Stop it, stop it! They’re alive, they’re alive!’ That pain I endured, the cackling and laughter of that fire, I would only experience such agony once more during my months of survival in the forest, and only once more afterward, which I will be unable to write about, as I shall not survive much longer. I hear the yelping and shouting and screaming, and the explosions, and the gun shots, and grenades detonating, and there are bouts of quietness, and I fear that silence more so. The screaming of children. Being eaten alive. Alone. This is driving me mad.

Lost in the clouds of smoke, bumping into burning trees, scorching my bare arms, singeing my hair, my red shirt scattered with specks of flames, these memories were only retained. Then I was back at my hut, the rain was gone, patches of sunshine shot between the

clouds, and I was holding a burning club of wood in my hand, sparks splashing the air in flashes of red and orange, a stream of blood sticking my left eye lid against the skin overlaying my eye ball. I searched for branches and chunks of dried wood and I built a pit surrounded by rocks; a dragon rose from the circle. There was giggling. Excitement. Happiness. I had found fire. Fire! Fire! Fire! And I danced around the sphere of heat, tickled by the warmth. I brought out my dirty white shirt and spread the material over the damp ground. I watched the captive stingers, and then drifted into sleep. I now had water and shelter and food and fire.

On the fifth day I created stews: roasted squirrels and rabbit legs and the meat of a red bird that I found hobbling on the forest floor, its leg twisted and dangling. And I clubbed it over the head with a stick until its whimpering was no more and its eyes were glazed. It was suffering. I removed it from this suffering. Was I not worse than the fire? I was still a killer. Four days of murder. Was I breaking my promise I made on the first day? I was only borrowing. To survive. To live. Hunger. I found a large rock that was hollow, its inner center level with its outer center and I placed it in the middle of the pit, over hot coals and surrounded by flames attached to logs that scorched the grey sides. I ripped the meat from the animals with sharp edged rocks and set the pieces in the pot where they sizzled. The scent of roasting animals mixing with the dying wood drifted about. My mouth hung wide; and when I was delirious, I reached into the pot, the heat bubbling my skin, and I grabbed a chunk of meat, throwing it into my throat, not caring about the pain as my mouth was burned. On a square piece of bark that had fallen from a log, I gathered the stew. I used two sticks as utensils. And after eating, with the sky dark, and the fire illuminating that darkness, the distance of my eyes capturing that stuttering of light, and the hooting of an owl drawing away the silence, I slept again. There were no nightmares.

The next day I made tools of wood and stone, chopping the remnants of the fallen trees that were scorched by the burning forest. I used wood against wood, making an axe with a branch and a thin and narrow rock and then hammering into the bark, with the wooden handle as the throwing device and the rock as the cutter. These pieces I piled by the dimming pit and the strips I used for layering over the holes still visible from the crisscrossing of the strewn

vegetation that I had placed upon my shelter. There was another feast of squirrel and rabbit, and also roasted toad, which I had stepped on while the wood was being chopped, seeing its hopping body bounce from spot to spot. It was anger. And I was well rewarded. The toad was delicious. The crunching of its skin between my teeth, the warm blood flowing upon my tongue, the meat ripped and torn from its bones and the force of my jaws drawing out that flavour. I was annoyed by its content movements. Maybe I should of let it be. Hunger was to blame or made as an excuse for my animosity. I was satisfied. The night was cold and I allowed the fire to grow, feeding it sacrifices of trees, and I saw the stars so bright from above, and I was warm and hot and cold as winds blanketed my body: my cheeks warm, my nose running, my arm hot, and my toes cold. Sleep drifted in and out. I awoke before the sun had risen parallel with my ragged demeanor.

