

The Sharp Edges of Everything

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed.

Signature:

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With the guide

I live in the tunnels underneath Cape Town.

They are round halls of brown brick, they convey the sad silent water from the mountain, they are the pitch-black underbelly of this part of civilisation. Like all places, they are cold, but at least they are still and you can breathe and you can sometimes unfasten time from yourself. In the city-mountainside suburb of Vredehoek, there is a utility hole behind some houses in a service alleyway. If you lift its cover, if you climb down the rungs of steel built into the wall, if you walk a few steps downstream, you will reach the platform where I sleep and where I keep the things that I use. You might remember the one.

Everything is anywhere to experience, and though it will wreck you and grind you through fever there is something to be desired in it.

I brought with me into the struggle a profound hatred which every day was renewed by the spectacle of this society where everything is base, everything is equivocal, everything is ugly, where everything is an impediment to the outflow of human passions, to the generous impulses of the heart, to the free flight of thought.

Émile Henry

It took Henry two months to set up the factory. Most of that time was spent waiting, for documents from lawyers, for safety clearances, for the arrival of the machinery, some new, some borrowed from the factory in Jo'burg, some returning from repairs after they shorted during load shedding - each pause giving him time to feel the weight of what he owed his father and what his family would lose if he screwed it all up. When he was not stressed, Henry thought that his boredom then was rooted in his waiting, in the fact that his friends had fuller full-time jobs which made them unavailable during the day and deflated or overbearing at night. He had found himself looking forward to weekends despite his lack of commitments during the week.

When his boredom remained the same once he got his modest assembly line going, after the uncomfortable job interviews and the equipment's teething issues, he came to the realisation that he had been focusing all his energy on work. There was more to life in a new place than seeing tired friends for beers after work and standing in an office watching people work for you through venetian blinds. He needed a girlfriend.

Any night out, Henry would park his car a few blocks away from the club or the restaurant where he would meet his friends, disregarding the person asking for spare change as he stepped out, begrudgingly nodding to the car guard who would collect money for being in the general vicinity of his car for the duration of his night. This night, like the others, he stood in the crowd-queue to the bar, preparing himself to make the order and pay the money as

quickly as possible. The music was loud and would only be enjoyable if he had his drink and also the three he was getting for friends this round. The first two hours were for drinking. So very few people were attractive, maybe none, but he recognised those who were generally considered attractive and recalled the prescribed path out of romantic solitude.

“I’m Henry. Nice to meet you.”

“Hi! I’m Henry. Do you want to have a conversation?”

“No, nobody calls me Hen. What’s your name?”

“Nice to meet you. I just moved here from Jo’burg so I’m trying to meet new people.”

“I’m a business owner - I came down here to set up a local branch of the family company. We make solar geysers.”

“I just moved down to Cape Town to start up a family business.”

“Henry. No; Henry. Hen-ry. Can we move somewhere with less noise?”

“Oh god yeah it’s nicer here for sure. I mean, Jo’burg still feels like home, but this side of the country is better looking and better run.”

“Totally nice to have a job that makes money and helps the environment, for sure.”

“You said you were a designer? Oh, advertising? That’s cool. What sort of stuff do you do?”

“Yeah it’s weird for Jo’burgers, coming down here. I’m still trying to get used to this whole outdoor, go-on-hikes, beaches-with-freezing-water thing. I think I still prefer the swimming pool at the gym, but eventually I’ll manage to kill off the Jo’burg in me.”

“Well we specialise in stainless steel ones so they’re relatively expensive, but they’re very high quality. Some of our customers jokingly call them the Rolls Royce of geysers.”

“How is that? I always kinda liked the idea of being a journalist. Freelancing must be tough, I imagine.”

“You’re a curator? What does that involve?”

“It’s a niche market. We do an especially good welding job that allows us to use stainless steel in a way that other places don’t seem to manage. So basically we’ve got a monopoly.”

“Yeah, because there’s less crime in Cape Town. The government’s better.”

“Well my dad’s put a huge chunk of his money into it, basically. Kind of a sign of good faith.”

“Yeah I love that show. I had a huge phase of British quiz shows lately. Stephen Fry is awesome.”

“An architect hey? I’ve got an architect friend in Cape Town; Chris Longden?”

“I’ve got a few friends I’m here with now and I spent quite a bit of time down here as a kid but it’s basically a fresh start.”

At the end of the night he didn’t want to kiss the girl, but he gave it a try, and it was either no good or he got told something he was sure both of them were aware the other knew was just an excuse. And he didn’t blame her and a part of him was relieved that he didn’t have to go through with it, though a part of him wondered what was going wrong.

As often as not, this was the most exciting part of his week.

He had spent four months in Cape Town before he was thoroughly bored and exhausted by it. There was far more demand for stainless steel solar geysers than he would be able to



meet anytime soon, but the stability that gave him made things worse. He found himself phoning his father under the pretence that they shouldn't lose touch - now that they lived in different towns - but his father's conversation was just a more in-depth and dreary version of the one Henry pitched to women, aside from occasional anxious questions about how things were running at the factory, and regular complaints about his wife's family. Henry missed his brother and they talked weekly. Jamie was deep into an Honour's degree in economics and already looking into job prospects, unsure but hopeful. Henry felt more enthusiastic about his brother's progress than his own.

It was on a Tuesday after a work day full of mundane phone calls and faxes and papers that Henry called up his brother on the phone.

"If you're having such a bleak time over there you should call up Ashley," Jamie said.

"Who?"

"Ashley you were mates with when you were laities."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Jamie shouted across the house, "Hey ol' man! Ol' man! Dad! What was the name of that little kid Ennie used to hang out with as a kid and we went on those beach trips together and that. - I'm talking about a chick. - You sure?" A few seconds later Jamie moved his mouth back over the receiver. "Her name is Charlie. Charlie Green."

"You're fucking with me."

"Naught. You had a mate who was a chick and you were born on the same day as her and you grew up together, and we used to play together all the time until she moved down there. Jassus big guy, you need to do something about your memory."

"Well I'm looking up 'Charlie Green' in Cape Town right now and I'm just getting a bunch of okes."

"You've been looking for about ten seconds."

"Oh, here we go. Looks like she's done some work for a children's NGO. There's a little write-up and a picture. You should have a look at her."

"Rocket?"

"I don't know you'd call her a rocket but she's definitely good-looking."

"Well call her up, queer. See what's cracking with Miss Green."

“I mean, I don’t even remember her.”

“She’ll remember you. Either way it doesn’t look like you’re swimming in options there Ennie, so you should get off your arse and try your luck.” Henry’s brother had a way of putting things.

As far as my purely personal preferences went I would have liked to join the Anarchists.

George Orwell

Henry had never been to the suburb of Observatory before, so he was surprised when, thinking himself lost, he found himself facing The Shap. In the middle of a line of restaurants on either side of Lower Main Road, there was a window storefront with the word SHOP printed off-centre on a window - with a red A painted in the O; SH<sup>A</sup>P, visible through the group of smokers sitting on the sidewalk tables. Being on time did not relieve his meeting anxiety.

Henry peeped inward at what appeared just to be a bustling and overadorned café-bookshop, before stepping inside.

“Welcome!” the lady behind the counter at his right said. The place was full of people, many in their late-twenties, like him, but he couldn’t see anyone who looked like the girl he had grown up with. As he tried to conjure in his mind the few photos he had seen of her online, he wondered what to expect and why she’d asked that they meet here, in an ‘anarchist infoshop’. He stifled a smirk.

Once he was sure that he did not recognise her anywhere, he idled against a barstool, looking at the baked goods on display and then the dolls hanging from the roof at the back as he overheard a conversation over the countertop. Two people were telling the wide-eyed black-clad lady behind the counter - they called her Shamani - about the squat they had lived in for six years in Italy.

“It was a usual story for us,” the first woman said, “They could not get away with closing us down for as long as the whole community supported us and we could mobilise people against evictions. But they eventually found a way to poison our relationship with our

neighbours, then they smashed our wall and raided us.”

“It was really something wonderful, really,” the other said, in a thicker Italian accent. “We were able to do so much because we did not *have* to do so much. Everybody else they spend their lives working. You go to work half the day, you come home and spend time to unwind from the work, if you are not answering email or working late or whatever online bullshit you doing. You sleep to recover for the work, and on the weekend you take the leisure and spend money to keep up with the world, so you have to go do more work.” She looked at a badge that she took out of a jar on the counter. “The post-leftists are right about work. Instead we were throwing a party one time per month for money. We ran a huge community garden, but *huge* hey, it was six...”

Despite his general interest in the country of his father’s heritage, Henry’s nerves unfocused his attention and his eyes and thoughts trailed off to more of the shop. There were no empty bits of wall, there was no dead space, there were posters and pictures and scribblings and trinkets, all ethical or political in theme, all different but alive in the mishmash, growing over time, like multicoloured lichen. The long wall on the right side was home to a large mural of a black armoured train that flew the Jolly Roger and was emblazoned with Cyrillic text. In a painted-in plaque there were the words “FREE COMBAT DRUZHINA - the train battalion of the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine, in the seven-million strong anarchist Free Territory - 1918”. The train carriages were big enough that paintings were hung against them, for sale, apparently in support of local artists. The mural itself was lined with wheatpasted posters of people, each with their name, the times and places they had affected the world, and one sentence on something they had done. Henry recognised none of them, but noticed his first name on one of the posters -

*Émile Henry - raised in a liberal aristocratic environment, he became an intellectual anarchist of the propaganda of the deed era, known for blowing up a restaurant which he saw as a representation of the bourgeoisie itself, and is considered by some to be the first terrorist of modern times. “There are no innocent bourgeois,” he stated at the trial where he was sentenced to the guillotine.*

Henry was uninterested by this obscure history itself, but mused at the different histories people held, how people in Cape Town could be working from a world that remembered so

differently, and why exactly anarchists would promote this individual. It was unusual for him to see a 'Henry' of any sort who was famous. Aside from British monarchs, and Ford, he knew none. He did not like his name.

\* \*

I will walk through your life without you, and one day you will see everything. When I like, I will be your guide to the gateway; a floating fluid assemblage of potential parts of you, parts that usually inhabit the margins of your mind. You keep me there; the distance suits us both.

You might find the gateway searching the world for a self you like, slowly, afraid with each time you fail that no such self exists.

You might find the gateway in your love for a woman you have just met, when you see how everything is out to get her.

You might find the gateway in your own ailing memory.

Everything is coming and you are not ready.

\* \*

Henry checked the time on his phone. 3.08. He would wait until she was there to order a drink. He loved books - the ones he loved, anyway, so he moved to inspect the bookshelf meanwhile. Though most of the crowd was bohemian, there were two groups at the back of the shop with distinct looks - one was made up of solely black people wearing a lot of black, and the other people who looked queer. There were also a handful of people whom he would otherwise assume were bergies. These groups were at home and sticking out - they seemed like frontier gangs in a tavern.

Henry had not seen shelf section titles like these before. Radical politics, anarchy, earth and animal liberation, black consciousness and black anarchism, queer anarchism,

anarchafeminism, ability, and “the prickly edges” - apparently where the *real* strange books were. In general the books were unfamiliar besides the ones in the philosophy section, where he found himself gravitating for comfort. He picked off a book he had already read - Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo* - and stared at the cover but did not open it or read the back.

“Eyo!”

Henry turned to the voice at the door - one of two mid-twenties men at the door, apparently homeless, wearing blankets as capes and red bandanas with awkwardly-cut eyeholes as masks.

“Waaaaiii! You guys going to be fighting badguys today?” the other said, smiling.

“Not today, Garth,” Shamani replied, smiling. “Not with hand-to-hand combat at least!”

“Let us know if you need our services! Here; take our card.”

Garth handed her a piece of paper over the counter.

“You got any stuff past the sell-by date?”

“Na Garth, sorry.”

“No money?” the other one asked.

“Sorry Liam. We’re completely strapped for spare cash.”

Then a woman walked in past them and was handed what Henry assumed was another card. Henry recognised her; the wavy dirty-blonde hair, with two thin braids hanging down the left side of her head, was the same as the few photos he had found online, as were her round head and green eyes. She was tall, not much shorter than him, and wore a plain lime-coloured t-shirt and jeans with too many bangles of too many different types on both arms. She was cute.

“Twin!” she said, as soon as she saw him.

“Charlie,” he smiled. “How are you?”

“Good! Busy! Let’s get a seat and get started, I can’t stay very long but I want to squeeze as much of you out as I can.”

“Oh. Alright.”

“Can I get you a juice? Our juices are good.”

“Our? Yeah a juice sounds good.”

“Sham, Alex, can one of you please put together a juice and a cap for us? And get somebody to bring it over?”

“Sure,” Alex said. Henry had hardly noticed the gangly white guy in the plain white t-shirt and jeans behind the counter.

Charlie led Henry to the only empty couch in the place, and slapped it to indicate that he sit, then went to the back of the shop and returned with a fold-out chair and sat across from him. She leaned forward smiling and put her hand on his and looked him in the eyes.

“How are you?”

“I’m alright. Figuring out Cape Town.”

She kept looking at him.

“My place in Jo’burg got robbed, six months ago now, I guess, already - basically I woke up with a gun in my face, it wasn’t pleasant. Being a student wasn’t really working out for me so I decided finally to cave in to the ol’ man and get set up over here with one of his factories.”

“What were you studying?” Charlie raised her voice to be heard - the queer group had started singing along with a song that had come on over the shop speakers.

“Philosophy mostly. I had this supervisor who spent a lot of time studying philosophical texts for their literary and dramatic devices. I did a lot of Plato, that was my thing. I like thinking about how the way you say things beyond expressing their basic content affects other people.”

“But you liked philosophy,” she said, taking the cappuccino that Alex handed her with a silent smile. Henry noticed that Alex’s nails were painted a dark purple-grey.

“Well, I figured I could just keep doing it in my own time. You don’t need classes to read interesting things and mull them over. So that’s the plan.” Henry realised he had not thought seriously about philosophy in months.

“I said ‘our’ because I’m a part of the collective that maintains this space.” Charlie’s direct smile expressed that she owned her words.

“No shit. What’s the story?” Henry nodded lightly in a circular motion to indicate that he meant “with this place”.

“We’re an alternative social space for people by people who try to live anarchist values.”

“I guess this is the part where I own up to not being a hundred percent sure what you’re talking about when you say ‘anarchist’”.

“Anarchists are complicated. Basically we lure people we know into our infoshops and pretend to get to know them and make friends so that we can discreetly kill them off and eat

them. Loads of us are vegan and it's a good way to get protein."

"Oh, then I'm an anarchist too. Isn't everyone?"

A low growling voice came from the entrance behind Henry and he turned with many others to see the speaker.

"Hey! Hey! Got any particle accelerators? Hey!"

The man at the door was in a robe and hiking boots. His hair was long and a patchy brown-grey and he seemed to have a sore on his neck covered inadequately by a rag-scarf. In contrast to all this he had a brand new set of headphones over an ear, the other resting against his temple, the cable heading into one of the robe pockets. A pungent smell of urine had wafted into the shop.

"Sorry Daniel," Shamani replied, "we don't have any of those."

"No particle accelerators?"

"No Daniel, sorry."

"Can I have one of those treats then?"

"Sorry Daniel, we have to sell these. They're fifteen rand."

"Do you have seven rand for me so I can buy some cigarettes?"

"Sorry Daniel, I don't have any spare money on me now."

"Nobody got seven rand?" he asked the people looking at him. No-one gave him anything, and he turned vaguely in the direction of Henry and Charlie. "Do you have five cents?"

Charlie got up and handed him something. Daniel nodded in acknowledgement and shuffled out of the doorway, wheezing.

Henry uncrinkled his nose once Charlie sat back down.

"You know, they say you shouldn't give money to bergies. Better to go with charities that are going to help get them out of poverty, instead of helping to sustain their situation."

As Charlie laughed the attention of the shop turned again to a new person at the entrance - a young woman with an oval face and highlighted platinum blonde hair in mascara and teal lipstick, wearing a tight tiger-striped tailed-and-eared hooded one piece, and holding a small pile of newspapers. Around her neck was a poster on a string, saying



INDEPENDENT ANARCHIST  
NEWSPAPER  
COLONIALISM EDITION  
R10-R20 ACCORDING TO MEANS

“Hello dears,” she said to Charlie and Henry and the storepeople in general, smiling and heading behind the counter to put money in the cashbox. “Is this him?”

Henry rose to shake her hand, enjoying his luck. She was stunning - her svelte figure was clear under the tiger suit, and her face was right out of a magazine.

“Henry.”

“Will! Nice to meet you! Welcome to our abode!”

“Thanks.”

“You tell him about the thing?” she asked Charlie.

“Not yet, but I’m going to.”

“Nice. Hopefully see you then,” she said, smiling. Her teal lipstick did not match the rest of her outfit, but this did not affect Henry, whose mind had scrambled just to be able to return conversation to someone so attractive.

Will moved over to and was absorbed by the queer group. Charlie turned back to Henry, who had become more excited for the social possibilities he had through Charlie.

“Will’s our shop’s celebrity,” Charlie said, stretching her legs out and folding one over the other.

“Looks like it. She work here too?”

“Yep. There are fifteen-twenty of us in the Shap collective, keeping the place running.”

“So how do you make money off a fifteen-twenty-way split?”

“We might have that problem if we paid ourselves, but we just do this because we want to.”

“You’re volunteers?”

“That wouldn’t describe us either.”

A sound outside had the shop on their feet. By the time that Henry had turned his head Charlie had run past him and Alex had jumped over the counter and slipped out the door and indicated to the others with an outward palm that they could stay behind.

Once he was standing Henry could see an elderly man kicking Daniel on the ground

across the road. Alex grabbed the man's arms and tried to pull him away; Charlie stood between the man and Daniel. The man thrashed loose, and faced Alex, shouting:

"Do you know who I am?"

Henry saw little more than an unkempt drunkard. Charlie spoke, her voice firm and calm.

"Please stop hurting him."

"This guy comes in here," the man fumed, pointing to the bar across the street, "and stinks up the place, disturbing the customers *every* day - then he swears at us, and you're defending him? Don't fuck with me!"

"Please just leave him alone. You know his situation. Nobody needs to hurt anybody here."

"You don't tell me what to do!" he said, then noticed the faces looking at him from the street and the shop. He grunted and went back into the bar.

Charlie offered to help Daniel up, but he seemed to want to do it on his own. She spoke with him briefly and helped him get his newly-snapped headphones back around his neck, then he nodded and hobbled down the street. Greeted by cheering, Alex returned silently behind the counter, followed by Charlie, who poured herself a glass of water before returning to Henry.

"Sorry about that! Obs is a messy place," she said, bringing down a brown fabric bangle that rested toward her left elbow.

"No - not at all."

"Sure it is - there's a lot of poverty here, a lot of people with drug problems, and the mess that comes from having a capitalist mental institution down the road. And lots of people don't like to deal with Daniel because he represents something scary - an old white man who is categorically down and out."

"I meant for your apology, like don't worry about it. Who was that guy beating up that guy?"

"Oh," she laughed. "The local ward councillor."

Henry's eyes tightened, incredulous.

"What's confusing?" she asked.

"And he's with the DA?"

"That should make it less surprising."

“You’re fucking with me.”

“I’m serious!” She smiled. “Look him up. Vincent O’Malley. DA ward councillor for Obs.” She laughed. “Hang out here a little more and you’ll find that that sort of thing is more normal than you think.”

“Alright, so, uh, you do this just because you like it?” he asked, making conversation.

“Yes,” she looked him directly in the eyes as she spoke, and it seemed to him that she did it to say, *I’m open, I’m sincere, I’m serious; take it seriously*. “we’re living so far as we can in the way we’d like to. Which is not very far, unfortunately.”

Henry looked around at the shop. It was small, but almost every seat was taken.

“How do you guys pay to live?”

“Each of us has her own answer to that question. I work as a freelance bookkeeper and do some other stuff. Will’s a model. Alex takes people on tunnel tours under the city,” Charlie grinned, as if she had let him in on a joke. “Different stuff. Our rent’s low since we overpopulate wherever we stay, and we have easy access to foods because we work with a farming collective, and whatever we buy is already cheap since we avoid animal products and we can do bulk and share.”

“You guys live together?”

“Eight of us who are permanently based in Cape Town have a house here in Obs, and another four of us stay in a house in Gardens. Others do their own thing. Though we manage to share between us despite not all being in the same place. It’ll take you a while before you get the ins and outs. There’s a lot here. Listen,” she rested her hand on his and looked him in the face again, “I’m sorry about today, I can’t actually stay longer, I’ve got a job tonight and I need the money right now. So I want to give you this and invite you to my wedding. It’s this weekend, it’s a whole weekend thing, but you can just come for the ceremony Friday and stay as long as you like. We’re also doing ride shares to get up and down there so feel welcome to do that.”

“Oh. Alright. Shit, I had no idea. Congratulations! Ummm... Oh, right, Madiba Day. I’ll be there. I’m looking forward to meeting your guy.”

“Let’s try hang out before then though, we’ve still got so much to catch up on,” she said, uncrossing her legs and rocking her body to a stand.

“Sure,” Henry said, standing also. “Sounds good!”

Charlie stepped forward and reached out to Henry, held his cheeks in her hands and

smiled at him.

“I’ll send you an SMS after work tonight. And you need to tell me about Jamie! It’s great to have you back, Twin.”

They hugged and she left. Henry sat back down for a moment to soak in the experience he had just had. It had been short, but Charlie had been lovely, and the brevity of their meeting generally kept him safe from having to create conversation. He had the sense that he was glad she had entered his life, though he felt little.

He decided to remain in The Shap a while and take his time finishing his drink. He went over to the bookshelf and took an Orwell book he was not sure he had heard of - *Homage To Catalonia*. He read the back and then went to the counter and bought it, grateful he had enough cash on him - he normally used a card, but the shop did not accept cards. It was surprisingly cheap.

“Enjoy your read! I avoid reading white guys these days but a lot of our people like the book,” Shamani said, handing him his change. “You new here? Stay if you’ve got time, we’re doing a free screening in about forty minutes.”

Henry took the first fifteen minutes to flip through the *Anarchy 101* book that the shop displayed on the counter, hoping for a better idea of whatever Charlie and the space were about, and now more inclined to be sympathetic. He did not know what to think.

Once the shop had been rearranged for the screening, chairs and couches facing a white sheet hanging from the roof, an individual Henry recognised as a high-ranking official of a new opposition party came in, followed by a group of mostly red-bereted men and a woman. The stumpy man had come to light recently as being the head of a faction rallying against their leader, and was considered to be the theoretical backbone to the project of the party, the Economic Freedom Fighters. Henry had never been able to pronounce his name and so had forgotten it.

As if they had come to play a game, the red berets roped the anarchists behind the counter into a conversation about whether Mandela or Mugabe were better leaders. Henry was not the only one who watched the spectacle.

The anarchists, and in particular, Shamani with a furrowed brow, argued that both were

terrible, to the melodramatic and feigned outrage of their visitors, who then spent some time as Mugabe apologists against Mandela. Henry was incredulous - he had never seriously considered that Mandela could be thought a bad leader, and to be presented with two views that plainly held as much was so odd it was unreal. The only time he had heard an argument against Mandela had been from individuals in that large portion of the generation above him that he had grown up around - those whites who had never done much questioning of their ethical and political views, who spoke of the apartheid as 'the good old days' with a silent 'good', who lived unreflectively in mostly-white areas and never associated enough as equals with people who had different opinions that they would challenge theirs. He couldn't remember their argument because it had held so little weight - something about how Mandela was bad because he resorted to terrorism. It probably was not anything more sophisticated than that. The arguments from the anarchists sounded nothing like that, something closer to the opposite.

It didn't make sense. The whole scene. A parliamentarian was hanging out in a café looking to argue with whoever was behind the counter, and the arguments were radically different to what Henry was used to. Yet there was logical progression to their words, and Henry could just barely see the outlines of the paradigms that each side was coming from. They were serious and they were taking it seriously and they arrived at views so different from anything he had been used to. The anarchists in particular seemed intelligent when they weren't outrageous. Shamani's eyes were soft and bright as she spoke. Alex stood back and said nothing.

All of the red-beret group but the parliamentarian Sicelo and his girlfriend, along with most of the rest of the shop, left before the film, which started twenty minutes late. Will tapped Henry on the shoulder and waved a goodbye with a smile on the way out, and Henry responded with the same. He overheard that most of the people who were leaving were anarchists who had seen the film. This left him wondering how he had not heard that there were so many 'anarchists' in the world, and with the impression that many of the films they showed were for people who were new to the place.

The event Henry considered the real event of the night occurred ten minutes before the movie. He was sitting at the counter. Less than a dozen people remained in the shop when someone walked in - Henry learned later that his name was Joshua Dubb, political analyst and the founder and director of an educational NGO in Khayelitsha. When he stepped in there

were amused whispers between the anarchists on shift behind the counter and a general change of atmosphere in the shop. The anarchists were looking at Sicelo - who stopped his conversation the moment he saw Joshua, and was staring dead ahead in intense thought. Henry learned soon after the film that these two were bitter enemies, both having given scathing and deeply personal critiques of each other's political viewpoints, with Sicelo having promised violence the next time he saw Joshua in public. Sicelo spoke with one of the anarchists setting up the projector before cutting to a comment that shot across the room.

“What’s this fucking fascist doing at a film about black consciousness and African nationalist revolution in Africa?”

Joshua did not reply, only smiling, presumably to show that he was not affected by the taunt.

“Fucking piece of shit fascist,” Sicelo continued, firmly planted on the couch he would watch the film from, staring forward, next to the woman he was with, who sat silently. Joshua stood next to Henry at the counter, speaking with one of the anarchists about something shop-related, actively ignoring Sicelo. “We gonna fuck you up boy. Just come to the township. You find yourself in the township we gonna fuck you up you fucking fascist.”

“I’m in the township every day,” Joshua replied.

“If we catch you in the township we’re going to fuck you up boy. Piece of shit.”

And that was it. Joshua sat down on a couch a few metres from Sicelo and were among a handful of people who watched the film that night. As soon as the film ended Sicelo disappeared and Joshua hung about and engaged in a post-film discussion with Alex and the others.

After the film, instead of giving a donation Henry thought to buy another book and start a conversation. He found Shamani stacking the plastic seats that had been spread out across the shop for the film, and as he helped with the job he explained that he wanted to get another book - not a basic introduction but something well-written and sharp and mostly accessible. Shamani smiled and pulled a book off the shelf - *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, by Raul Vaneigem.

“This was the first book I read in radical politics. It’s relatively recent but it’s a classic and it’s still one of the best things I’ve read. But you don’t need to buy it, you can just find it free online or I can email it to you.”

Henry drove home having bought the book anyway. He thought about his day. He thought about Charlie and the wedding and the hint that there was something interesting ahead. In bed later he opened up Orwell's personal account of his time during the Spanish Civil war, *Homage To Catalonia*, and began reading. Some time later he read the line, "I had dropped more or less by chance into the only community of any size in Western Europe where political consciousness and disbelief in capitalism were more normal than their opposites," and decided that it was time he started a journal.

Olivia is the quiet comfort ever present in my being in the world.

I walk in a hard hat, reflector vest, and gum boots - a most effective invisibility suit - squeezing at the dynamo torch in my hand, over the shallow waters through the tunnels. I walk past the loose brick patch of wall that Alex uses to hide explosives and guns, towards the UCT downtown campus, on the way to her. We have shaped our experience in words and numbers and we have spread this imposition across the world; today is Wednesday the twenty-ninth of October. She is in her office.

Our language is broken, it cannot be reformed, it cannot be destroyed in one generation or two. It conceals peculiarity, it reifies time, it founds our alienation and is a pillar of civilisation. It is its own ideology, it mediates our existence, it keeps us from reality. For us, it is only escaped in the delirious peaks of fever. Too much of the communication between us will be trapped in it. Forgive me. I am trapped in it.

From the city campus there is a bus to the main campus that will cost no money, but you must pass for student. The university is rich so buses will run strictly to reified time. From the main campus there is a short walk to her office. Bear with the cold.

The office Olivia uses is empty but the phone in it begins to ring.

“I thought you’d be there, love,” she says, and I imagine that she has a warm smile. “I’m running late today because of the meeting, but I’ll be there soon and we can head up together.”

She rests her hand on my back as we walk from the office to the Rhodes Memorial.

“There’ll be over a hundred of us there forming a core defensive group,” she says, “though only about twenty of us will be based there. A couple of the more dedicated people of the UCT and UWC collectives and Ilrig, then our people from the Shap, the farm, the Khayelitsha group, Good Vibrations, the ELF group from Popeye’s, the serious people from



the extended community, and a few from the nihilist and BC and anti-civ crews, and the internationals.”

“You seem concerned.”

“I do?”

We keep walking.

“We haven’t even started yet and there are already stark cleavages,” she says. “The nihilists. They’re butting heads with the social anarchists. It’s more the people who disagree than any overall incompatibility of their approaches, really.” Sometimes Olivia’s De Waal Drive accent peeked out from behind the one that had been overrun with whiteness and academia; she pronounced ‘really’ as ‘ree-lee’. “At least when you consider the general direction we’re trying to go. You know who I’m talking about. We’ll see. We’re all working with what we have, and we have a lot, considering. I’m glad.”

Deeply grateful for her existence, the mind turns to the explosives in the room carved out of the tunnels, and is not sure that the problems are merely of personality.

It is pleasant to see everyone.

The meeting is huge and uncharacteristically quiet. We feel gravity tugging on our organs. With all these people and despite Olivia’s concerns we find unanimous agreement. The plan will go forward and we will break ground.

There is no such thing as mental illness. It is merely a convenient label for grouping and isolating cases where identification has not occurred properly. Those whom Power can neither govern nor kill, it taxes with madness.

Raoul Vaneigem

After a long day of playing online tower defense games in a shirt and square-toed shoes at work, Henry was looking forward to seeing Charlie. He had been invited to dinner with her mom after Charlie had been unable to meet at any other time in the week. It seemed that she was always fully absorbed in something. Eventually all his workers clocked out, he closed up the place and set burglary alarms, and went to his apartment to shower and change.

Moving through the city to meet Charlie was an experience peculiar enough that Henry would later question whether it had been a dream. Five streets parallel from his own apartment complex on Main Road was another block of flats where Charlie's mother, Emily, lived. He found parking alongside the blacked-out windows of an Adult World after there were no empty bays in the petrol station across the street. The front door was a huge steel gate next to an intercom with at least one apartment's button permanently jammed in; there was always a buzzing sound, and so it was hard to hear what sounded like instructions when he spoke with Emily through it. Once he was through the gate he was immediately in a security buffer room with a large glass door that was cracked like a spider's web. He walked down a fluorescent-lit tortoiseshell-coloured hallway lined with empty glass displays, until the end where there was a staircase and an elevator and a list of occupants on the wall, except the list had moveable letters and most of the names had been jumbled or removed or made to spell new words.

The elevators didn't work, so he took the stairs, until he noticed people getting into one on the first floor and followed behind them. The elevator only went down to the first floor,

they said, so you had to take the stairs to take the elevator. At the sixth floor he got out and smelled the cooking that wafted around; it was something unidentifiable, slightly like chicken or cabbage in some sort of stew, though he suspected it was neither.

Eventually he found 602, and the door was open but there was no-one there to greet him. Inside it was a completely different place.

He was in a corridor with dusty wooden floors, lit mostly by the sun instead of fluorescents, and he walked along it, past empty bedrooms and closed doors until he reached a living room.

Even if he had remembered Emily's face, he would not have recognised her. She was gaunt and pale, with short hair, and had only stark green eyes in common with Charlie. He greeted her with a soft hug and she kissed his cheek and told him that Charlie was just finishing up with some work in the next room. Many thoughts occurred to him at once; of how Charlie seemed the sort to throw you in the deep end; of how the house was furnished and decorated but dusty in the hard-to-reach places, as if they had been there for some time but had never fully moved in; of how little he knew of Charlie. She became fuller in his mind in those moments, less a tool for social upward mobility.

Henry small-talked the way someone might do with the mother of a girl he wants to impress, taking a seat at a dining table while Emily made coffee. She had prepared food and it looked great - she used to be a chef, she said, until she was taking more sick days than not and could not keep the job. He didn't ask; perhaps she assumed he knew. They spoke about his family, Emily telling him how she remembered his mother and father fondly, Henry wondering what her experience of them those years ago had been like, not asking. It was all polite.

Charlie and her bangles stepped into the room and her presence seemed to dispel the bareness of it all - the kitchen counter on one side, the small round table with room for four, the single couch in the middle and the cupboard on the other side. On a shelf in the cupboard was a large white pharmacy packet overflowing with boxes of medications Henry was not familiar with.

They all sat down immediately for the meal.

"This is the best meal I've had in a long time," Henry said, honestly.

"It is? I'm glad to hear it, Ennie," Emily said.

"Does anybody still call you that?" Charlie cut in.

“Only Jamie, but you’re welcome to.”

Emily reached an arm over to rub Charlie’s shoulder.

“Ja. It took me a while to get my vegan food up to scratch.”

“I’m a huge fan,” Henry said. “If it was like this all the time I’d happily become one.”

Henry immediately felt bad. He found it hard to view the world from perspectives he didn’t take seriously, even to the point of being inconsiderate, and was afraid he had been. Still, the meal was brilliant, and looking at Emily you might think her life had been squeezed out into her food. Despite appearances she was cheery and talkative, and they listened to stories of her shenanigans as a chef for much of the dinner. Henry pretended not to notice those moments where she repeated groups of sentences as if she had not just said them.

More coffee after dinner. Coffee seemed always being prepared and offered in that house, a mocha pot always ready on the stove.

Emily told them she was exhausted and that she wanted to lie down for a while. She moved to one of the other rooms, and Charlie put on a lilac hoodie and suggested to Henry she and he step out onto the balcony.

There was little space for them on the long slim balcony lined with potplants, but the view was great. Lion’s Head, all the buildings moving up the mountainside, the ocean on the other side, the dreamy magenta of Cape Town’s sunset - Henry was sure that it was beautiful, though he did not feel it.

Henry moved up to the corner of the balcony at the edge of the building and it opened the vista. Before him was Table Mountain. It was green and bold and possibly significant and Henry began to think for the first time that he was really in Cape Town. He wondered whether it was Charlie’s presence, or a sense of being in a family setting, or some other reason.

Wind rushed past them both towards the ocean.

Charlie leaned her back against the concrete railing, resting on her elbows. Undoubtedly the symbol on her hoodie represented some cause.

“Thanks for inviting me here. And to the wedding,” Henry said. Charlie grinned like the Cheshire Cat, for a moment Henry felt like he remembered her from their childhood. “I’d be interested to hear about Vimbai if you wanna talk about him,” he said, referring to the other name on the invitation.

“A good place to start is to note that Vimbai is not a him. She’s a her,” Charlie smiled.

“Oh. I couldn’t tell from the name. I don’t know any Vimbais. Is that why you asked me not to bring it up with your mom around?”

“Nope! It’s just not that kind of wedding,” Charlie drew out her words, as if she was consciously placing each after the other. “Vimbai’s from Zim - she’s a part of the scene there, and things are tough for her there as a result.”

“Hm,” Henry sounded out. He could tell from the careful way Charlie had spoken that it was something that was not easy for her to talk about. “Alright. You know, I live down the road from here, it’s pretty odd.”

“A part of me hoped you’d moved into your grandmother’s place in Vredehoek.”

“You know that place?”

“Yes, silly. We used to hang out there when you were in town for the first couple years after I moved down here.”

“No shit. I forgot completely.”

She searched his face with her eyes.

“That’s amazing,” she said.

“What is?”

“Everything, I guess.”

“I, uh, I forget a lot,” Henry put on a smile to make light of his words. “I suppose I should mention that my gran passed away over a decade ago. We sold the house. That was even before my mom died.”

“I heard.”

“It’s just my dad’s side of the family left now. And Jamie.”

“That so? Between us we make one family, then! I’ve just got a handful, on my mom’s side only. How’s Jamie?”

“Jamie and I are solid these days - we got really tight around the time our parents got divorced. It’s great. Not that our parents divorced, obviously, but yeah. Though right now I only really speak with him one or two times a week. He finished his BCom and tried his luck on the job market for a few years till he was pretty tired of the instability and the bullshit and the pretending, so he ended up signing up for an Honours degree in the hopes that he could get a leg up on the things making him anxious. But he’s good. Smart kid. He’s a bro, but he’s my brother.”

Ten-year-old Henry lay on his belly on the top bunk, reading *Asterix in Spain* in the room he stayed in when he and his family visited his grandmother in Cape Town.

Charlie would be coming later. This information was how he had kept his eight-year-old brother from pestering him to play together all day; *Ennie, let's go do something outside - Charlie will be here later, Jamie, we can play then.*

Jamie was the second child. He had always been more social and sociable and socialised. He looked forward to Charlie's arrival more than Henry, though the playdate was implicitly theirs. Charlie was an only child. She was more social and sociable but less socialised than Henry.

Henry spent the morning ignoring his brother.

"But we're not allowed!" Charlie protested.

"You came down with us last time," Henry said. He liked to posture around other's insecurities. "And it hasn't rained for a while. Come on, Jamie, help me open."

The three children stood around the utility hole in service alleyway behind the house, the two brothers wielding steel rods that they began to jam under the cover.

"But guys," she whined, "we'll get in trouble!"

The boys managed to lift the cover and lean it against a wall. Henry walked up to Charlie and took her hand, then looked her straight in the face.

"What kind of person are you if you do things just because adults told you, even if you know they are wrong?"

Charlie stared blankly at Henry.

Jamie and a quivering Charlie took a torch and a headlamp and a broom handle down, Henry a large drawstring sack and a blanket. They slowly descended the ladder and walked a

short way downhill to the platform, avoiding the ribbon of water running by their feet. They would play ninja turtles, they would set up a base.