It was on the seventh day that I rested. My bruise was healing, less sore when prodded by the tips of my fingers, the deep colour returning to its original warranty and my ribs unpainful with motion. The tear upon my forehead had again clustered and the flesh was hardened, the edges pulling together, the skin tightening and borrowing, and only a dull throbbing still lingered. It was my muscles that hurt, their over use and lack of nourishment from the beginning days, their excessive contractions, the running and chopping and lifting, their lethargic reactions when needed, I had to rest to allow my body to heal. There was plenty of food left from the previous nights feast, and two concave rocks retained a portion of water, enough to supply the morning and evening. The sun warmed my tattered red shirt, and the thick white shirt I used as a pillow, and my jeans laden with sweat and grime were also heated; and I lay with the breeze dimming my senses, the solitude refreshing, and calmness and peace, my eyes looking forth upon nature, the greenness climbing from the ground and giant plants, and the moss developing on rocks and logs. Little flowers were sprouting up. Occasional insects landed on my face, humming their annoying melodies as I swatted at their bodies, hitting my own skin instead, and hearing their laughter in retreat, the buzzing in my ears.

The next few days and the week to follow, these hours I filled with hunting and wood working, patching my hut and adding other sections, a kitchen and a livingroom, and a

bathroom: the potty made of hollowed out wood, the wiping paper consisting of my two socks and the sleeves of my red shirt, all of which I washed when required. I used my time recalling lost knowledge, the alphabet, and my speech was redeveloped, where I talked to the insects and the decapitated animal heads, bringing a crowd of friends together until they rotted and drew swarms of flies and I had to replace them with others. I cried when the eyes of my toad fell from their sockets and white worms crawled out of the cavities, and when I threw Toady into the trees, I knew I had lost a great friend. But then came Hoppy and Snakey, and the brothers, Tails and Bitey. The time continued with these experiences. The days were warmer and I was protected from the decreasing coldness of the nights. Nature shocked me with its discipline. When I re-entered society, I was amazed by the contradictions, the useless behaviour of the people, I saw them seeking pleasure, but not to better or to change or to propel, but to hide, to follow the template that was set in place. It was the advertisements that first shocked me, the giant billboards, the cowboy smoking a cigarette, the skinny blonde model covered only in lingerie, her elbows and knees meatless, the arc of her breasts blocked by protruding insertions. To waste living, but not in discipline, but in waste, this is what I saw, and I was scared. The t.v.'s, the magazines, the movies, the marketing, the consumerism, the corporations, the food, the music, I wanted to return back to the wilderness. But it exploded together, and my mind imploded, and here I now lay, on the damp and shiny floor, hidden behind a wall, the people, the animals are searching, and death is near. I am but only waiting. The flashing fluorescent sign above repeating every other second the same words: SOON. And then it blinks out. And flashes: SOON. And blinks. And: SOON. And. SOON. With the heat now causing perspiration to escape my skin, the stickiness of my fingers from the honey I removed from the beehives, the dirt and dried blood and the stink, I decided to wash. When I was stripped of my clothing, my stomach now flat and firm, and the muscles of my arms and legs defined in curves, I stood on the bank of the river, shivering at my reflection in the running water. Would it be better to jump in or slowly climb in? Then the wind wafted my own smell into my nostrils and I had but no choice. My body splashed into the frigid rapids and I screamed and I could feel my limbs fighting. But then the pain subsided. I became used to the coldness and the struggling. I was clean again. The other days

and weeks were also similar: hunting, building, remembering, exploring, cleaning, eating, drinking, sleeping, using time, and penance.

Then agony returned for its second cycle. But not before my idleness. It was during those periods that I meditated, trying to draw forth my lost memories, any snippet of information that might be useful in recalling the event that brought me to my isolation. I pieced together the first day, waking in a field with a bruised chest and a cracked forehead, the flesh torn and sticky upon touch, and I remembered the first few minutes, peeling my body from the frost laced ground and noticing that frost had not covered my limbs. But how could that be? Did my heat prevent this? I was well insulated, a thick white shirt with buckles and straps and a red shirt beneath, and my jeans. Then I thought that maybe I was placed in the field, that someone had dropped me there. But there were no foot prints. So how was I to have materialized? Where did I come from? Did I just grow there, sprouting from the Earth as a flower does? Maybe I was an ungrounded root, displaced from one of the trees. All those wasted hours and days, conjuring up what was lost forever. Even at this moment I am still deciphering flashes of thoughts and the voices, the conversations, the previous night, the wandering of the street. To this immediacy, I still only recall a thin layer of my past history. The delusions I started with, the atrocities and murders, living life in penance for the crimes I committed, this was just my imagination propelled by the circumstances. I was a simple man. I lived in quietness; still with my parents even at the instance of my disappearance, or so I had perceived. It was before the events that I had existed in my parents house. At that time I was employed at the local restaurant, a man of thirty-three, a cook, but not even. A man trapped in conflict. I regarded employment as waste for it did not pertain to reason. There was no job that interested or brought a semblance of purpose to my ideals. To help pay the bills, I was a cook at Dc D's. But for what purpose? I was shocked when my name tumbled back into my memory. It happened the day before my second encounter with agony. I was laying at the top of the hill, above my first placement, staring at the rolling clusters of trees, and a dragon fly had landed on my arm, such a beautiful creature, translucent wings and an elongated body. I was thinking about flying creatures, memories that had been recalled—bumble bees, Monarch butterflies, Blue Jays, Owls, Eagles—and there my name

spiraled and I was able to grab it, and it became my History again. I was called Rupert. The last name of which I must not disclose. So I was this Rupert, and such a strange name it was. But it was my surname that caused my shortness of breath, and the knowledge of who my parents were, and my birth, and the life I lived. It was just after the first event when I discovered the secret. The terror! Those ideas that filtered through my mind, just misplaced. I became more disciplined because of them. My energy I converted into creating, to giving something back. I lived life in this isolation, but only to strive and to develop. This was the promise that I made. The one that I have failed to keep.

The second agony. This ordeal I keep mentioning, but cower away from before it is remembered. I want to describe why the first incident of agony tortured my spirit with such ferocity. It was the thoughts and the feelings that tore my emotions from within. I was able to experience what the fire was doing to the trees and the screaming I heard, and the calling for help. Even later when I burned wood, the dead pieces of the giant plants, I felt the same anger. To remove the contradiction from occurring, it was only the fallen stalks and the logs and the broken branches that I built into my shelter and heated my food with and used to bring warmth for my survival through the nights. The trees I always saw as friends, as relatives. I would never fell a part of myself. Even with the animals, I could not kill the beasts unless I was starving. It was unfortunate to them that everyday I hungered. But with the forest, there were always remnants to pick upon. And I used these remnants. The pain always drawing me back to the fire and the torture and my own madness.

Now the second bout of agony. It was mid-morning when I was roused from my daydreaming, where I was floating in the sky as a sunset materialized with the purple and red and pink colours capturing the background of the horizon, and the beauty I saw, it was all so beautiful; and then I was awake as a roar sent my hair follicles standing on end; and my body shivered, the hut also shaking with the deep sound. My eyes opened. With caution I rolled to a crack and peeked through. There by the fire, a giant beast stood, its fur billowing in the breeze, and it had found my friends and was squishing their heads between its teeth, eye balls popping from sockets, ears mangled and dangling from thin skin attachments, flaps of noses lingering between its fangs. I was paralyzed. Never before had I seen such a creature. And