The platform itself was a square area of brick in a cubic hole jutting out of the round tunnels. Once they had arrived, Henry hammered two nails in the wall where the tunnels met the platform hole, and tied a string from one nail to the other, then placed the blanket cover over the string, creating a sheet wall. The blanket was placed on the floor of the platform and a plate was put in the middle and three candles placed on it and lit, and a battery-powered CD player set up in a corner against a wall and played Michael Jackson's album *Dangerous* in the background.

They went exploring together and found some old coins - half- and quarter-cents. They scratched pictures into the walls. Henry and Jamie did not brawl. Then they came back to the platform.

Henry pulled food from the sack - a plastic bag holding most of a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter, a jar of pickles, a jar of olives, a box of mini tomatoes, and a couple of oranges - and they all had a picnic together.

They sat together, with an arm of Henry's over each of them, laughing and joking. Henry would remember his brother's roaring laugh and Charlie's grin for years.

Henry made the warm spring Friday afternoon drive to the wedding alone to ensure that he would be able to leave whenever he liked. The morning had felt endless. He had read the news, amused that Desmond Tutu had been robbed while he was in Qunu giving a memorial speech for the new holiday.

He had only been to a handful of weddings over the most recent years as few of his friends kept to the marriage timeline of his parents' generation. At twenty-nine, however, the vast majority of the people in his high school cohort had not yet married. The times were different. None of them had had same-sex marriages, either - none had even come out.

Henry had brought a sleeping bag and pillow as requested and had mentally prepared to stay the night instead of making the hour-long trip home. It would be easier if he could drink, anyway.

He arrived at the gate of the farm, the property lined on the outside with dozens of cacti. The wooden sign screwed into the short stone entrance wall said *kodu'kana, permaculture farm and alternative school*. The invitation itself had just said 'the farm' - with no address or details. He had asked Charlie how to get there.

He drove slowly along the gravel driveway lined by a wall of plants and flowers up to a parking lot and a farmhouse. The farmhouse itself was a hodgepodge of extensions and elaborations. The far left of the building was in the style of old Cape Dutch architecture, but this had clearly been abandoned for the much larger sections that had been added on, each of which were different from the other, but all of which were painted with images of natural scenery. In the parking lot there were a few cars, a darkly-coloured hippiemobile, and an abandoned car that had been opened up and converted into a garden. Henry felt his usual meeting-anxiety in his stomach.

Two people waited at the brick-archway main entrance to the farmhouse.

"You must be Henry," one said.



“Yeah, how could you tell?”

“I could spot a liberal in a haystack.”

In the moment before Henry processed these words and identified whether what he heard was a joke, he wanted to be able to say that he wasn't a liberal.

“I'm kidding,” the man continued, smiling and reaching out for a handshake. “You're just the only person coming today who I don't already know. Welcome! I'm Mohammed. You can just call me Mo.”

“And I'm Mahlatse. You can just call me Mahlatse. We're part of the organising team and we're also in the Shap collective with Charlie. You're right on time, we can show you through if you like.”

They brought him through what appeared to be a hall-classroom that had been emptied out, aside from a pile of mattresses. They emerged at the back of the farmhouse to a medium-sized clearing that had not been visible from the drive in. There was a pond at the opposite end with two windmill boreholes standing in it. Some of the trees lining the field had hammocks and were occupied, as the grass was with blankets and people, and in the centre of it all there was a large chunky makeshift log table piled with food. There were at least a hundred people, talking, laughing, dancing, with little uniformity of appearance, from people in work shirts and ties to a bearded man in a chainmail skirt. Perhaps the most uniform group was frolicking around the pond naked.

“There's Charlie,” Mohammed said, pointing to the girl with the lime-yellow knee-length dress and a wreath of daisies on her head. Her arms had only one small string bracelet on her right side.

“Twin! You're here,” she smiled, hugging him. “Welcome!”

“You look great.”

“Aw, shucks. This is Vimbai, and this is Stace. After you and Jamie she's my oldest friend.”

Vimbai had the striking features Henry usually associated with Ethiopian women, and wore a coral-white dress of the same sort as Charlie. Her dreadlocks were pulled back by a matching embroidered headband, some locks wrapped individually in multicoloured threads. Stace wore a black lace dress and a navy jacket, and was the most plain-jane-brunette-looking of anyone he had seen there, with a small silver stud in a nostril.

“Hi!” Vimbai said, putting an arm around him and kissing his cheeks, her wooden snail-spiral plugs tapping his chin as she did. Stace greeted him with a hug.

“I’m a lucky girl, aren’t I?” Charlie grinned.

“I’d say so.”

“Sit with us after the ceremony,” Vimbai said.

“Alright, I will.”

A soap bubble the size of a child floated next to them. They all stopped for a moment to watch it pass, as it wobbled and contorted through the air. There was a young woman across the field with a rope and a jar of soap water, making them.

Someone tapped Henry on the shoulder. It was a familiar face, familiar features; a very good-looking skinny man with long white-blonde highlighted hair, in a wine-red baroque t-shirt, jeans and cowboy boots.

“Hey Henry,” he said, “nice to see you again.”

“Hey,” he replied, unsure.

“Ah, really? Nobody’s told you. I told Charlie she should.” They looked at Charlie, who was grinning again. “I’m Will, from the infoshop. With the tiger-suit?”

Henry did not have time to process his thoughts.

“Oh, Will, hi! That’s, it was, it’s nice to see you again.”

Will made an exaggerated grumpy scowl towards Charlie, and then turned back to Henry.

“Come on,” he said, “I’ll show you around. You like the invitation? Charlie seemed to think you should have one. I think you were the only person invited to the wedding.”

“Woah there humans, don’t disappear just yet,” Vimbai said, as Henry started to follow Will. “We’re getting started now now.”

“Okay, later then,” Will said. “Henry, come take a seat with us.”

\* \*

I wake from a rest in the dormitory. Many of us had arrived early to set up the carnival. For the anarchists, it is the last breath of an era.

An empty lain-out blanket in the field awaits me under the sun. Andreia and Hlumelo and Robyn and Marc joined. This is good, it is comfortable.

“You’re back,” I say to Robyn.

“Mhmm, we stuck around after the conference for a couple weeks, to see if we could get involved in the nighttime stuff and learn about how they do things.”

“Success?”

“We’ll see, depends how much if it is useful here - that we’ll have to find out ourselves.”

The photo shoot is about to start, so we leave the conversation there. In my relief, surrounded by warm people, I lull into euphoric thought.

There is consciousness, but it does not exist. Consciousness is not a thing. Philosophers continue to flounder and quarrel on the mind-body problem because they will not comprehend how one thing can be and not be. They are not allowed, they do not allow themselves - they build their world on the impossibility of P and not-P. But this question is at the fundamentals of our perception of everything. It is why we have ethics, why we feel responsibility, it is where and why the symbolic exists, it is our first alienation from direct experience of the world. It separates us from plants.

\* \*

The ceremony was strikingly brief, despite the almost indiscriminate riotous cheering and booing and interruptions running consistently through it. Stace stood up with her back to the lake, with a microphone, Charlie and Vimbai at her sides, facing everyone else, who were mostly sitting on blankets, many of whom had put on party masks for the ceremony.

Throughout the ceremony there was a photographer and a camerawoman recording the event.

“We are gathered here today to witness these two beautiful people get hitched in the eyes of the lord and our masterful state!

“Before us we have two lovely ladies taking a big step; writing their names on a piece of paper that will tie them together via a third party who has no place in anybody’s private lives anyway. If any of you have any objections as to why this marriage should not take place, speak now so that you may be ignored!”

The noise from the crowd burgeoned to a roar and Stace waited a minute before trying to be heard over it.

“Actually, we’ve all signed already - Sizwe said it would be easier if we did it yesterday. So, without further ado; Charlie, do you take Vimbai to be your lawfully tethered wife, to

love, forever and ever, like all the fantastic individuals in your life?”

“I do!”

“And do you, Vimbai, take Charlie as your state-endorsed wife, strong in the knowledge that you are both awesome and will despite your disagreements always share the same terrible taste in hippie shit?”

“I do!”

“Then I now pronounce you wife and bride! Kiss to seal the deal!”

They kissed and there was explosive cheering and aggressive firing of many large confetti poppers while the newly married put a wooden ring on each other’s fingers. Once sense was restored, Stace continued.

“Now it’s time to eat and make merry! Let the party begin!”

More cheering was joined by the starting up of a perky folk band, and most went for the food and drink on the centre table, taking entire trays and punch bowls back with them to the blankets. From his spot on the blanket where he had sat with Will and his friends, Henry stood and watched as logs and small bales of hay like the limbs of scarecrows were placed on and under the cleared table in a way that made the combination look like the head of a sunflower. Then Charlie and Vimbai lit a bale together, and placed it in the centre of it all. The table became a bonfire, and there was more cheering as the band continued to play.

“What’s the story with that punch?” Henry asked Will, motioning towards a large punch bowl with a cardboard picture of a cactus on it and a shot-glass ladle leaning against it.

“Mescaline tea from the San Pedro cactus. Feel free to have or not have any.”

Henry was distracted by the three people on a neighbouring blanket - it seemed that they were casually drawing on each other with a tattoo gun.

“The cacti by the entrance?” he said.

“The cacti by the entrance.”

Henry was intrigued, but felt a prick of anxiety. It was too late for him to make the mental preparations necessary to try a new drug then.

“Need another drink?” Will asked, tucking hair behind his right ear.

“Sure,” he replied, knocking back the last of the jar of wine he had been handed earlier.

“Come along.”

They went to a table by the farmhouse to find nothing that was familiar to Henry - only

two barrels labeled 'gingerbeer' and a line of unlabeled and differently-shaped wine bottles.

"Where d'you get these?" Henry asked.

"The farm crew makes it. They're obsessed with DIY. Which turns out great for everybody else. Plus they're great to have around." Will talked about them with a cloudy-headed affection, almost like a person in love. "You'll never see them waiting around for somebody else to do things for them."

The ginger beer was good.

Once the bonfire was an inferno, Henry noticed that the party had completely ceased to be about Charlie and Vimbai. It developed a fever he could not identify in any specific action among the crowd, but he felt something like desperation building in every gesture. An immediacy. For the moment Henry was content listening to the conversation between Will, Stace and the few other people on their blanket whom he had had been introduced to but whose names he had forgotten. They were talking about two mutual friends who were cycling to Berlin, a couple they adored and who had been important active parts of their collective some months ago.

\* \*

I move to a hammock now that Hlumelo and Robyn are playing music, and, like you, listen to the people around me talking, preferring to watch the world around me with a pre-emptive nostalgia as the last of the day sinks under the horizon. The evening comes over us like an outreaching of threads banding people together. Many of us are happy, and all of us are happier than usual - the space, the moment is good, and not in a way that is upsetting because it feels like the best days of our lives, like it could only be downhill from here. We are a group of people who are relying on each other to do something together, and the future is bright and scary.

\* \*

Charlie and Stace joined up with Henry and Will's group, then Charlie took Henry aside, resting her hand on his arm.

"How are you doing?"

“Good thanks. Congratulations.”

“Has Will shown you around like he said?”

“Not yet. There hasn’t really been time.”

“Let me,” she said, stepping away and holding out her hand.

After flashes of thought, around how he did not usually hold people’s hands, how he was awkwardly unable to interpret handholding with an attractive girl as wholly platonic, how he was to feel about the public declaration of affection Charlie was making and the meaning of his response, Henry took her hand. After he refilled a jar with ginger beer, the pair walked past the bonfire away from the farmhouse towards a thick section of the trees. A short curly-haired muscular man in his mid-thirties walked up to them on the way, dressed in white overalls and with a tattoo of a group of tiny hands reaching out over his collar on the left side of his neck.

“Good job with the marriage.”

“Thanks.”

“Introduce me to your friend.”

“Marc, this is Henry. He’s that friend who was born on the same day in the same hospital.”

“Hi Henry. How come I’ve never seen you before?”

“I’m new in Cape Town. Well, five months now.”

“And what do you do with your life?”

“I make solar geysers.”

“You yourself?”

“Well I’m running a branch of a family company that makes them.”

Marc looked at Charlie, then looked back at Henry.

“Nice to meet you,” he said, already walking away. Charlie and Henry continued towards the trees.

“Don’t mind Marc,” Charlie said, “We’ve got lots going on at the moment and some of us will naturally be wary of new faces at an intimate event like this.”

“It’s alright. It’s interesting. He wasn’t too bad, anyway.”

“Well, he was asking questions he knew the answers to.”

“Ah. So what is all going on at the moment that is so tense?”

“You’ll see soon enough.”

Henry struggled to take the secrecy seriously, especially when he was being interrogated, but he was willing to play along. He tried to ignore how much Marc's presence had affected him.

They arrived at the edge of the clearing and had entered a clump of trees. There was a path lined by small rounded white stones leading to a wooden staircase going up to a wide treehouse platform.

They ascended the stairs to what amounted to a thick layer of wood lined by balustrade - and said hello to the four others who were already up there and were on their way off. It had been built widely enough that thirty people could fit on it, Charlie told Henry, if they felt brave. It was often used as a classroom for the school, with a wall set up on one side where a large blackboard was housed. From the platform most of the farm could be seen. On one side were the fields that led eventually up a line of hills, groups of vegetables, legumes, fruit trees and nut trees mixed in with each other and the landscape, with another windmill borehole and two huge wind-turbines. Over the last few years they had come to use no public water or electricity, and fed their surplus electricity into the national grid. The community - the infoshop collective and farm collective and some of their extensions at the wedding that day - all shared the costs, the harvests, and the decisions. The costs were minimal, and they all needed less money to get by as a result. For many, time was saved, time was 'taken back'. Turning to the building, Henry saw that it was large. Aside from the hall that had been converted to a classroom, there was a warehouse, a greenhouse, and a small grape vine resting on overhead rafters. As she spoke, Henry felt Charlie was trying to introduce him to as much of her day to day experience as possible. She seemed almost overconfident in her assumption that he was interested, but something in her direct engagement with him kept him listening.

The school had twenty-one students, some of whom were children of the anarchists, and the rest of which were kids from the surrounding area whose parents had chosen to have their children go there instead of the local public school, for various reasons. It was an anarchist school that had started out as a small group of homeschoolers, focusing on voluntary learning, avoiding the homogenization of students, and working with critical pedagogies for children. Henry tried to keep up with the language that Charlie used, aware that she was already trying already to make it more accessible for him. It was hard when the context of the

conversation was more removed from his own experience.

This was just one of their projects. They had also opened up a community centre in Khayelitsha in cooperation with an anarchist collective based there - Hlumelo, the person playing the trumpet in earshot, was one of that collective - and there was a collective running a farm-to-plate deli in town, and another running a feminist sex shop next door to that. Charlie spoke happily of the achievements of the farm and elsewhere much like they were her own, though she had made clear that her work had been limited almost entirely to running the infoshop and helping out at the community centre in Khayelitsha. Henry wondered why the farm collective would work so hard to feed people who did not do any of the farming work, despite his general sense that this was how anarchists did things. Henry felt a discomfort almost like anger - that they could live a life with all their basic needs covered, and then also be happy with it. He thought about his father, a man who had been wealthy for the last two decades, who was on antidepressants for almost as much time. He thought about his brother and the anti-anxiety pills he had recently started to take to deal with the pressures of the last year of his degree.

“You’re lucky,” Henry said, and Charlie looked at him with a slightly raised eyebrow. “It seems like you’ve found something you think is worthwhile, and you’ve found it with other people, and you’ve managed to come together around it in a way that cuts through all the bullshit. It seems like you guys are really living, you know. It seems like you’re well-loved. Something about how you were, at the infoshop, and how things have been at the wedding - the way you guys can all take each other’s support for granted, even though you’re different and you even butt heads, while you go out and get things done.”

“I am lucky,” she said, processing his words. “Though you probably haven’t learned to identify our own brand of bullshit yet.”

“I suppose so. Maybe then I’m saying your brand is one of the nicer ones.”

“If you think that, you might want to stick around and see how far this all goes.”

“I’ve... I think I ...” Henry paused, trying to articulate the feeling he had.

“You’ve got some time,” Charlie said. “I’m not going anywhere else, and neither are the rest of us. For us, Cape Town is like a neglected building we could all move into and make into something that is beautiful and for everyone.”



“Occupy: Cape Town?”

Charlie smiled.

“You know, I have a lot of affection for you. You’re a part of what I remember from my earliest years. And you’ve turned out nicely. For a liberal.” She smiled. “I’m really happy you came.”

Before Henry could find a description of himself that kept him safe from the accusation of liberalness or anything else Charlie did not like, she leaned in and kissed his cheek. Her lips were soft, and immediately as she pulled back Henry found himself wishing for another. Charlie looked at him, and leaned in again, kissing his lips lightly. She pulled back again.

“Let’s go back,” she said.

“Okay.”

The pair walked down the wooden staircase of the tree platform and onto the path in the trees. Before they stepped back into the clearing, Henry spoke and they stopped walking.

“I don’t know how to interpret what you just did.”

“Oh? But I told you.”

“Told me what?”

“That I have a lot of affection for you, and that you come from a special time of my life.”

“And being married today, what was that?”

“It was lots of things. I don’t really like explaining things to people when they aren’t just my business. How about this: will you trust me that I wouldn’t put you in a shitty position, and will you not imagine anything I’ve done to be more than it was? If you do that, you’ll learn for yourself the answers to all of your questions in due time.”

“Okay, I’ll do that!” Henry said, smiling with a closed mouth. The back of his brain erupted in tingly prickles at the opportunity to trust someone.

\* \*

Tham joins me on the hammock. We sit together, we are watched. Xolile joins her. I can see the wounds of the people I know, throbbing sacks of coagulated blood, hanging from the body. Tham is hard to see underneath the wounds. Xolile smiles and jokes, he always performs lightness for her, always with the greatest care and gaining the greatest joy from the smallest of lifts in the corners of her lips. Neither Tham nor I say anything. We both find

solace and more sadness in our inclusion today. If we did not have these threads connecting us all, we might be able to die. She is sad also that sometimes she hates Xolile because she loves him and does not want him to suffer with her death. If only we did not care, we could die. Tham can feel everything.

\* \*

The scenery of the field had changed. Someone had set up a jumping castle a little too close to the fire. It was beyond capacity.

Charlie and Henry walked past clumps of people cuddling and shivering and sighing, something he assumed was not unusual for mescaline-takers. Henry had refilled his jar of ginger beer again and was feeling the effects, noticing only then that the jar had around a half-litre capacity.

“Hello everybody! Good evening!”

Someone had begun to talk over a microphone, but it was no-one in the band - they stopped playing music soon after hearing the words. People were looking to the roof of the main building - Henry turned and saw Mahlatse, standing on it, wrapped in a grey blanket over his shoulders.

“Time for a speech, humans.”

Most people who had much control over themselves turned to listen, and others emerged from the building and the trees to join. Henry refilled his drink.

“As is traditional for all the best festivals, there should be a moment for remembrance. I remember when I first joined this collective, eleven years ago. Back then we were only six people. We were hardly a collective back then, just a small affinity group that managed somehow to put in the hours that let us keep the Shap open. We did what anarchists throughout history have done; a lot considering our numbers. I was fortunate enough to see our collective grow. We were so dependent on the outside world back then. When we got the farm, this beautiful farm, we began to feel like we weren't on the back foot.”

Most of the audience was calmly listening or gently writhing through their cactus high.

“I loved that we could provide our community with a stronger example of how we all could live, that we could feed ourselves and others. I loved that people on the outside could

have their questions answered not by listening to our words, but by watching us live.”

As Mahlatse gave names, some people stood up and bowed and others cheered for them.

“I was happy to see our support base grow, when six years ago Lynn, Tina, Hlumelo, and Jaz all got together and started up Popeye’s, and then four years ago Robyn, Shamani, and Tham started Good Vibrations, and when we all got together for the Khayelitsha centre. We’ve come so far from the years where we struggled every month to fill the shifts and pay the rent at the Shap. It’s amazing how some of the right people came together at the right time for the right things to happen and for us to get the right sort of exposure.

“I remember when we broke the barrier of representational and prankster politics and moved into the realm of defining ourselves by how we shaped the world. We made small moves that sank ships and we learned how this country really works along the way.”

In a flicker, Mahlatse glanced in the direction of Henry.

“I think we’re set to overcome some of the problems that destroyed anarchist movements before us. I think we’re one step ahead. Our new gestures will be interesting, and unprecedented in this side of the world. We’re going to set the new example.

“So let’s toast to that privilege and the serendipity it was born from, and let’s make a little utopia tonight, because it’s a special night for all of us.”

Henry did not know what to think of all he’d heard as he saw the girl at the drums break into a roll that transformed into a steady aggressive beat, and everyone exploded in cheering. The beat was joined by the singer, who seemed probably a masculine woman, maybe a feminine man, and an original sort of sound flowed, it felt like it was not Western, maybe African, but it was also punky, jazzy, experimental. Most were standing, dancing, and the field felt small and full and the air became thick.

“This is one of the beautiful things to come out of our community,” Charlie said, grabbing Henry’s arm and pulling him up to dance.

\* \*

As the musical set develops it is repetitive and chant-like. It rocks back and forth in fever and I feel a glint of sameness and warmth from it. Shamani walks by with Marc and Alex. She plucks me from the hammock. I leave Tham with Xolile and a wave. We add logs to the fire and we join Lynn and Mahlatse and other insurrecto-illegalists on the roof.

Olivia is cross-legged on a blanket by the fire. She is contemplative. She sits, staring at the flames. Her presence is comforting.

We all live over the threshold; we live our days quietly and permanently incensed with everything. For the people lost in the dancing below - disordered, rebellious, turbulent and Dionysian, this is a commitment to the creation of ourselves and the world by passing through violence.

We are at ease just to watch and wonder.

You do not realise how much of this you soak up.

\* \*

Henry danced and drank and joined in the eruption of whoops and whistles and cheers when the jumping castle finally caught alight and burned into a sad pile of plastic. The song the band played never seemed to end and the anarchists were tireless. More and more logs were tossed on the fire that grew like a house of flames and soon large groups of people were stripping naked again and jumping into the reservoir. Henry kept with Will and Stace who stood and watched the band. Stace had drunk the cactus tea and was fawning over Will, who seemed to understand it for what it was, while also being wholly giving of his body.

Henry had reached his first limit situation, now existing in a world out of ordinary for him. He perceived the space around him in a detached manner, and a clear fascination with what was happening around him.

It was the mix of candour and ferocity emanating from each of the anarchists, and something else he could not identify, a genuineness, which made him think that regardless of their extreme views there was something to be said for what those views made them as people. He recognised in his discomfort at the nudity when he had arrived not any flaw in the anarchists but his own internalised and unwanted taboos. What surprised him was how quickly it became normal to stand or sit in groups where some were naked. Aside from those moments when he had genitalia in close proximity to his face, he quickly assimilated into the context. He came to feel grateful for the experience, for what it showed him about himself, and what it showed might be possible with the anarchists.

Once he was tired of dancing, he filled his jar again and moved to sit with a group that had formed on a blanket in the front of the band. Will was there with three others, now topless besides the boa draped over his shoulders. In this state it was still not wholly clear what Will's gender was; aside from a slightly more obvious lack of breasts, Will had all the expected features of a slim-fit feminine model. Henry made a concerted effort not to look at Will too much. He would have to get his shit together, Henry told himself - he had never given gender too much thought, despite his awareness that there was more to it than he knew. But Will appeared wholly focused on the band - Henry could see it in the elusive awkwardness somewhere in his stare and his clapping, a distinct kind of engagement with his world than his usual grace. Will seemed consumed by the band and the music. Henry could not tell - he had never had the feeling before.

While the band took a break to fix the strings that had broken on a guitar, Henry summoned the guts to say something to Will.

“You really seem into them.”

“Ja! I love them! Andreia changed my life.” Will smiled without constraint, a smile pretty enough that Henry had to avert his eyes. “I watched this band for the first time about ten years ago as a kid who didn't know a thing about gender, didn't know how to articulate any of my own feelings about my own sense of what I was. And there was Andreia. They tore their vocal chords up in front of a mic in front of maybe a hundred people that night. And for the first time I thought, maybe there is more than boys and girls.”

“That's pretty awesome.”

“Ended up spending a lot of time in the scene. It wasn't long before I realised that Andreia couldn't just be theirselves without the group of people who embraced them. That community was the anarcho-kids and the radicals that hung around them. So I spent more time with them, learned a lot about myself. And decided I wanted this community to be as huge as it could be - it's the only one I know that I really understand to be inclusive.”

“I'm starting to get that impression. Maybe you can be other people's Andreias.”

Will smiled again and waved Henry along to sit down with him and a few of his friends to watch the band as it was starting up again. Once they were in full swing Will did not give him much attention. Henry was happy to have found a space where he could do nothing and have nothing expected of him for a while, and enjoyed thinking about what Will had just told him and why he had told him what he did.

One song melded into another and the anarchists began to converged on the stage around the band, singing along to the songs like anthems. It seemed as though over fifteen minutes the whole party came together in the small area. Henry and Will and his group got up and started dancing along with everyone. In the mess of people the microphones were surrounded and moved in front of the stage where everyone stood around them jumping and putting arms around each other and screaming their lungs out into the nearest of the two. They sang themselves weak, like they wanted veins to pop in their necks and foreheads. Over a hundred people, clumped around two microphones, many of them still euphoric from mescaline beyond the exhilaration of the space. When Henry allowed himself to get into it, dancing with his arm around Charlie and her arm around Stace, Charlie's wide open-mouthed smile gave Henry an understanding of the wholly unrestrained way she had welcomed him into her life. He felt he would never forget that moment.

\* \*

You and I are the only two who do not sing. I lie back on the roof and look up at the dark sky, listening to the conversation of those around me. I head down to the ground. You start dancing hand in hand with a girl you have not spoken with, you look over to Charlie, who is dancing with Vimbai, and look over to me. You feel your solar plexus sink harshly, like a punch in the stomach: you see for an instant where the elated feeling you have in those moments might lead you.

\* \*

Henry decided to take a break. The party did not seem to be slowing down, and his cellphone told him it was already three a.m.. Time had flown. He excused himself to the bathroom, and then decided to go up to the tree platform for some air, away from the dancing and the drugs and the bonfire and the band. He had walked the short path through the trees to the staircase, but something was different. The door frame, if you could call it that since it appeared always to have been doorless, now had a black cloth obscuring it, like a makeshift tent flap, and the usually see-through balustrade border had a layer of cloth over it and up to

the frame, such that there was no clear view inside without stepping in. There was some soft music coming from the other side of the cloth, and other sounds he did not identify. He slowly brushed aside the cotton fabric and dipped his head forward, with only a slight sense that he might be intruding. What he saw was the candle-lit flowing and churning of naked bodies among blankets and pillows. Once he was fully conscious of what was in front of him he stepped back, jolted, and immediately headed in the opposite direction.

Henry stepped back inside the farmhouse building and found his way into a hall or classroom and eventually got back to his car, where he pulled out his sleeping bag and two pillows. On his way in an anarchist he had not yet spoken with pointed him in the direction of the dormitory and offered him a mattress, which he took. He laid out his things not too close but not too far from another three people who had also gone to sleep, drank as much water as he could from the tap, and got into bed. The room was spinning slightly; he was drunk. He wanted time apart, to wait it out on the bed alone.

The orgy was probably the first moment he felt fully that the anarchists were not just particularly rowdy or socially daring and alternative, but people inhabiting a different perspective, with a distinct set of conventions. There was a difference in kind, not degree, for that merely to be one aspect of a party, and certainly not central to it. While he was initially caught off guard and was already overwhelmed, his thought became this - that we need more people like this, more people who show us that things can be done differently; not because they are right or wrong - they were probably wrong - but because diversity lays bare the truth that we have options. As he lay there fighting occasional bouts of light delirium Henry found himself wondering what these people did for money, how they lived, what it was about the world they inhabited that allowed for their lives to be as they were and how he could let himself be shocked into a conservative awkwardness about something that was merely different to what he was used to. He came to think he did not know his options, and that he would not possibly chose his life as it was then if he did.

When he was younger, Henry used to think that there were three types of people. Normal people - squares - who were fine with being normal; and - like him - normal people who hated the link 'normal' had to 'mediocre', and so fought to be more individual or weird, but were really just normal; and abnormal people who desperately wanted to be normal but could never be.

Already then he knew that things were not so simple, but he still felt a lingering sense of these categories in people, and how, if he aged any more as the person he was, he would become the square, instead of the middle category. He was afraid of the emotional strain required to get past the internalised taboos he felt, compounded by the fear that not overcoming them was a fate the same as living death.



The school of today, no matter whether public, private, or parochial ... is for the child what the prison is for the convict and the barracks for the soldier — a place where everything is being used to break the will of the child, and then to pound, knead, and shape it into a being utterly foreign to itself.

It will be necessary to realize that education of children is not synonymous with herdlike drilling and training. If education should really mean anything at all, it must insist upon the free growth and development of the innate forces and tendencies of the child. In this way alone can we hope for the free individual and eventually also for a free community, which shall make interference and coercion of human growth impossible.

Emma Goldman

The scholars had been told half an hour before that they would be attending an assembly together with their sister school, Sacred Heart College, and that Nelson Mandela would be speaking to them. There were no other circumstances under which their sister school had been called to participate in anything with them - other schools instead were the norm.

Fourteen-year-old Henry was quite interested as he and his class walked in single file towards the olympic-sized swimming pool area with its concrete tiered seating; despite the new hall that had been built recently, there would not be room for two full schools anywhere else. He tucked in his shirt.

They lined up outside the pool area and after a uniform inspection were shepherded into the space along with the students of the other school, with whom they did not interact. They were grouped together with the other school in repeating parallel rectangles of students like zebra stripes over the seating areas rising up from the borders of three of the pool's edges. A teacher from their school began warming everyone up by getting them all to sing the words "Nelson Mandela" in repeat to the tune of the national anthem. Henry looked at the children from the sister school and felt some shame and some burning sense of discomfort and frustration. The difference between the schools was clear, and this made it clear why they had

been brought in.

As he sang, Henry noticed his sixth-grade brother in the crowd on the other end of the pool. Jamie appeared to be talking to one of his friends instead of singing. Henry was annoyed - Jamie could at least show the appropriate respect for Mandela, who would be making his entrance very soon.

The school skipped the usual prayers and announcements that commenced any assembly in light of the occasion.

Mandela walked in to the sound of our collectively singing that hastily prepared song, and Henry felt that something important must be happening. Mandela greeted everyone and began,

“Where is Mandla, my grandson?” he boomed with a smile. “Come to me, boy!”

Twelfth-grade Mandla emerged from the crowd and went to his grandfather for a hug.

It was not long before Henry got bored, having only the sense that he was at an important event with an important person to fuel his interest in it. He did not know much of Mandela beyond the bare minimum. Still, the assembly was preferable to class.

Most people are not really free. They are confined by the niche in the world that they carve out for themselves. They limit themselves to fewer possibilities by the narrowness of their vision.

V. S. Naipaul

Olivia and I alight a hammock in the early morning; it is impossible for us to sleep with the sun illuminating our eyelids. We drape our blankets over clumps of people around the elderly bonfire - they are still trying to sleep and fighting the imposition of light. I am underslept, I may not have slept; I find an empty bit of mattress among the jumbled layer on the floor in the classroom. I clog my ears with tissue and go back to sleep.

\* \*

Henry rose with a dull headache at 11.04am to the feeling of his phone vibrating in his jeans. He had slept badly and had been stirring for some time but would go back to sleep once he saw that the people around him were still sleeping. It was his brother.

“Hold on,” Henry said, stepping around and over people as he navigated his way out to the gravel parking lot out front.

“Hey. Whatsup.”

“Did I wake you up there Ennie? Somebody had a good night hey big guy? I’m calling to hear how it went.”

“Yoh, Jay, I don’t know where to start. It’s been so interesting. I’m still here.” Henry glanced around - he was probably inaudible there. “It’s a whole weekend thing. These guys, they don’t fuck around.”

“Oh yeah? Let’s have it then.”

Jamie loved English gangster and football hooligan movies, so it wasn’t unusual for him

to use that vernacular, even occasionally with a hint of British accent.

“Jesus, okay. So, I get here, and it’s basically a hippie paradise slash music festival with a really intense slant. Charlie’s very cool. Charlie’s wife is cool, really friendly, though I haven’t spent much time with her. Basically everyone’s warm and welcoming and about half of them are high on some cactus.”

“Peyote? San Pedro? Peruvian Torch?”

“San Pedro. Since when do you know cactuses?”

“Cacti.”

“Things got hectic. By the end of the night I’d say about a fifth of them had gotten starkers. Things were burning down. I walked in on a fucking orgy in a treehouse at one stage. Fuck knows what I didn’t walk in on, there were so many places to be and I hardly saw any.”

“Jheezus. Sounds like a party. Tell me about this orgy.”

Henry leaned on the door of his car.

“I’m not done. What’s really interesting is that Charlie kissed me.”

“What do you mean?”

“We were alone for a little while after the actual wedding bit - I didn’t even speak about that - and she just gave me some compliments and said she was glad I came, then she kissed me on the cheek, and I guess maybe she saw something as an invitation to full-on pull in, which she did. I was a really cool moment.”

“She sounds like a slut.”

“No, no. It wasn’t like that. I don’t know how to explain. She was just showing affection - she was like... I can’t remember how she explained it right now.”

“I dunno. Chick gets married and is making out with you before the night’s over. Sounds like a slut to me.”

“It’s too early for me to explain right now,” Henry rubbed his brow. “But anyway I’m pretty sure it’s not how you think; I just did a shit job of explaining. I should go. I need to take a leak and drink something.”

“You enjoy yourself there Ennie. Watch out for the VIGS.”

“Cheers Jay.”

Henry cut the call and headed apprehensively inside through the hallway entrance, where

more people were sleeping, and he waved to a couple sitting talking quietly on the mats they had slept on. He passed through to the main living and kitchen area, in the corner of the L-shaped building, where one line was the hall and the other the dormitory/lavatory. Here there were handfuls of people who were already some degree of awake and about, helping themselves to fruits or cereals or salad and coffees or teas. He decided to make some tea, feeling awkward that no-one he was comfortable starting a conversation with was around.

Olivia had been awake since she woke with me earlier and invited him with a raspy voice to sit with her and some others. Sizwe, Elena, Jesse, Mohammed - he had been introduced to enough people that they were becoming an indiscriminate blur, and was glad when Olivia iterated her name. Henry did not find her particularly attractive, though he liked her crop-cut dark hair and her sleeveless jacket.

“Have a seat. Sizwe was just straw-manning me, hoping that in ‘my’ primitivist utopia we’d be able to get some coffee out of my Mayan-style swidden-fallow forest gardens. He seems to think we’ll need to mass produce the coffee bean so we be perky for working those nine-to-fives as hunter gatherers.”

“Well, coffee is one thing,” Sizwe said, his voice gruff and weak. Many anarchists had lost their voices from the singing the night before. “I wanna see you revolution-away consciousness.”

“You’ve read *The Anarchist Tension* - why can’t you see AP like that?”

“It helps that a positive civilisation-reformist anarchism is at least theoretically possible. But if you’re talking about getting rid of language and symbolic thought then it’s another story. One does not simply go full-Zerzan.”

“I don’t know what’s possible,” Olivia said. “The way the world looks right now only provides a tiny range of possibilities. But Sizwe, devil’s advocating aside, there’s a difference between being anti-civ and signing up for the whole primitivist shebang.”

“What do you think?” Elena asked Henry.

“I think you’ve been speaking English, but I’m not sure,” he replied, and paused. From the little that he knew from his recent internet browsing, anarcho-primitivism was the most absurd of all anarchisms. It was at minimum against civilisation - the urban, agriculture, technology, industry, mass society - while being for something like hunter-gatherer band society, and seemed to require a mass die-off of humans to be viable. “I don’t know. Given that I don’t think I inhabit the perspective required to understand the language you’re using to

express your ideas, I doubt I'm able to imagine what might happen in the possible worlds you seem to be positing."

"Hm!" Elena replied. "Where'd you get your language from?"

"Philosophy student. Former philosophy student."

"Oh goodness. At UCT?"

"Wits."

"It does feel weird that anyone could possibly think of me as a reformist," Elena admitted, continuing the previous conversation. Henry got the impression that the following brimming silence was due to his presence, though it was not clear why.

"So," Olivia said, directing her words at Henry, "today's a new day and we've got things planned. Do you take mushrooms? Most of us who can stick around for today are going to be doing some."

"Yeah actually, it's about the only illegal drug I do. My supervisor back in university was a Platonist who encouraged us to take them to do philosophy. He called it 'ambrosia'," Henry laughed.

"A Platonist supervisor?" Sizwe said, "I didn't know you still got Platonists."

"Until a couple weeks ago, I didn't know you still got anarchists. Or, I didn't even know what an anarchist was. I'm still not sure I do know what an anarchist is."

"We're anarchists," Sizwe replied, wagging his pointed finger at the people in the group.

"See, you're already halfway there," Olivia smiled playfully. "Instead of talking about and reifying some abstraction to explain what 'anarchism' is, you just pointed to anarchists. Which is kinda the opposite of Platonism, I think. Complicated merit-based aristocracies and abstractions more real than the world we walk in?"

"It's never so easy with Plato, I think, but you can start there." Henry said. He was unprepared to debate the topic, so he did not admit that he saw this as roughly the ideal political arrangement.

Henry learned that there would be two groups of psilocybin-takers. The tree platform was being transformed into "the blissful forest of radical subjectivity" - which for Henry amounted to being a space where no-one would speak and everyone would engage in as much non-cognitive thought as possible. The other group would just be people anywhere else, doing whatever they liked. When Charlie woke up she said that she would not be taking

any drugs, along with many others who would not be going home that morning. He felt uncomfortable that she wouldn't be joining them, but he already felt committed to it, because he wanted to, but also because he wanted to participate in some drug taking - in the same way that you accept the gifts that someone you want to befriend is giving you, even when you don't want them. But Will was joining, clothed and made-up in a baby-blue dress and the teal lipstick he'd worn at the Shap. And Henry did like the idea of a space without speech.

About half of everyone left after breakfast, but these were mostly people whom Henry had not become familiar with, and soon he was standing among a group of people, below the staircase to the tree platform.

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I wake up despite myself and help Andreia and Anne move around the seating and get the less organic and aesthetically-pleasant things out of the space in the treehouse. It is wonderful to be functional. It is surprising how even this small area of relative freedom gives me room to breathe.

\* \*

It was around one p.m. when Henry and the group around him filed up the staircase to the platform. They were each handed a chocolate containing four or five grams of mushrooms, more than the three grams Henry usually took, but not enough to scare him. Once in the room, no-one said a word, and each person found somewhere among the large pillows, mattresses, and bean bags that had been arranged in a crescent-moon shape, and sat down. A baby blue tarpaulin with painted-in stick figures carrying different anarchist flags and walking in all different directions had been put up over the seating area to shade the space from the midday sun. A calm instrumental music was playing at low volume.

Henry sat on a large navy rectangular cushion that looked to have come off a couch, and bit into the chocolate. It was delicious, soft and dark and spiced on the inside with a cinnamony something that was not clear to him. He finished it and contemplated asking for more before remembering that each was full of mushrooms and then noticing that many

people had shared chocolates with another person. Now all that was left was to wait. Henry looked around and counted the people sitting silently on the platform; twenty-two.

He thought about the new South Africa as the rainbow nation and the irony that diversity and inclusion was being best achieved by people who dreamed of smashing it. It was a stark contrast to most of the groups he had spent time with throughout his life. He had spent all of his school years - from grade nought to grade twelve - in an overwhelmingly white and Catholic private all-boys school in the middle of Sandton. Most of the black kids, making up maybe ten percent of his grade by the last years of his school life and once apartheid was well over, had been there on bursaries - and most of those who weren't were the children and grandchildren of major figures in government. There had been even fewer kids of other shades. Henry remembered the embarrassment he felt when Nelson Mandela came to give a speech at his school. Not one of the people from his school he had spoken with about it later had mentioned any notice of it. Henry thought about how those kids tended to keep to themselves and wondered how alienating the experience had been for them. Going to that school, a school considered one of the best in the country, had damaged everyone in it. He experienced that damage in the slight sense of disgust he had with himself for being attracted to Will. He experienced that damage in his awareness that he had only one brown friend in a brown country, and his awareness of how their relationship existed only because of how much that friend seemed to participate in the world in ways he recognised - white ways. He experienced that damage in his aversion to nudity, his awkwardness around platonic hand-holding, his lack of a sense of options, his lack of ability to think of things outside of liberal terms, in a sense that he was not even aware of the range of ways in which he was damaged.

Life had not been so homogenous in university, but not nearly diverse enough, and as it happens the further into his philosophical studies he went the more white and male the remaining students were, the more everyone shared a similar language and specific register. Perhaps he had become less alienated there, at least. Looking around him now he could say that the group, though not representative of the overall population of the country, was inclusive in ways that were rare.

A couple in their mid-thirties sat in front of him on a mattress. Henry had always wanted to do mushrooms with a girl he liked; his mind flicked to Charlie. The man was wearing faded denim shorts and a thick chalky baby-blue cotton jersey with the large image of a daisy



sewn into it, contrasting his muscular build and dreadhawk. The woman he had not seen before; brown hair in a bun and wearing what Henry was sure was the coral-white dress that Vimbai was married in, barefoot with wine-red bra straps going over her shoulders.

There was something easy about not talking. Having the pretence allowed Henry comfortably to ignore any sense that he had to be social. All he had to do was sit and experience what was about to happen. He felt relieved.

Henry was staring at the lines in the thick planks of wood that made up the floor of the platform. They seemed more interesting than usual, more vivid. But he had never given them any attention, and could not tell whether he only bothered to notice now that he expected to see things that way. He looked around at the people and then the balustrade and the branches, trunks, and leaves beyond them. His stomach had some slight discomfort, and he was feeling the beginnings of the feverish symptoms. He looked up at the sky through the half of the platform that had not been covered by cloth. The sky was a cloudless bright blue. It was a great setting for a mushroom trip.

Around the time certain areas of Henry's vision pronounced themselves and floated lightly-raised against the rest of his visual field like a raised section of a map, Andreia, the singer from the headlining band the night before, came up the stairs holding a large white canvas behind them. Henry remembered a word he had heard sometime in the night used to describe Andreia; genderfuck. He could not see whether they were a womanly-man or a manly-woman or something else. A young vividly emerald-haired woman called Anne helped Andreia carry the canvas, holding it up at the back. Henry had not met her, but he had noticed her, she was one of the people who had been naked throughout the night before. It was her face she had seen among the bodies in the treehouse. She wore white overalls now, with a lifelike heart painted in two halves on each side of the open button-down front, wearing only a black bra underneath. They propped up the canvas underneath a short wooden crate and against the back wall with planks of wood against the railing - where the blackboard had been the day before - and turned off the music. Henry now understood the crescent seating as one best disposing the trippers to see the canvas. It must have been a metre and a half by a metre and a half, and was shining white in the sun.

Andreia and Anne stepped out and soon came back with paints. As they prepared the paints on the floor Henry stared at the bright white square. It became the only constant in his

vision; the people in front of him on the platform and the wooden railing and trees beyond were moving, as if his field of vision was a piece of glass behind this shining canvas that had subtly shattered and was liquidising in the cracks and welding itself back together. The world stretched and contracted, and seemed as if it was trying to break into the canvas.

There was something remarkable about the wordlessness of the scene. Something was released, or uncontained, without them. Andreia started to paint around the top left corner and Anne the bottom right, with her left hand, in bold colours with wide strokes, without obscuring much of the canvas. Henry realised that because he had not eaten breakfast he was likely to be further along the trip than those who had. The heated feeling he had was more pronounced then, bordering uncomfortable but also agreeable, almost sexual. Henry occasionally reminded himself that the lack of speech around him was premeditated.

As he relaxed in the company of people who were all becoming vulnerable, throbs of phenomena shot through his mind like speeding ripples. He was not surprised that things kicked in so heavily, either, since he had taken so much, but he felt it worthwhile to remind himself of that fact. *Things were going according to plan.* If he let his eyes rest on a spot, the edges of his vision would start to dismantle, like earth breaking and crumbling down off a cliff, until he was wholly subsumed in fever and had nothing but sliding slivers of sight aesthetically arranged and floating in front of him. While he could do little else but be barraged by thoughts and other phenomena, he used what control he had over its intensity to delve deep and then to return to a manageable space. He repeatedly allowed the world to break into bits and then dissolve back into itself, with the accompanying feeling of bursting, overflowing coming from his solar plexus and his head and his limbs - with some control over it, at least most of the time, that could be gained by changing his focus.

He couldn't bear to look at the painters at work - there was just too much to see and think. So he lay on his back and stared at the cloth and the stick-anarchists painted on it above his head, and the border between it and the sky, until even that became too much and he had to close his eyes. It felt something like dangerous fun: he was never wholly convinced that he had not taken too much, but enjoyed most those moments when he completely lost himself in a kaleidoscopic assault on his own senses.

For that time - how long he could not tell - that he was staring through mostly-closed eyes

at the bright blue above him, he existed in such a way that he was not conscious of the space around him at all - the whole world was only his mind and the black-red of his eyelids and the many-dimensional blue beyond. He saw what seemed to be layers of a multiverse, spread out like a fan emerging from his eyes, and he could, when he wanted, hurtle towards the edge of his phenomenal reality, as if he was sinking into the corners of his collapsing visual field. So much of what he felt and thought then was both invaluable and indescribable.

It was when he had enough control over himself to open his eyes fully, and began to watch the painted stick-anarchists walk and dance and cartwheel off the cloth into the sky, that he found himself able to string together full sentences.

*I've been too much in my own head lately*

*This whole fuckup with getting robbed and quitting school has left me a wreck  
I have nothing to offer anybody*

*Even this party I've spent too much time thinking and watching and imagining myself and  
imagining myself in the eyes of others  
I have not participated*

*Even now my enjoyment of the no-language agreement comes from a desire to stand at a  
distance from my own life*

*Alienation*

*That's a word the anarchists use*

Once Henry had some sense that he had gone past the peak of the hallucinations, he decided to sit up again, and was struck when he did by the magnitude of the experience. Lying back, staring up at the sky, had been a whole other world. In front of him was a different place, both remembered and foreign. Many of the people had splayed out or curled up on their seats, some had left and some had joined, but the surroundings were the same, except now the painting appeared finished and only Anne remained on the platform, sitting silently next to the canvas. She was pretty - strikingly beautiful with the enhanced senses he

had at that moment. He stared at her, paranoid that he was being too obvious or looking for too long. She had buzzed her emerald hair short on the left side and would occasionally rub that side with her fingertips. Henry did not usually like coloured hair but it worked for her. He liked her oval face and the triangle of flesh he could see in the mostly-open front of the overalls. When she caught him looking he changed his focus to the painting, embarrassed.

Fresh bright sunlit colours flowed outwards from the opposing corners that the two painters had started from, meeting in the middle, rushing at each other like colliding torrents of wind. Henry perceived the bottom right section as more earthy colours - though there were no greens or browns, it was more a red - and the top left colours as more skylike - though there was little blue, and the line of collision became a natural line on which his visual field broke, like two plates of earth, and tried to consume each other. Despite his misgivings about his approach to it, the wordlessness allowed the experience to be personal and shared.

Henry thought it was a wonderful painting. He had never seen a painting brought to life by psilocybin, but had always felt that the drug could help a person to understand art, and to understand beauty, and to understand the lines on which beauty fit. Why else would so much art look like what the world looked like when in the fever?

Henry leaned forward and rubbed his fingertips against the lines in the wood floor. This too, the world of the floor, was a wholly different headspace to the world of the sky or the world of the platform. His fingertips were extra sensitive, a standard experience for him on this drug, and it was interesting to rub them just for the sake of the rare sensation. He wondered what it would be like to run his fingertips through Anne's buzzed section of hair.

As he looked back up to the world of the platform, he saw Anne stand, and pick up some utensil, and then at the centre of the collision, drew slowly and deliberately in black, the lines of what first appeared to be a sunrise, then an eye, and finally a gnarled seed. The experience of watching the stages of the canvas, from white, to the beginning spread of colours from the corners, to the clash of colours and the seed that emerged, seemed built into the final image. Henry thought about how he had never perceived the painting of a painting as a story, how he would never look at a final image as only a page in a picturebook. The seed seemed like it had a future. Henry became overwhelmed by fever.

*I've mostly just liked my aesthetic and mostly just not had an opportunity to explore others*

Returning to a recognisable consciousness, Henry wondered about his own future, and noticed, as he saw the colours around the seed gently constrict, fold, and expand, that it was wide open. When he moved to Cape Town he had a sense that, away from it all, things would become clearer to him, that he would get set up with a home and with his factory and then, from that base, be able to engage with the world in a full and meaningful sense. He had been robbed, it was a significant experience to have the burning barrel of a gun pressed into his cheek, and it had left him afraid of the dark. The young men with weapons had robbed his family in their fortress in a gated community, with its tall walls and electric fence and cameras and indoor alarm system and outdoor alarm system. Henry did not know their specific situation, but he did have the feeling that the robbers could make use of the goods and that his family had embarrassingly more than enough.

The feeling reminded him of an experience he had years before, when he lived in his father's home. He had gone down the driveway to sign for a package from a courier. The courier had smiled and started a conversation with him.

"I was one of the people who built this house back in the nineties. I laid most of the pipes."

"Oh. Wow," Henry said.

The courier looked at the house, proud.

"How many families live in this house?"

"Just one big one," Henry replied, embarrassed, unwilling to lie but willing to allow 'big' to mean six people to him but more to the courier.

On the tree platform, Henry became distracted. Someone nearby was weeping - Henry had to confirm that it was not himself. He felt concern for the person who was crying, he wished that person well.

Henry thought about the Shap, and how every day there were people in there, working for free, to make a stack of money that they would hand over to the owner of the building that

they worked in. It struck him that they were the perfect workers in the capitalist system - still entirely participating; buying stock, paying rent, working all the hours, but taking no money. They were essentially working for their landlords, who did not actually do anything for them.

With that thought Henry thought he was starting to see things more in terms of systems - more, perhaps, like an anti-capitalist. He was happy about that, but also reluctant and nervous. He already felt estranged from the world he had come from - every bit of weirdness he picked up meant a little bit further he was from relating to his family and the few friends he still had from his school years, every bit of peculiarity was a step away from people in general. He already struggled for a sense of connection to his uncles and aunts and cousins, whom he loved, but were not interested in philosophy or going beyond the life potential they were presented with, whom he felt were complacent and overly comfortable not questioning their ever-shrinking worlds. The frail philosopher in him told him to prefer whatever seemed to make sense over whatever seemed to make life easier, so he felt obligated to look deeper.

He became overwhelmed again and his mind flashed to thoughts of his family. His brother, his father. His mother. The wave of fever was uncomfortable, like those I feel daily.

Henry came back and thought about his journal. His inspiration had changed. He did like the idea of making an unusual and interesting part of his life communicable to others much in the same way that Orwell had with *Homage to Catalonia*. But even this was just writing a character, something incomplete and unable to track reality, something that pretended to be him but was not. He had to avoid creating an alien self.

Despite some minimal growing affinity to political thought it was the people themselves he was primarily interested in. He would continue to explore them, and perhaps by extension, the temperament of Cape Town anarchists and anarchism itself.

In the meanwhile he would learn more to give context to their actions, and, he hoped - or pretended, he was not sure - to prove his open-mindedness to himself, and to others if necessary.

He thought about how he wanted to make the most out of his relationship with Charlie. Despite their differences she seemed fully able to accept him in good faith and include him in the interesting world she took part in. Henry felt grateful for her and her existence. He

wanted to tell his brother about it, about his excitement. He missed his brother and appreciated him as someone he could share things with. He should call his brother more often, and give his dad more attention.

As the fever subsided among the crowd, people got up and left the platform. Once Henry felt his usual self he did so also. He felt exhausted, but good. When he found out that something had come up and Charlie had left while he was tripping, he found everyone who he thought might be interested in being told goodbye and did so, then got in his car and headed to bed. He would not forget his sense of resolve to get more involved with the anarchists and with Charlie.

Henry could not get hold of Charlie, or anyone. Those in the group with public online profiles were not using them. He visited the Shap - it had been emptied out, the walls painted white, and there were people inside fitting a marble bar where the cobbled-together wooden counter one had been. The people inside did not know what had happened to the previous inhabitants, and their manager had said only that they had not renewed their lease. The anarchists had disappeared from Henry's life. He felt excluded, and did not know whether he should look harder if they had not invited him along.

For the first few days after he realised that they had just vanished, Henry sat and fretted and wondered and agonised. It was like they had never existed, except now he felt different, like he was committed to something, and a part of him was afraid that they were gone forever and his growth had been torn at the roots. He went by their deli and their sex shop in town; the people at the former had nothing to say to him, and the latter had been closed.

Weeks passed. Henry solidified the habit of checking the news online each morning, and after some time his attention shifted to a few small-scale and community-based news and political opinion sites.

He found himself looking for company in books. Work was totally unstimulating, so Henry began collecting texts, giving him something to avoid his lonely and mundane work situation and allowing him to feel that he was doing something with his previous resolve. He spent a lot of time looking for books, finding free and pirated ebooks online to read them at home and in his office. He wanted them to show him proof of people who thought like the anarchists, people littered throughout history, people central to it. He would read snippets and chapters and then store the books away on shelves and hard drives and look for more, rarely



finding something he would take his time to read more fully. The one book he kept coming back to was the title Shamani had suggested to him in the Shap that first day - Raoul Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. But he was a slow reader, and it was a dense book; he did a lot of meandering. He was starting to build the framework for anarchism in his mind; he imagined himself eventually being able to understand and contribute to this community of interesting others. Something about this discomfited him, but he did not dwell on the feeling.

Beginning to understand his relationship to his employees, Henry spoke awkwardly with them in his discomfort and tried to give them an opportunity to address their concerns. He had never taken the time to get to know the twelve people employed at SunHot Pty. Ltd. What had been empty faces gained histories.

After a while he started noticing much more in the world around him, and in the media, mentions of anarchism and anarchist takes on certain events, and articles that seemed clearly anarchist while being surreptitious about it. It was hard to believe that he had just been blind to these things up until then. In the graffiti on the walls of Cape Town implicit and explicitly anarchist thought was common, even occasionally whole paragraphs matched well with provocative images. He could not tell if he was just some sort of paranoid, but in the place of the anarchists, anarchy was in the air. It was only when he spoke with his friends and found that it went unnoticed for them that he decided he had seen the anarchy because it was on his mind.

\* \*

These quiet days are cold and there is room in them to take pleasure in solitude. Olivia is busy, but she can be called on if need be. The Gardens apartment that the anarchists keep is empty; it is a place for a warm shower, an easy walk from the platform where I sleep.

They are building their new world in the shell of the old. They are trying to be human, though no human is possible in this world. They are trying to make the world horizontal as they drag their own wounds like sacks of flesh from one act of kindness or destruction to

another.

The days free up; there is no rush. If I see a crushed dog on the highway, there is time to carry it to a butcher and try to sell it, time to try to haggle, time to watch our mutual lack of comprehension unravel the space around us. I can take the unsold corpse and toss it in the meat section of a supermarket. There is still time to gather food and water.

I spend some days walking the city grid handing out anarchist flyers. I have two thousand from them, it is a responsibility I took. The city is cold, like everything.

\* \*

When finally Henry saw that one of the anarchists, a comedian who used his nickname, Jaz, as a stage name, was doing a show in town, Henry felt that they were within reach again. He left for the show having packed an overnight bag.

Henry sat in the back of a small, hot room a flight of stairs above a bar on Strand Street. The show was entertaining. Jaz did a good job of tying his political views into stories of his adopted white family; Henry wondered if audience saw that the views they cheered for called for an anarchist world. As soon as the show was over Henry stood up and squeezed across the seating to the front.

“Hey Jaz, do you recognise me? I was at Charlie’s wedding. Can we talk for a bit?”

“I don’t really have time right now man, sorry.”

“You sure? Where the hell is everybody?”

“Can’t help you man.” Jaz stared at Henry like a stone wall.

“Is there anything I can do to change that? You guys just disappeared, I haven’t heard from Charlie over a month. Is she okay?”

“Ja; I’d like to help you but I can’t. Leave it.”

Henry felt defeated. Any more pushy and he would be passing the acceptable limit.

After a couple drinks he went home, had an unsatisfying wank to some internet porn, and went to sleep.

Without the environment that was the context of his resolve, Henry's attachment to the anarchists faded. He found himself returning to playing online games in his office at work and occasionally going out with his old friends for fruitless nights at clubs or pleasant-enough nights playing board games. With little sense of a foothold in the new city, he flew up to Johannesburg over Christmas and New Year's.

The task of a coherent revolutionary group, far from being the creation of a new type of conditioning, is to establish protected areas where the intensity of conditioning tends towards zero. ... Something can be expected from a micro-society formed on the basis of the radical acts or thought of its members, and maintained in a permanent state of practical readiness by means of strict theoretical discrimination. Cells successfully established along such lines would have every chance of wielding sufficient influence one day to free the creativity of the majority of the people.

Raoul Vaneigem

Henry only heard about it once things had turned violent. Two months into his lack of contact with the anarchists, he found them on street-pole headline posters.

“ANARCHISTS”

ATTACK

POLICE

At the next robot Henry bought the paper and skimmed the text on the way to work, usually at stops.

*...ignored an eviction order...*

*...long-abandoned property beside Grootte Schuur hospital...*

*...approximately one hundred people dressed in black and white and wearing balaclavas designed as panda masks...*

*...arranged in strategic formations to fight off the evicting officers...*

*...some of the inhabitants were tased, many of the police were covered in paint...*

*...unsuccessful at making any arrests...*

*...police have vowed to return in force once they have assessed the situation...*

*...officers on permanent standby at the scene...*

Henry arrived at the factory and went immediately to his computer to see what else had been reported. His usual mainstream news source, with all its pretence to being the best in Africa, had said nothing of it.

The most interesting article he found was on a less-known political news site.

“... The squatters have identified themselves as a group of anarchists who are known to the area. People of interest among their group, though none of this can be confirmed because of the masks that were used, are the daughter of struggle hero Chris Hani, Palesa Hani, two socially prominent academics, Olivia Jackson and W. Roy Thompson, the rising supermodel Will Steyn, along with several individuals with significant standing among civil society and political circles.

“The building appears to be state property and is officially a part of the hospital, though residents in the area say that it has been abandoned for as long as they can remember. Prior to the arrival of these squatters, the tarred driveway had large plants growing through its cracks, the toilet facilities had been stripped of their sinks and all other metals, and the entire building had become dilapidated, but the occupying group has since taken time to clean the place up, replacing broken windows and painting the inside of the building. The building itself has no running water, but the group have gone as far as establishing two medium-sized wind turbines to supply them with electricity. ...”

Henry did not know how to react.

“... The occupiers claim that they are using the space as a residence, free school and community and cultural centre in the tradition of squats like Barcelona’s Can Masdeu, and that for now they are an open house in daylight hours after noon on Sundays. They also will be hosting free film screenings weekly, free art shows, and other activities. Their first major event will be their eleventh annual book fair next Saturday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January. ...

“... *Capitalism left this building dead - we brought it back to life*; these are the words now emblazoned over one wall on the property, next to the international symbol for squatting movements - the circle with the lightning arrow passing through it.

“... ‘You are missing the point if you expect us to negotiate with the state. To make

demands would be to legitimate the state's authority, and we do not accept that it has any,' one of those outfitted as pandas commented, remaining anonymous."

By the time he was done reading a few of the articles, more had emerged - some with weak content, and others too well-researched for Henry to believe that they had been written following the events. Most of those were pro-squat or ambiguous. Henry decided to try calling Charlie once more.

"Hey Twin, good timing."

"Charlie! I just read the news where have you been I've been trying to get hold of you?"

"We've been busy. You coming by after work?"

"Okay. I can just come by?"

"I think so. But we're not sure. I'll email you a press pass to print and keep handy in case any cops ask questions - they don't seem to be doing much by way of surveillance yet."

"Okay. Ummmm. Alright, umm, that's fine."

"Five-thirty?"

"Okay."

Henry parked on Station Road in the same spot he parked to go to the Shap. This time he walked uphill to the robots on Main. It was clear - the hospital over the road to the left, and the large two-storey building, its cream-white walls faded and cracking and peeling. Many of the windows appeared new - the others were thick with dust on the outside. According to the news, this was the squat. There was a sole policewoman subtly dancing along the sidewalk to music that appeared to be coming from the squat - rap-rave, nothing Henry was familiar with. Once he had walked past it and then around the corner he saw a police van parked on the opposite end, with three more cops hanging about outside it, and then two police cars parked across the road from the entrance fence. Five more uniformed police stood about in a circle besides the cars while a sixth spoke to a semi-formally dressed woman with a pen and notebook. It was Stace. When they saw each other and she did not acknowledge him he took the cue to keep going.

The wire-mesh sliding gate was open enough that a person could step through, but

chained at the top and the bottom so that it could not easily be opened further. As Henry walked the music would cut occasionally and restart.

Beyond that was a group of about fifteen people dressed as pandas sitting on plastic chairs on hard soil, next to a pile of torn-out asphalt in what appeared to have been the parking area surrounding the warehouse within the property. Ahead was what looked more like a film set than the normal equipment that could be expected from a television news film crew, including a camera crane. The wall it focused on had been painted with the baroque-stylised words "Pretty Dangerous". Withholding judgement, Henry walked in without much thought, and was met by a panda.

"Henry, right? We meet again! Charlie said I should bring you through."

"Alright." Henry could not tell who was talking behind the mask, and did not know if it was appropriate to ask. They walked silently around the warehouse and he soon realised that there actually was some sort of film set, and that this was where the music had been coming from. This area of asphalt had lines of plant life growing through its cracks. More pandas were standing around the set among some professional-looking people, and Henry recognised an internationally famous local rap-rave couple standing with Will, who wore tight jeans and an open sleeveless button-down. They were filming a music video.

The guide panda brought Henry around the building to a steel backdoor, next to which was a table with a case on it.

"We don't allow outside electronics inside - you can keep your stuff in here for now. It'll be safe here, don't worry." The guide panda opened the door, dipped his head in to call to Charlie, and, when he saw that he had put his cellphone in the case, flicked his wrist to indicate that Henry should go inside. Henry thought it was the comedian.

Henry didn't know what he had expected, but he had not expected what he saw. The contrast between the outside and the inside of the building was stark. The inside was clean and neat, though bustling with people, mostly unmasked and familiar, variously greeting him. It was big, and this was only the first floor, recently repainted in a clean white. Two walls had built-on shelves and half of one wall was covered in books. The wall with the most windows had been painted with an image of a huge tree; in front of it, an actual sapling had been planted in a hole cut into the ground. One corner of the room was packed with various musical instruments. There was a long wooden table with bench seating off-centre of the place, besides which was a circle of easels with paintings of Will, and more filming

equipment around them. The windows had been covered with a steel grating, and each door to the outside - two steel ones and a roll-up garage door - had been reinforced or doubled-up.

“That was quick! Look at you, all dressed for work.” Charlie said, approaching him after appearing from behind a bookshelf, herself dressed in white shorts and a white t-shirt. She had tied back her hair. Henry noted that he preferred it down, and found it odd that he had bothered to have that thought in that situation.

“This is...” Henry strained to describe his experience.

“Something else, huh,” she said, giving him a hug. “Shall I give you a tour?”

“Uh, yeah, sure.”

“Well this is the main living space, as you can see,” she said as she started to stroll with him along the line of books. We’ve got most of our mattresses and personal boxes upstairs,” she pointed to a wooden trunk with a symbol of a square carved into it. “That door leads to a kitchen and storage area. As you can tell, we have a lot of books. We’re hoping by next month to get in stacks of new ones we can just give away. There are toilets in the row building, but we haven’t got our water situation sorted out properly yet so you might not want to use them. For general electricity we’ve got the two wind turbines you saw outside and a couple solar panels, basically giving us energy for a couple lights and fridges and computers, and maybe the coffee machine when we get running water, and a generator for emergencies. Uh-oh.”

A voice came booming from the door behind Henry.

“So this is it?” It was Sicelo, the parliamentarian from that night at the Shap, with a bespectacled friend. “Come now, come now, you can’t be taking this seriously. We’re not in Europe.”

“What’s up Sicelo, you tired of your sellout politics and needed a breath of authenticity?” Mohammed replied.

“What are a bunch of middle-class mamparas doing occupying a building when there are so many people without homes in this country?”

“What’s a parliamentarian doing complaining about how many homeless people he isn’t helping when he takes home nine hundred grand a year?”

“And the whities here? Haven’t you taken enough land already?” he laughed. “This is public land for a non-colonial South Africa. Go pay tax and rent and help build the country you destroyed.”



“Party-political garbage getting to your head, former ‘anarchist’? Four years ago you would be laughing at everything you’ve just said. You’d write a diatribe against it. Oh wait, you did.”

“That was before our party existed. The EFF is going to do things. Anarchy has only ever budded, and only in the middle of revolutions, but never flowered and never gotten anywhere. Bah, I’m not here to explain to you how the world works. The police can do that later. Where’s Mahlatse?”

The squatters gave way and pointed to the communal table, where Mahlatse was sitting in overalls, eating a peanut butter sandwich and drinking tea. Mahlatse waved them over and the three of them walked over to the table, stopping as they reached Henry.

“Cee, looks like you’re doing fine.” He was talking to Charlie.

“As you can see,” she replied.

Sicelo looked at Henry, then back at Charlie, before moving on and sitting at the table.

Everyone in the room went on with what they had been doing.

“What was that all about,” Henry said.

“Sicelo loves playing games with rhetoric. It’s a complicated relationship he has with us.”

“And with you?”

“Oh with me? Sicelo and I used to go together. We’ve got a complicated relationship too.”

Henry became uncomfortable. The wholly illegal scene around him, the bohemian barracks, the vivid atmosphere, the police, and the panda suits were all of a sudden getting to him.

“I don’t really understand,” Henry said, rubbing his forehead with his left palm and waving to another person who greeted him with his other hand, “What’s all this for?”

“It’s a squat. We live here.”

He had come across mentions of squats in his reading, but standing there, among a small horde of people who had presumably all agreed that this was a good idea, he could not see it adding up.

“You live here.”

“Yes, it’s our own place. No landlords no government. Rent is theft. That sort of thing,” she seemed to take on a facetious tone in response to his offishness.

“And you’re going to go to jail just to have your own place?”

“Well, obviously the idea is not to go to jail. Exciting hey!” she slapped him on the back.

“I, uh, I mean I don’t know, I suppose.”

“And here you thought we were anarcho-hobbyists,” she said, sitting down on a trunk and patting it to indicate that he sit next to her, which he did.

Henry glimpsed to his right and saw two naked people he assumed to be a couple, both with long braided dark hair, a peach-tree tattoo over the woman’s buttocks and back that he recognised from the wedding, both cross-legged on chairs reading. After he felt that some boundary had been transgressed and thought of how it was illegal to be nude in public, he remembered that the entire space around him was illegal. He was in a space removed somewhat from the reach of the law; his response was literally out of place.

“Jesus.”

“See. Not so complicated.”

“What! And the police?”

“Just what you read in the news.” She laughed. “They had no idea how to deal with a hundred and twelve people in panda suits. We didn’t even have to get serious. And they apparently aren’t doing anything today because of the filming.”

Henry leaned forward, resting his elbows on his legs, and rubbed his face with both hands.

“Don’t worry,” Charlie said, “We know things you don’t.”

“Well that’s a fucking relief.”

“And we aren’t so silly we’d do things without thinking, Twin.”

Henry looked at Charlie as a slow awkward anxious whine escaped his mouth.

“Relax, Twin, relax.”

“And money, what are you guys doing for money? You can’t make cash off of music videos forever.”

“Oh we aren’t doing that for the money; we need the public good will. Most of us are still working, so one way to think of it is to wonder what forty people do with the money that would usually be stolen by landlords. You should see the projects we’re getting started. You want some tea? Let me make you some tea. Just wait here a couple minutes.”

By then it would have taken little for Henry to be convinced that he was sitting in the middle of a wacko cult. The only thing getting in the way of that interpretation had been his experience of individual people in more personal contexts, and that, so far as he could tell

with the reading he had done lately, all of what was happening around him actually made sense in terms of the anarchist interpretation of the world, however unprecedented it was in this specific part of it.

He looked around then, and noticed how what he had first interpreted as a bustling environment was actually something else. Nobody was playing tower defense games or solitaire on computers, or re-watching classic comedy shows, or slacking off when there was no-one supervising them. Nobody seemed like they were working - Henry did not understand what he saw as working. The conversations he heard were not small-talk, or he did not recognise them as such. But things were getting done.

Everyone there was burning.

A few times in his life Henry had watched a film or read a book that, once it was finished, left him feeling energised and driven to live fully and to forge the world with his own hands together with the people like him. He would spend the rest of that day with a chaotic obsessive energy, pacing, plotting, making notes, researching options and seeking out likeminded people, emanating a drive towards ripping his future from the grip of passing time. He would struggle to go to sleep when he finally got into bed in the dawn hours - because he was burning.

But he would wake up the next day looking at the same ceiling, and drag himself to the same bathroom to brush the same teeth with the same motions, and make the same coffee and take the same shit, like clockwork. His first waking hour had always been a half-conscious programmatic stumble through the minutiae of the morning, and from its first moments he had always slipped into a mode of more-of-the-same. Usually some hours later he would be struck by the thought, "Oh! Yesterday I was going to change the world; it completely slipped my mind. So much for that resolve, if sleep can kill it."

The anarchists seemed to have found something he had been looking for his whole life; something that kept them burning.

"Thanks," Henry said, receiving the tea. "Okay. Sorry about that. What about your mom? What's she think about all this?"

"My mom supports it," Charlie said, sitting next to him again.

"You aren't wearing bangles anymore."

"Once they were off I didn't feel like putting them back on. Wanna try on a panda suit?"

"Sure."

The pair walked over to the door that Henry had come in through. What Henry had previously thought was a row of large dustbins were containers for overalls and panda masks.

“Visitor’s gear,” Charlie smiled, digging through the overalls, checking the sizes. “This’ll fit ya.” Charlie watched Henry put on the clothes over his own, and the mask.

“I feel ridiculous,” Henry said.

“Such a cute panda!” she punched his arm playfully. “You just need some bamboo!”

“That’s why you chose them to represent you? They’re vegans?” Henry grinned.

“I think they don’t only eat plants, but they are the international symbol for endangered species. Rhinos were our second option, since they’re more locally-relevant, but pandas are cuter and less dangerous, and haven’t been taken up by white South African liberals who are happy to be outraged at the suffering of rhinos while caring nothing about black people.” Henry was getting used to the way Charlie looked him square in the face when she said things like that.

“You guys are concerned about being cute?”

“Well, you know how Pussy Riot wears those brightly-coloured balaclavas?”

“Yeah, I’ve seen them here and there.”

“They did that because they did not want to appear threatening. They wanted the average Josephine on the street to see them and recognise them as someone who was creatively trying to deal with problems faced by most people - or at least just not to recognise them as thugs or immediate threats to their physical wellbeing. But even that was twisted in the media, who described the colours as harsh and acidic. So we just wanted something harder to twist. And then there’s the terrible comedy about it all.” She paused, picking out a mask for herself.

“Let’s go up to the roof.”

They stepped outside, where the music video crew was packing up, and Will was sitting on a couch with the musicians, talking while they listened intently. Henry watched them as he followed Charlie up a steel staircase on the side of the building, to the small second-floor section of the other building, and then up another staircase bridging the gap between it and the warehouse to the roof of the warehouse. There was a notable seriousness in the face of the musicians, whom he had only really seen in character, or in very relaxed interview engagement. They had the faces of people who were concerned and learning - unexpectedly humble for musicians in their position. It seemed to him, as he stepped onto the roof, where on the other end another handful of anarchists were seated in a circle in conversation, that the

musicians might be taking the anarchists seriously.

Against the back wall of the warehouse building was a large rusted flagpole from which the anarchist black flag was flying. Charlie picked up an empty chair and carried it along to the pole, set it down, and then sat on a wooden box against the pole with her back to it. Henry took the chair.

“I guess I mentioned your mom also because I want to hear what happened with her,” Henry said.

“When my dad was killed, my mom went from being a comfortable stay-at-home mom to a three-jobs single-mother mom. Most of high school I was either waiting to be old enough to get a job or doing some job after school to try and help out. I don’t know anybody who works like my mom did. She never finished school. In ’76, because her family was scared with what was happening with the country, they left South Africa to go back to Italy. She had basic Italian, but it wasn’t good enough to do well at school. And then they moved back in early ’78, and she couldn’t get back on that train. She married young - which was a thing back then - and I guess she got unlucky.”

Charlie burst into laughter.

“This is a serious conversation to be having as pandas.”

“You can’t see it, but I’ve got a sympathetic smile on right now. I didn’t know your mom was Italian.”

“Her dad was! Anyway, she worked to make not very much money and keep me in the school I was in. She had a thing about it because of how she regretted her own schooling history. She had a thing about the Waldorf schools especially, and so I ended up there, while she squeezed in chef school among everything else.

“At the end of my grade-eleven year of school my mom collapsed from exhaustion. She’d been working a full-time job, with separate weekend job, as well as an after-hours bookkeeping thing that she got through a friend of hers who wanted to help out, and then she still tried to get more qualifications in the meanwhile, but didn’t get much of a chance. She collapsed in her seat at her desk in our living room. I remember the clap of her head hitting the wooden desk. Psychiatrists said PTSD at least, and I learned a few more terrible things about the night my father died. After that, my mom dropped her extra jobs and started doing her full-time job as a half-day thing. She couldn’t keep up. None of her studies panned out except the chef thing, but she hasn’t been able to pick it up. I ended up getting a job and just

barely finishing school, stuck with debt.”

“Wow,” Henry replied. “And how are things there now?”

“Well my mom’s recovered a little. I don’t know. She’s more of what she was like before my dad was killed. She does one part-time job now. I usually do one stable job with a couple irregular ones. And the rest of my spare energy goes to the Shap. Or, no, this place now.”

Henry remained silent.

“It’d be nice if you saw her again sometime. I’m sure she’d like that.”

“I’d be happy to,” Henry replied, though he found the idea exhausting. “I guess our mothers had some common ground.”

\* \*

I walk to stock up on food. This week is Fruit and Veg City downtown. They expect me fortnightly. I come in neat clothing, with a trolley and uniform fabric bags and the piece of paper that says I am a food collector for Food Not Bombs, in case they want to inspect it again. In many developed coloniser countries, like the US and the UK, it is commonplace to find dumpster diving in the bins behind major food outlets. The poor and the prudent alike find good food, often still packaged and sealed, tossed away for having exceeded the sell-by date or for having committed some offence that does not align with reality and does not affect the function of the food.

In Cape Town, major food stores lock up their bins and hide them away. They ensure that tonnes of food each month goes to waste, because they do not want the margins on their doorstep, in their back alleys, near their white people, in sight.

The neat clothing and the piece of paper together form my invisibility suit - imperfect because I have no car, but sufficient so far.