my poor decapitated animal heads, my friends, and they were being devoured. Could I fight the beast? Would it attack me if I did not sneak away? There was such craving in those black eyes. I thought to hide. It would sniff my scent and then come for me if I did not. I knew it could not be killed by sticks or rocks. I moved to the bathroom, crawling upon the leaves and grass and the tulips that had blossomed, and I tore into the wall of vegetation, removing sticks and branches and pieces of bark. A small hole was uncovered. I was silent in my endeavour. There was quietness. The beast had finished its feast. But was it full? Where had it gone? Did it already smell me? The roar that I awoke to now blasted through the front of my hut, and the flimsy structure swayed as the beast stuck its body into the front entrance. It was then that I screamed and threw my head upon the opening. My hips became trapped in the narrowness of the hole, and it was only with wiggling that I was able to tumble into the sunshine. But not before the creature had swiped at my right leg with its claws and ripped into the flesh hidden beneath my jeans. The warm blood gushed down my ankle and into my shoe. It was because of this that the bear was able to track me: the squeaking of my sneaker as I ran and was chased, the sound of squishing between the lifting of my foot and the pressure of my skin against the cushioned material within my shoe as it touched the ground. Fate had tricked me again. Before the beast emerged from the structure of wood and debris, I had gained a considerable distance, and my spirit was elevated. I thought I had escaped. So I slowed to a trot and then to only jogging, and I was walking at a fast pace, staring at the clusters of flowers, the reds and yellows and blues, and I saw mushrooms growing among the logs and patches of weeds, but the roar returned. The creature tore through the bushes, its teeth dripping with saliva and flakes of decayed animal meat, and I noticed the curvature of a pupil stuck upon its tongue; I could but only freeze, watching as laughter formed on the corner of its mouth, its eyes satisfied with success; and it also slowed, sniffing my stink, its stomach preparing for my flesh. Was I to die? How could I escape? It was instinct that answered my questions. I jumped and my hands flung upward, and I clung to a branch, my legs wrapping around the base of the tree and then locking together. Now I shinnied up the bark, drawing energy from each individual finger, and my strength was able to push me onto the appendage; and I climbed higher and higher, the base narrowing as I gained height. The bear was

unsuspecting of my maneuvers. When I began my ascension, it froze, thinking, and as my body had reached the first branch, it was then that it charged. But to no avail. Its arcing claws were not to slice me. Even standing on two limbs at full length, and the shaking of its limbs against the tree, I was still safe from its grasp. This success brought tears to my eyes. My beating heart slowed only to gain rhythm again as laughter escaped my lips and echoed with the sounds of nature. So here I sat on a thick branch, the bear down below roaring, and I was happy that I had survived. But was the beast ever to leave? How long would I have to remain in the tree for? Would I ever return to my shelter? And could I still live there? These thoughts permeated in my brain as the day progressed and the bear had not left. Then it was night and I was hungry and thirsty. I fell asleep with my feet dangling in the wind.

Dawn broke forth and I awoke to more shaking and roaring, the sun now climbing into the sky, the fur of the bear tinted with splashes of pink, and my body sore from the awkward position it retained. The second day in captivity, the bear unrelenting in its attainment, I was unable to satisfy my desire and need of food and water. What was I to do? If I climbed down the tree, the bear would eat me. If I jumped onto the beast and attacked it with only my hands and legs and feet and teeth as weapons, I would also be killed. And so I waited. Now the third morning arrived, the bear again shaking me from sleep, its roaring dimming in agitation and failure. My hunger was trembling from within. I picked the occasional bug off the bark to tame the pain. It was during the evening hours that I first heard the chirping birds. The sound drifted from below. I descended the tree, listening for the uneven melody, and in the opening of the wood, I saw a family of blue jays. The mother bird was feeding its five babies, regurgitating a worm that it had consumed. Temptation brought my senses into delusion. This is where my agony resurfaced. It was behind the six flying creatures that I saw two eggs still unhatched. Without contemplating being bitten, I reached into the hole, not touching the birds and I snatched the eggs from the nest. The first shell crunched under my jaws, and I heard tiny noises between my teeth as they chomped into the living fetus. Even after discovering the bird was about to emerge from its shell, I still continued in clenching into its body and head, and chewing the little bird into digestible pieces. These memories and the following, I have to this day remembered, waking to soiled sheets from nightmares, the sweat dripping

upon my comforter and pillow. Now with the second egg, before popping it onto my tongue, the bird within cracked through its captivity and I was able to see its sweet eyes and its meatless body brought forth through struggles, as if I had caused it to escape, as if it had heard its brother screaming from his shell. Although seeing the bird break free, I still drew it into my mouth and ripped into its flesh and bone, the sounds of pain filtering into my ears. And I was crying. How could I have killed these living animals? They had not yet lived any semblance of life. What gave me this right? The poor babies. Those creatures would never see their mother's happiness or the love that their mother would distill upon them. Such agony I felt. It was either give up to the bear or satisfy my hunger and hope that the beast below would leave. I decided upon survival. Because of this decision my life has been tormented. The six birds in the nest all screamed as I ate the eggs. I was bitten until my right hand was raw with the veins protruding above the skin. I crawled back to my branch, and when the night came, I lay dejected and empty against the bark, my mind only a sliver of understanding. But my hunger was content. I would live to see another morning.