I am shown to the crates of tins that have been offended by dents or scratches, the tins whose labels have slid or peeled. They are kept aside for me now, when the people here do not forget to avoid trashing them.

Then I am taken to the bins. Huge containers brim with more produce than I could ever take. They are stored inside and locked after hours. I fill the trolley and hang bags over its edges with sealed clean food.

Cape Town is disgusting.

On the way I stop at the gate of an apartment complex and shout inward.

This is a group of homes with a slaves' quarters below.

Soon an elderly man and a child come out and I hand them the packets. This is the habit built from walking past and being asked to stop and share. They take some time because they must also carry their wounds.

I keep walking up, up to the mountain. In the cycle of time this trolley feels like a boulder and I think I will become feverish again soon.

There is a new bistro on this road. A young healthy white male sits by himself at a table outside, drinking a black coffee and eating a panino and reading a dystopian novel. He is neat and clean and unaware of the drunk bergie who stumbles and sits and curls up against the large yellow-and-black plant pot between them. There is a heart-shaped sticker on the plant pot - 'Cape Town, World Design Capital'. People do not see the man. His head lolls to the side and his jaw hangs loose on his gaunt face like the car guard in District Six who is homeless because his home was taken and now he works as a car guard and saves money every day so that when the government finally returns his home to him as promised he can live a normal life and so he sleeps curled up in a patch of grass in a parking lot where his family's home once was. The waitress comes to ask the man if he is happy and he tells her he is finished with his meal and can he get the bill, thanks. His plate is almost full but he does not ask to take the rest. The bergie's skin strains against his cheekbones, hungry, like more and more people, more and more millions, like I have been. People do not take notice and a group of young loud people in anachronistic clothing walk by everything and the bergie throws up and the man finally notices and calls the manager to do something and another older such man starts yelling and the black security guard helps them because he will lose his job if he doesn't and his family will go hungry again and they can't afford to get evicted again. The middle aged couple having the vegetarian pizza on the other side of the patio have stopped speaking about the Rainbow Nation and look appalled and disgusted and you'd think they were the ones with a bottle for a home and they're pulling the bergie onto his feet and they're shouting him away and it is heavy it churns the stomach the weight of everything

suffocates and I walk fast barely breathing and people pass by and do not take notice and I feel memory and present mash together.

It is a great effort to express to you the things that will restructure your perception. I am in the tunnels again.

\* \*

“Last year,” Charlie said, sitting on a box as a panda on the squat roof, in view of the pink and yellow sunset sky, “a group of us scouted a school to occupy. Cape Town is full of empty schools. We found one right next to a running school and thought it was ideal. The scholars and staff had actually occupied the buildings once before, symbolically, in protest at the thought that the space was being wasted. As these things stereotypically go, there was also a mall next to the empty grounds and it seemed clear that there were people trying to finagle the land to extend it. The occupation lasted a day; the school got a stack of promises from the local government so they backed down and waited. And waited. When it was clear that nothing was happening we felt we had an opening to make things happen ourselves.”

Henry continued to look at eyes behind the panda mask as she spoke, looking away for some time whenever he felt the eye contact was too intense, then looking back when he felt awkward at his lack of confidence to do so. He got distracted from the conversation by self-conscious thoughts about it, staring at her mouth and not her eyes, blaming the ridiculous clothing for some of his discomfort. Charlie continued, sitting normally.

“So we had consultations with the teachers and students to see what they wanted from the school. The principal was a maverick, and he was surprisingly willing to go along with the plan. We were looking forward to making the space available to students and ourselves as a community centre, kinda like what we’re going for here.

“About a month before we would occupy, the government let the school know that they would be getting the space, and they reneged on their plans with us. Which is a shame because it doesn’t look like the promise is going to amount to much.”

By then Henry had lost track of her conversation in his obsessing around eye contact and was trying just to focus on her face and seem like he was listening. Charlie went on.

“Anyway, the point is, among us there have been people who have been thinking about



and planning for squatting for some time. We've had to make adjustments because it isn't a school with some sort of 'legitimate' claim to the space and because we aren't going to pretend to care about what the law has to say about things here. We're going for survival through our own strength and the support of people around us. We live in precarious times, so there are going to be more people who are sympathetic to our radical rejection of the way things are. Hopefully."

When the evening got cold the pair went back downstairs. Charlie had something to attend to, so after he got changed out of the panda suit Henry browsed through the bookshelves and picked up a book that caught his eye, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone*, and another that he'd heard of in his reading, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

"Are these for sale?" he asked Charlie when she got back.

"You can have them. Bring them back when you're done with them if you like so somebody else can read them."

Charlie said nothing of his book choices. She and Henry said goodbye.

On his way out he was stopped by Anne, the emerald-haired painter from the mushroom trip.

"If you come by here again let's have a conversation," she said.

"Okay. I'll probably be here for the book fair."

"Me too, as you could guess," she said, waving her hand and beginning to walk away.

Henry arrived home and went to his journal to take notes before he forgot some parts of the day. Once he had written notes, and failed to articulate his image of Anne and his excitement about her, he started to doubt the whole thing. He thought about his hubris, about how he imagined a large audience reading his journal one day as an important historical document. He imagined being studied by academics and students. Alternately he imagined his journal would be found after the apocalypse as a sole surviving piece of literature to be studied by aliens and future intelligent life. He could spend hours with fantasies.

Now he wondered why anyone would write a journal or very much else for that matter. There were people in the world right now. You could love them, you could experience vulnerability, you could feel unnamed feelings when you did. Writing about the moment the cool girl showed a wound under the surface of her normally composed exterior was a

unremarkable and calculated tear-jerker at best - it provided a schema for that kind of girl, a girl you understand through your past experiences, a girl who defines the future ones. He started to think that the best writers would not be read. A good writer would write so well you put down the book ten pages in, resolved to live life.

Perhaps in reality inspiring writing only inspired more reading, he thought, and then wrote his thoughts into his journal.

What he continues to miss is that for the bulk of humanity, including civilized people, the apocalypse has already happened. We are currently the over-populated survivors of total destruction, blinking in the sunlight of our own loss, wandering aimlessly for food and shelter.

Aragorn!

An old high school friend phoned Henry at work the next morning. Graeme was in town for business for the next four days and wanted company. Henry had been neglecting the people he knew in the city so he acquiesced. He imagined that he was tired of his friends and the predictable flow of conversation that came from any time they were together, especially after spending time with the anarchists. He invited Shaun, Vusi and David and was surprised that all were free to meet up for dinner. None of them had been particularly close friends at school, but outside of Jo'burg they tended to band together.

The meeting was surprisingly pleasant. Graeme had some interesting stories about the inner workings of his consulting firm. Henry thought about the anarchists when Graeme mentioned that he and all his coworkers were aware of how unethical their jobs were, how they even had running jokes about it. Shaun was hilarious that night, especially because it was the first time in years he hadn't spent half the day talking about his hangover. Shaun and Henry probably had the most in common out of all of them, just by virtue of them working for their fathers. Shaun hated his job so much that he drank his paycheck away after work each day and partied at every opportunity and snorted whatever powders he came across. They had dinner and some drinks and went to play pool.

Henry wondered about the appeal of the anarchists. Maybe the biggest difference between his old friends and the anarchists is that the anarchists had an earnest common direction, and presumably weren't merely keeping each other in good company, despite everything. The whole event made Henry speculate on what he wanted friendship to be. He had always the

sense that he wanted friends with whom he shared a direction - and he could not tell if he would find people if he had more of it himself, or, importantly, how he would get any in the first place.

At home in bed later, Henry stared at the white ceiling of his room. He feared that his dissatisfaction with life and people was rooted in the fact that he was an unsatisfying human himself, that he was boring and pedestrian, and that the kind of future he wanted was reserved for people who were more interesting.

\* \*

The tunnels soundlessly blare and sleep is impossible. There is cold and fever. With a dynamo torch gripped in my distant hands, walls rush me and encase and distort and contort and pervert. The round chasmic space is full of cockroaches and other survivors. Hands rub one another around the torch but each transmits only more coldness. Blankets fail tonight and the surface is frightening and unfair and far away. If I walk for long enough I might find somewhere warm under the city. There is chanting in the distance, around the corner. I can catch some of the words:

The whole world is coldness and suffering  
And glimpses of relief

The song goes on, but it is lost in the deep breaths I take. There is a corner that feels warmer than the rest, there may not be any better place found tonight, it is less frightful just to wrap in blanket and tuck it tightly around me. Thought drowns me and keeps me from peace.

And that man, reading that novel, like a literature student in those classes full of white people who can afford to study things with no clear career path, who can afford to spend hundreds of thousands of someone else's rand going to university to get a degree without ever reading a book, to leave and get a job somewhere through some nepotism, to live a life anywhere not caring about anyone. Such things aren't necessary, aren't romantic, aren't

inspiring. But nobody will spend much time feeling inspired. That man will be eloquent at parties and will quote Derrida and Coetzee and drink and impress people with the theories of everything the old white male professors taught him in their classrooms built and maintained and cleaned by brown people nobody pays any notice to and take women home to fuck and disregard and wake up in the morning like an absence and go to work and be futile and through everything be unmoved. And the friends and the fucks and the moments he takes in are hollow. A life lived from a distance, so they can't smell the sewage entrenching the misery of everyone else, so they can't even hold each other together. The universities are just production lines for the current order. They churn out nondescript aliens, violators of the many; they write the scripts erasing our defenses; they leave in the cracks.

These inadequate words flow to you and you imagine the lines in your mind shifting.

I wake up rigid but lucid and rush back to my platform. Drips of light pass through the top of some parts of the tunnels. Out of the tunnels in fresh clothes and the sun feels like morning sun. I rely again on the anarchist house in Gardens for a shower, under water as hot as I can bear.

Dry and clothed, toward the UCT Hiddingh campus for a free ride to Obs. The anarchists' absence is over; they have been outed in the media. It is safe to see them.

At the squat few of the people who are sympathetic to me are around. It is easy to pass time rearranging the warehouse for the book fair. We move excess furniture into a room in the long building, we stack chairs. We put up partitions to separate areas where talks will take place. We prepare food and eat. The place has changed. Most of all I like how the overgrown tar paving outside has been wrenched from the ground and replaced with a garden at the back. I am glad of the summer. Not all plants find ways to survive the cold.

I have been asked to give a talk on the way that I live and the things that I do to get by. I use ink and a piece of paper in the squat to make notes.

The anarchists have relaxed. The police have not returned. They talk about how they might be falling into a false sense of security. It won't be this easy, they remind each other. It seems as though hundreds of people will be attending the book fair. Far more than usual. People are interested, and they would be upset if the fair did not happen, so the anarchists expect safety meanwhile. Their eviction notice is framed and on their wall. The anarchists have started planning to hold events often enough that the police always feel uncomfortable with their timing. Next will be a police brutality awareness festival, they say. Then an anti-Anti-Land Invasion Unit party.

It is comfortable at the squat and it becomes hard to move as I recover from the heaves and purges of earlier. There are people who appreciate me here and I don't have to be neat and clean to look less homeless, or to wear invisibility suits, or to humour anybody's incomprehensible expectations. Charlie lives here, and Olivia and Marc and Shamani and Hlumelo and Anne and Vimbai and even Will and Alex. I am so happy that they exist.

I listen to the conversation around me and continue to float in mild euphoric stillness.

In one corner of the room a poly couple are dealing with one person's jealousy. They are talking normally, but the jealous man, he sounds like Jesse, is outlining his historical suffering in relationships and its relation to his feelings. Mohammed is impatient but trying to assuage his fears, reminding Jesse that his previous relationships were with different people, and that most of them were not poly nor even in the relationship in good faith.

There is more planning of the book fair coming from the communal table. It is all underlaid by the awareness that for the moment the survival of the squat depends on relationships with the surrounding community and the general public. It is underlaid by the anarchists' desire not to feel doomed to being a minor minority subculture.

Somewhere near the door someone is playing what I imagine to be a harp. It sounds lovely.

Khayelitsha anarchists who are living at the squat are talking in Xhosa. In my

incomprehension I feel the weight of distance between our worlds and our needs.

People eat soup and bread and talk about the work they have been doing for their reading group. A new zine called “We Are All Very Anxious” causes excitement among them. They are talk being at the beginning of a new wave of resistance against capitalism and hierarchy, and they share enthusiasm at how they may be able to shape that wave.

I wonder if the plans of these anarchists will show seeds that can ruin the city. I want the city in ruins. Sometimes I want you to desire the same.

Olivia arrives later and moves in front of my face and looks at me. Her bottom eyelids are heavy - she is concerned. She tells me I have been sitting silently hunched over my crossed legs on the floor for at least five hours, and I realise that my legs and buttocks hurt. I stand slowly and battle the paresthesia in my legs and feet while she worries that I am not fine. I tell her I am no more terrible than usual. She holds my arm to help me keep myself up. I see her fingers clearly, her shortly-cut unpainted nails. Someone places a chair behind me. I sit. I feel appreciation. Olivia says that Charlie has been looking for me to tell me my father has been looking for me. I remember that there is a father and that the father depends on me and he is owed money, or that you have the father and owe the money. Nothing is clear. There is no room to fit him in my mind from here. Vimbai? I get upset and remember it is cold and Olivia brings me warm rooibos tea and she kisses my temples. I appreciate this.

Marc is here but he is busy and I won't disturb him. My legs function again. I go and eat some more soup. Olivia stays with me and calls me 'love' and talks pleasantly about her recent studies. I tell her that I appreciate her and that I love her. I give her a hug. She is under strain.

On my walk to the UCT Observatory residence it starts to rain. I did not prepare my platform for rain so I am nervous on the busses though I am confident that it has not rained enough to wash anything away.

I descend the steel bars to the tunnel and find my platform. It is fine. I hang more things on the nails in the wall and decide to go to Popeye's to be with Hlumelo.

The roles of paranoiac, schizophrenic or psychopath do not carry the seal of social usefulness; in other words, they are not distributed under the label of power, as are the roles of cop, boss, or military officer. But they do have a utility in specified places - in asylums and prisons. Such places are museums of a sort, serving the double purpose, from Power's point of view, of confining dangerous rivals while at the same time supplying the spectacle with needed negative stereotypes. For bad examples and their exemplary punishment add spice to the spectacle and protect it. If identification were maximised through increased isolation, the ultimate falseness of the distinction between mental and social alienation would soon become clear.

Raoul Vaneigem

Arriving home, Henry thought that he and his brother should stop going to school for a while. The days were becoming blurry. He went upstairs to do homework but was soon interrupted by Jamie, who brought him downstairs and out to the back of the property.

“Hey, boys,” their mother said. She sat in the garden, legs splayed out, resting against a wall, with her substitute beside her. Logs and other pieces of wood, held together by long rough steel nails, resembling a human being at a stretch of imagination, resting against the off-yellow wall, sitting next to her. What distressed Henry most was the face of the object; it was a log, sliced longways, one of the few that was correctly sized to the original, and blemished, perhaps by water. The blemishes made the outline of a left eye and brow and a nose much like that part of the image of their mother in her wedding photo. The original photo had been taken down off the wall in the living room months before.

Except for twice when she was cooking food for her children, and once when Henry burned himself on an oven tray, their mother would not move out of arms reach of the wooden creature, bringing it with to bed, to the bathroom, and outside to the garden where she sat most of her day. It was the sort of uncreative and unreal experience Henry would have expected from an unremarkable film - you had to address the creature to get and answer from



the person, you had to show courtesy towards the creature and ignore the person.

Sometimes Henry lost track of the difference.

Aside from the mannequin their mother was almost normal.

After the second week other people got involved and she was hospitalised.

-

Tara is the psychiatric hospital school kids will threaten you with when you do something peculiar. "You're going to get sent to Tara!"

For Henry it had become a real place.

Ward eight, the ward for the most severe cases. Henry and Jamie visited several times a week. Ward eight was on the far end of a line of wards, with a stoep looking over an unkempt sports field. Their mother would be there, fighting for lucidity in the delirium of drugs she had been given.

In ward eight there was nothing to talk about that was good. Every day, the inmates were filled with drugs until they were incapacitated, and nothing happened unless it was terrible. You could not visit one week, come back a week later, and expect a person to have new things to talk about - they would have done nothing but sit in a stupor and cope. They had little control over what they say, if they could speak. The first time Henry and Jamie went to visit their mother at least she was able to show them around. This is the corridor, this is the shared room, this is Delia, don't mind her, she is going through something unbelievably hard, this is our bathroom, and this is where I sleep.

They looked at Delia. She stood in the corridor in a dress, liquid splashing to the ground from between her legs.

"My dad..." she said this and no more. Henry would never forget those words even when he had long forgotten everything else about her.

They could not see it, but they could feel how much their mother was trying, even in her state, to make her situation seem normal, unfrighting - to avoid traumatising her children.

On the way back with their family friend to their house, the two brothers sat close to each other. Henry put his arm around his brother's shoulder and gave it a squeeze.

One of the most painful truths about non-consensual power is that those who are victimised by such power often respond by dreaming not of a liberated and egalitarian society, but of a world in which that power flows through their hands instead of the hands of their masters.

Lewis Call

Henry felt he was beginning to understand more, that he was noticing more from the perspective slowly building in his mind. As absurd as it was at times, Charlie and her friends, her collective, were doing something serious. The clearest thing he took from it all was how the life of the anarchists put into relief how disconnected he felt from his own life. He was upset with himself that he had for a moment believed it was that the only difference between his friends and Charlie's was that hers had long-term goals in common. There was more, he thought, though he could not be sure.

Henry came to understand what it meant to be 'alternative' in a wholly different sense. Up until then, in the scenes he had spent time, alternative people were more fashionable, more flashy or down-to-earth clothing than the mainstream, who often listened to music more mainstream people would find distasteful. They were often people dealing with more conventionally significant personal problems than the mainstream. This was the reason they were alternative - the prescribed path had failed them and they had sought out identities that promised some sort of salvation.

But the anarchists were different to the goths or the otaku or the swingers or whatever. Nobody seemed alternative to Henry anymore unless they were radical. Unless they wanted to change the shape of the world at its basis, and prefigured the world they wanted in their actions. It was that alone which constituted the alterity to make 'alternative,' and in the apolitical white South Africa he had grown up in it did not exist.

If he thought about which parts of his life he considered most interesting and meaningful,

it seemed that an easy way to tell with some objectivity what that might be would be to look at what was written about in his journal. His work, his whole old life, except for his brother, hardly got a mention. He had intended when he started the journal partly to document his experiences with the anarchists, but there was also a sense in which he was writing now because it was something he thought worthwhile.

Henry arrived earlier than planned for the book fair. He had spoken with his brother the night before. Jamie was anxious about completing his degree and finding a job and it made Henry anxious about having completed his degree and gotten a job. His brother now joined his father in taking pills to affect his emotional state - anti-anxiety pills and antidepressants respectively.

The place was full - the entire property spilled out into the side road with people at eleven a.m. on a Saturday. About half of them were wearing masks of some sort, mostly animal balaclavas, mostly pandas, and the fair seemed in full swing. There were no police outside that day, only a desk set up with three people in panda masks, handing out events programmes, selling various cotton masks, and keeping pamphlets with an explanation of why masks were desirable. A cardboard plaque read

TEN RAND -  
ALL MASKS SOLD  
AT A SMALL LOSS

Henry wondered how he would recognise anybody as he approached and took a programme.

“Henry. It’s me,” one of the pandas behind the desk said, putting down her phone from a call.

“Anne?”

“Yeop.”

“It’s odd to see you in panda form. Where’s all your hair?”

“Baking the back of my head.”

\* \*

I feel stronger today - less human - and imagine a skip in my step. Everyone is together and lively. Today is a good day, relatively. I arrived minutes after you, walking in from the Obs Square free bus stop.

You are already distracted by Anne and one set of motivations. I go inside with a wave to Sizwe and Patience.

\* \*

Anne asked to take Henry's hand, then took it and walked him to a Wendy house on the inside of the property at the entrance to the gate. Henry had always loved people who could pull off ignoring social boundaries. He had only seen her that day she made the painting, and those few seconds where she said she wanted to speak with him the last time he was at the squat - but she took his hand with a disarming insouciance. He was reminded of the last time a girl had taken his hand and the kiss that followed. Three young children were in the Wendy house playing with toys.

"I dunno where Jesse is, he signed up to caretake her right now." She sat at one of two plastic chairs in the room and took off her mask. Henry took the other. "So, to start, Charlie said it's okay to let you know that the people in the collective are all wearing black or green-and-black bandanas around their necks. Charlie's is black and she's mostly working the Philippi stall, so it might help you find her later. Preferably don't mention the bandana thing to anybody else - it's a safety thing for us."

"Okay."

"Now that that is out of the way," she sat up straight, stretching her neck to the left and right, and cracked her knuckles, "let's take turns asking each other questions. I've been wanting to ask you about yourself."

Henry tried not to bore himself or her with the usual self-exposition he would give, and she seemed to like what he had to say. He asked her about herself.

"I work at Good Vibrations. And I'm in the collective here," she said. She pulled up her left sleeve to rub a muscle on her forearm, revealing a line of alternating black stars and silver hearts coming out of her skin around her wrist. Dermal implants made to look like a

bracelet. He would not ask about them, he was sure she was always asked about them.

“At Good Vibrations? I’ve been been by it recently but it was closed. What the story there?”

“It’s my turn! Why does Charlie like you?”

“Oh. I don’t know. I’ve thought about it. I think she’s nostalgic for the life we had together as kids. There are also a few interesting parallels in our lives, I guess. There’s no real reason for her to like me.”

“I think you’re underestimating her.”

“Underestimating?”

“She wouldn’t just like you for something like that,” Anne sat, crossing one leg over another on the plastic chair and resting an arm on the chair back. She had the convincing poise of a confident woman. Henry felt unnerved, and then excited. Anne continued, “Vibes is a sex-positive feminist adult shop in town. I run it with four other womenfolk. We do some cool stuff - sex worker support, sex workshops for adults, sex-positive community building, consent culture building. Anarchafeminism’s where it’s at,” she smiled.

\* \*

There are many people, and so many to avoid, at the bookfair. I am invisible in personal clothes so don’t bother with a mask. Olivia is here but she is busy dealing with something that must be deeply personal.

Parents and their children play pin the molotov on the cop car. Adults make stencils and spraypaint the wall that was prepared for today; they seem to like flowers and flames. Piñatas resembling the heads of political parties, the chief of the police, a ballot, and a prison cell hang on display.

A poncho panda is making tacos in a stall. My lack of felt hunger reminds of the lack of felt cold and reminds that I am cold, but less cold here than beyond the squat border. A happy panda with Will’s voice invites me inside to talk. He is prettiest when he wears a mask. I put on a melancholy cotton panda balaclava and white overalls and step into the warehouse.

I am the third talk for the day. A talk on the middle class narratives of the poor overflows with interested participants in the centre of the warehouse even as it closes. Some stay seated

and talking. Will calls out that the next talk will start soon. Many arrive to hear, many of them wearing bandanas.

When thinking about what I want to say in this talk, I imagine I tell a story about a person who, in the moment of dealing with the loss of his brother, discovers a deep empathy and an understanding of the structure of the world. I want the talk to be these things without talking about these things. This is my post-Platonist post-anarchism.

I desire not to perform as the person who lives without the city, under the city. It is harder still to present without prescriptions. The talk is a dialogue. The simple things are covered - these are the hours of the day when you are unlikely to be checked for tickets if you take the train, this is how to shoplift these shops in the city bowl, these are traits that the police will identify if you are inspected.

The reality is that an individual's experience is hardly universalisable, if somehow that was desirable, and these skills apply because I live exactly as I do, and not the other way around.

I try to talk about everything, aware that you are still in conversation with Anne outside. All starts to overwhelm and attack, I present as open, in case a person would join. Perhaps the people here human with me. I do not have the strength to tell. I can only try to draw lines subtending the smallest events to the strata of everything, and imagine that the lines are visible to some.

I say more.

Imagine you have a younger brother, and he's not just biologically your brother but a brother in the fullest sense, and in your teenage years you and he were fundamental to each other's coping with terrible suffering and loss. This brother is your most special person. Maybe you are lucky enough to have somebody like that.

You and your brother are different, however. He has always been a little darker than you, more nihilistic. More likely to say, "Fuck it, let's do it, we're all going to die anyway," in the face of a risky decision.

You are different and eventually you inhabit starkly different lives. You might be equally intelligent but he takes on a thoughtless sort of hedonism, partly because of the sheer weight of thought. And you, less often affected by it, take on a calm and studied approach to your decisions. You don't experience the meaninglessness of life, you merely believe it is meaningless, and you spend your time trying to understand what to do with a life like that.

You and your brother find yourself in different cities, still connected by a history that will keep you close forever, but still diverging. You live with the unconscious understanding of an unconditional love shared between you, as a pillar holding up your life.

And one day, at the most interesting possible moment, you learn that your brother has died.

In that moment, your own life flashes before your eyes.

Your life is made up of people.

You look at these people, each of them, and their significance in your life. There are some you have warm feelings towards, and as you think about those and your relationship with them you identify the warm feelings as a real love and appreciation. Good will reaches out to them from your consciousness, and you start really to think about the people you care about by virtue of that caring.

To wish well here includes to wish away suffering, and as you think about the people you care for, you start to see that they are suffering. Clearly. Their bodies transform and you see their wounds. You did not see them before, for a million reasons. All their wounds. The bulky knots and fatty scabs in their everyday life, that have fallen into the background even for them, like people who unknowingly take on fumbling gaits to avoid knee pain, circumventing the wound.

You see that everyone you love is limping. And you imagine that there's no reason everybody else would not be limping too - their wounds are merely invisible to you. And you imagine that there's no reason why you would not be limping too. And soon all you see is your love and the wounds on everyone.

You need to know why.

You need to know why, because the reality of it is devastating and there has to be some way for it all to be different.

You have lost your brother living an ordinary and terrible middle class life and you are shattered. You are shattered and you realise that you have among the most inevitable and

normal of life problems. You don't have to struggle for food every day, for warmth every night, your life is mundanely secure. You experience thoughts about struggling for food and warmth and security from a distance, as vacuous clichés. You don't fight to survive, and clamour in the wretchedness of your quiet and immense solitude.

You imagine anything, you see anything, you hear anything, you have any experience at all, and you feel it tied to the vast myriad structures of domination that exist across the globe. You start to feel *everything* - the seamless relation of all individual events to the socio-economic-political structure of the world, and you are wholly incapacitated. To feel everything is the experience of humanness but it is also impossible to cope with in a world so terrible and massified and globalised as this.

It is cold and you need to change everything, but you can't change it from the inside and you can't get out.

If you can cope, you live on the edges.

\* \*

It seemed to Henry that Anne thought of him as a puzzle to be deciphered. They talked for some time. It was as if she was looking for something in him - whatever it was that she assumed Charlie valued in him. He was in the precarious position of accepting her interest but being aware of it as an interest in him for the sake of something other than himself.

First she mentioned her girlfriend, and Henry found himself re-interpreting all of her actions. Perhaps she was gay and completely uninterested in him romantically, perhaps she had some romantic history with Charlie - perhaps even she was jealous of him as a result.

"How does privacy work here anyway?" he asked.

"That's probably the least attractive aspect about this place. The buildings aren't built to house this many people in a way that gets anybody much. Well, they aren't built to house people. So we've got a couple rooms in the long building that are more-or-less dedicated to people fucking. And we've got a house nearby for now that some people use while we wait



for the lease to expire. But I just sleep out at my boyfriend's place two-three times a week, and it's the same for those of us who have people outside of the collective."

"So did you say you have a girlfriend, and a boyfriend?"

"Yep!" she grinned. "I'm really lucky right now."

"How does that work?"

"Polyamory?"

"Maybe, what is that?"

"Ethical non-monogamy."

"Okay," Henry pushed his bottom lip up in thought and some anxiety tugged at his solar plexus.

"It's characterised minimally by the informed consent of everybody involved. There's also an implicit critique of monogamy and patriarchy and heteronormativity and the nuclear family in it, but there are a lot of ways to think about being poly. For me, it's just anarchy for relationships."

"So you're going out with two people?"

"Mainly. I've been with both of them for a year and a half now."

"No shit. Nice. Mainly?"

"Well it's not necessarily only them. Assuming there's time and something else falls into my lap, more people might be involved. And sometimes I date people with one of my partners for a little while."

"Jesus. You're already going beyond the average guy's wildest dreams."

"The poly world is good to me," she said, leaning back, crossing a leg over another.

"How do you pull that off?"

"I mean it's relatively easy for a poly person to have, though it's exhausting putting your heart into so many relationships. You just need to find some open-minded and honest poly people who you like. And I mean, I'm an anarchist who works in a sex-positive adult shop."

They spoke for almost an hour, first separately from everyone and after some time behind the welcoming table with what turned out to be Sizwe and another person he was not familiar with. He enjoyed it.

And that was problematic. He hadn't given it too much thought before, but there was definitely a part of him that was emotionally invested in some sort of romantic relationship

with Charlie. It had started before she kissed him, and since she did he had wondered incessantly about what might be possible.

What was problematic was not just that he might have some mutual interest in Anne, but the thoughts that followed some of their conversation. He felt he had heard of polyamory before, and it did fit some of his intuitions, but he couldn't square it with so much of himself.

He was afraid to admit to himself, because it would say more about him than about ethical non-monogamy; he had never been comfortable when the woman he was seeing was attracted to people he found inferior to himself, and despite his sense that he was possibly an uninteresting person he still thought of himself as better than most. He had always preferred women whose previous relationships were with intelligent, good-looking, and successful men - though he did not care much either way if the relationship had been with a woman. He had always thought that it reflected on her sense of her own value; the quality of person she choose to be with, and it reflected on her perception of his value; in brief, if she had been picking losers lately, then she probably saw him as in the same class of person, and he could not allow himself to be seen that way. His intuitive problem was that polyamory allowed for lovers to find losers mid-relationship with you, and then you would be faced with the discomfort of already caring about someone who you would then no longer feel wholly comfortable being with.

\* \*

Upstairs there is a mattress and rest, and a new mural. Three of four walls are parliament in flames by night. The fire must keep the anarchists warm. With luck I will be awake for the launch.

\* \*

Henry finally stepped onto the property, amusing himself with the question of how seriously he would consider it 'anarchist territory'. The walls were lined with stalls and the folk band from the wedding was doing a quiet acoustic set in the corner - the place itself was still full of people, almost to the point of being bothersome. Making his way over to the Philippi stall, Henry learned from a banner over it that the anarchists were involved in three

major projects besides the squat. The Philippi community centre, the Woodstock-Walmer-Salt River anti-gentrification drive, and a chapter of the Anarchist Black Cross in Pollsmoor prison - which he was told was an international prisoner support organisation.

There are two people behind the Philippi stall counter, both in panda masks.

“Henry!” the smaller one said in Charlie’s voice.

“How’d you know it was me?”

“Oh, it’s you.”

Henry laughed.

“You just get here?”

“Just walked in.”

“Heya,” Vimbai’s Shona accent came through the other panda. “Come round here. Hugs.”

Henry gladly complied and was invited to sit down.

“I saw a disco ball at the Really Really Free Market, I’m gonna go see if it’s still there,”

Vimbai said, and rested a hand firmly on Henry’s shoulder. “Henry, human the fort?”

He looked at Charlie and then back at Vimbai.

“Okay.”

“Come back quick,” Charlie said, “I wanna show him around!”

“Ah,” she said, waving a hand and disappearing into the crowd. “I hope to return with booty.”

A tall man with a shaved head and all-black clothing and black beret came up to the counter.

“I’m looking for Hlumelo.”

“Hey Zintle - it’s Charlie. I’m not sure where he is.”

“Charlie! I see you’re feeding into the spectacle as always. I don’t get the whole dressing up as animals thing.”

“Does a Situationist want to accuse us of not making fun?” Henry would bet that she was smiling.

“I dunno, do the anarchists exist to give the hipsters something to do on the weekend?”

“Oh man, even I wouldn’t call you a hipster. Don’t be so hard on yourself.”

Zintle accepted the blow and Charlie changed her tone.

“You ready for the anti-Anti Land Invasion Unit party?” she said.

“We’re on top of it.”

“Looking forward to seeing what you can do. It’s going to help us too, obviously.”

A panda tapped Zintle on the shoulder.

“Sup.”

“Oh, here you are. You’re doing the panda thing too?”

“Damn right. You ready for later?”

The pair walked off.

“Is it just me, or is your scene full of people trying to point out that everybody else is wrong?” Henry asked.

“Sounds about right.”

Vimbai did not return, so Henry sat with Charlie for the last forty minutes of her shift. It was not long before he was helping explain what the project was about to interested visitors as if he was one of the people involved. The anarchists supported a school and a library and a community centre that they had raised money for and built themselves, together with a group of students, students who had exhausted all other options so that they would not have to study with shipping containers as classrooms. Henry met one of the children at the end of the shift - they came to take Charlie’s place.

\* \*

Outside the sun beats down like the imposing eye of a god, but it provides no warmth, because warmth does not move vertically. I am awake sitting among the crowd, watching the people as they pass, carrying their wounds and their emptiness, nursing it all. You are there too. You do not see it.

I am ready to hear Olivia.

\* \*

Henry’s day passed in flashes of colour and difference, and soon he was among the crowd of people prepared to watch Olivia speak on her new book. She was sitting calmly, in a jacket and bowtie, reviewing the notes in her hands.

Olivia's speech was more of a performance than a presentation. It was mostly oblique to Henry, with language that did not map reality, language that was wholly inaccessible to him - full of references to the golden age of piracy in the Caribbean. Henry gleaned some understanding of it - something about a preference for band society instead of the mass society there was now - something about organicity, or mind-body dualism, and its relation to the problem of free will - all towards a more thorough understanding of structural violence and inequality, an understanding of 'everything'; literally everything, visualised as the seamless relation of all events to the socio-economic-political structure of the world. Her linking the perception of everything to being human was where Henry completely lost her. It did not take much to understand structural inequality.

He tried not to interpret it as garbage. Whatever Olivia's anarchism was, it was not easily recognisable in what he had been reading.

Her words were not memorable aside from giving Henry the sense that he wanted to better position himself to understand why she had spoken so badly, and why so many of the anarchists had been riveted by her words.

\* \*

Olivia speaks some of my language and for some time I listen. It is only afterward when I feel it again that I realise that there is such a thing as coldness and temperature, and that for some time it did not exist.

"How'd I do?" she asks, as we cuddle on a mat upstairs.

"The speech was lovely. Was it only for me?"

"I got asked to give it, silly, same as you. And you weren't the only person who heard me."

I look at her, she continues.

"Tham was there. So was Marc. And there are so many who understand enough. Anyway, I can't just be an anarch like you. Any other circumstance probably needs multiple generations of unlearning this and learning how to human."

She feels an accusation in my words and now I feel it too and feel ill.

“This weekend my department had an official social meet-up for the faculty. It’s this annual thing and there’s a lot of pressure to go to keep up a sense that you want to participate fully in your job et cetera, and things are dicey for me now since I made my involvement here public. We went to this restaurant set up in a warehouse on the shore and ended up sitting at tables outside overlooking the sea. I’m already squirming in my seat as we get there and I’m literally the only brown person there who isn’t working. Then our waitress comes over and I start to feel disgusted and disgusting as they work. She’s there because it’s the best she’s got; she’s not going to have rent money, she’s not going to be able to feed herself and likely more people, unless she can keep up this job. At least sometimes I feel like I’m not coerced to keep my job. Then I thought, well I’m here because I feel coerced.”

She starts to run her fingers through the hair on my head. She breathes in slowly, out slowly, deeply.

“There’s a yacht about a hundred metres out, and half the faculty goes on about how they wish they had one, while the other half pretends to get upset at the excessiveness of it all. I hate yachts.”

“The opposite of a pirate ship?”

“My dad has spent his whole life wanting a yacht. When he was seventeen he got hired by some rich white family to be the on-board slave-boy. He spent the whole time taking shit from them. It’s clear if you ask him anything about what he did. But if you ask him what he feels about it he’ll tell you how much he loved the people he worked for, how much he admired them, how hard they had worked for what they had, how for him they were the image of success.

“I grew up with a picture of a yacht hanging above the shitty old TV in our house. My dad still wears bits of sailor uniform as he goes about his day, telling my mother to know her place when she complains that their white landlord has been harassing her.”

It is rare for her to present her wounds so openly. Her lower lip is dropped open for a tut but no sound emerges.

“He had Stockholm syndrome,” she continues. Her eyes are focused, sharp; her mind is clenched. “This world has Stockholm syndrome on a grand scale. We identify with and love the people who subjugate us. Politicians, celebrities, billionaires. I hate it.

“As things happen,” she smiles, “I was a product of my environment. When I talk about the band of anarchists as a pirate crew I’m aware that it’s in reaction to the yacht. My black

flag has a Jolly Roger on it and that's fine, that's me. I'm not a plant like you."

"But you can see everything in a yacht."

\* \*

Neither Charlie nor Anne nor Will were at the afterparty, so after a twenty minutes Henry decided to leave. He was suddenly quite tired, he told himself, and he would need to take his time getting in with the anarchists - it had been enough for the day.

You are what you do. If you do boring, stupid monotonous work, chances are you'll end up boring, stupid and monotonous. Work is a much better explanation for the creeping cretinization all around us than even such significant moronizing mechanisms as television and education.

Bob Black

Instead of arriving slightly late to work, Henry arrived an hour early, while the streets of the industrial area were humming only softly. He went to his office with a bag over his shoulder, stood around for about fifteen seconds, and left the office area to the factory floor and then to the workers' changerooms. He stopped again, tensing his uncomfortable stomach.

He thought about his family.

He didn't work for what he had. He was handed a factory when his father decided he had spent too long doing nothing. And he had. But none of the alternatives were real. A factory making something that was supposed to be helpful to the environment had been a bearable option when he looked forward, at the financial situation he wanted for his future.

Henry reached into his bag, pulled out stacks of pamphlets, and slipped two in the slots of each locker; an introduction to anarchist ideas in the context of South Africa and the US classic *How to Fire Your Boss*.

He could not bring himself to sink his father and the rest of his family. A couple pamphlets wouldn't do it. But if they did, if somehow they magically did, then he would be alright with that.

Henry sat in his office, playing solitaire in casual clothing as his employees filed into the factory and got started without him. In the beginning of the job he could talk to them like he



wasn't exploiting them. Now he held back his persistent desire to be apologetic.

Something had to give eventually, he thought, as he scratched at a scab that had formed on the back of his head. Either he adopted an anti-capitalist stance, which would mean losing the factory and destroying his father's financial security, his father's retirement, he and his brother's inheritance, and his father's new family's livelihoods - or he found a way to live aware that he was part of the problem. The first option meant hurting the people closest to him, it meant significant and irresolvable conflict with his family. If he went as far as the anarchists, it meant risking imprisonment, risking all sorts of marginalisation, it meant things he could not yet imagine. The second option meant living a possibly contented but fake life. The only way he could imagine himself living that sort of compromise would be over a maybe-impossible layer of denial, a layer that he would occasionally see through, a sight that would destroy him, until the layer grew back over. But maybe even that would lessen over time.

The second option seemed unacceptable, and the first impossibly heavy.

\* \*

The games begin today. Early in the morning the police arrive in riot gear and try to force over seventy people off the squat. Those seventy people are in overalls and masks and keeping tight formations to avoid being separated from the others. They have bricks that they throw, all at once, because singly they can be dodged. They have fire extinguishers full of paint to cover the visors of the police. They have steel dustbin lids and other objects to hide from rubber bullets and those tear gas canisters that are aimed at them.

The police have never tried to evict a group that uses black bloc tactics; they fail. They go back where they came from, and the anarchists cheer and cry, though many are now nervous about the next degree of violence to come.

The anarchists send out the pre-drafted articles to news companies. They post information online about the run-in.

I am not at the squat when this occurs. For me things start at night, when I meet with Marc, Alex, and Shamani in a park in Mowbray. They mention what has happened and we get in a white Citi Golf, and I can see that Alex yearns to bring far more destruction to the city than we will tonight. His mind is always on the stockpile of bombs and weapons in the

tunnels, he waits perhaps only for some affinity, some sense that he is not the only one who thinks that Cape Town should be razed as-is. Maybe Alex also wants death. Marc, instead, speaks of his nerves - he threw up earlier, he is terrified but willing. Shamani keeps to herself. She looks cold.

A minute away we turn into a quiet road and swap the number plates off our car, then we get back in and find our way to the municipal service centre, donning hats and scarves. Alex and Shamani carry large dark felt bags. Marc waits at the wire-mesh fence we clip through to avoid the guard at the entrance, and we head to the rows of garbage trucks in the darker patches among the dull poorly-lit buildings. Across the property, we hear the bass from a party in a building over the next block.

Shamani is shaking. She sets herself up as a lookout while Alex and I start work on the trucks. I leverage open petrol-tank covers with a crowbar-like chisel, and pour sugar into the tanks, and let air out of the tires before slashing them. Alex gets underneath each truck and does the real damage as quietly as he can. I move quickly to keep up with Alex as we go from truck to truck, all the while keeping an eye on Shamani.

We get through all the trucks. Alex is muddy and oily from lying on the ground, but grinning. We return slowly to Marc, who moves to start the car as soon as he sees us, and we get inside and drive to a quiet road in Salt River, where we get changed and swap the number plates back. Both sets of plates are fake, Marc tells me.

Our part of the plan goes off without a hitch, and we're feeling good about it enough that they joke about joining up with others on theirs. I am carried by the glimmers of joy from those moments and glad to be able to spend some time in an affinity project. I take up the anarchists' offer to spend a few hours at a bar in Obs.

Henry glued an article from that day's online paper into his journal:

There [does font remain on compile? Alternately, tab.] was destruction and defacement of property throughout the city last night by multiple groups of people who may be working together.

Included in the destruction were several public monuments from both the pre-democratic and democratic era. The vandalism of the statue of Nelson Mandela in Green Point Stadium has prompted an explosion of public opinion and outrage on social media. Angel-like wings and a halo have been painted onto his body and the words "Be still! I am Mandela!" scratched and sprayed onto Mandela's trademark shirt, while the plaque below has had a new panel of inscribed steel welded onto it, saying, "Freedom is not merely two votes per decade."

The head of the horseman of the Rhodes Memorial on Devil's Peak has been cut off and the inscription above the head of the Rhodes statue itself has been changed.

Previously the inscription read,

*To the spirit and life work of Cecil John Rhodes who loved and served South Africa,*

And now, new words chiseled into place over old ones, it reads

*Against the spirit and life work of Cecil John Rhodes, who exploited and abused humanity. Against the foundations of this university.*

Other vandalised statues include the Louis Botha monument on Roeland Street outside of parliament. Surveillance footage shows one group of six masked people in the same green Volkswagen Polo having committed each of these acts. Security in

Parliament did not manage to apprehend those involved before they made their getaway.

It does not stop there. Many of you will have seen the unexpected gardens when stuck in traffic this morning.

Highway surveillance footage shows three groups of five individuals posing as highway construction workers who closed off single lanes of the N2 and used jackhammers or picks to remove approximately two-by-three metre areas of tar, replacing it with soil, young fruit trees, flowers, and decorative rocks.

The identities of these individuals are unclear as they wore surgical masks and scarves, but police have commented that they have some leads, and that the roads should be retarred by the evening.

At approximately the same time, three more groups invaded municipal property and thoroughly damaged all of the garbage trucks serving Cape Town and the surrounding areas. Beyond damaging the tires and engines, the trucks were further tampered with in an inconsistent manner such that each needs unique repairs. This morning several areas in the province went without their garbage pickup service. It is not yet clear when garbage services will continue as normal.

As yet no groups have claimed responsibility for the acts and it is unclear what connections these groups have. The police and the city have withheld comment for the time being.

The sorts of responses to these actions from the general public and from public figures that were floating about the internet were mostly boring and predictable to Henry, the favourable and unfavourable. It was only the actions themselves that were interesting.

\* \*

Light and the sound of a wailing alarm wakes me in a bottom bunk bed in a small room in the side building at the squat. My back feels uncomfortable from the mattress; it is much

softer than cardboard. Olivia climbs down from the top bunk - we are alone in the room - and she arranges a t-shirt to function as a balaclava as she approaches the door. The police are here to evict us again, she says. Cover up your face and get to the warehouse for a mask and overalls.

I am outside stepping through the garden to the warehouse and already the anarchists are fortifying the barricade they have at the drive-in entrance. Inside the warehouse is a rush of activity. Most are already masked up and all appear to know what to do in the situation. Some anarchists seem bored of pandas and have taken to plain white balaclavas. I get changed slowly into the mask and overalls, and am among a handful of people in the building that remain. A panda walks up to me holding hands with another, with Will's voice.

"This is Liz. Can you stay with her until this is over? It should be safe to watch from the roof if you get behind the bins and you watch out for projectiles."

"I can stay with her. Hi Liz."

We step out back to the garden and up the stairs on the side of the warehouse.

There were six anarchists waiting in pairs on three corners of the roof when we arrived - the two corners that were on the edge of the property and the other that was closest to the property gate. Perhaps they recognised me; we were left to do whatever we liked. They were calm and had noticed already that they were not being raided yet - only being given an alarming amount of police attention. Three police vans and two squad cars waited silently across the street from the entrance, with a squad car waiting at each of the property's other walls.

The anarchists waited in a rough three lines parallel to the front wall, holding thick rectangular cardboard shields with book covers printed over them. Some journalists had already arrived and were filming and taking photos.

Nothing changes. The police loiter and joke around and relax.

"What's happening?" Liz asks, pointing to an unmasked Olivia and Palesa, walking towards the gate. I feel ill.

The pair step out beyond the fence. They are approached by two policewoman who apprehend them.

"Fuck, are they going to jail?" Liz asks.

I stare and think and respond: "If anybody leaves, they get arrested."

“I have work today!”

“Are you okay?”

“What do you mean?”

“I am trying to understand you.”

She looks at me.

“Not being able to go to work,” I say, “this is part of the point.”

“Fuck! Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck.”

“It is easier for visitors. Just call in sick. The anarchists will arrange for you to sneak out at the first chance.”

I feel nauseous. We sit and sit on the roof.

The anarchists come to feel secure that they will not be invaded - they pay less mind to their barricade and contact the people and workplaces they are committed to. They hold an assembly outside. I understand that Liz is not invited, and furthermore that Will may have allowed her to stay on the squat against the collective agreement, and there is little else to do - I wait with her on the roof.

“So what’s your relation to these guys?” she asks, noting that I am not joining the assembly. I can’t hear half of what’s being said, but I enjoy the hand signals the anarchists use to communicate in meetings.

“I’m generally anarcho-friendly,” I say. She laughs. She isn’t familiar with the term ‘anarcho-friendly’.

One of the shop clerks from a nearby corner shop comes by and tosses a newspaper up to one of the roof watchpandas, who drops some money down. The police take the clerk aside and she shrugs them off. The anarchists amuse themselves over the article they find and in time it comes to us.

I read it with a smile, learning like the others for the first time about what some of the others have done the night before. Liz laughs at the picture of the garden in the middle of this highway and I cannot tell if she knows who is responsible.

“These humans are going to be busy for a while,” I tell her. “There’s nothing for us to do unless you want to test your luck and leave. You have probably had less sleep than me. I’ll let one of these pandas know to get Will to find you after the meeting - in the meanwhile let’s go back to sleep.”

Liz thinks and thinks and agrees. I start to feel overwhelmed.

We return to the room with the bunk bed and remove our masks and overalls.

Liz is a strikingly attractive chameleon. Her skin is a polished mosaic of different greens with some red and blue to contour the lines of her body, a beautiful purple line of skin over her shaven head like a mohawk going down beyond her clothing. She wears denim hotpants and a collared shirt knotted at the front, showing her abdomen. We look at each other for a moment with interest and she smiles and her cheeks gain yellow speckles. I get into the lower bunk of the bed and I feel that she is considering getting in with me. Instead she climbs up the side of the bed and clumps into the top bunk.

Liz's slender green hand and multicoloured fingernails hang down from the bunk above me. After a few minutes a long, slimy, worm-like muscle slides over next to her arm. Her relaxed tongue. She must be comfortable with me if she is willing to make herself so vulnerable.

I watch her tongue lift and sink slowly with her breathing for some time. Her tongue shot back and she spoke. She is embarrassed.

"Haven't you noticed I'm a chameleon?"

"How could I miss it?"

"You're surprisingly calm."

"Not much is surprising when you're like this."

"You do seem peculiar."

I stare for some time at the human chameleon that called me strange. As if she understands my critique and then embraces herself, the world disappears and all there is is Liz.

"I am a fan of peculiarity."

"And euphemism," I respond, without my mouth. The only mouth is Liz's mouth and it is a different thing.

She climbs into a not-bed with some sort of me. We sink together into the rushing depths of our wordless minds.

\* \*

Henry went through the same process in the new day. After finding the appropriate zine

on an online library, he printed fifteen copies of it before work and slipped them into the lockers of the workers' changerooms. *Against Democracy*. He added a hopeful note - show these to people in other factories.

This time he did not question his sanity afterward. Instead he read the news and saw an article about some vandalism around the city which he guessed was by the anarchists. He would buy the paper to cut out the article in case he found out that it was them.

At ten-thirty the power went out for load shedding, and when it was not back at two, he sent everybody home. He wanted to see the anarchists so he drove by their place. It was surrounded by police. Charlie did not pick up her phone, and nor did Anne. He assumed that they were busy, and was too concerned about consequences to try to walk in past the police, so he headed home and did some reading. He had started to think that he would like to go back to studying, maybe some Deleuze - some of the anarchists fawned over Deleuze - though whenever he allowed himself to take the idea seriously it disappeared.

By the afternoon anonymous groups had claimed responsibility for the actions the day before. *People are alienated from their waste, they said. Perhaps they will be less wasteful if they see their garbage pile up in front of their faces, if they have a moment to see how much they discard, if they think for a moment that their waste does not simply disappear, that it persists somewhere and accumulates in a mountain of dead substance.*

\* \*

"How are things?" I ask Charlie. The good fever has waned and now I am too aware that Olivia has been taken.

"We've got enough food to feed us comfortably for three days," she replies, "so probably nine at a push. After that we start to starve to death, which the government would be happy with in itself, though presumably things happen before then. In the meanwhile, we make things as uncomfortable for them as possible. We have sick people among us who have to get medicine, we have pregnant people, and we have a couple famous kids too. And we're generally happy to make the government look bad at our expense," she smiled.

"Usually you all have grander plans."

"Well, I'm sure some of us do. It doesn't need to be the case though. We're living how we



want to live. If we're lucky, people will want to live like us too, then it's just my job to help them if they ask."

"Olivia?"

"She's a prolific UCT academic and well-known social commentator - they aren't going to treat her too bad. We've got lawyers, and she's been taken with Palesa who is basically untouchable because her surname is Hani. She'll probably live more comfortably than she does at the squat."

Sometimes it is pleasant to hear things you already know.

\* \*

"And your jobs?" Henry asked Charlie once he finally reached her on the phone.

"I've been saving up on off days. Actually I've never taken an off day. So I can take a couple weeks, if we need to. We probably won't though."

"What makes you say that?"

"We've got friends now!"

"Like who?"

"Like you."

After the call Henry sat alone on his couch in his apartment, rubbing his forehead. He was frustrated. He had been a spectator through this whole thing, interested but always at least one remove from participating. He had been straightforwardly aware of this since his mushroom trip, but he still idled and idled.

Now he felt like he was being relied on, even if in the most vague of ways, by someone he felt like being reliable to. Maybe it was rarely ever the desire for a just world that fuelled revolutionary action. Maybe Charlie just wanted friends, and this was the only way she felt friendship was real. He did not know - Charlie seemed uniquely just to know what she wanted, and got herself out there to do it.

Henry wondered whether he just wanted to be relied upon.

That afternoon he realised there was something he should have done some time ago, something he could have done at any stage after his first visit to the squat.

He liked the idea and wondered about it as he sat around at home and rewatched a

comedy series. First thing in the morning he would take a truck with some workers and equipment and head to the squat. The police would give him a mouthful, but after he would push that he had already been paid and that he needed the work he would be allowed in, once the truck was searched and the inhabitants noted. It would be embarrassing that his workers were black or coloured and that he was white and that he was a capitalist and that the workers waited on orders before taking actions that they were as qualified as him to do. But some of the workers would be clearly amused, and he would realise how obvious it might seem to anyone of them that he had been slipping the pamphlets into their lockers now that they saw where he spent his time.

The water pressure at the squat from the makeshift reservoir was not great, but they would manage to make it work. Even thinking 'we' was uncomfortable for him - 'me and my workers' was better. Grouping himself so casually with people he employed seemed unfair.

Perhaps neither Charlie nor Anne nor Will would be there and he would feel deflated by the lack of pomp around his donation. Perhaps no-one would seem particularly interested in talking with him then, and when he would speak with someone, say, Mohammed - he would feel like he was only being humoured. Perhaps he would leave the squat with little sense of validation.

Later he would write about it in his journal, and want to interpret what they had done in this way: He would be aware that each of the anarchists had done far more for that space and even politics in the country than he had with his measly geysers. They hadn't asked for his hot water, they didn't need it. It was easy to argue nevertheless that they could have been nice about an anarcho-rookie like him making a gesture. But he would think that they wanted him to see himself as one of them, someone who worked among them for his own well-being and his own desire to contribute to a collective project. They would not have made a fuss because they wanted him to be a person for whom such an act was just a normal part of his participation in life.

Henry paced up and down his lounge elaborating on and enjoying his fantastic plan past midnight and went to bed feeling energetic for the next day.

The next morning Henry woke up for work tired. His excitement about helping out the anarchists had left him with little sleep and he had a sense of dread sinking in his solar plexus. He got out of bed, turned on his coffee machine and watered the bonsai in his kitchen window. He made coffee and sat on a couch in his lounge in front of the online news on his laptop screen.

There had been more property destruction overnight, this time going beyond the borders of the city. Henry wondered whether it had been the anarchists, or if the anarchists were relying on others to be confused in the same way. He read about the actions.

Trucks that were used by the fracking industry had been sabotaged similarly to the garbage trucks. Appletizer, which was apparently exported to Israel, had one of its main production plants broken into and sabotaged and then graffitied with anti-occupation slogans, and the city itself was covered in stencilled graffiti, with over one hundred freshly-sprayed surfaces. A new pamphlet on sabotage and its historically successful uses circulated the web. Estimated costs for all the repairs and removals of graffiti were in the millions. The news did not give as much detail this time, perhaps because of how much there was to report on, but for the first time 'terrorism' was used to describe the actions. If the anarchists were involved, the police siege was not hindering their actions.

In the meanwhile, social media was overflowing with information on the protest happening the following day. The anarchists had not been wasting time. However anyone looked at it, the most interesting thing to do with Saturday evening that week was to attend the party parade protest. The anarchists seemed to want to put on a dramatic show, and there was a lot of interest. Many people did not seem to have engaged with anarchism but had a sense that the city and the country and the world needed to be different, and that the

anarchists were a gateway to that. There were many creative types among the anarchists who had put together beautiful flyers and posters. On these were the smart slogans and the endorsements of many people, from Will to Palesa, and others outside of the collective, combined finally with satirical quotes from police and politicians and reporters. On the other end, despite how no-one had claimed responsibility for the destruction of the garbage trucks and the highways, many more people had the sense that it had been the anarchists and there was a clear antipathy towards them for the piles of garbage accumulating on the sidewalks of so many suburbs and the cost to taxpayers for all of the repairs.

Henry headed to work in his car, rubbing at his face. On the way he stopped at a robot and as he waited watched a policeman and woman search another person against a wall on the sidewalk. He wanted to know how to understand that. Were the police protectors of society? Were they just looking for bribes? If they were looking for bribes, were they just bad apples? Or was the whole tree rotten to the roots?

He remembered something he had read a couple weeks before - 'radical' comes from 'radix', the latin word for roots. Until recently he had understood the word just to mean extreme.

He arrived at work and got some employees together to load up their delivery truck with four large solar geysers. Then they headed off to the squat, and only after he left did the thought sink in that he would likely not succeed. They arrived, and he was refused access outright despite his protests and pretences. He returned to work feeling like an idiot.

\* \*

The new day is unkind. The squat is not a desirable place to be and I have missed my chance to escape in my delirium. A group of people has succeeded and the police are more vigilant. It seems none of the escapees are in custody.

The anarchists are worn and grinding on. The wind turbines are shot up and the squat is running off a generator. Inside the squat people put on brave faces, but they are under attack and this makes their wounds heavier and fresher. There is a general assembly inside the warehouse building to discuss the event for the next day. I do not want to participate, but I

climb up onto the main bookshelf and lie within earshot of the meeting. I half-heartedly read and keep my ears open. I am concerned about Charlie; she is feeling stunted, it is visible in the way her cheeks seem heavy like her mother's. Her clear green eyes are calling out for solidarity. I miss Olivia and I begrudge everything for putting her in a cage.

They continue a debate about what to do for the protest that had started the day before. It is not enough for them that the event allows some of them to escape and others to enter. It must cause the police to leave, and even further than that, to be part of an overall attack beyond the space. They will defend, recharge, and attack all at once.

“If the police don't give us a show today, if they clear out, and just come back tomorrow, that'll be the worst thing for us. So we have to attack. We have to show people what the state will do when the gloves are off, and this means making sure the gloves come off and dealing with the blows,” Mohammed said, in his turn to speak.

Their urgency is clear. You may be able to tell by now.

There are arguments. The besieged group are pressed by those anarchists who are outside for input on what they should be doing with the night. It is not easy to include in the assembly the people who are outside of the squat, though most are hardly interested in such centralisation of tactics. Some argue for arson, to some agreement.

“I'd like us to burn down the police stations in Woodstock and Mowbray. And the Biscuit Mill while we're at it,” Marc said, sitting back against his chair, manspreading, his crossed arms covered with tattoos from his wrists to beyond his t-shirt sleeves. “That's a real rupture which'll give us room to work with.”

“You cannot be serious,” Vimbai said, rubbing her nose up between her eyebrows with her fingers. “The only reason we're still here is because we have broad support. How quick do you think we will lose that if we start burning down the things that people depend on? We're not ready to be associated with things like that.”

“You don't get it. We've got the whole of lower Woodstock behind us on the anti-gentrification project, and they're hating the police ever since the recent evictions. We can throw Mowbray in along with it and do ourselves a favour. It's a shame we've only got three

groups.”

“That’s crazy,” Sizwe said, cutting in, leaning forward in white overalls, rubbing his palms on his thighs. “You’re sounding more and more like some religious fundamentalist these days, Marc. Random violence isn’t going to get us anywhere.” Alex sat silently. The whole room is aware that the ‘fundamentalist’ reference is directed at him and the nihilists.

“What’s random about police stations and the symbol of gentrification in Cape Town?” Marc said. “Nice ableism, by the way.”

“Forgive me, I still have a lot to unlearn,” Sizwe said, as an aside. He turns back to Marc, “I’m telling you it’s a bad idea. They can crush us if it comes to battle of blunt force. Why do we need to keep bringing up how we need more support before we do anything like that?”

“First off,” Marc replies, “*we* ’ll be in here when it happens. *We* have the perfect alibi. We’re a liminal space between other powers and we have to drive a chisel through it and tear it open. You know tonight’s going to be a huge one for the people who are coming to this event. They’re going to see whose side the police are on when the time comes. We have to ride that wave. Or we can just plod on with these positive projects that function only to postpone political and ecological collapse by making capitalism a little bit easier for some. We have to negate, to destroy.”

I glance over at the anarchists. Many are shaking their hands upwards, to show their agreement without interrupting the speaker. As many are shaking their hands downwards.

“Marc, everyone, listen. Listen,” Vimbai said. “We have to keep remembering the context. Our hands are tied. We can’t go to war with the state just yet or they will crush us. Why isn’t the conversation ending there?”

“Because you are the ones who aren’t remembering the context. This planet is a catastrophic climate change timebomb - we can’t wait around for gradual growth. This squat can’t be a stepping stone in a river to anarchy, it has to be a lily pad we move so fast over it doesn’t have time to sink. This is why we have to attack now and we have to rely on serendipity. We have to be as smart as we can while being more brazen than we imagine is viable.”

More hands of agreement and disagreement. Most agree with Vimbai and Sizwe’s group and I see the lines drawn between groups of people and their ideas. People start talking out of turn. I notice for the first time Stace coordinating the conversation.

Andreia suggests other options. It goes nowhere, and they decide to move onto plans

around those parts of the evening they will participate directly in.

They consider a plan to hold a rally, ostensibly against everything that is wrong with Cape Town and against the mundanity of privileged lives and the horror of marginalised life programmed by late capitalism, but they will direct their energy against the police and its actions. There will be a full rock band on the roof headed by Andreia and they will narrate a journey projected on a screen introducing the anarchist perspective of police and showing footage of some of the various massacres, murders, and beatings the police have dished out over the last few years. At its height, the anarchists are going to rush the main entrance in a tight formation while those who need to get in or out do so over a convenient wall, and others exchange supplies by throwing them up to the anarchists on the roof from the sidewalk outside.

The point overall is not complex - it is one of seduction. Transformation relies on disobedience. Nothing opens up a sense of possibility more than transgressing reified rules. The squat is a transformed space that exists as a sort of frontier - something under which new possibilities may emerge. We invite people to be in the space and experience it for themselves, without having them commit to anything that would make them want to stay home. Between the information we give them, and their own attack on the police, we infect them with curiosity that allows them to go beyond what they would have found possible for themselves. The people who have come, who must themselves be at least interested in our actions, will discover new desires, desires that would not have been felt or acted upon outside of this contagious space. With that we may ethically draw them from their political slumber. This is unfortunately the best plan the anarchists have - but other anarchists have kept squats with less.

Mahlatse argues that it would be patronising to hold a Beatles rooftop concert for the poor middle class that needs to be spoon-fed a revolution; a few people become wholly uncomfortable with the plan. More people than that are concerned the plan is too wishy-washy. Most are not in the mood to be creative - the collective feels stifled by the weight of the siege.

After an hour of talking in circles they reach a consensus to go with the original plan for the rooftop concert unless someone comes up with a better idea. Those members who are

outside of the siege will figure out entirely on their own what they want to do with their part of the action. The meeting breaks and the anarchists go back to their usual duties.

\* \*

Henry recalled the conversation he had with his brother the night before to write it in his journal. They spoke quite often, once every three days or so. Mostly Jamie called him - though he believed he would call Jamie more if that was not their habit. Jamie spoke little of himself today, brushing over the fact that he had started a job at their old school coaching rugby.

“I hear Charlie’s little buddies are making the news.”

“Yeah.” Henry knew then that his words would be analysed. He was given the most open-ended statement to respond to, along with the slight provocation in ‘Charlie’s *little* buddies’, because his brother could learn a lot from how he answered the question. “They’re doing a lot of interesting things. I tried to see her today but I didn’t get a chance.”

“You need to watch out what you do with that lot. You saw the news today. I know you like them and all, but they’re basically asking the cops to send them to jail.”

“I’ll be fine. They seem to be pretty confident about what they’re doing and Charlie isn’t the sort of person who would put me in danger.”

“When you’re behind bars taking it up the nought we’ll see about ‘I’ll be fine.’ Don’t be an idiot, Ennie. You need to make sure you know what you’re doing.”

“I know, I know. I don’t need a lecture.”

“Well there’s no use in me saying these things after you’re sharing a room with sixty prison-gang bullqueers in Pollsmoor.”

Henry laughed, mostly to reduce the tension of the conversation.

“How’s dad?”

“He’s bored. Same old. Going fishing this weekend in the boat. It’s one temporary amusement to the next.”

“The boat?”

“He bought a boat last week, didn’t he tell you?”

Henry’s solar plexus sunk.



“Ah. I actually haven’t really spoken with him for a while. A little fishing boat?”

“Dad didn’t fuck around - it’s a nice boat. You need to stop being useless and call him up sometime. Ask him yourself.”

“I will, I will. Relax.” Henry was feeling anxious. He realised he did not want his father spending money - his father could not afford it in some of the possible futures Henry saw.

“How’s the coaching been?”

“Lekker. I’ve got the under-sixteen Bs. Our first game is in a week and a half. It’s awesome. They’re like my little pawns - little minions I can send to do my bidding.”

“Sounds like you’re having fun.”

The line went quiet for a moment. Jamie spoke just before Henry came up with something new to say.

“Do you remember when we were in hospital for mom, the two sisters who’d been poisoned in the same ward room as her?”

“No. What sisters?”

“The kids whose father had been killed, whose mother had poisoned the whole family’s dinner soon after because of their financial situation? There was a mother, two daughters, and a son who was a lot younger. Name’s Dean.”

“Jesus. No I don’t remember that.”

There was silence on the line for a moment before Jamie continued.

“I dunno how the fuck you don’t remember that. The point is the son is in my team. I recognised his sisters. They came to watch him practice. They’re alive. For fuck’s sakes.”

“Wow. I don’t know what to say. Did you speak with them?”

“I haven’t. They weren’t conscious when we were around, I think, and the kid was seven and obviously completely fucking destroyed. I’ve thought about it, but it’s awkward to tell somebody you remember them from the day their mother tried to kill their whole family.”

“You okay?”

“Ag I’m fine, it’s just heavy. I heard the other day that in Japanese the word for heavy is the same as the word for thought.”

“I didn’t know that. Yeah.”

“You know something else? Teboho’s gay.”

“Who?”

“Teboho Maledi. Head boy in my year. You were in those plays with him.”

“Ah, Teboho.”

“He told everyone he was gay two days ago. On the internet for all to see.”

“That’s tough.”

“I had no idea. I used to crack gay jokes with him all the time. He’s such a good oke. My minions too, the whole school, probably even the gay kids, they rip it with the gay cracks. Teboho’s twenty-four. Fuck.”

Henry thought about the anarchists.

“So what are you doing about it?”

“What do you mean?”

“Teboho. Your kids.”

“I haven’t really thought about it yet, Ennie.”

“I’ve been reminded lately of how heavy thinking is for people who grew up like we did. I remember teachers telling us how we lived in a bubble away from the real world. We all just kinda nodded in agreement and went about our day. I think we live in a made-up world that has a sort of logic that justifies itself and makes it hard to see beyond it.”

“Ja. I guess so. Alright bro I’ve gotta go get ready to meet some mates tonight.”

“Cool Jay, keep well.”

“Ciao Ennie.”

Getting out of control is the point, which is precisely why the riot is the foundation from which any future worth the name must be built.

Yugen

Movement and concerned conversation rouse me from a mat in the dark sleeping quarters. Commotion grows and it is impossible to return to sleep as shouting breaks out.

A meeting has begun. There is no sound from the generator room because it is dead.

“In simple terms,” Alex says, “somebody put unleaded in the tank. All of our remaining stocked petrol is unleaded. Our generator runs on diesel. And we probably can’t just drain it and put in diesel, even if we had diesel, because it looks like the engine is fucked. We’ve got no electricity.” He wrings his hands. His blue-grey nail polish is freshly-applied. “I’d say the easiest thing for us to do would be to fix the wind turbines, but I assume they’ll just get shot up again. So unless we fix the part that’s ruined, which we could probably have somebody toss over the wall, and get diesel, which would be the problem, we don’t get to have a generator. I’m sorry, I thought it was sounding weird, but I didn’t think too much about it.”

The sun will rise soon and the anarchists are bickering. Jaz and Patience apologise for their blunder with the petrol. They are part of the Vimbai group and their failure does not go ignored. The meeting is disintegrating. I am out of place and associated with the group of serendipitists; there is little I can do to help.

\* \*

Henry sat at work browsing the internet. He checked up the anarchists’ site and clicked around for news. He was bored, so he went through the archives. The anarchists had

documented the process of coming to the squat, starting with its history as an engineering facility for the hospital during apartheid, and photographs from the first days that they scouted it. They showed the main warehouse emptied out, with the remnants of garbage and cardboard bedding indicating that there had been homeless people sleeping there at some stage. Where paint remained on the walls it was crumbling and bubbled. About a tenth of the windows were broken, the rest were so dusty that little light got in from outside. The floors were cracked deep. The long-thin building on the plot housed a bathroom that had been stripped of all metals, the doors and even the toilets were missing in some stalls. What did remain were steel gate doors on some of the rooms in that building, but inside there was nothing of interest - a yellow chair and table, a filing cabinet caked in dust. The whole of the outside was paved with concrete, cracked and with lines of weeds growing high through them.

Recent photographs showed the squat to be a wholly different place. More than half of the outside space had changed from concrete to a garden, with mostly vegetables planted but a line of flowers around the edges and a line of fruit trees along the walls. People got around by stepping on stepping-stone paths in the gardens, and there was a small area that remained paved, where the outdoor stalls of the bookfair had been. On the wall of the warehouse visible from the entrance to the property, there was a large board for wheatpasting or writing messages. At the moment it was publicising the website.

The windows were repaired, the walls were painted. The after-photos of the outside of the building showed a shiny-white coat of paint or a well-designed mural. The anarchists loved murals.

Henry read over the instructions for the evening again:

*If you think that something is wrong, that your life and the lives of others are not fully and freely lived, and that there's something about the way the world is built that is the cause, something that limits your options, here is a chance to participate in something real and to feel yourself be closer to where you want to be.*

*We recommend you find yourself in Obs earlier rather than later. If you would like an idea of what to do there, attend the (independent) free event held by the Theatre Arts Collective in the hall of the Methodist Church, which will be from 4pm to 6.15. We*

*recommend this to make sure that you will not have trouble between finding your way to the squat, the traffic, parking for those of you who drive, and whatever obstacles that might appear. Everyone should arrive at the squat at the same time - 7pm. If the event is shut down or otherwise does not occur we rely on you to use your brains and spend some time elsewhere nearby - Lower Main Road is lined with places where one can kill time. Upon and just prior to arrival at the squat, wearing masks or other facial covering is welcome and encouraged, though not necessary. See our link to why we prefer to mask up if you are interested, and note that prepared masks are useful if one is in the vicinity of tear gas. There will likely be a strong police presence, possibly even at the Theatre Arts event, among them will be riot police with tear gas and other non-lethal means of harming.*

*Mass media and alternative media people will be there and are likely to keep the police in check, so you needn't worry about lethal violence. Among the crowd will be other anarchists who will be there to help in general. We recommend you bring a hard board as a placard for a message, as well as to shield from rubber bullets should they be fired. Follow our link in the recommended reading section to a document on safe ways of participating in protests if you are interested. Keep in mind that we have not got permission for the gathering and would not ask for it anyway, furthermore that insofar as this is considered a protest by the government, use of masks will be considered illegal and wearing one might cause police to harass you. At no stage does anyone need to be violent, but all should be aware that the police may not care whether you are violent or not. Once people are settled, a group of protesters will be allowed onto the property to provide a crowd for trapped anarchists to escape into. Thereafter we'll let you know what we would like to do, and those of you who would like to join us are welcome!*

Henry set off in his car alone at around four p.m. to Observatory. In the back seat there was a placard he had reinforced with a steel sheet cutoff from his factory, covered in a large black rubbish bag. He kept a mask he had bought at the book fair in his bag in front of the passenger seat. He had considered asking some of his old friends to join him, but he felt like being around them would make him fall into old patterns of behaviour that he hoped to break out of. If you go on holiday on your own you're forced to make new friends.

He was glad of it too, because when he parked on the far side of the bridge on Station

Road and headed up towards the Theatre Arts building he saw Daniel, the homeless person who had been beaten by the politician the first day at the Shap, with another grey-haired man in a good-looking but humble blue suit and fedora hat, sitting opposite each other at a table outside a cafe, with a case for an instrument of some sort at his feet, perhaps a trombone. Henry felt like he should live up to the feeling he had - he stopped at the table.

“You guys mind if I join you for a bit?”

The man in the suit did not reply, he only put his cigarette out in the ashtray on the table and pulled out the empty chair. Henry put down the rubbish bag, and sat down.

“I’m Henry.”

“Mose. And this is Daniel.” he said, lighting up a new cigarette, squinting his eyes as he dragged on it. “What brings you here?” Daniel nods his head slightly, Henry interprets it as an acknowledgement.

“I’m going to go to the protest later at the squat.”

“Oh, a protest? Do you kids even know how to protest these days?”

“We’re learning, I think.”

Henry notices that Daniel stinks, but not nearly as much as the last time.

“What brings you here,” Henry replies.

“I’m visiting a friend,” Mose says, with a wag of his cigarette-holding fingers in Daniel’s direction. “I grew up with this old fuck. We were the outcasts of Bishops, which is still more-than-square in the real world. He got me into music,” he slapped the case at his side, then paused, taking a drag of his cigarette. “I was best man at his wedding. And now we’re here, huh, buddy?”

Daniel sat, unresponsive, milky coffee sogging up his beard.

“We used to play together even when he was on the street. About fifteen years ago we lost that too. Nowadays the best I can do for him is stop by, give him a meal and make sure he’s got music to listen to.”

Henry noticed that Daniel had new headphones.

“This is the only place in Obs that will let him sit and eat now that that other café with the books closed. And that’s only if he takes a bath first.”

“The Shap?”

“Sounds familiar.”

“What happened to him?”

“He’s hydrophobic. Won’t go near a shower if he can help it.”

“That’s all?”

“Oh, I thought you meant... I was on a different track. Ask him yourself.”

The old worn-out man in the old worn-out robe looked like he had not been following the conversation at all.

“Daniel, what’s your story?”

“You fucking bastard,” he muttered, not clearly directing it at Henry.

“I’m sorry,” Henry said, looking to Mose for his response. There was none. Daniel spat as he spoke the harsh sounds;

“You fucking anthropologist fucking bastard.”

“Don’t be too bothered,” Mose said. “It’s a bad day.”

“I should go,” Henry said. Daniel was muttering curses now, he had put his headphones on and seemed calmer.

“If you like,” Mose replied, taking a drag of his cigarette.

“Good to meet you,” Henry said, picking up a bag in each hand.

In a flash, Daniel snatched Henry’s left arm. He gripped it tight, and startled him. The hand felt grimy, infectious, to Henry, and immediately felt shame for his feeling. Daniel spat words out, they weren’t clear, and stared sharp into Henry’s eyes, with his scraggly long grey hair, his beard saturated with coffee. They stared for a few seconds and Daniel released his hand. Henry walked away.

\* \*

The anarchists fight each other and undo their agreements. Charlie is upset.

I go onto the roof to breathe. I can feel another attack of fever on its way to me.

The police are assembled. It is a spectacular view.

Cape Town tries to be what it calls ‘a world class city’ - and by that it means the capital of a rich social democratic state like Helsinki. To be the southernmost part of Europe. Cape Town tries to forget that it is a part of Africa and that its history is a South African history. Cape Town does that by pushing its margins right off its map

sending the homeless to forced labour camps  
gentrifying the coloured community out  
changing public benches into cubic seats in order to prevent people from sleeping on  
them  
redesigning bridge underpasses so that people can't live underneath them  
Kofimprisoningndsofmo nrfsdpfpitransgenderndpo aptoiletsogm  
Lmgosmfoodef pfefcolonisationneinf eonnasdniwahungryppf adafwsexworkerevsht  
uybtvvacuousuonm  
Faipmdfpao mosdf, independentapdifnos indfwependent  
Ddewerwqerfhsexistjtjutktdyhealthjnff  
  
fever

\* \*

*A little bit of everything.* Over the last two hours, spent alone with a book in a coffeeshop, Henry had come to be sure that this was what Daniel had said to him as he had gripped his arm.