On the fourth day, with the bear still waiting for my flesh, stomach pains again grew from within, and I could only succumb to that madness. Into the late afternoon, I returned to the hole in the wood and I grabbed two young birds out of the nest. My left hand was now ripped from the repeated pecking of beaks against the skin. There was terror from the remaining creatures as I scooped those beautiful children and brought them to my branch. The mother bird flew into the sky and attacked me, biting into my cheek and removing chunks of meat from the bridge of my nose as its babies twitched in the palm of my left hand. Such sorrow I experienced, procrastinating, and in the end I fell into remorse again. When night was present, my hunger gone, my thirst also less visible, the blood quenching that desire, I fell into a coma of agony. But I survived to see the sun rise; the bear waiting at the trunk of the tree, laying upon the forest floor, its limbs loose and ready for my appearance. Would I last another day? Would the bear retreat? I had to devise a plan. I was too hungry and thirsty to stay, and my body ached from distorted idleness. I decided upon leaving. The four birds were to be incorporated into my idea. In the afternoon, when the bear was less able, I snuck back to the nest of the flying creatures, and seeing the mother and her three children singing

with their heads tilted, I reached in with both hands, strangling each bird, and breaking their thin necks with the twitch of my fingers. They would be used for sacrifice. The baby birds I clenched in one hand and the mother I placed into my jean pocket, her blue wing hanging limp outside the opening. I climbed down the tree until the bear was visible, but still out of range from its claws. The roaring tormented my thoughts as the beast saw me dangling from the first appendage that I had climbed upon three days before. The desire I saw in its eyes while it shook the tree, such determination, and I knew then that it might succeed. If I was not saved by the birds, then just death, my bones crunched and broken, the tiny mystical creatures eating my remaining spots of flesh until only my white tunic lay strewn upon the dirt and the grass.

The bear was standing on its two legs, and I felt the vibration of its strength, the force swaying my body, almost causing me to be knocked loose from the branch. Saliva sputtered out of the beast's mouth, and there was anger in its movements; it clenched onto the tree and pulled its body upward. I had not foreseen this. Its claw was only inches away from my face, its body hugging the bark allowing a greater reach available. My lungs were sore as screaming dominated my vocals, my throat dry and chapped with the repetition. Should I climb higher? Should I jump to the ground and run? Instead I threw the baby birds at its face, their crumpled bodies flapping against the bear's nose and one hitting his left eye. The bear dropped to the ground and sniffed the dead creatures. It turned to me and growled, motioning that I was still the main feast, and it then flipped the birds into its mouth and ate the three creatures. It was unsatisfied. The shaking of the tree began again. What could I do? I would have to run. This was my last choice. Even though I would be caught, the bear being so much faster than me, I had no avenues left. If I was not caught there was still nowhere to hide. Time slowed, and the seconds that flowed by before could now be counted. The decision was final. I removed my red shirt and placed the mother bird in the centre, rolling the two parallel ends into cylinders and then tying the material together with the creature in the middle. When the bear became resourceful and had scaled the bark of the tree base, I flung my shirt into the forest, with as much strength possible, but fate was not tricked. It hit the second tree to the right and dropped into a bush below. The beast saw the movement, and walked to the object