Maybe it had been nonsense.

Walking out of the public bathroom on Station Road towards the squat Henry felt sick with nervousness. He was in his panda mask with a white jersey and blue jeans, and his shoes were wrapped in black plastic bags. And he was not the only one. Different people were heading up the road, about half with masks and most with boards of some sort.

One was his favourite so far:

~~“SPREAD ANARCHY!~~

*DON'T TELL ME*

*WHAT TO DO!”*

His was artless enough that he became self-conscious:



“RELEASE  
PALESA  
& OLIVIA”

Henry did not like how plain he was.

Some placards were straightforward, some amusing, others seemed misguided and contrary to what Henry thought the event was about. Henry walked up to a group with the placard he liked and introduced himself and asked to join.

They approached the top of the road where a larger group was hesitating to cross over to the side of Main Road that the squat was on. The first part of anything that Henry could see was the flashing blue lights of a squad car reflecting on the white wall of a corner shop on Main Road.

It soon became clear how the government was approaching this protest. Once Henry had joined the tentative crowd he saw that there were two large armoured police vans, ‘nyalas’, he thought they were called, in the road, and this was the road furthest from the entrance. To get there, they would have to circle the property clockwise.

South African riot police were all tall and bulky. This, Henry learned, was no accident. Not one of them was shorter than six-foot-two. They were thick-necked, meaty, and in sophisticated armour. He would not forget the first van he walked past - side door open, brimming with these monsters - and the one closest to the exit sat still with a face of hatred. He thought, there are nineteen-year-old women hardly a metre and a half tall here, and further he thought, there is no way that the anarchists could be successful. That man with that face could kill them with a baton. The police knew that, they all knew that, there was no way people were going to stick around to become casualties. The tense undertone he had seen in some of the people as he walked up the road was not nearly tense enough. A hundred giants guarded the squat.

They did not have batons, as he had assumed. They had rubber sjamboks, and shields on their backs, and what looked like shotguns. Henry caught himself thinking it absurd that he hoped the bullets were rubber.

He had been wrong about the ages of the crowd, too. There were eight-or-so-year-old children with their mid-thirties parents, and people he guessed were in their mid-sixties.

As people trickled in from around Obs the group of people swelled and they talked incredulously about the police that they saw. Soon it became clear that another group was ballooning on the parallel Milton Road, because it had started to spill across the street onto the sidewalk against the walls of the squat. They would have to cross a riot truck to join Henry's group, which was in the process of getting around the property to the entrance.

Henry saw many people turn back as soon as they realised what they were up against. The photos he had seen of South African riot police in the news did not leave nearly the same impression he had with them in front of him. Either the anarchists did not have enough time to mention this, or maybe they forgot, or maybe they did not want to scare people away until they saw for themselves. Henry became concerned that he had not come with friends.

In the crowds approaching the squat, for every handful that backtracked, there was one or two who brazenly stepped forward, encouraging the others, reminding them that the police could not just do anything with all the cameras around. The armoured meat giants were still, and Henry did notice that they were already under the lens of at least one television camera, and several photographers.

This was enough for the braver ones among us to cross the street. They quickly filled the pavement and people seemed nervous about what it would mean to stand in the street. The group became cramped for space as the people in the front moved forward more slowly than they were being forced forward by people coming to Henry's side of the road. There were a lot of protesters. Henry guessed that there were around two hundred in his sight alone.

He saw no faces he recognised of the anarchists, which was to be expected - they would most likely be wearing masks. He wished he could see them. He realised he was afraid, but the situation was too far outside of his sense of normal for him to know what he was afraid of.

The group walked up the road along the dimly-lit sidewalk at the wall opposite the entrance to the squat and around the far corner, which exposed them to the sight of two ambulances and two more riot nyalas - this time Henry did not look inside the van to see their faces.

Now that they were going onto a less busy road they flooded it, and others were more

confident now that Henry's group had gone as far as they had without so much as a peep from police. That was until they heard a voice coming from a loudspeaker.

*This is an illegal protest. Masks are illegal. Your presence here constitutes assisting criminal actions. Disperse immediately or we will have to use force.*

That they used words you would expect added a confusing sense of unreality to the dread.

When more cops and protesters were revealed around the last corner more of Henry's group met their wits' end and left.

As Henry approached the three lines of riot police blocking off the entrance to the squat he did not think about Charlie, or anarchy, or his factory, or the fact that it was Saturday evening, or the fact that he was himself, with all his history and all his personality. He was reembodyed. For a few seconds he was in that space, walking firmly behind the masked person he had trailed for some time, seeing the police, feeling each step, feeling the placard in his right hand, feeling his warm breath in the cotton over his face, moving, aware only of his immediate surroundings.

\* \*

The comfort of the tunnels call. There are men with weapons waiting to harm me and put me in a cage and I have only my worn clothing to pad the blows. I imagine my cheek bone cracking under the force of a rubber bullet. I imagine life as a tunnel person with a disfigured face. I am glad at least that the anarchists have been feeding me better than I feed myself, though two days of round meals will not make my body any less frail. Between the anarchists and the tunnels is violence and unlike you I do not imagine myself to be immune.

\* \*

Henry could see no-one on the property at all, no light coming from the windows, and still no-one familiar in the crowd. He did not know what he expected, but it had not been that. Five minutes passed and more people gathered around the entrance but well out of range of

the police sjamboks, while the police themselves returned to doing nothing.

They were soon just standing around. Some people were chatting. Some were asking what was going on, and nobody had answers. Even the riot cops seemed to become accustomed to the inactive situation and loosened up. They were supposed to be there at seven, all at once, with a bang. It was almost quarter past. Some people sat down. There were some large rowdy groups, some drunk people, and they were all still quite excitable, but something seemed deflated. As for Henry, he did not even recognise any people he did not want to see, who at that stage would have been a relief.

Eventually they heard the loudspeaker again.

*This is the police. As you can see, nothing is happening here. Please leave the area immediately. Those who remain by quarter to eight will be apprehended and arrested.*

Another twenty percent left, but the group was over four hundred strong. Henry thought that people assumed that this was part of the anarchist's plan, or that they remained in mere defiance, or that they were just incredulous about the possibility of the event being a non-event.

Henry kept thinking about that riot cop in that van and his hateful face. What did a person have to believe about the protesters to look at them that way? Henry could only imagine the narratives they were fed by their officers.

\* \*

The anarchists fail to do anything, even to agree on what to tell the people who wait patiently outside the squat. It is unpleasant. Some threats are made, many lines are drawn. The anarchists on the outside will be doing their own thing. None of them can believe that they are going to abandon everyone outside, but that is exactly what they are doing.

Alex is speaking.

They are arguing about the bombs.

Olivia is not here and it is cold and lonely and the tunnels are calling.

\* \*

At forty past seven the protesters were all edgy and frustrated, and Henry saw the first people he recognised. Garth and Liam, the ragged superhero duo from the first day he had been in the Shap, walked amused through the crowds, dressed as usual like ninja turtles, though today they were not obviously homeless or unusual because many people were dressed up and masked.

Henry watched them walk up the no-man's land between the group of riot police and the people. He was further back in the crowd, among the more deflated visitors, not realising that those near the front lines were in a different headspace. As he saw it, out of earshot, Garth spoke to one of the protesters, and received a response, then looked to Liam before pointing at the police with his plastic sword while talking.

As it was told, the conversation went like this.

“You aren't really a rhino! What are you doing like that?”

Apparently the listeners understood Garth not to be joking, and tried to be straightforward and forthcoming about it.

“We're here because police like that assault people like us and put them in prison. They locked up two people who live here, and they have trapped people inside. We're here because everyone is trapped in a world where police like this exist.”

“Those guys are bad guys?”

“Yes, they're bad guys.”

Garth turned to Liam and shouted something that no-one else understood.

They rushed the crowd of police, plastic swords in hand, immediately followed by the group of people they spoke with, who had realised what they caused. Garth and Liam had already attacked, starting with an unforgettable flying kick from Garth, landing sharp in the thick bare throat of a cop, and were both already being beaten. Liam was the only one who shrieked in pain, Garth was possibly not even yet aware he was being whipped. Henry felt the

need to rush to help, but moved with hesitation, while the people who spoke with them leapt in, trying to pull the pair from the beating, trying to separate themselves, while others tried to shout explanations, but those who got in the way were only absorbed in the beating, and this only caused more people to rush to help, except now some people were pushing police away, trying physically to hold them back, some soon were completely engaged in fighting with the police. Some rushed to leave as the violence broke out, many rushed to help, many rushed to see what was happening, people were pushed and shoved, people shouted and screamed, and the police from the closest van started to close in, while the police van itself issued orders over a megaphone that were inaudible as the collision exploded.

In less than a minute, there were over a hundred people fighting the forty-or-so police in the area around the entrance to the squat. Henry continued to head towards Garth and Liam - though Garth was being beaten on the floor and Liam had been dragged away some way from the action. He wanted to help Liam get out. Tear gas canisters were shot into the back of the crowd, away from the police, ironically trapping many of the people into engagement with the police. As if they were experienced, some people ran to the canisters and tossed them back - but even one at a distance was enough to be very unpleasant. Everyone was choking. It burned terribly down his throat, through his sinuses, in his eyes. It had no smell. Henry passed a group of three riot police in the mess on the way to Liam and one of them struck his back with a sjambok. It was a terrible numbness. By the time Henry reached Liam, Liam had been pulled into the largest group of police and had been bound up. On the peripheries some people were being thrown to the ground and having their hands tied behind their backs with thick cable-tie handcuffs, but in the centre most people were being beaten to the peripheries. Henry had lost his objective infinitely far beyond the line of the police, and was watching everyone, including some police, cough as they swore and beat each other while protecting the people on their side. Some people wore goggles - he saw other people putting on wet masks. In front of him he saw a girl, around twenty-three, unmasked, standing still for a moment as he had, breathing deeply, breathing quickly, coughing, then turning and running up to a riot cop and kicking him in the back of the knee as he tried to grab someone else, before running off through a gap in the riot cops' line and disappearing. Protesters were shouting for everyone to stop, but the only way to avoid being attacked was to run from the scene, which, between the tear gas and the thin line of riot police forming around the area,

was not an appealing option alone. Henry realised he had just been standing, watching, squinting his eyes and coughing but somehow unaffected as people rushed and squirmed and punched and pushed around him, until someone in another rhino mask yanked him away from a riot cop whose sjambok was coming down on him, catching him on the arm.

“Wake up!”

Henry felt a surge of energy. He dodged another blow from a sjambok, and noticed the number of people being tied up was growing. He saw a policeman grab at someone who was trying to get out, saw him reach for cable-tie cuffs, and he did not think as he sprinted up to him and ran a clenched fist through his jaw. The policeman dropped to the ground, and Henry was stunned and terrified, and amazed.

As if his fist had pressed a button, the anarchists rushed out of their squat and collided with the police. Henry did not stick around. As soon as he had hit that cop he saw three rush towards him and he moved in the opposite direction. He ducked and dove his way out as he had as a rugby player in high school and back over Main Road. He jogged down the street, self-conscious but surrounded by enough other escaping protesters that he could bear the experience, then stopped at a bar, changed clothes in a toilet stall, and drove home reeling.

Back in his apartment later, after checking the news, after frustratedly feeling he had no one to talk with about what had happened, he lay in bed as his mind rushed with thoughts.

He was angry with the anarchists.

At the same time, he kept running an experience through his mind - punching the riot cop. He learned something in that moment. He learned that police are things that people can hit; he learned through a thoughtless action that something was thinkable. He had only ever thought his way into thinkability before, never acted. And it might generalise - the anarchists, with their anti-authoritarian foundation, whatever else they are; they are among so few who will ever have the opportunity to have this sort of experience.

What upset him more was the credit he gave the anarchists when they were not part of anything he did. They did not show him anything. He just learned it. They inexplicably waited, for five minutes or half an hour, he was not sure - for some of the protesters to be tied up before they decided even to show up. Henry did not understand, and he did not know if he should be trying to interpret their actions in some favourable way; they wanted us to revolt on our own, they did not want to be our leaders - or if they just abandoned everyone in the

middle of a fight with the cops they asked for help with.



Without a sense that Olivia is in the world, even the tunnels are uncomfortable. I sit on my platform in the dark with only the occasional trickle of water reaching my ears.

In this darkness the tunnels seem to be everything and infinite and even the most mundane of thoughts carry me through an abyss where I lose myself as my attention rushes outward from my body along lines of thought connected as images and the lines become vibrations making up everything where between them are whole worlds that can be investigated if only I were not already so busy following my thoughts.

I come up for air, and though it is fresh I feel no less trapped. I would prefer not to exist.

\* \*

The anarchists put a statement on their website. A lot of the online responses to it have been favourable - 'understanding'. It was different for Henry. He wondered how many more like him were unable to sleep because of the welts streaked over their bodies from the sjamboks. Worse still, the stress of those people who were arrested - regardless of the fact that, aside from a few identified as instigators, they were released. And Garth, who had been re-institutionalised at Valkenberg.

Henry had started to feel like there was something to them and now it felt tainted. He could not help but take their failure personally.

\* \*

The tunnels are a paradise for an anarchist cliché.

They pass underneath the UCT Hiddingh campus, underneath the train station. They come out in the street outside a major news media conglomerate.

They lie under parliament.

The far east tunnel is my favourite. There are safe exits in Vredehoek, CPU, District Six, along the train track, and the oceanside.

There is no counting exits or corners; the walk is all the way down, in a reflector vest and hardhat, a bag and sack over the shoulders and dynamo torch in hand.

There is a heavy-duty waterproof cordless drill in the sack. One hundred percent waterproof, the box says. It had been left visible-enough, under the driver's seat of a four-by-four, for someone to smash the window and escape with it in good time.

The ocean exit is close to a small outlet into the ocean itself, and a short distance more from the Royal Cape Yacht Club.

In working hours, a person with a reflector vest and hardhat has the power to become invisible. I walk the concrete promenade to the yacht berths in a small artificial bay. I walk its borders, scouting the boats for activity, and find a corner to get changed into a short-sleeved wetsuit. There are six yachts in a row with no signs of recent life. I slip into the water with the sack.

I am not as fit as I expect, and the water is colder than I imagine, much colder, but I emerge a half hour later.

The amateurish pictures I draw with holes are further spoiled when I drive a long thick bolt through them and yank it around until the surface cracks open. The drill does not last long, it is now on the floor of the bay. I get dressed back into the invisibility suit and return to the tunnels feeling the cold and the anticlimax and I long for the ability to take Olivia away from the police.

On the platform where I sleep I cover myself in blankets and cardboard for warmth. I decide not to go to the anarchists for a while.

\* \*

Henry decided that morning to take a break from the anarchists. He would do some

reading. He noted to himself that, besides Vaneigem - whom he loved but he read as anarchist - he had not actually read much cutting-edge Marxist texts or any other alternatives there might be, if there were any; he had been rushing towards anarchy without having even read up on his options. It was disconcerting for him to believe the particular beliefs that were held by a group he wanted something from. He could not tell if he believed them because he wanted to or because they were reasonable.

Henry's decision was followed by his brother's arrival in Cape Town for a surprise visit the next day. Henry was glad for the company. He got a phone call from Jamie at the end of the work day saying he had just landed, he was renting a car, and he would meet him at his flat in an hour.

Since last time he had seen his brother, Jamie had gained the beginnings of a beer belly. They had never looked similar - only their heights were the same. Jamie was bulkier, and his light brown bed-head and beard together with his premier league football jersey showed that he retained the role of a youthful student-type, not yet assimilated into the more homogenous-haired and stalely-dressed world of professionalism. They hugged, put Jamie's bags inside, and went out for a drink at a bar down the block.

"So, what's been cracking this side?" Jamie asked.

"Not much. Factory's set up and running. It's been pretty much as expected. You can come see it tomorrow if you like. What made you come down?"

"It's been six months since I saw you. Who needs more reasons."

"That I know; I mean, don't you have uni?"

"I've got a few weeks before my last exam. The old man bought me a ticket."

"How's school?"

"Eh. You eat shit doing the graft, you pass, repeat. Except now I've only got the one exam left and I'll be fucked if I'm going to apply for a Masters in Business Science," Jamie clenched his jaw.

"Still nothing you want to do?"

"I mean, I have options. I just don't know which to take because none of them are, agh, it's not that they need to be perfect. It's that they should be."

"Perfect?"

"I don't know why anybody would work if they didn't have to. All my mates have shit

jobs, even the one or two who actually like theirs. I had that farewell last week - I was thinking about it - Mikey's going to fly planes in Dubai and live in a little South African ghetto in the middle of what's supposed to be a desert. Just because. He says it'll be a change, and he's getting paid some ridiculous amount of money. And the only reason he became a pilot is because he got some sort of insane discount in his training through his uncle or something. Sometimes I think about that and think I should just fucking pull the same nepotism card you did and leave it at that. I don't know. Most of the rest of my mates who are working are just schnarfing coke four five times a week like it's all they've got to do. I'm stressed even despite these anxiety pills about this fucking job thing. But I didn't come here to talk about that," he said, gritting his teeth. "What's going on with you - don't just mention the factory and leave it at that. You have any luck with Charlie? You read the news today right?"

"I did. Agh, nothing's happening there. I'm a bit over all of that at the moment."

"Is it? The whole city's out of joint. And nothing's happening with the 'anarchists'?"

"Not for me! I think they might be full of shit. I don't know about Charlie, but I'm not in a rush to find out right now."

"Something happen?"

"I'm just a bit pissed off with them for abandoning all those people at the protest."

"The hippies and the degenerates?"

"There were a lot of different people there."

"Still, it's no joke what they've done now. The police are making serious shit for them for burning down their stations, even if it was obviously not anybody inside the squat. And apparently they're linked to all the sugar that was poured into the gas tanks at those fracking sites."

"I haven't heard about any fracking thing. Anyway, the police should buy it if they have half a brain - the whole point of anarchy is that organisation is decentralised - so the group in the squat could easily have had nothing to do with the police station thing. They're lucky no cops died. Whatever, I don't really feel like talking about it."

"You okay?"

"Yeah."

"Sure?"

"Yeah. I'm just a bit disappointed in what happened. Up till now they actually seemed

solid.”

“Solid, my ass. You can’t go burning down police stations. Apparently they hardly had time to get detainees out of the holding cells at Woodstock. Imagine how many records were lost in the fires. They have enough trouble convicting rapists in this country without having all their evidence burned by people with a boner for making life difficult.”

“I mean, it’s not that simple. They’ve got a stack of reasons why they do what they do. You sound like the Sunday Times.”

“I don’t see the reasons.”

“Yeah but, I mean, have you even engaged with the arguments? How much do you actually know about politics in this country? Do you know a single thing beyond the minimal amount you’ve gleaned off of a couple shallow articles and the opinion of random unsympathetic people?”

“Okay fine.”

They both took a drink of their beers.

“Anything happened with the sisters from the hospital?”

“Actually I spoke to them the day after I told you about them. They came to watch Dean at the match on Saturday,” he smiled. “I didn’t actually mention that I knew their situation. I mean, they obviously didn’t know who I was. Really it’s not a big deal. But I feel excited about them. Like I know it’s no big deal that we happened to be in the same hospital ward that day, but something about... in that specific time - I know you don’t remember them. I don’t know, I feel like I care about them.”

“Yeah? That’s cool.”

“It is kinda cool.”

“Alright, what did you say to them?”

“We just talked about Phillip. And rugby. And about each other. I didn’t want to be too inquisitive. It seems like they’ve been working since high school, the older one, Becca, works in web design and apps and what-what, and Cassy works half-day at some upmarket tailor and makes custom clothing in her spare time.”

“Cool. So you just going to play it by ear with them or you got a plan?”

“I’ve been thinking of asking Cassy out for a drink.”

“Oh. Alright. Like a date?”

“Well, I’ve just been thinking about them a lot because I see them twice a week. I got her

number. Agh it's just to see what happens.”

“Sounds good, Jay!” Henry slapped him on the back.

They talked about Henry's love prospects - none, it seemed to him. He was not sure what to think about Anne, he did not even bring her up. He also wasn't sure when he would see Charlie again. They headed back. It was a night of mostly catch-up.

Henry woke up in the middle of the night and checked the time on his phone; 3.32 a.m.. Before he got back to sleep his brother was at his bedroom door.

“What was that?”

“What?” Henry croaked, squinting at Jamie's silhouette.

“That huge fucking bang!”

“I dunno, but I'm pretty keen to sleep. Everything's fine, right?”

“It was fucking close-by.”

“Well you're already up - let me know if there's anything to be concerned about. For now I'm sleepin'.”

Henry consciousness faded into a dream.

He is walking up Station Road to the squat protest, feeling his breath in the cotton mask over his face, upset with the anarchists as if they had already betrayed him. On his left are two homeless beggars, lying on cardboard on the tarred sidewalk. They call out to him for help and he does not know whether to give them money or to go on to the protest. He does not know whether either will help. He gasps awake, feeling the dull pain in the sjambok welt on his back.

We believe that it is fundamentally a radical political act to deprivatize sex. So much oppression in our culture is based on shame about sex: the oppression of women, of cultural minorities, oppression in the name of the (presumably asexual) family, oppression of sexual minorities. We are all oppressed. We have all been taught, one way or another, that our desires, our bodies, our sexualities, are shameful. What better way to defeat oppression than to get together in communities and celebrate the wonders of sex?

Dossie Easton and Catherine Liszt

Henry woke up and walked towards his lounge with the sunken feeling of sleep in his body. His brother was sitting, dressed and clean, on a couch with coffee and his laptop.

“It was bombs,” Jamie said.

“What was?”

“The noise I heard last night. Your buddies are bombing Cape Town.”

Henry swallowed, more awake. Jamie turned his laptop screen to face Henry. If the news was anything to go by, the anarchists had split into two groups, one largely non-violent group remaining at the squat, dissociating completely from the other, a violent group, that had opted for homelessness and a life far more aggressively against the law - and tied to those responsible for the burning down of the police stations. The violent group had published a communiqué online, claiming to be heirs to the ‘Os Cangaceiros’ title - a group that had its beginnings in France and a life spanning three decades, attacking everyone from police to leftist anarchists, completely rejecting work, trying to destroy the prison system that incarcerated many of them, causing prison riots to stealing and distributing prison blueprints. Described as ‘anarchist-terrorists’ in much of the media, they called themselves The Bandits, and unlike the group that remained in the squat, most of them were working class.

The ‘bang’ Jamie had heard the night before had been one of several. In response to an article in a township-based news site, GroundUp, that showed how the city intended to invest

in infra-red surveillance drones to monitor for criminal activity, particularly in the townships, and that the people spearheading it were unabashedly calling it 'Big Brother', the anarchists had put bombs into the buildings in suburbs that housed the public CCTV surveillance systems, promising to do it again if they were rebuilt. These actions, but not the sinking of three luxury yachts in the harbour, or the murder of three policemen and the destruction of their police cruiser in Athlone, were acts for which The Bandits took responsibility through emails to news websites. They had been written up in the Mail & Guardian, which surprisingly had not only bad things to say about the original squatting group, that this was only a pretence for The Bandits to destroy the CCTV systems that would put them in prison. There was a significant portion of responses online that supported the destruction of the camera systems, and larger portion who were upset that they had not even known about it.

"Jas-sus, Ennie, you know these people?" Jamie asked as they clicked through a slideshow of post-bombing images.

"Well, I don't know which people have joined which groups, but I know some of the original people."

\* \*

Fever. I lie on the platform I use to sleep and stare into darkness and shiver. I feel frail, like an organism that can die and dry out and disappear, not like a divine being with any sort of persistence or significance. I am too weak now even to climb up the ladder and lift the thick, steel cover that would allow me out and allow the sense that someone would notice if I died. It is a fever that causes you to use the time you are forced to be awake and uncomfortable to revise your life. I only have two oranges and a tin of beans. I feel grateful for each, though death would be a relief. If only I could feel more comfortable on this platform, less cold. Sometimes cold is the only thing there is.

\* \*

Henry pulled into work with his car, wearing the semiformal clothing he wore in his early months at the factory, with Jamie seated next to him, and half-introduced him to the couple of workers who were waiting outside for them to open up.



“It is quite big,” Jamie remarks.

“Too big. Dad wants me to fill this. You’ll see when we get inside.”

We walk in through the main entrance, past the empty reception area and the staircase leading to empty rooms and Henry’s office.

“So this is where the magic happens.”

“Yeah, magic. I don’t know what you’re going to do here all day - just let me know when you want a lift somewhere.”

Jamie lifts the blinds.

“So that’s the production line, hey? Looks neat and orderly.”

“Anything taking up hardly a quarter of an otherwise empty factory would look neat. But yeah, we produce at least sixteen a day, so that little line is pretty solid.”

“But don’t you have someone cleaning in here?” his brother complains, wiping his finger along the windowsill for dust.

“I figured I’d clean my own office at least.”

“Well if you ‘figure’ you’ll do the cleaning then do the cleaning. If not, hire somebody.”

Jamie set up his laptop on the other side of his brother’s desk - he would show him the factory floor in a moment. Henry made a few phone calls and sent out a couple quotes and invoices. He walked his brother through the assembly line. Neither of them particularly cared about the equipment - it was only a ritual of introduction. The most significant piece of machinery was the laser cutter; a big steel bed that would be loaded with a sheet of metal. The laser would come down and cut shapes out of the metal with speedy precision. Henry knew how to program the laser and design new geysers, but he never had to; they had set sizes for the geysers so all of the programs were already done. Henry introduced Jamie to Petunia, the woman who ran the machine, who had pointed out that the cut was not right as they were closing the factory the day before.

“Here’s our debut,” Henry said to Jamie.

Henry checked the settings on the user display for the laser.

“Not a problem here.”

He pressed a button to move the laser head to the neutral starting corner, put on some gloves, opened the see-through hatch to the bed, and unscrewed the nozzle on the laser head. It was the right kind, but the hole at the tip was no longer perfectly round. He held it up for

Petunia to see, then pulled out a fresh nozzle and screwed it in, and closed the hatch.

“Done.”

Henry pressed the load button, sending rows of suction cups over to and down on a pile of stainless steel sheets, picking one up and placing it, perfectly aligned, onto the bed. He pressed ‘cut’ and they watched the laser head zip around, leaving an almost invisible line in its path. The cut was perfect. He and Jamie went to the office area kitchen and made coffee through the machine.

“Seems like you’re on top of things,” he said.

“That’s part of the problem. There’s not much to it. I mean, some of it takes some brainpower, sort of, but not if you’re an oke with a master’s in philosophy. It’s my job to change the occasional nozzle. I don’t know why nobody else gets these geysers right. It’s just good welding.”

“How the sales coming?”

“Pretty much more orders than we can deal with, which suits me fine. Rich liberals are rushing for independence from Eskom and get off on going green and they think a geyser is going to save the world.”

“You’d prefer they used electric?”

“I’d prefer they saw the problem as more than a matter of being better consumers.”

“Oh? And what sets you apart from them?”

“Not much. Not yet. But, I mean, between peak production of oil and our looming climate change catastrophe it’s pretty obvious the world is fucked. It’s just a bullshit pretence for people who can pay more to feel like they are not assholes. I think even when I started working here I felt this way. I just hadn’t really let myself articulate it because I depended on the belief that this factory would be helpful.”

“So how’s it going for you?”

“What do you mean?”

“The factory. Doing this for a living.”

“I dunno. So far as making a living goes, or, this kind of living, I don’t have have alternatives. Well. Not ones I consider real, anyway.”

“Sometimes I think we got the education we did just to get qualified to be unsatisfied with life,” Jamie said, tossing back his espresso. “I feel like I have a billion options, and they’re all shit. A fucking billion. And the guys who work for you, they’re working hard so

that one day they can also have shit. I've spent a lot of time reading books about multi-multis and how they made their cash. I can't help but think that their lives are shit too. And then you die. Life is shit and then you die."

"Getting deep all of a sudden," Henry said. Jamie did not respond. "I guess that's one thing I've picked up from hanging out with the anarchists. For a little bit, I was kinda excited about my options. I think there's probably a group of people out there who could give me that. I've just got to find them."

"So, dad sent me here to check on you."

"Yeah? Okay."

"No, not just check up on how you're doing. The cops gave him a call the other day about his company's involvement in assisting criminals."

"What do you mean?"

"Apparently one of our trucks attempted to 'set up permanent facilities in illegally occupied property.' Apparently somebody, obviously you, went to the squat to install some stainless steel solar geysers."

"Ah."

"Obviously you get a phone call from the five-oh and you're in dad's position you assume your son is using the family company to support a delinquent revolution. So you send your little recon man. I'm supposed to snoop around and see if you're taking this anti-capitalism thing too seriously."

"Yeah. I'm wondering exactly about what you were saying. You get our employees, you get us, and then you get the multi-multies. And its shit for everyone. But that's capitalism. A bunch of shit options. Maybe we need a new palette of options."

"Well I recommend you stick with your working options until after the revolution, and that you do them properly."

"Looks like that's the plan!" Henry wanted to change topic.

"I assure you being a bergie isn't enjoyable or noble."

"Mhmm."

"Dad didn't loan you a dangerously fat chunk of cash for your adventure to Cape Town for you to give him the finger and sink him."

"I know that."

"Yeah, well, don't forget the commitment you made before you came here. You're going

to make big problems for a lot of people if you don't keep your shit together.”

“Okay, Okay, relax. I'm aware of these things.”

“Don't forget.”

“I won't, relax.”

Henry pretended to turn his attention to his computer screen, and started the process of emailing some invoices. If he talked more about his anxieties around his commitment he would be giving away too much for the moment. He was relieved when after a few minutes he got an SMS.

“No shit,” he said, reading.

“What?”

*Hey stranger! What's up - you don't call, you don't write. I've got a thing for us to do.  
How's your early evening looking? Anne*

“Who's Anne?”

“She's one of the anarchists, I haven't mentioned her yet. She's into some interesting stuff. Polyamory, I guess, which is just ethical nonmonogamy. I'll explain that another time.”

“I read Sex at Dawn.”

“You did?”

“That's what I said, chump. Friend recommended it.”

“I got recommended it too. Haven't read it though. Anyway. She's attractive, you should see her. I haven't really figured much else about her though since I'm not really used to people who live like them. And for some reason that remains sort of an enigma to me, she seems to fancy me.”

“You gonna go?”

I looked at the message.

“If you don't mind. We're going to have to close up early today.”

“I'm a bit over the anarchists at the moment,” Jamie mimicked.

Henry drove to Obs in his best inexpensive-looking clothing. The African bohemian Café Ganesh was more accurately described as a bar-restaurant with an upstairs area for smoking weed. It was one of those nights when the what-if condoms Henry kept in his bag could

actually fulfil their purpose.

Henry walked in nervous, five minutes early, and saw her emerald hair immediately, beside a magenta-haired woman at one of the long tables against the wall. She put out a cigarette and got up to greet him, walking around the table and picking up a produce box with a few shopping bags inside on her way over. She wore a black collared shirt with her sleeves rolled up and black jeans.

“Good timing,” she said, kissing his cheek. “Let’s get out of here.”

“Okay.”

They turned around and headed out.

“Let’s take your car,” Anne said.

“Okay. Do I get to ask where we are going?”

“Linkowood Court.”

“Linkowood Court?”

“It’s a UCT postgrad res in Mowbray.” Anne walked quickly.

“Alright,” Henry said, opening his boot for her to put the boxes in. “Just give me directions as I drive.”

Anne flipped through songs on the cellphone Henry had plugged into his car. Henry noticed again the spaced-out line of black stars and silver hearts emerging from her skin like a threadless bracelet.

“Your wrist looks good.”

“Thanks! Can we play music off my phone?” she said, unplugging his.

“Sure.”

“You ever listen to deathcore? I just got introduced to this band and I’m really liking them.”

“What band?”

“Molotov Solution.”

“Never heard of them. I don’t often listen to anything with ‘death’ in the genre,” he said, with a smile intended to convey that he was nevertheless willing to try. “Play it.”

She played the song and put the volume up high. The music itself was ridiculous but it did not offend him. Instead he became concerned that she had put the volume up enough to drown out normal conversation. Henry did not expect that - his mind flashed around for

possible explanations. She probably was not upset with him. She obviously wasn't avoiding talk with him. She had kissed his cheek minutes ago. She was going out with him, she would just not come out if she didn't want to. It felt longer, but a minute later Henry had pushed his doubts far enough aside that they were not invasive. He tried to enjoy not needing to think up things to say and being able just to be in the space with Anne, who was dancing lightly next to him, occasionally pointing to where he should turn, or shouting over the music.

"Okay," she said, turning down the volume. "It's on this street. If you can, get in through that gate just after that guy drives out."

Henry tried not to think about it, but the car stopped just after the gate to turn right, and the gate slid closed behind it.

"Ah, well just pull up next to the intercom," Anne said. "Press one-three-two-hash."

The intercom buzzed and began to ring. An uninterested security guard glanced at them through a sliding window in a brick hut next to them.

The intercom kept ringing. Nobody picked up.

"Hello sir," Anne said to the security guard, "we're here to pick up stuff for room one-thirty-two. I think he's asleep in there, can you let us in?"

A car had pulled in behind theirs. The guard looked at Anne and Henry and leaned forward. The gate opened. Henry drove in and parked. The parking lot was busy with seven different people loading up their cars with luggage.

"It's the end of the summer holiday," Anne said to Henry, still sitting in the car. "This rents out its empty spaces that the graduates leave over the summer. Usually it's about half of them! They rent it to young Americans or whatever who want to come over to SA for the warm summer. Anyway, today is the day that they all have to move out. And if they want their deposit back, they have to have their room empty."

"Okay, so what are we doing here?"

"We're going to get all the stuff that they leave behind."

Henry tried to assume that he had not just been dragged into a robbery.

"And nobody minds if we do this?"

"It's abandoned stuff. We're not really supposed to be here but I have a friend who says it'll be a breeze."

“Your friend at one-thirty-two?” Henry said, getting out of the car.

“That friend. She should be on her plane right now. She told me how it works is everybody knows they can just leave their stuff in boxes in the communal living areas - the kitchens and the lounge. So we’re gonna pick up a lot of food and alcohol and whatever other treasures we might find.”

Anne pulled the empty bags out of the cardboard box in the boot, and Henry followed her through an open key-card door into the building, arms tense at his sides. He tried not to be annoyed at how little notice he had been given before he began carting other people’s property out of a building he had no place in. He was trying to keep up with Anne.

Anne was right - each corridor was lined with occasional piles of boxes and packets of things that had been left behind. In a few seconds Anne had picked up a pair of boots and was trying them on.

“Won’t fit me. I can give these to Stace.” She dropped them into a bag. “I’m keen on whatever longer-lasting foods, like tins. But anything else that looks delicious. And all the alcohol.”

They started going through open boxes in the halls, ignoring the people around them, who were packing and moving and leaving. There weren’t many staff around and none of them seemed to be occupied by any intention to capture intruders, so Henry calmed down and began rummaging through boxes. They walked through the ground floor of the U-shaped building - sometimes rummaging through and deciding on objects together, sometimes taking a pile of throw-aways to themselves to go through - then came back out to the car to unload the bags into the car.

“You sure that this is all abandoned stuff?”

“Yeop. They have to all be out by 8pm today. Everything left behind is left behind.”

“How are we going to get back out through the gate?” Henry asked.

“It opens automatically from the inside. I think we’re covered, you don’t need to worry. All this food is making me hungry.”

As they walked around the second floor kitchen, opening up the fridge and freezer and cupboards and unloading food and half-drunk liquor bottles into bags, Anne talked about a friend of hers who was a sex worker. Her friend had a client whose fetish was to make her fat, so their only interaction was him buying her food, and occasionally watching her eat it.

“Except he only bought her food for dinner, because you’re supposed to get fatter if you eat before bed more than any other time,” she said. “It was great, one day the guy just treated her and three of us to the biggest meal.” She stuck a tongue out to the side and held her belly. Henry thought that Anne did the sorts of things only attractive women like her could pull off.

“Sounds fun,” he said, unsure of what he thought about sex work or Anne’s participation in it.

They got through the second floor - Henry helped Anne carry a small fridge to the car along with the other food.

“To the kitchens on the third floor!”

They covered the last floor and returned, completely filling the boot and the back seats of Henry’s car. Henry looked around again for cameras. He was surprised not to see any over the parking lot.

“Alrighty then, let’s get the fuck outta here,” she said, running her fingers over the buzzed side of her head and pushing her hair over to the opposite side. “Looks like we did amazing.”

Henry tried to sound chuffed despite his discomfort.

“I guess so!”

They got in his car and left without any problems. Anne played an agreeable pop band and kept the music low enough that they could talk.

“So I wanna take most of this stuff over to one of our spots in Obs; let’s head on in that direction.”

“Cool.” Henry could not tell if he should be annoyed with her, or how much of his discomfort was because he was close-minded and overcautious or because she was inconsiderate and endangering.

In the car they talked about their music tastes and their different procrastination methods and the meal that they would have after they were done. It was the most normal conversation with an anarchist Henry had had, and he did not feel like he impressed her with anything in particular, but the words came easily and Anne seemed engaged with him.

They pulled up to a small yellow property near the train station in Obs and got out of the car. Night was arriving.

“So - the loot. What do you want?”

“Um. I don’t know, I hadn’t really thought about it.”



“I’m planning on getting all of this food to the squat and to the Khayelitsha space. I’ll probably keep the alcohol for myself for a pride party I’m hosting next month.”

“Oh, alright, well you can just keep it then.”

“Well here, I found this for you. I think it’s badass,” she said, reaching inside a bag in the boot. “It’s a straight razor and a strop.”

Anne held up the razor - the handle looked too small and thin - it was just a thin strip of metal.

“The handle’s come off so I won’t give it to you right now, but I’ll make one for you and then you can use it to shave!” She smiled. “These things last ages if you take care of them. They’re basically the diva cup of shaving.”

“Diva cup?”

“You clearly don’t hang out around enough feminists. Let’s make some food.”

They brought all the food into the old wood-floored house. Anne poured them drinks then prepared a tray of enchiladas and put them in the oven in a small white and pastel-green kitchen.

“I thought you were vegan,” Henry said, noticing the cheese.

“Me? Na. Especially if something is free or about to go to waste. I hate factory farms as much as the next guy, but I don’t really think the vegans are doing anything significant except feeling good about themselves.”

“Oh. And you just assumed I wasn’t vegan?”

“Are you vegan?”

“No - though I’ve been tending towards vegetarianism lately.”

“Eh,” she said, shrugging.

“I’ve never had enchiladas.”

“Well aren’t you lucky to have such a sexy lady make you your first ones!” She smiled and posed as if she had draped herself against the wall.

“I guess I am.” Henry started to feel less uptight. The anarchists he knew had a weird way of being inconsiderate and considerate at the same time.

They walked to the park on Station Road. It was locked, but Anne had a key that she pulled from her backpack. They slipped inside, she closed the gate behind them and left the

open lock hanging on the latch, and they sat on swings under the dim light of the streetpoles. She took out the paper bag she had put the enchiladas in, and handed Henry his.

“Still hot,” she smiled. “I love Mexican food.”

Henry smiled and took the beers he had brought from the house and gave one to her.

“Thanks,” he said, “it’s always nice to eat something made by somebody you know. I assumed we’d eat at Ganesh if we ate anything.”

“Pleasure! And no, I hate being waited on, so I avoid it when I can. If I have to drink there I get it straight from the bar. Honestly, our collective needs a place where we can drink.”

“You don’t have one?”

“Well, not ones that are normally open to public. We need an anarchist bar or something. Actually no, that would be a fucking nightmare.”

Henry laughed.

“I think it would be pretty cool.”

“Dealing with assholes in daytime was a pain at the Shap. Give them alcohol at night would probably be the death of us.”

“This is good,” Henry said, as he bit into an enchilada.

“Damn right it is.”

They ate in silence for a few minutes.

“I take it you’ve been busy lately,” Henry said.

“It’s been an uphill battle. Trying to recover from that day. Were you in the crowd?”

“Yeah.”

They went quiet again.

“Let’s finish these and go for a drink somewhere I can see you better,” she said.

They arrived in Ganesh soon after and headed to the bar. She got a brandy on ice so he followed with a whisky.

“Is it cool if we sit with my friends where I was before?”

Henry did not want to.

“Sure.”

She lead them back to the table, full of mostly unfamiliar faces, and no-one he knew by name. He could not help but assume he had bungled his chances - that she would have sat

alone with him if she were feeling good about them.

But the company was good. They were a bunch of jokesters with a dry cynical sense of humour in common, talking about a new black consciousness book that apparently everyone was reading.

“Marxists,” Anne said, indicating her friends with the wag of a fork. “When last was Marxism a real thing in this country? They’re going to come round sometime when they realise the whole of their precious Left has already been co-opted by capitalism.”

Henry found it amazing that there were groups of people out there for whom this was normal conversation. People he might never know existed unless he had them in front of him. Like the anarchists had been before they started making the news. It was so easy to miss out on whole worlds.

“You guys aren’t impervious to co-option either,” one of the Marxists said, “You’re lucky The Bandits are running around causing havoc or your squat would already be on the way to becoming a city-approved tourist destination. All your smashy-smashies are gone and the remainder are about as hard as a baby’s bottom.”

“We’ll see about that. In the meanwhile, you guys can keep sitting with your dicks in your hands, or worse, join a political party and get rich.” Anne’s rested her leg against Henry’s beside him - nothing overt enough for him to be sure had any significance.

Once there were six of them remaining, Anne suggested that they go back to her place and make a fire and have more drinks there. She rented two rooms with a handful of other women-identified anarchists in a shared house near the train station, and they cycled who would use the rooms, or shared.

They drank more and passed around a joint. Henry kept to himself more than usual.

As the night wound down, they decided to call it, and stood up to leave. Everyone slowly shuffled over to the door, where Henry hung back, wanting for the others to say goodbye so he could thank Anne for the night privately.

“Hold on,” she said to him, as he began to step out towards the street. “Stay here tonight.”

It is less cold today. Olivia is out of her small cage and into the bigger one we all share. The fever has disappeared. I am confident she is busy. I will not disturb her.

In the tunnels, the music of running water and distant echoes is calming.

To relax I go to the house across the hill and use the shower. It is a sunny day. I feel together. I step out of the house into the light in slops, worn jeans and a light grey t-shirt, a green-white stipply stringy messy painted lichen-like image on the front; my only personal clothing.

This process is long and exhausting, so I embrace the moment of euphoric peace.

I am strong enough to see Emily.

Emily is asleep. She sleeps always lying at an upward angle, with a straightened spine, so that climbing creatures will slide back to her stomach. I wait for her to wake and eat some fruit from the bowl on the dining table.

Sometimes Emily trips over her wounds with the terrible hilarity you would imagine from a woman so old she trips on her sagging breasts. Emily has wounds like many long-dead parasitic and deformed conjoined siblings hanging from her body. They make up most of her weight, they feed on her life. The intimacy of their presence is an overwhelming gateway to everything. In the world there are people who are no more than semiconscious sacks of clotted blood.

It is in those moments when she trips, some barely noticeable to others; if she is cut off from talking and repeats her last sentences, if she rests her hand on her stomach and you feel she is quietly fighting off conversation with the creatures she has trapped inside her, if she leans back and stretches her arms and neck out like any other person might; to get them to

lose grip as they climb up her throat to escape out her mouth. Sometimes she chokes on them and sometimes they speak for her.

She prepares coffee on the stove. She hits her head on the extractor fan as she straightens out her spine. She has beings occupying her stomach and if they escape something terrible will happen.

We drink coffee and play cards. She tells stories about her childhood and Charlie's.

\* \*

Henry got to work late in the clothing he had worn the night before. His employees waited outside the locked factory and one of the braver women made jokes about the night he must have had.

“It was something.” Henry was on his office phone, speaking with his brother at his apartment.

“Good plug?”

Henry laughed in awkward response to his brother and continued.

“She was amazing. It was weird.”

“Indulge.”

“I've never had something so negotiated, but I've also never had anything so spontaneous. And she knows what she wants, and what she's doing, well, but we make it all together like a new thing. I feel like I was just fighting to keep up with her on all fronts, but that it made everything better. She wasn't fucking around. I dunno. I don't want to kiss and tell too many specific details right now.”

“That's lekker! I've also got some good news. I've got a date with Cassy when I get back.”

“Oh nice! That was quick.”

“Ja, my plans fell through last night so I had some time on my hands. Also, I spoke with the old man. Basically told him you were involved in some weird shit, but you're mostly over it and on the straight and narrow. For now.”

“That'll do.” Henry paused. “On that topic, you keen to meet Charlie tonight? I can try give her a call and see what's up.”

“Let’s do it. I’ll go buy the pre-drinks.”

“Ciao.”

“Ciao.”

Henry cut the line and called Charlie. As the phone rang he realised that he assumed she would be among the squat anarchists and not The Bandits, and anxiety dashed to his chest.

He was glad to find out that his assumption had been right. Charlie invited them to an event the anarchists were hosting at the squat that night.

He realised that she was never free to do something separate from other things she was doing.

\* \*

I visit Olivia, she is preparing to talk on a panel with Palesa and others. She is fragile after spending time in small cages, she has lost weight. She smiles and invites me to sit with her, but her smile drops quickly and her jaw clenches. I feel close to her and I hope that my presence comforts. She has done so much for us by now. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for her return. She looks up from her notes and smiles again, and we begin a conversation.

“Alright love,” she says, “I’ll try the experimental approach.”

\* \*

On the way to the squat Henry outlined to his brother that he should be more conscious of his use of words around the anarchists. He explained to Jamie among other things why ‘chick’ was an unacceptable description of a woman. Jamie was unconvinced, but Henry could tell from his brother’s intent forward-looking and the silence that he was processing the significance of Henry’s explanation with some respect. Henry was concerned that someone there would mention to him the extent of his involvement with the anarchists, but he realised that for the most part his involvement had only been in his own head.

They parked outside as normal. There were no police, in uniform at least, which was abnormal. Henry was completely used to seeing people in overalls and panda masks, and

amused at his brother's amusement.

"They wear them all the time?"

"Whenever they're in public as anarchists, I think."

They walk onto the property among the pandas and visitors. There was a surprising amount of people mulling around, talking, smoking. Henry reached the squat door around the back and a panda grabbed his hand and his brother's. Henry recognised the Shona accent and the thicker area of hoodie that covered dreadlocks.

"And he's with his brother! I can see it, somewhere there. You *are* always punctual. Come with me, give me a hug. I am Vimbai. Charlie's finishing some work and she asked me to collect you."

They walked with her away from the entrance towards the long building, and Vimbai unlocked a security gate to one of the offices. It was clean and neat. There was a wooden conference desk in the middle and big steel shelves built onto the back wall. Charlie was in white overalls at a laptop behind the desk.

"Hello!" she said, grinning. "Jamie! Just doing some last minute preparation." She shut her laptop, and Vimbai closed the door behind them, removed her mask and untucked her hair. Henry caught his brother staring at Vimbai's wooden spiral plugs.

After being wanded and frisked Henry and Jamie went inside the main building with Charlie and Vimbai, both of whom had put on masks. The centre of the warehouse had been cleared and people had been encouraged to sit in a circle on mats on the floor. There were several news cameras recording the first event since Palesa and Olivia had been released. The event would be a launch for an anthology of anarchist perspectives on various problems around Cape Town and beyond. Palesa and Olivia were the only two anarchists Henry could see who were not wearing masks. Palesa looked more formal, almost regal, in person than in the photos Henry had seen in the news, which he found ironic. He was intrigued finally to see the famous granddaughter of Chris Hani. Olivia wore a jacket over a pale white t-shirt and jeans.

Charlie sat a few seats from them, across from Vimbai, Jamie and Henry, and announced herself as the facilitator.

Palesa speaks. Her words are hard and her reason instrumental. She builds concepts trapped in models that justify themselves like fountains that splash down into the pools that feed them, trapped in models that propagate themselves like viruses. The words are domesticated and they standardise the minds of the audience. Yes, they agree, the police did treat her better than normal prisoners because of her relations of privilege. Yes, they agree, the experience does illuminate some concrete understanding of the processes, the powers and the flaws, of the prison-industrial-complex and the global white-supremacist heteropatriarchal capitalist machine. Yes, they agree, they uniform. I resist.

\* \*

Palesa spoke first. She was clear and eloquent. She talked about her concrete situation, the detention, the imprisonment. She avoided abstractions and focused clearly on the specific context she experienced, while tying each experience to an understanding of how the state-capitalist system actually functioned. Although Henry did not imagine her talk to be a thing for cheering, it did break out after she sat back down.

\* \*

Olivia speaks. Her words are alive and they paint pictures on their own, different pictures in each mind. She talks to the imagination and sets their cogs running, and the cogs warm and melt into a shapeless moving mass that become organic and plantlike. I enjoy the warmth that comes from some in the crowd.

\* \*

Olivia spoke next. Henry thought it was interesting, but he did not know what to make of it. She made no argument. She only drew connections between moment after moment in the world - a smile from a clerk as a child buys from a fast food chain, an attractive man in overalls plastering the cracked wall of a house in the suburbs, a young woman rushing her walk home as the night sets in, and on and on. In the end, Henry reminded himself again that



the anarchists were only human, who might not give the sort of speech he wanted to hear, and then he got frustrated with himself because the discomfort he felt made it clear how much he remained invested in them. He saw her as badly representing something he wanted to identify with.

\* \*

Jamie is here. He is sitting next to you. I see him, I see you both; my solar plexus plummets and re-emerges, nausea sets in, balance goes, I am on my hands and knees, the vomit is dark, a dark maroon, it stinks like soap. A panda comes to help, Andreia, they are helpful, they take me outside to breathe, I want to breathe but I also want more time inside. Andreia helps me to sit on the stairs going up to the roof on the outside of the building, as they let me down I see wounds on them I have not seen before. I throw up more. If it is not unbearable it still feels too much. I lean against the handrail, close my eyes, and am still.

I am mourning. My brother is dead.

\* \*

Jamie put up his hand and was soon called on by Charlie to have his say. Henry felt concerned that he might ask something embarrassing.

“I’ve got a side question for the anarchists. A lot of you have lost your jobs since you’ve started up this squat. Some of you have kids and people who depend on you. I imagine that what you are doing is overwhelmingly exhausting and that it’s easy to get derailed. Have you got any insurance against your way of life falling hard on its face? Or, maybe; would any of you be able to go back to a normal life after this?”

Charlie indicated one of several of the pandas with hands-raised to respond.

“In reality,” a voice Henry was not familiar with said, “all of us, insofar as we want anarchy, are hoping to get to a point of no return. There’s a long way to go to get there, and there are a few among us who I think could not go back, but yes, many of us are haunted by the possibility of compromise. But I think we’re okay with that.”

“Anybody want to add,” Charlie said, “or can we move to the next question?”

Hands fell, and the next question was taken. Henry liked the idea of being good beyond no return. He did not know whether the anarchists had the right idea, but it was not hard to slip into their narratives and imagine himself as someone uncompromising in it. They had done so much of the work already, over years. They weren't paying rent, and they weren't paying for food so far as he could tell. They had people who could make and mend clothes. They made their own soaps and toothpastes. Their electricity and water was generally free and renewable. Most of them did not use personal cars. Whenever he learned about something they had it had been stolen or attained in a roundabout way that had avoided complicity in the economy.

Nevertheless, the idea of having no health insurance was scary, even if the anarchist had doctors among them, which he thought they did not. Attending a public hospital was taboo for Henry. He felt this though he was aware it was at least in part a foolish prejudice. He did not know what they could offer if he had to get cancer, or, anything - only that people he grew up with complained about public hospitals as if they were beyond consideration. The anarchists had not set up any anarchist-equivalent life insurance or pension funds. They were under permanent and severe threat of imprisonment and their home would always be precarious. If their farm got shut down or sabotaged they would lose many of their basic needs. Henry was embarrassed that he was not even familiar with public transport, and would feel uncomfortable trying to figure out how to use it on his own. Looking at them, it seemed that they were bound to lose their battle, so it was always something amazing when they made their next move and lived on.

Afterward, Charlie and Vimbai removed their masks and overalls and took the brothers across Main Road to a bar that Henry had never noticed before. From the outside it there was not anything to see. A small, opaque, grey shopfront with the words J.B.B. BAR painted on the doorframe. Inside, the space was surprisingly large. Charlie said hello to the people behind the bar. Most of the furniture was wooden and cushioned, there were pool tables and a jukebox playing music that nobody would like when they were sober, it was smokey and dim. They sat together at a booth. Jamie started asking potentially inappropriate questions about their marriage when Henry realised he needed to go to the toilet.

As Henry stepped out of the bathroom he heard a familiar voice calling his name, and his eyes scanned the room in the direction it came from. Anne was standing up from her booth to

greet him. She had been sitting at a table with a group of others, some of whom seemed familiar, probably from the wedding.

“Fancy seeing you here!” she said, smiling and giving him a hug.

“And you!”

“I’ve got all the stuff I need to put together your straight razor, we should hang out next week so I can give it to you.”

“Cool!” Henry smiled. “I’m just here reintroducing Charlie to my brother.”

“Oh I wanna meet your brother! Let me introduce you to someone.” She turned to the man who was sitting next to her seat. He was tall, had long brown hair, and wore a pink heather t-shirt under a leather jacket. “Henry, this is my partner, Jacques.”

Henry’s solar plexus fell and returned with a wave of discomfort.

“Hi Jacques.” Henry tried to smile but it wasn’t coming. The corners of his mouth twitched. He became self-conscious of his face as they shook hands.

“Nice to meet you, Henry!” Jacques said, smiling. Henry struggled for words as thoughts flooded him. They dated. They slept together. They probably would sleep together tonight. He probably knew he and Anne had slept together the night before. Henry had thought he was prepared.

“N-nice to meet you. Cool,” He said, addressing neither of them in particular, “see you later.” He waved at the rest of the booth as he stepped away.

Henry could not participate in much of the conversation for the rest of the evening, and once Anne and Jacques came to say hello, and Henry introduced them to his brother, Jamie understood and they left soon after.

\* \*

I am delirious, even when Olivia comes to sit with me and rests her hand on my back. It feels like a back, not mine but experienced by me, and her hand is like a grounding force guiding it somewhere. We sit on the roof and she talks calmly to me with her comforting voice. My existence feels too unpleasant to me to be worthwhile. I assume this will pass and that I will be glad of remaining alive, so I bear it, to return to a person who can enjoy living. There is not the energy to think of what else would be lost if I loosed my awareness of everything.

\* \*

Henry was the first to talk once they had gotten into the car on the way back the apartment.

“What was up with the inconsiderate prick at the talk?”

“Who?”

“That shitfaced homeless guy in the pandaclava who was throwing up.”

“Oh. I assumed he was one of the anarchists.”

“Yeah? I don’t think so. It was probably one of those local drug addicts abusing the inclusivity of the anarchists.”

“And here I was thinking you were an anarchist,” Jamie smiled, slapping his brother’s knee.

“What do you mean?”

“You like the idea of helping ‘people’ - just so long as they are are specific people you like. Or won’t you take a structural view of that person’s situation?”

“Maybe you’re the anarchist.”

“They make some sense, like many smart people. I just don’t have any faith in them, or think what they want is even vaguely realistic. Anyway, let’s have it. What’s up?”

Henry explained to his brother his thoughts and discomforts around Anne. He listened, and reminded Henry of what he should have known he was getting himself into, before pointing out that he was also interested in Charlie, that he was hypocritical, and that Anne seemed just plain better than him at fulfilling her desires. Sometimes Henry felt like an idiot around his brother.

Arriving back at the apartment the brothers sat in the lounge in front of their respective laptop screens drinking tea.

“Ennie, you know what was fucking weird about that homeless guy,” Jamie said, “was how he was wearing the same t-shirt as that thing.”

“What thing.”

“The log thing mom had those days. It was the same t-shirt with that green, fuckin’,”

mossy-looking Jackson-Pollocky painting on the front.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“We got dropped home that day from school and mom had set herself up with a homemade human mannequin thing made with firewood and nails and shit.”

Henry looked at his brother. There was no reason to think he was joking.

“I don’t remember that at all.”

“What are you fucking kidding me? We spent like a week with that thing.”

Henry felt a dull pressure behind his eyes and a desire to change the topic.

“No, it’s pretty crazy I forgot that.”

“We spent over a week trying to convince mom that she was something separate from that pile of wood.”

Henry shrugged.

The current nihilism amongst the youth is not arising from nothing. It is a reflection of the total failure of both resistance and capitalism. Many see no alternative and want nothing else other than the complete destruction of the beast that feeds them: the city.

Anonymous

A new morning arrived with the next set of headlines. The city was ‘under siege’, as The Bandits had burned down a major media conglomerate in the city centre and surrounds, while the biggest cow farm in the province and the biggest chicken farm in the country had been attacked and sabotaged, causing millions of rands in damage, and “allowing thousands of animals a few moments outside of a cage.” Henry remembered when the city had the anarchists literally under siege; how the media had not framed it that way at all.

Three people burned to death and several others were injured in the arson of the media building. These were the the first deaths that were directly attributable to anarchists in the country. The Bandits had flyeried streets around the arson with explanations, stating, not arguing, their hatred of civilisation and capitalism and the contributions the media and industrial agriculture made to each. During the sabotages there was a shootout at the chicken farm but no-one was injured. Henry took a moment to ponder the significance of the deaths before moving on to consume more news.

On the same webpage Henry saw a report on a report showing how in the last forty years, half of the world’s wildlife had been killed off by humankind. Another paper noted that someone had planted hundreds, possibly thousands, of marijuana bushes in all of the common hiking routes around Cape Town and in all of the green spaces in the inner city. A group apparently unrelated to the anarchists had taken responsibility for it online, in part as evidence that criminalisation of it was “wholly ineffective and laughable”. Protests around the province and the country were breaking out as people in less developed areas had gone without water or electricity and other basic services for weeks and months.

Henry looked out to the street outside with his brother. It looked like a normal day.

They could not help but think that nobody would sympathise with the attacks; the deaths of those in the media house would sink them even if people were sympathetic to their arguments, and too many people saw no problem in farming animals. It was too easy for any normal person to write off someone who was anti-civilisation as preposterous. The comments sections beneath the articles he read on the incidents seemed to corroborate that. The Bandits clearly weren't interested in waiting on the approval of the general public.

Henry sat at work that morning, reading the anti-civ critiques characteristic of green anarchists and anarcho-primitivists. Despite his earlier thoughts, the statistic - half of the world's wildlife killed by humankind in the last forty years - left him thinking that none of what they are saying, not even the primitivists, the most radical and unusual and unbelievable of all the anarchists, seemed inappropriate.

“And here I am,” Henry said, and thought, *a fucking capitalist*.

Why he cared then, after these attacks on the animal industry and the media, instead of any other time, when he had been made aware of a world full of terrible things, he did not know.

Two of Henry's employees were absent from work and he found it hard to care. He kept thinking about Olivia's talk, running the whole thing through his mind. It was surprisingly vivid in his memory. He felt like she wasted the opportunity to speak to an audience. Henry thought he could do better, and then he reminded himself that he had done nothing, he was doing nothing, he wasn't actually going to do anything. He was just a chatterbox talking to himself with an opinion based on almost nothing.

Henry tried to feel some relief through the thought that though he was a part of the oppressive class, he was still oppressed by the system - there was nothing desirable about the position that he was in, except that perhaps it was easier to be in than people lower down the class pyramid.

\* \*

The Bandits are using the tunnels. Alex has opened their passages up to them. It is a

matter of time before people come and find the platform where I sleep. I feel forced to think of future and the weight of our loss bears down on me more. The end of this tunnel adventure is in sight.

\* \*

Halfway through the workday Henry took his brother to the airport for his trip home. It had been good to have Jamie around. Henry had forgotten what it was like to live with someone he was close to. He mulled over their relationship.

Maybe it was just that they only made decisions because somebody decided it was time to, maybe that was why they had decided to take different paths. Finished school; what now, you can't just do nothing. Finished university; what now, you can't just do nothing, one day you'll want a family, you're going to need money.

He and his brother were different, Henry thought, but maybe they should have tried to work on a path through life together anyway. Jamie was the only person he knew whom he loved unconditionally.

He got home later. He was by himself, on his couch, in front of the wall-mounted flatscreen TV he did not want to watch. He played a comedy film he had seen many times before to fill the empty space. Maybe he would go out and see some old friends. He did not want to see anybody.

He thought about Anne and his discomfort returned. He thought about her comment, some time ago, that the worst thing about the squat was the lack of privacy. Henry had not had the opportunity to desire privacy - first, he wanted affinity. He thought about SMSing her - what he might say, whether she had noticed how put-off he had been after meeting Jacques that night, whether she cared or even wanted to see him again.

After a while he SMSed Charlie instead.

She would be spending a week at the farm, she said, and they would be drinking ayahuasca that weekend. If he liked, she would arrange for him to join them, she said, slowly, deliberately in that way she had always, and once more Henry understood that it was a serious decision. Henry said he would think about it. He had never tried ayahuasca, and he did not know much about it, aside from what he had once heard a comedian say;



unexplainable; out of body; like pressing reset on everything you know and feel. It was supposed to be the most otherworldly, mind-exploding psychedelic drug; released naturally in your system only in the moments when you are born and when you die - it presumably explained vivid spiritual experiences in near-death situations. He was also aware that people who took the drug standardly spent much time throwing it up, and occasionally would shit their pants. Henry could not tell how much was hocus-pocus, but he was sure that it would be a serious thing to do, and he did not want to make himself vulnerable in that way in a group of people he was unsure of.

It was a shame; he felt that he and Charlie had never really spent time together, only snippets of time before she disappeared to some other obligation - and since the day before, and then with this, it was possibly more his fault than hers. He SMSed her that evening to say he would not join them, but that he would like to see her soon. Still thinking about them, he started to download the green anarchist film *End:Civ*, and when it was ready he closed the comedy and played it.

After the film he found himself pacing his room, stopping to read bits of articles and searching the internet for books, then reading dozens of pages before pacing again and restarting the cycle. He thought, *Maybe I should press reset on my life*. It was 3.47 a.m., perhaps too early to phone Charlie to say he had changed my mind. He had realised some time before that it was a bad idea to remain awake knowing that he would have work the next day, but if he did not ride his momentum nothing would come of it. He was afraid to go to sleep and return to his normal self the next day.

Henry dragged himself out of his apartment, cursing how little sleep he had and the cold he seemed to have picked up. He drove dull-brained and light-sensitive to work and ended up falling asleep with his forehead on his desk. After he woke up, walked-in-on by one of his employees, he caught up on work, and it was only in the drive home again that he thought about how he had wanted to take Charlie up on the ayahuasca journey. The idea did not seem as appealing now, the decision felt hasty, and he felt some guilt at the break of loyalty to his former self, but things were what they were and he did not feel like taking a potentially permanently life-changing substance without much sense of what it was about. He would skip it.

\* \*

Out of the dark tunnels and the dark week, for food. I am okay. I want to see Olivia, I want to be helpful to her and the others while I have some strength.

She is too overwhelmed to attend to me. I need something to make this experience bearable, and decide to meet with The Bandits.

\* \*

The next few days passed quietly for Henry, and the discomfort he had with his factory situation became something that quickly unoccupied his mind when it pushed its way in.

It seemed even the anarchists had taken a break from changing the city.

He spoke with his brother at the beginning of the following week.

Jamie's date had gone nicely. He and Cassy had met for coffee and ended up having a picnic at the zoo, all according to plan. Jamie was feeling good about things. They had not kissed; he was 'playing the long game'; she 'might be a keeper'. Henry thought about Anne and how little his time with her had been like Jamie's time with Cassy. Then he thought about taking Anne to the zoo. Nothing was innocent anymore, everything had to be reexamined through the anarchist critique. So simple a thing as taking a girl on a nice date to the zoo was now tainted by his awareness of the terrible suffering he would be complicit in by doing so, and how Anne would never desire or agree to such a thing.

\* \*

I wait at the loose-bricked tunnel wall that conceals The Bandits' cache. I want to speak with them, to move with them. I hope they will not shoot at the figure in the dark. I lie down next to the thin flowing stream.

I wake up to bricks sliding from the wall and falling to the floor and many sets of lungs breathing heavily.

"Get up," Robyn says, "We need to get in here."

They are shaken. Alex is there. Marc is there. Andreia is hurt, there is blood down their side.

Through the wall are medical supplies. Robyn says the bullets went through the arm and clipped the hip - it is not critical but it is significant.

Alex leaves. We tend to Andreia. Robyn closes and sews and bandages. Marc and I hold up lights. We help Robyn where she asks for it. Andreia huffs and hisses with pain.

All are peaking. Xolile was taken, they say.

Xolile whose light smile relieves even Tham of her sadness.

Alex returns with Shamani and a hammock lain over and tied to two poles. I am asked to remain, and to inform the squat anarchists about Andreia and Xolile.

\* \*

Henry drove back to the apartment. Despite a one-track mind forced by Henry's stuffy sinuses it was clear that the police were making an effort to be visible. The night before they had arrested their first Bandit, someone he had never met, named Xolile, after The Bandits had blown up the water system feeding through to Clifton and the other surrounding megarich suburbs, in solidarity with the residents of Delft, who had been without running water for three weeks. The Bandits had attacked the police van that took Xolile away, and there had been a firefight.

The return of Palesa and Olivia to the squat seemed to have rejuvenated the image of the squat anarchists somewhat, along with the fact that they always threw very appealing and well-organised events otherwise. People were buying their book and talking about the ideas, and generally found them more moderate and thereby reasonable than The Bandits. Henry felt this amounted to little. He had read a handful of books and many bits and pieces of texts over the last few months, and had done nothing; it was not clear to him whether much would happen as a result of - what seemed to him mostly middle-class - South Africans reading about anarchism.

Henry's clogged and beating sinuses pressed against his awareness that he was the only one who could open up his factory for business as usual that day. He took some symptom suppressants and grudgingly made his way to work in jeans and a pyjama top.

Most of the workday was spent behind his computer screen with earphones in, rewatching a comedy series he liked and blowing his nose raw. He thought about seeing Charlie and Anne, but there would be no use in his condition. He didn't feel like thinking about them or about anarchy or very much at all and he excused himself with the cold, all the while aware of how much he would love some human warmth to make the space of his sickness less desolate.

\* \*

I return to the squat.

The anarchists are moving and flowing as usual, though tense - I give the news, a friend of theirs is in a small cage, and Andreia is injured.

A group of schoolchildren from Langa are meeting with them, aware of what they have done for children in Philippi. Their classrooms are shipping containers also, it is impossible to work properly in them; they provide no insulation, they are either too hot or too cold, their windows are broken and have to be covered over with plastic bags when it rains. The children see themselves with no possibility to escape the conditions of poverty that they are in from that position. A few moments walking around them in search of Olivia and this is clear, even through their second-language English.

The anarchists do not have masks on - this even is not publicised.

I see Charlie. She is among the children. She absorbs their desperation. Some of them are looking at her like baby birds open-mouthed waiting for sustenance from their mother; she in

uncomfortable with the nature of their dependence. She looks to me and smiles, I walk to her, she excuses herself from the children.

“Hello dear,” she says to me, placing her hand on my shoulder. She smiles and looks directly into my eyes. She is inquisitive.

“Hello,” I say.

“Are you alright?”

“At the moment.”

“I’m sorry I haven’t been around too much lately.”

“That’s okay, you are doing interesting things. Are you alright?”

“Running at max.”

“Maybe today I can help.”

“I think you’re doing just fine like you are. You’re probably the most peculiar thing to come out of this whole adventure. A lot of us get energy just from knowing you exist. I don’t know if you’re aware of how people feel more human around you. But if you do want to do more we could probably figure something out.”

“I think I do.”

“Okay, come chat with me in about an hour, I need to finish up here.”

“Where’s Olivia?”

“I think she’s at UCT for a meeting. Are you smitten?” she smiles.

“I don’t know.” Everything is too much for me to be much of anything.

I go to lie down on one of the mattresses. Olivia will see me when she comes back.

Charlie is working out her tension - how to teach without becoming an authority figure.

Before I fall asleep, Mohammed comes to my side.

“Hey.”

“Hey,” I reply.

“Give this a read quick,” he says, handing me a slip of paper.

*Alex and Shamani want to talk with you tonight. They can meet you where you live tonight. Tell me if that’s alright with you.*

Alex and Shamani are Bandits.

“It’s alright with me,” I reply, handing the paper back to him. Mohammed is a nice guy. I shut my eyes. Maybe all the squatters are still in touch with The Bandits.

\* \*

Early this morning The Bandits robbed a Macro megastore for food and other supplies after causing false alarms elsewhere, leaving flyers all over explaining the exploitative practices of the company in the context of the country and the neoliberal practices of the international conglomerate that owned the chain and others. Nobody was hurt, the news noted, highlighting the deaths of those in the media house fire.

Henry wondered where they were hiding and how they managed to avoid capture despite the massive nation-wide hunt by the police. It was getting to the point where fascinated people were disappointed if The Bandits had not done something new and outrageous overnight. Henry had come to be quite interested in their strategy; why had they picked that megastore instead of another, did it say something about where they were hiding out or something about their products or what, and how many answers to these and other questions the police already had.

Anne had tried to call him, and had sent him an SMS. He had not responded. He could not find a reason to be upset with her, but he wanted to be. He was. Maybe he had been too quick to think he could deal emotionally with people who were different to him. He was annoyed with himself for feeling conservative. He would reply to her in a couple days; there were too many hasty things he wanted to say right then.

\* \*

I tell Olivia about the meeting I would have tonight.

“I don’t know I wouldn’t have joined The Bandits if I’d been around when the split happened,” she says. “I’m interested to know what they want to talk with you about.”

“You’re not speaking with them?”

“Haven’t needed to.”

“Is there something I can do to help you?”

“You help plenty just by being your lovely self.”

“Charlie said the same - I don’t understand. You have plans, you do things, you advance. I can’t contribute?”

“I can do as much as I do because you remind me of the self I’m committed to and the

distance between who I am now and that human.”

“I’m no sage, Olivia.”

“You’re only you, love. *A je ne sais quoi*. That’s my point. If you want to help me, I could use a hug.”

I reach over to her and hold her. I don’t understand, but I know she believes what she says. I run my fingers through her hair, and I start to miss her, aware that I will be without her later. We sit with our arms wrapped around each other and she tells me about the new programmes she is starting. Olivia and Charlie are amazing. They do not stop, they do not rest, they plummet, even as they are destroyed by the atmosphere. What Olivia and Charlie have most in common is that they are strong and desperate and they know they are under attack.

We sit like that, on that mat in the squat, amidst everything.

-

I sit under the light of my gravity lamp. I did not eat enough today and I have not had luck with food lately. I feel I should be here for the meeting, and do not want to eat from my emergency tins. It is cold as usual, but I am not used to it.

I am reading when I hear the light slap-tap sound of shoes walking on the water. I see a torch light. Alex and Shamani emerge with backpacks and gumboots on.

“Hello.”

“Hi,” they say.

“You’ve really lived here the whole time?” Shamani asks.

“Yes.”

She stares at my platform with a wonder I do not understand. I can only offer my visitors space to sit but they seem to find even that remarkable. Alex has been here before, but he seems to feel differently about it today. His hair looks different - he must have washed it.

“How are you doing?” Shamani says. She seems shaken, she is reverting to talk bound in roles.

“Everything is overwhelming and I do not cope well, but today I hold together.”

“You think you’ll be functional over the next week?” Alex says.

“I will be sure to hold myself together for as long as you need.”



“We’ve come for some help,” Shamani says, “I’m guessing you’ve heard that X has been taken by the pigs.”

“Yes.”

“He’ll appear in court in town in three days. We’re going to get him back then.”

“Okay.”

“We only need another person to get us around the tunnels. You wouldn’t actually need to leave them at any time.”

“Oh.” I am relieved. This is something I can do. “I can help.”

“Also if you don’t mind we’d like to keep some guns down here with you from tonight, it will be easier than opening up the wall on the day.”

I take a steel box and place it on my bed.

“Great. So we’re not sure if they’ll be expecting us at all or how prepared they’ll be,” Alex says, pulling a piece of paper from his bag. “I drew up this map of the area around the High Court. Here’s the Gardens. There are these three exits here,” he points to where utility holes are, one on the property of the Saint George Cathedral, one in gated alley off Keerbom Street on the other side of the building, and the next nearest one in the Gardens themselves by the High Court Library. “You know them?”

“I have never tried the library exit, but I know where it is.”

“The library courtyard exit is closest and easy to get to, but it’s welded shut from the topside, and it seems more trouble than it’s worth to try brave the noise it would take to get it open again. Which leaves us with the other two. We don’t want to have to move around inside the building, so we’re planning on doing all of it between the times X is taken out of the cop van into the building. But we don’t know which side of the street they will park their police van, so we need to prepare two exits. The Keerbom-Long Street alley is our best bet for an escape and also the least likely to see action, so we’d like you to take that, and I’ll take the exit in Gardens on Government Avenue. It’s the best way to lose them we can think of.”

“Is there no other way?” I feel the tunnels shrinking.

“The next best option is kidnapping a politician and making a trade,” Shamani says. “We might have to do that eventually anyway if more of us get caught. One day if we’ve got friends rioting inside we’ll go full Cangaceiro and attack the prison. This escape is most likely to be a once-off, as you can guess.”

“I have guessed,” I say. I think about my home and I think about Xolile in a small cage.

“What exactly can I do for us?”

“We’d like you to wait for us at that entrance with the manhole open from eight-thirty a.m.,” Shamani says, “the cops could pitch up with X any time between then and eleven. We’ve got walkie talkies to keep you up to date on what’s up. We’ll be hanging out in two groups of five on either road the courts come out on. My group, on your side, are probably going to be dropped off and hanging around as inconspicuously as possible for that time. Alex’s side will probably wait in the car because they’ll ideally drive to the exit. If we see the action we’ll be coming over quick, possibly with guns blazing, and we’ll need you to get us as quickly as possible to the exit at Buitengracht and Hans Strijdom.”

“Which one is that?”

“The one,” Shamani says, “where you get to the end of the highway and there’s immediately the robot, then the next robot where you wait forever and people turn right to go to Green Point and there’s the unbuilt bridge standing there like an awkward reminder of the inadequacy of white supremacy.”

“There’s an island between the roads there with an exit,” Alex says.

“I know it.”

“That’s all you have to do,” Alex continues. “Though we’d recommend you made yourself scarce for a while after that. You’re welcome to join us for a while wherever we’re staying, or we could arrange to drop you off. We’re going to catch a ride from the exit to Woodstock, then separate for a while, so you could leave us there.”

“I could use that ride to Woodstock,” I say. I pause. “Are you prepared? You have told them your model, they can expect you.”

“We’ve been risking everything for some time now,” Alex says. “Together. We won’t leave him behind.”

I intuit this. My discomfort at the idea of losing my home makes me look for reasons against the action.

“Can you take my books with you?”

“Your books?”

“It’s not going to be easy to move everything in three days.”