to investigate. As it was distracted by the shirt and moved in that direction, searching with its nose and then clawing the material to remove the bird inside, I jumped from the branch, rolling in the vegetation, and then I was running, darting between trees and over shrubs and upended roots. The roaring was growing distant, and then I was startled as the sound emanated from close behind, and my legs were burning, and I passed my hut, noticing the destruction of the camp, and down the decline I ran. But to where? What direction? The bear was chasing me. Where could I go? There were no trees here. I heard the river in the distance, filtered from the roar of the beast as it followed my scent. The water was then close, the bear only a few steps behind, and with its claws scorching into the skin of my back, I fell into the raging waters, the coldness dimming the heat of my wound. I drifted with the rapids, my head bobbing in and out, my body banging into rocks and swirling in forward circles until dizziness and the sputtering of liquid caused my breathing to fluctuate; I was only able to draw in air when my head surfaced. The bear jumped into the water after me, but the torrents were too strong and it settled back onto the bank. When it was far behind and had given up the chase from the river's edge, its roaring became faint and then stopped.

But now another danger presented itself. And the pain of that danger was being felt as my body was flung about in a multitude of directions. I cascaded down the river, struggling to gain independence, to find a boulder to grasp onto or the shore as I came within range around a bend; maybe an overhanging branch to snag or even a floating log for relief. There was no luck forthcoming. It was hard just to acquire air. The skin upon my chest was adorned with scrapes and cuts and the top layer of my left nipple was sliced off as I was dragged over a hill of rocks. The claw marks on my shoulder blades became indistinguishable as other tears and markings added to the torn skin. After many miles of drifting, the water settled and opened into a lake, the flow becoming calm and subtle. The motion had slowed and I was now unable to sustain my weight. I began to sink. I had no energy remaining. The pain was too much. My arms flapped between the air and the water and my legs kicked about, trying to propel my body to safety. I retained swallows of water, and there was sputtering and coughing. Behind me a log came twirling in the rapids, and I tried to grasp the cylinder of wood, but its force was too strong, and it changed direction and hit my right shoulder with

such speed that all my strength left. The struggles had won. My body sank to the river bottom. And I could feel the polluted liquid filling into my lungs. Was this the end? Was it all for vain? I crouched my body into a ball, resting my hamstrings on my calf muscles and then I sprung upward, my limbs flapping in the resistance. I had resurfaced. I used my left arm to direct my body to the shore, sinking once more in my attempts, and then I was on the sand, the pebbles resting on my face, my head sunk in an inch of mud, the reeds bent and hidden below my legs. Is that Toady? Are you alive Toady? I lost consciousness staring at a frog; its croaking silenced my thoughts.

This is the end. I can hear the footsteps squeaking upon the tiles, and the distant voices, the clarity of their search, the flapping of white robes, the white canvas shoes passing by. It will finish soon. And my death also? I can only shake at such thoughts. My head rests against the tiled floor, a wave of light revealing my face, the scar visible with the misaligned skin crumpled into a thin valley, my eyes puffy with darkened creases layered beneath, and my lips twisted and bending in a frown of laughter. Now I can see their shadows through the crack under the door; they are within view and then they sputter away. It is all dark. Light overcomes that darkness. But it is just repeated. Should I give up? They will discover my hiding spot. Escape is not possible twice. Maybe they think I am already gone. There is brightness everywhere. I am safe for a while.

After resting for two days, eating raw frog flesh and captured crayfish, filling my thirst with river water, and sleeping by the shore of the lake, I then traveled from the park and into the city. During the first night before my departure, I found strewn articles of clothing, a blue shirt with a collar discovered by a bench covered in newspaper, a man sleeping beneath, and two discarded socks laying adjacent to a used syringe by a cluster of thorn bushes. My body was now protected, the torn skin and bruises hidden. The rip in my jeans, I sowed back together with a weed and the tip of the needle. I cleaned my face, picking the shrubs and twigs and clumps of mud from my beard and removing the patches of dirt from my cheeks and the dried blood around my wound. I was able to find a comb by the sleeping man, and I brushed my hair, parting it on the left side. I felt elegant, while retaining the knowledge that I had become a transient. The city would now acquire me. And I would survive in the chaos,

my hunger relinquished from scrapings of food, discarded by park citizens and from shelters, and my thirst filled by the river and from flop houses giving out soup and coffee and tea. Flourescent signs, billboards, skyscrapers, fast food restaurants, zombies, flashing advertisements, automobiles, carbon dioxide, sulphur, coughing, conversing, horns honking, yelling and screaming, laughter, people watching the displays of tv's through store front windows, homeless entities begging for money, some hoping for food and water, most desiring mind drainers: malt and beer and wine, and drugs and glue and aerosol cans, trying to dim thoughts and allow time to run away, this is what I saw. My first hour upon the city, and these were my perceptions. I slept in a warm bed that night, and inside the building, a place for the underprivileged of society to attain life necessities, there was madness floating about. For one moment it almost captured my mind, but I ducked and it flew into the man beside me; there was such screaming and his mouth bubbled out fountains of foam. When he was quiet and asleep, the madness snuck away and entered another. This continued into the morning hours. I lay awake with tears falling from my eyes. Two weeks later I was to become the victim. If only I had stayed in the wilderness: lost in happiness, a forest of giant plants, the tiny mystical creatures, all my friends, my best pal Toady, the river and the hut, the quietness, the clean air, the singing birds, the solitude, my dishes of stews and bubbling animal soup, such peace and tranquility. And now in the city: people lost in emptiness, a forest of concrete and steel, the demented homeless creatures, all the zombies, my comb, the road and the shelter, the chaos, the polluted air, the laughing insane people, the screaming, my half-eaten hamburgers and cartons of sour milk, such madness and anger.

They are still searching. There is time available. The flashing red light above has slowed. Only two letters blink with the delay: SO. And blink: SO. And: SO. And. SO. My story will continue until I am found, until the animals, the people silence my tongue, and I am immobilized, carried away and tortured, and I become an unknown, no identity or history or past. Nothing. It was hours ago that I revealed my first name. And I never wanted to disclose my full identity. But it is my last name that must be known. When I discovered my parent's secret, all the pieces of my life fit together. I was living in a facade, unsure of what was right or wrong. All along it was on the edge of my thoughts. I was unable to reach deep

into my conscious. I was not strong enough. Everything came together one day. After working an evening shift, I wandered the empty streets, a similar occurrence that would happen the night before my awakening in the wilderness years later, and it was during my walk that I was attacked and robbed. Two derelicts beat me over the head with an iron bar. They stole my McD's id and the five dollars in my wallet and also my health card. Upon waking with a throbbing headache, my scalp only bruised, it was then that the context of my life fit together. My surname was but one entity that I should have discovered in childhood. I was called Rupert Allen. I'm sure you are wondering the significance of such a normal last name: Allen. What could it mean? What is the real truth? It is truth that I must also describe. But only later if there is time. Is there something hidden in Allen? Why did I not reveal it earlier? I was fooled for a long, long time. When I was beaten, when my memories became distorted upon awakening, everything was then real. Rupert Allen. Yes, it now made sense. I was shocked by the revelation. But it was too obvious. There was no agony associated with this knowledge. It was just a misplacement of my origins, of who I was. A burden was lifted. I was even able to hold my head up high, the confidence of my existence was comforting. Then I was attacked again. And on the same night. Under the same streetlights. By two different criminals. They used a baseball bat. My wallet was taken. I did not regain sight upon the street. Back to my surname again: Allen. And about my parents, their real identities. Are those footsteps I hear? With my head against the floor, I am able to see six sets of shadows, and they are walking toward my door. I am sorry. I will not finish the story. It looks like this is the end. I must say goodbye. They are but standing there, only their arms are swaying, and I hear conversing. They do know my whereabouts. They are acknowledging, the shadows of spheres are overlaying the thin shadows. They are nodding their heads. Well goodbye. Goodbye. Are they jiggling the handle? What do they want with me? Please leave me alone. You must go. They will discover us. Run. You can only run. They are turning the handle. I can see the knob twisting. No, wait. It's the door across from mine. They are examining the room, and I hear the grenades, and there is machine guns firing, and screaming. Are they finished? They have killed someone else. Thank you God. They are gone again. And I smell sulphur and burning flesh, and smoke is shrouding the crevice under my door and seeping

into my room. There is time remaining.

I have lost my thoughts. I think I was describing my re-emergence into society. My hours spent drifting along the streets, begging for money and food, receiving insults and bruises from pestered society-individuals, people with expensive suits and skirts, gold chains hanging around necks, diamond rings, and even emerald money clips. My demeanor became ragged and my intelligence that I regained, now dissipated with the struggles I had to overcome, and there was no retainment of the happiness I had acquired from living within the forest. I was now a city person. My third bout of agony, this did not just happen in one episode, it was days and days of incessant torture, the men and the women, my perceptions of the environment, and the poor children and the old people, such treatment, and still unknown to the tricks and the games played against them. What was this craziness? And so I would wander about, sometimes dragged by hungry dogs into alleys where groups were gathered in wait and need and hope, and other times beaten by young gangs of disillusioned teenagers, their coats deckled with absurd images, their fathers in motorcycle cults, fighting for territory, like grade school children throwing fists over the use of a swing. And this was real. All of this. But how? Who was responsible? It was then that I understood. With human nature, our excuses, our reference to two simple words—good and evil—the meaning that is acknowledged from these letters, and the rebellion into those blending sounds combined by structure, by a template, that is how it was all tightened in looseness. Not for creating and growing in objectivity, but for wasting, for taking. The people from our past had caused this recklessness. All these bits of societies and cultures thrown together into what the proceeders' thought truth was. But knowing that it was unattainable. And yet satisfied that they had discovered the secret. Such a contradiction. The mass of people followed what these proceeders' declared as right, as truth. There was but no choice. It felt wrong. We became disciples. We fought these decisions that we ourselves had made: complaining and fighting, and yet still living under that hierarchy while we complained. These governments, these businesses, these rulers, where did these proceeders' obtain this understanding. It was our History. The past proceeders'. This was the influence. This question popped into my mind: What if these people were wrong? I shuddered at such a thought. But I knew it was true. And

that was the only truth that really existed. And so I had established what my promise would consist of. I would only have to set the plan in motion. This was not to happen. It was two weeks since I emerged from the river, the Spring now fighting with the Summer, the mystical creatures becoming colourful, butterflies fluttering around exhaust pipes, the heat and humidity bringing forth skimpy articles of clothing, shorts and tight tops and bare chests and swimming trunks floating in lakes with foam cups and pop cans. I was staying in the Salvation Army for another night, dodging the flying shades of madness, splattered with saliva from the coughing sick people, and it was one moment that I felt quietness, that I imagined that I was laying in the sun again, it was that one moment that I became unaware of my surroundings, and then it all filtered back, and it was then that the madness descended, the third bout of agony transpired and I was overtaken, immobilized in paralysis. I did not climb onto the next plateau, but instead fell from the top and plunged into a never ending abyss of darkness. I was discovered for the second time. And here I am, trying to escape and also to hide. I have failed with my promise.

My last name. I will unveil the significance. I am Rupert Allen. And I have descended from aliens. Do you see: Allen, Alien. So very similar. It becomes a relief; does it not? When I was wandering about on my way home from work, and after I was beaten, and this revelation came to be, I felt such terror. But I thought about the meaning, and then I was filled with joy. That is how I discovered that my parents were aliens. I continued home elevated, hoping my parents would be excited with my acquiring of this knowledge, and then I was beaten with the baseball bat. They thought I was insane when I awoke, talking about being an alien, and my parents as aliens, and my relatives as aliens, and their family tree, those people also aliens. Because of this I was sent to a mental hospital. After a few years I escaped. And while I was walking down the street, I was beaten for the third time. When darkness descended upon my vision, I saw a bright light. Then I remember gaining consciousness in the wilderness, with a cracked forehead, an unbuckled straight-jacket, and a pair of jeans. I was re-captured in the Salvation Army, and brought back. Now they are again searching for me. I am hiding in a broom closet. This document I have written is finished. I will hide it behind the clutter on the top shelf. You know what to do? I have failed

myself. There will be others. And some will be crazy. Let us hope not. Farewell. I have been found. If only my screaming Something.