Alex and Shamani slowly come to understand what I am saying. They become awkward as they realise this means I cannot stay in my home. Alex scratches his stubble. But it is only awkward because they had not been as considerate as they could have been - I have always

been aware, and I had agreed to help under those conditions.

They say they will be back the day before to give me the radio and a watch and to help get the cooler box and the books out of the space. I move their weapon box underneath the small pile of books that has accumulated. It is worrying and exciting and I feel like I am participating in life, like I am affecting the real.

\* \*

Henry got back to his flat that afternoon feeling like the only thing he would like to do is sleep. Instead he made tea and sat in front of his TV, playing a film he had downloaded the night before. He did not feel like doing anything, not even enjoying the film. He sipped the tea and blew his nose while wrapped in a blanket, and time passed.

Modern existence (and, we might infer, for the white middle class especially) entails a substitution of survival for life.

A.K. Thompson

The next day was the largely the same. Henry's cold remained and he could make it bearable with pills. He thought about taking pills every day and how it was the norm for his brother and his father.

At the factory he managed to do some work. His employees seemed to be slacking since he was without the energy to do the necessary policing. He wasn't sure whether to take it personally. His lethargy was reaching new lows and, flipping through the online news on the topic of tuberculosis in South African prisons, he spent time imagining he had the disease. He played in-browser games on his computer and waited for the day to end.

\* \*

There is little to prepare for the move; Alex will be back to help with some of the things. Hope lies in staying with Olivia for the next two weeks, and if there is a way, to move back to the tunnels. It will not be easy to stay away. I am afraid home will disappear.

\* \*

The news notes how the police have confirmed that one of The Bandits was shot during the arrest of Xolile. They didn't know the identity of the person or how he or she was doing. Henry found himself hoping that Charlie and Anne were not somehow secretly Bandits and that they had not been shot. He could not help but dislike the police. It took little more than a

few documentaries to make it clear that police worldwide were a force acting as a violent wall between people looking for social change and the people in power. The Bandits were going overboard, to be sure, but the whole thing was out of whack. Henry felt a pleasure and a distaste at how he was able to pontificate his opinions to himself and an imaginary audience, as if he would be called upon one day to preach history as the authority or as a special insider on the topic.

If the mainstream news was accurate at all, the squat anarchists had focused on community building and political education in the suburbs around the squat, along with continuing their major projects in Langa, Pollsmoor, and Woodstock. Woodstock, along with Observatory and Mowbray in particular had been getting a lot of attention from them. Henry understood them to be building up a base of mutual aid and knew they would be doing it well.

One of the articles he read on them was about their anti-gentrification project. Around a decade ago Woodstock had a group of political people who had worked in their suburb for the issues of the suburb, including the gentrification that had already started to set in. This group had been systematically targeted and driven out by developers, and had left the area without anyone willing to push against the progress that was dismantling their community. The anarchists had recognised that there was a new generation of people in the area since then, and had set up the campaign with a variety of tactics.

First they sent out a flyer explaining several things; what gentrification was and what they could expect to happen with their homes in the future; what legal recourse people had against being evicted; and contact details. They also handed out a zine to all the teenage kids in the area, outlining the interesting and typically adolescent-appealing approach that an anarchist group in the US took to deal with their area being bought up by developers, levelled, and replaced with “monotonous monstrosities to be lived in by wealthier people wholly alienated from each other and the history of the space.”

The squat group was prolific. Daily there were new articles online around some problem affecting lives of people in and around the city. They had put together a think tank with a few people out of one of their reading groups, and they produced thorough anarchist analyses of some topical subject at least once per week. News groups in the country had taken note and were regularly checking it for interesting stories and different interpretations of events.

Henry had not wanted to think about them much, but he had now a months-long

developed habit of looking up their website and the sites they could regularly be expected to have contributed to. He was bored. When he wasn't bored he was anxious. His cold was miserable, in its second week and still going strong - his throat had become infected and he had started taking antibiotics. He felt those emotions that haunted his father and his brother with a sharp but distant fear.

\* \*

I walk down to Greenmarket Square. Lynn is there in the usual spot with puppets and a crowd of children. Once the teacher is sent away and the school destroyed, Lynn emerges, winks. We leave the stage with a neighbour. We walk.

“Where is Tham?”

“She hasn't been able to leave the house,” Lynn says. “She doesn't want to see anybody. I'm really hoping X gets out soon. It's weird doing this without her.”

It is not easy to hold together under the weight of her words and the words I hear that she does not say; *Tham might not choose to live without him around.*

“I'm doing fruit trees too now,” Lynn adds, distracting, gently pulling a planted sapling from a plastic two-litre soft drink bottle that she has cut the top off of. “The squatters have been keeping some of their pips for me. They won't grow as well as weed, because weed's a weed, but I think we'll get some luck with the peaches, and the avos if I can get them started, and maybe some other ones.”

Lynn wants to turn the city into a garden as a beginning to rewilding. I want to ruin the city, to make it ruins. We walk the grid and set the seeds in any piece of earth that might give life, planting a sapling when we think it is less likely to be removed.

We go back to the stage and I talk with the puppets under the high sun. Conversation changes with the passing-by of some charmed young students from another end of the earth. They are clean and presentable like mass-produced superdolls. They join the talk and they present as kind. They tell the puppets and me that they are volunteering at an NGO, they have arrived in the country yesterday. The show ends, Lynn gains a small fortune from them. She decides not to go directly into how the NGO sector is the Trojan horse of capitalism, or how they needn't condescendingly have travelled all the way to Africa to do good things, or how they're hardly more than tourists and tourism is pro-capital, but I see the thoughts on her

skin. They decide they want to take us out for drinks, Lynn wants to go back to Popeye's, I take the tourists up on their offer. Their language is closer to yours and I want to try to be near you somehow.

\* \*

After Henry had been back at his flat from work for about an hour his phone rang. It was the house number in Jo'burg, which usually meant his brother was calling him.

"Hello!"

"Henry my boy!"

"Hey, dad! How's it going?"

"Alright, you?"

"Yeah. Things are fine. I mean, I've got this shitty cold but it is what it is. Been settling in to life without Jamie around - it felt like he got settled in really quick, and it was nice having his company."

"He seems also to be doing better after the break."

"Yeah he did seem pretty anxious about some things, but I think he's coming right. If he can find a job he likes coming out of this exam then I think he'll get a chance to settle down and not be so concerned."

"I think so too. I think he'll tell you about some job thoughts he's had once he finishes his exams."

"Cool. And you, what's happening with you?"

"Nothing much. You know, basically the same thing every day. Every day blends into the next and then one day you're old."

"I suppose so! You might want to do something about that."

"Eh, that's just where I am in life right now. I've got plenty obligations and things that I need to hold to and that's how things go when you're in my position."

Immediately - and between thoughts that it was futile to try to wrench his father from his coma - Henry thought that these "obligations" he spoke of implied family obligations; that part of the reason why his father worked so much was to continue to pay for the lifestyles of his wife and her children, and for Jamie - and, though Henry was beginning to make his own way, even he still relied fundamentally on his father. The idea that he was contributing to his

father's sense of trappedness was a problem for Henry, and that his father expected him to treat the family in the same way; Henry needed to support everyone through their joined project and participate in the way that his father did because it was what was expected of him. It would never be simply a matter of quitting, if he ever did. It would not only potentially sink his father and himself financially, it would betray his father's lifelong sense of family obligation. Henry was well aware of how much his father had sacrificed to give him and Jamie the opportunities they had - opportunities their father never had. He did not want to tell his father that the opportunities did not seem all they were cracked up to be - while at the same time feeling like a spoiled brat. Henry wanted to tell his father that he needn't feel he had to take care of all these people at his expense.

Instead, they talked about his father's new hobby - he had bought a saxophone and would be taking lessons weekly, starting in a few days. He had saxophone trivia for Henry, and some comments on his tutor's professionalism - though they had not yet had a class together. Henry was sure the hobby would not last more than two months, like any taken up by a middle-aged man - not because it was desired, but because anything was.

He handed the phone to Jamie.

"Hey what's crackin' Ennie?"

"All's good. Got a shitty cold-infection-thing. You? I hear you've had some thoughts about what you're keen to do after your exams."

"That's a shit one. I'm alright. Things became clearer while I was there. Those anarchists, their standard of living isn't exactly something to be envious of. Sleeping in a fuckin' collage of mats in a warehouse all together with no privacy and everything in common, and risking prison half the time for stunts that nobody's even sure do anything. They get to party hard but they party in the dirt. And to be honest your situation at work was also an influence. I don't think I could deal with something so unstimulating and eternal. I think you should try do something so that you don't have to be in every day, En, or that you only come in for half-days or something, I don't know. Or find something interesting to do with the rest of the space there. You've got to do more with that time, or you're going to end up with regrets."

"Yeah I've been wondering about what to do with the time. I dunno. I don't want to force anything. You know, pick up a sax or something."

"Well you should do more about it. There's nothing interesting for anybody, chicks or yourself or whoever, in a guy who sits and picks his nose and whacks it behind a desk all day,



even if he owns the factory the desk is in.”

“You said things are clearer; what’s clearer?”

“Well I’m less anxious now, about going into work. There’s only what there is. If I wanna take care of a family someday it’s about time I’ve just got to find a job that is interesting for me and go with it. I’ve got a couple options right now and I’ll look into them and make my application sometime after my last exam. Eight more days!”

“You ready?”

“I’ve been grafting hard, so I’ll probably cream it, but I’m not taking any chances. But you never know whether they’ll nought you with some fuckin’ dogshit question at UNISA, so I’m not going to take it easy until I’ve got my marks back.”

“You an Cassy going out again?”

“This weekend! We’re going to go watch comedy at Monte’.”

“Nice. How are you feeling about it?”

“Good. She’s a solid chick.”

“I’m thinking I’m going to call up Anne sometime this weekend and see what happens.”

“I don’t really know why you want to, but sure. Whatever makes you happy big guy.”

After the phone call Henry thought about his father’s stagnant life. When his father had come here from Italy, his family had little money, and he had worked hard. Too hard, because it seemed he stopped doing anything else. He had few friends to speak of and his wife was quite clearly fundamentally concerned with access to his money. He had not been exposed to anything that required him to change.

His father had ‘pulled himself up by the bootstraps’, with the help of apartheid laws. He was also a person who came from a background that made him that way. It was too heavy to think about it more.

Henry thought about the saying, “Change starts at home,” and dismissed it. Family members already had far too rigid roles set, far too many long-developed emotional triggers in the most mundane of interactions. Change would begin elsewhere.

Henry still spent too much time in his own head, he thought.

\* \*

The time with the students reminds me why it is much easier to exist around anarchists. They offer me to join them in a round of drinking some Belgian cranberry-flavoured beer. There are three women and two men in their group and it is unclear what they are doing. One couple holds hands while using their other hand to press at their phones. When they do speak, it shows that they are new enough to this city not to realise that I am not characteristic of most people in it. I am barraged with questions, all, at my best understanding, just for the sake of asking them, and as they find out I spend much time with the anarchists some appear put off and others more interested. At all times, regardless of whether I am liked or disliked by any person I am engaging with, they are all aliens; those who dislike me keep me at a distance, those who like me see me as exotic. They are on safari in the streets of Cape Town.

I am unable to express to people this far away how I experience things without sounding incredible to them. It is hard even with the anarchists, but nothing like this. They buy more drinks, I decline mine. Though their minds are opaque to me, I see the suffering of others in the clean neatness of their clothing, in the money spent on European beer as a visitor to Africa from North America, in the straightness and whiteness of their teeth and their actions, in the way this restaurant is not upsetting to them, in the chicken strips and calamari rings that they order, in their haircuts and hair colouring, in their uncomprehending not uncondescending faces.

Their smiles are separate from them - they smile for photos, representing themselves as happy people, or, as people on holiday, or something more thoughtless. They smile for photos because that is what you do.

Alex walks to the tunnel platform where I sleep with a steel shopping trolley and we load many of the things I keep into it. Some books, a cooler box, the gravity light, the invisibility suits. We leave only some food and water, the alarm clock Alex brought me, the dynamo torch, a blanket, and a bag, much like the beginning.

\* \*

The water from Henry's taps were running murky; he wondered if it was related to the bombing or if it was just bad water, though it made no sense that it could have been the former. He thought about his conversation with his father the day before and started to feel dread around going to work that day.

"Man, I don't think I'm coping," he said, sitting at a table in a bar that evening with his old friend Graeme, in town for business again.

"You sound like you need a girlfriend."

"I mean maybe, but I doubt it. That's not what I'm talking about here."

"I could use a girlfriend."

"How do you do it? How do you manage to wake up early, go to work all day and distribute clothing made by underpaid people god knows where, then drive home and make dinner from food where you don't know how it got to your plate and wash the dishes with chemicals and take a shit and flush it, and end up living in a world where the only things you're actually facing are your home and your job and the leisure time you drink away at a table like this, talking about girls and TV shows and English premier league football. And then if you're lucky and privileged, which we are, we get to get more comfortable until we're completely alienated and afraid of the world outside of the roles we live in the job the home

and the bar restaurant. In the meanwhile the world is getting exponentially more fucked.”

“I dunno man, you say we’re privileged, but my mom and dad did a piss-poor job of investing for his retirement and stuff and my brother’s busy going through a humanities degree, so my main focus right now is to make sure that ‘comfortable’ is even possible for my family. That’s what I’ve gotta do. None of us are going to give a fuck that we use a drainpipe for what it’s made for if my dad gets cancer and I end up having to pay for chemo. Not that we give a fuck right now.”

“I dunno, I feel like we should. And it seems like you’re doing fine in the saving-for-chemo department if I have a look at your car.”

“Just because the girls you want to fuck are into these things doesn’t mean we all need to get schooled in the most insignificant political ‘movement’ in history. I work hard for the things that I have, I pay taxes so that government can do its job and help people while I go about covering my own ass. That’s how things work for the rest of the world.”

“Just because I might want to sleep with somebody doesn’t mean anything they say that doesn’t jive with our worldview is invalid.”

“It just means it’s convenient for you to believe their shit.”

“I don’t even know if I wanna sleep with them anymore.”

“That’s also a convenient belief.”

Henry got back home and thought about the size of his living room and the size of a shack until he went to sleep.

\* \*

Awake, with a nightmare like all the nightmares when my body is tense from cold. The alarm has not gone off. Feeling capable. There is not much to do so there should be few problems. More concerning is leaving the tunnels for some weeks. Perhaps longer.

I pack a blanket into a bag and make a slow walk in a hardhat and reflector vest to the hole where I wait with the walkie-talkie. The wake-up alarm screeches and leaves me with a sense of dread for the new day as if I had been conditioned over many awakenings to hate life at the sound. My feet pat their way along the tunnel’s trickling water and down these dark

holes that once seemed endless but now are charted and navigable. I arrive at the ladder that will take me up to the alleyway my group will come through.

\* \*

All the way to lunchtime Henry had employees coming in to speak with him about various things - a machine was having problems, leave that needed to be taken, a baby that one was going to have. He couldn't imagine any of their smiles to be real, any of their reactions to him to be separate from the fact that he was their boss and had power to ruin their lives.

The millions of human beings who were shot, tortured, starved, treated like animals and made the object of a conspiracy of ridicule, can sleep in peace in their communal graves, for at least the struggle in which they died has enabled their descendants, isolated in their air-conditioned apartments, to believe, on the strength of their daily dose of television, that they are happy and free.

Raoul Vaneigem

I hear the a sentence through the weighty black brick in my hand.

“Crew One to Crew A, you in a good spot?”

It is a voice I do not recognise from Alex’s group. There is no response. Two minutes later it comes through again.

“Crew One to Crew A, are you in place?”

“Crew A here, we got a lucky spot. All’s well here. There?”

“We’re settled in and waiting.”

“Pit Crew, you there?”

It sounds like Shamani’s voice, she is calling out to me.

I tell her that I am prepared and she tells me she’s heard me. After that is waiting, listening, and the intermittent conversation between them.

\* \*

Henry phoned Charlie and Anne as soon as he heard about it, but they did not pick up. The shootout at the high court, or, he thought, looking at which sides had casualties, the High Court Massacre, dominated the news in the morning. Including Xolile, eight Bandits had been killed, while some of the cops and two bystanders were injured. The names of the other Bandits had not been released.

\* \*

“Two steel pigs here, none with cages.”

“All clear this side.”

I sit on the floor in the dark beside the ladder, left hand gripping a cold steel rung. I have lived some time in the underbelly of this city, and am acquainted with the way silent darkness sends minds into waking dreams. The blackness takes on a green tinge, and slowly melds into a kaleidoscope of greens and reds and blacks and yellows and purples and browns. I appear in my body at the sound from the machine in my hand.

“Big brass pig with a cage pulling in A-side now, we’re keeping an eye out.”

“Gotcha.”

“Nobody home. We’re waiting on the next.”

“Gotcha.”

\* \*

Photos released by the city showed a grey Jetta pull up and park in the road perpendicular to an entrance of the court building. It was impossible to see inside. There was another photo of three unidentifiable people, wearing mostly obfuscating clothing - high collared jackets, sunglasses, hats, an eyepatch, standing on the street corner. The news noted that the number plates on the Jetta were fake and that the car had been waiting there for five hours before anything happened.

\* \*

“Brass cage pig arriving A-side,” a voice that sounds like Will says.

“We hear you.”

In the silence I hear each of The Bandits holding their breath.

“This is it,” Will says, “A-side confirming and heading out. Pit crew get ready for us to

come through with the treasure.”

“I’m ready,” I say. I climb the ladder.

I push the tunnel cover off and aside and set the sign beside the open hole. *Work in progress.*

\* \*

The news explained that the armoured police nyala pulled up next to the entrance of the high court. The three Bandits loitering on the corner crossed over the street at pace and moved around the van in order to face its back, while four more Bandits got out of the car and crossed the street past the front end of the nyala and up the stairs to the doorway of the building, as two policemen emerged from the truck and headed around it to open it up and collect Xolile. They noted that Xolile moved particularly slowly, and they speculate that it is because he was aware of the trap.

\* \*

“A-side foot crew heading out, brass crew slowly coming round.”

“X is about to go up the stairs with two armour pigs at his side, we’re moving in three, two, one.”

\* \*

As Xolile emerged, the three Bandits facing the back of the van lifted bandanas over their faces and opened fire on the two policemen escorting him, along with The Bandits who had set themselves up on the stairway to the entrance of the courts. The police had been prepared, and several emerged from the back of the nyala and from the entrance to the court building, returning fire as soon as the bandanas were on.

\* \*

I hear pops and firecrackers. Single shots. Bursts. I see none of what is happening. I am



concerned. I wait in place.

Will's is the only voice from the group that comes through my hand.

“There's nothing.”

The gunfire gets harsher.

\* \*

The two policemen who escorted Xolile from the van were saved by the hidden light armour suits they wore beneath their clothing, though two others sustained severe injuries. A firefight ensued in which all eight of the initial Bandits were killed, with little grace. Another group from a car that came around the building was fired upon and retreated. The imbalance in deaths and injuries between sides was presented as the result of the special training of the police involved - and the news marked the two escort policemen as heroes for their bravery.

\* \*

After some time the gunshots become less frequent. The Bandits in the car from the other side shout out from the black brick in my hand. They get no response. They cry, and shout, and shoot. Everything goes silent.

\* \*

The mayor's preliminary statement noted how it was a tragedy that youths could be so warped and that they had died in such a state, while reminding everyone how the police had done their jobs well and that the actions of The Bandits, including the three deaths they had caused in the past, were grievous, and that The Bandits were indeed terrorists who would have caused chaos and death if they had continued on their path. She assures everyone that there will be a commission into what exactly has happened that deals with the event and ensures that the event is treated with the gravity it deserves.

Henry wondered for a moment how the photos and footage had been gained if the city's CCTV had been destroyed. He became overwhelmed with blunt numbness.

\* \*

I step out of the hole and close it behind me. Nobody has come. I walk out towards the court building and am shooed away from the crime scene, only able to see for a moment the legs of one of The Bandits lying behind a nyala.

I weep and I drag the body that I use to the squat.

I am an organic assemblage of grief. A siphonophore of loss.

The people of the city, the anarchists, we are crippled by a cold-sweat fever. I throw up the alkaline dark blood-brown bile, as if to make room for everything.

\* \*

Eventually the names were released. Will was dead, along with the seven others, some of whom Henry had met before. Charlie and Anne were not on the list.

Will was dead. Henry sat on his couch in his apartment, pinching the bridge of his nose, feeling a dull numbness in his frontal lobe.

The Bandits released counter-information to the press outlining how their ambush had been ambushed and that the massacre was a calculated and wholly intentional act of the city and the police. They outlined how they were fired upon before they had made any move and note how convenient it was that only stills from the video of the event had been released. Their intention had been to retrieve Xolile, harmlessly if possible though that was wholly unlikely, and instead they were systematically murdered.

The Bandits reminded the readers of Xolile's years in social work and his activism prior to joining The Bandits and argued that this was a case of criminalisation of social justice. They showed the names and histories of each of the people who were killed. Xolile's wide smile and deep crow's feet stuck in Henry's mind. About half of The Bandits were conventionally remarkable people, people who from an early age had set up educational NGOs that had won awards, a promising young UCT academic whose doctorate thesis had

reshaped anthropology, another who had no qualifications or specific achievements to point to but had been receiving tributes endlessly from major people in civil society, and Will, the internationally famous gender-bending activist beauty. As Henry read those words he felt he could not help but recognise The Bandits as the good guys, despite the shambles the city was in and his awareness that they had not discernibly achieved anything. A brief look over the online articles on the topics and the comments sections below showed that his view was not in the majority.

Henry paced up and down the living room of his house, cellphone in hand. He still could not get hold of Charlie or Anne. The squat was not allowing visitors. He became more and more aware of how he wanted to be able to participate, and how he had not been the sort of person who could be taken seriously as someone committed to changing how the world was built. Will was one of the first people he had met whom he felt was fundamentally uncategorisable - one of the most kind and welcoming too - and Henry wanted room in the world for people like him. He felt upset at how little he felt otherwise.

After some time, he felt grated that nobody had done anything. There had been a lot of writing, online and in print, about what happened the day before, but the streets were quiet. The city seemed incapacitated and useless.

Too much had happened too quickly. Henry felt exhausted. His desire for action was tired and hollowed out by the weight of the deaths. He got into bed. He thought again about Xolile and his wide smile. Behind that smile had been a person with endless moments branching out to others and filled with emotions and tensions and energy, making up a deep living history. He had family and friends that cared about him who affected him in myriad good and bad ways. He would have had a long and hard process of radicalisation, the rebuilding of himself to see the world from fundamentally different premises. He lived and died beside people who wanted some of the same things as he did - Henry wondered what it might be like to stare death in the face with a group of close friends. He wondered most of all whether there was a story behind Xolile's smile, and what it might be like to be a person who hated the world enough to become a Bandit, but loved life enough to smile like he did.

He thought of Will and his story, the story he had told about his admiration for Andreia, and started to cry quietly by himself.

\* \*

I hate it here. I hate drowning in awareness.

Everything is absurdly excessive in a globalised world. The claim that we evolved in small groups of maximum a few hundred humans, and are best built to live under those conditions, is an experience I have vividly. If the realm of everything consisted of only that many it might be bearable.

I feel a deep connection between the ability to experience everything and the possibility of being fully human.

\* \*

In Johannesburg, a government building was attacked by a mob of protesters, and the home of a parliamentarian was hit with several petrol bombs. In Durban, a group of people preventing a shipload of Israeli products from docking at the harbour wore masks and were covered in patches with circle-As. In Pretoria, a new collective found its way into the news for tagging over thirty billboards and shop windows showing happy white families and their products with “Where are the black people?”. In East London, a group of vagrants recently evicted from their long-time home in a developing area occupied an abandoned building with the assistance of more privileged locals. In Cape Town the only thing Henry found was that a machine in the Coca-Cola factory had been sabotaged by its workers.

When a video was leaked showing the strategic cornering and killing of The Bandits by the police, and the pursuit of the group in the car off camera, Henry’s mind kept grinding through the thought that the anarchists’ interpretation of the function of government had been right all along, or at least going in the right direction.

“Hey Ennie, what’s up?”

“Jay! Not much. Things have been hectic over here with The Bandits.”

“I heard about that. You knew the model guy, right?”

“Yeah.”

“How you feeling about that?”

“It’s all pretty unreal.”

“You talked with Charlie?”

“I can’t get hold of any of them.”

“That’s a shit one.”

“Yeah,” I said, and the conversation fell silent. “What’s happening with you?”

“I basically landed with my ass in the butter. One of my chick mates has an uncle who works for Leyn & Porte - which is basically the best place to work for someone like me. He heard I was looking for a job and that I have the qualifications I have and he said I’m in.”

“That’s great Jay, I’m happy for you.”

“Well technically I have to go through an interview but he tells me it’s just a formality. They’re not even going to wait for me to get the results back from my exams. So long as I do

end up passing, they're good."

"Nice!"

"I'm interviewing next Friday and I'll probably get started at the beginning of next month. Got that final exam the day before so it seems like good timing."

"No shit. How you feeling about it?"

"It's kinda heavy how quickly it's happening now but I feel like I've just gotta ride this wave and make it happen. It's a great opportunity. The meds are making it easier I'm sure."

"I suppose so. I don't know too much about it, what kinda work is it?"

"It's consulting. We basically rock up places, look around, and tell people how to do their business better."

"Okay, and you're keen on that."

"Sure, it's what I've been learning this whole time - I feel like I've got a good grip on it."

"Alright cool. Though I don't know if confidence that you've got a grip on something means it's something enjoyable."

"Meaning?" Jamie's words were curt enough that Henry was not sure if Jamie had become annoyed. Henry tried to talk as if he had not noticed.

"It's like cricket. Nobody likes that shit. Some kids are just good at it and get positively reinforced to keep it up. They like being good at something and not the actual thing."

"I dunno. Isn't that basically every job?" It became clearer that Jamie had been bothered by his statement - Henry would lighten up.

"I suppose. I'm just trying to get where you're coming from, Jay."

"I mean, it is weird. Moving into the full-time job. It's the last thing you do before you retire. Which is the last thing you do."

"I think the world's different today, but yeah, it's no joke. I'm already there with this factory."

Henry was starting to wish that life would pause and give him some time to collect himself.

\* \*

The squat anarchists are moving forward through the fever. They run headlong, dragging

their suffering behind them because they understand relief to be in only one direction.

I am a wreck.

The image of the body next to and obscured by a vehicle haunts me.

That most familiar body.

\* \*

Halfway into the next week he got through to Charlie after a long day of work.

“Henry.”

“Charlie! Are you alright?”

“I’m doing well,” she replied, and he did not understand.

“Is there something I can do to help?”

“I don’t know. What do you want to do?”

“Anything that would be helpful. Just let me know.”

“I’m not in a position where I want to tell you what would be helpful. I think it’s not too tough to figure out if you want to.”

“Okay.” If he had been speaking with anyone else he would have found those words offish and distant, but he was confident enough Charlie was just being straightforward. “Well if that changes let me know.”

“I’ll do that.”

“How’s Anne?”

“I haven’t talked with her personally. I think she might be going on the ayahuasca trip Olivia’s organising for this Friday.”

“Another one?”

“Another one. A couple of us use it to come to grips with things like what happened - it’s really good for that.”

“Oh. Are you keen to hang out sometime?”

“I’m a little too busy right now, Twin. They pre-planned a whole media strategy to spin this their way. Sunday I’ll be at my mom’s though if you wanna pop in around two.”



After the phone call Henry spent about two hours sitting, thinking about doing the ayahuasca. He thought maybe he could ask Charlie to help him to join, but he needed to be sure. In a moment of confidence he called up Charlie.

“Hello again,” she said. Henry was surprised to get through. He half-expected it not to work.

“Hey Charlie. I’m calling to see if I could come along for this ayahuasca thing on Friday. I think I could use it.”

“Okay I’ll talk with the people involved and get back to you. I’m not sure if they’re happy to have people they’re not familiar with there on the trip but it’ll probably be fine. I should say though that I just spoke with Anne and she’s not going. Vimbai’s always there for a trip though. You still wanna go?”

“Umm, yeah.” Henry felt a pang of anxiety how how Charlie knew he had some attachment to Anne. “Yeah I wanna do it even if it’s by myself.”

“Alright, I’ll let people know and send you a SMS.”

Thursday evening rolled around quickly. Henry was antsy and decided to call his brother.

“Jamie! What’s up. How was the exam?”

“Creamed it.”

“Ah, great. I’m glad.”

“Yep. Fucking decent. Got that interview tomorrow afternoon.”

“Oh yeah, shit, that’s already happening. Good luck!”

“It seems like it’s in the bag already so I’m not too concerned. Just gotta appease the bureaucracy. Bit anxious but I think it’s just residual from the exam.”

“Cool. Let me know how it goes.”

“And what’s happening with Ennie?”

“Well I decided yesterday to try out ayahuasca, so I’m doing that tomorrow.”

“I don’t know about that - it sounds like it’s something you don’t fuck with.”

“It definitely isn’t. I’m just ready to try it and see what happens.”

“Ehh, not just anybody is ready to try something like that.”

“I think it’s time.”

“Well alrighty then Ennie. Good luck chundering out your mouth and your nought.”

“Yeah, I don’t really know what it’s going to be like, or if I’ll feel changed after, or what. But aside from the hecticness of the whole thing it seems like people think it’s good shit.”

“Okay big guy, well come back in one piece.”

“That’s the plan.”

That night, Henry flipped through his journal to reacquaint himself with the thoughts that had occupied his mind over the last year.

Henry was off-guard. The drive together in the kombi had been unexpectedly pleasant. Henry was reintroduced to the people there, and introduced to others, none including him.

“Hlumelo? Not Biko, right?”

“Oh no, it’s not an uncommon name, and unfortunately we all share it with that guy. He’s into electoral politics with his mom. I’ve seen him once, at the old white bourgeois book festival. The watch on his arm would have been less offensive if it literally spat in the faces of poor people.”

There were mostly familiar faces and names; Vimbai, Olivia, Alex, Andreia, Mohammed, Hlumelo. Henry was told that Andreia had been in a car accident a few days before. Their arm was in a cast. Other new names included Liz - who was younger, maybe twenty, and the only person besides himself who would be taking the concoction for the first time - and Vukhile, who along with Hlumelo were part of the Black Consciousness-focused anarchists and had been particularly close with Xolile.

Everyone was agreeable and wearing warm comfortable loose-fitting clothing. Henry imagined that they used this time to step out of a world in which they carried the weight of everything. He assumed everyone there was squat anarchists. Mats were laid out with buckets beside each in a rectangle around a sort of altar, a thick flat square piece of wood with enough room for a cross-legged person and some artefacts - a large green candle, wooden cups and a brown bottle, a wooden sculpture of a woman standing with her hands out and holding incense. The air was comfortably cool and windless. Everyone was casual and Henry absorbed their sentiment. They talked about light things as the day faded, and there was only a quiet sense that everyone would be going through and that it would be gone through

together. Henry did not understand it, and he did not see it like a quiet lake surface over something unconstrainable. The pleasantness of those eight others around him was a mutual mercy.

The rectangle of mats were set up as three on two sides and two on the others, pointing towards the altar. Vimbai would facilitate, she sat on her legs on the altar, and for the introduction the least experienced four sat at one of the mats. At eight, night had fallen and engulfed the space in darkness only slightly incomplete under the stars.

Like a safety briefing on an airplane, except that she referred to the ayahuasca as a person, as 'she' or 'the medicine', who will 'do her work on you', Vimbai ran over details of the trip for first-time users and as a reminder to the experienced.

She went through the contraindicated things they should not have ingested or otherwise put in their bodies over the last few days. She explained how they might get more control over ourselves if we started to lose it. Sit up straight, focus your eyes on something specific, focus on the music. Don't be afraid to cry, but otherwise it is preferable to keep silent to avoid invading the delicate space of others. People would likely cry. Everyone would be hypersensitive to sound and to light, and when things started the only light besides the stars would be the candle in the middle of the altar. Before everyone took the ayahuasca, it would help to think about whatever issues each would like to delve into on the journey; everyone was invited to have those clear in the mind. It was a particularly strong batch, she said, so each person should say if they wanted to take it easy, and Vimbai would pour a smaller amount.

People seemed excited. Henry did not know how to interpret this in light of all the anarchists had dealt with lately.

Vimbai called those who were still milling about to sit down so she could administer the liquid. Three of the more experienced users there were engaged in a calm but strong private debate around some issues that the anarchists were dealing with, which Henry understood as a process of priming themselves to think of these issues while they were with the drug.

Each was called up one by one to drink from the wooden cup. Henry was fifth. He came and sat in front of Vimbai.

"Want me to pour you a lighter dose?" she offered.

"No thanks," he smiled, "I came here for the full experience."

Vimbai smiled back at him and poured a measure of the thick, dark, brown liquid into the cup.

Henry took it into his hands and paused.

This year had given him a lot to think about. Was it possible for him to be someone who runs a factory? If it was not, how could he face his father knowing the financial loss it could entail for the whole family? Was it possible for him to become something like these anarchists? How should he feel about his life? Should he choose the comfortable boredom of his father, or the safe anxiety of his brother, or should he leap into the uncomfortable and the unsafe and uncompromising? How did he feel about Charlie? How did he feel about Anne? He hoped for the drug to give him some straightforward answers.

Henry drank it. It tasted terrible, like thick soapy ground-up tree bark. But it was down.

As soon as everyone had drunk, the three who were arguing before went back to arguing - they would return in twenty minutes or so when the drug started to take affect, and Vimbai lit the candle and the incense and moved to a mat.

Two people decided on a last-minute journey to the bathroom. People were still casual. Once one was back - the girl, Liz, who was also having her first time - Henry saw her take out her phone from her bag at her matside, and turn it off. It was odd to see anarchists with cellphones in their hands.

He had forgotten about his own phone and did not want to disturb the ceremony with beeps or vibrations, so he opened the side pocket of his bag to pull it out. He had eight missed calls, from his father's cellphone, from his father's house line, and Charlie. Three SMSs from his father all urged him to call immediately, and Charlie's told him to call his father.

Henry stood up and walked away from the people. There would be at least ten minutes before the drug kicked in. It was starting to get chilly - he was glad he had brought a blanket. He dialled the number. Everybody was so casual.

"Where have you been?"

"Hey dad, you're trying to get hold of me? I'm out with friends in the bush. I wasn't checking my phone."

"Listen. Something's happened. Prepare yourself."

Henry felt like a hook had slipped through his skin and into his solar plexus.

“Oh. No -”

“Jamie was in a car accident on the way home from the interview. Jamie is dead. I’m not sure what...”

He cut the call. He panicked. His throat clogged. He rushed, stumbled to Vimbai. He felt ill with terror and undone by grief.

Vimbai’s face reflected understanding. Henry tried to speak calmly. He shook and whimpered.

“Vimbai. I need help. I just heard that my brother is dead. I can’t be on this drug right now. What can we do?”

The faces around him changed. They were not reassuring.

“I’m so sorry,” Vimbai said, putting her hand over her mouth.

“Put your fingers down your throat,” Hlumelo said. “Force purge right now and drink water. It’s the best you’ve got. But it’s too late. You probably won’t be able to make much difference. You’re just going to have to do this.”

Henry looked at Vimbai, he had started weeping. His phone was vibrating; his father was trying to get hold of him. Vimbai’s tear-lined face confirmed that there was nothing he could do. Suddenly her cheery colourfully-wrapped dreadlocks offended him. As he put his hand in his mouth thoughts flashed through the layers of distress. Everyone was intoxicated, no-one could drive, they were stuck there, at least an hour by car from anyone he knew. He sobbed and cried out as he threw up onto the ground. The harsh tree-bark taste came back as the blackish paste passed through his mouth. Someone took his phone.

*Jamie was in an accident.*

Next to Henry, another person was throwing up. Through his tear-blurred eyes Henry saw Olivia, her sleeve pulled up, her fingers down her throat, purging into her bucket. She moved towards him, downing a bottle of water, and joined Vimbai at his side.

“Hey. It’s okay. You’ll get through this. It’s going to be terrible, but it might work out good for you. You should sit down, it’s going to come on soon. Drink some water.”

Vimbai and Olivia helped Henry to his mat. He sat down, nauseous. He did not want to deal with this. These two things would be too much. He did not have anybody he could rely

on to be in his state around. He wept as he drank the half litre of water that was handed to him. He wanted mercy.

“I’ll sit here next to you during the trip,” Olivia said. “I won’t always be able to help, but I will be here and I will do my best. Don’t be shy to ask me for help, and I’m sure everyone here will do what they can when they can. Ride it out, it will probably be no more than two hours.”

“Thanks,” Henry squeaked, between gasps and sobs. He jammed his fingers into his throat and threw up again, this time into a green bucket. He drank water again.

It was already terrible. He was feverish and distraught something cold was setting into his bones.

*I can't believe I took the strong dose.*

I wanted to hide and suffer on my own but I was afraid to be alone under the influence of the drug. How terribly unlucky to be on this plant with this news. My vision was blurred from tears and blurring as the drug started to take effect. Spiral patterns emerged over my visual field it became difficult as I became conscious of my bodily functions, to maintain my ability to use them. Even my heartbeat felt deliberate.

*My brother is dead.*

It became too heavy, too labour

ious to use my vision, though no lights remained  
but the green candle and grief, so I closed my eye  
s and wailed  
my brother is dead  
and there was a head resting on a body part and they were probably both mine.

*He is my closest person.*

Bright flowing colours started to e  
merge and trans  
form in my visual field.  
My brother Jamie is my closest person.  
green yellow purple black bright black a bright white black

nausea

Sitting up in foetal position. Someone put a blanket around my body it is cold I appreciate  
it. I picked up my bucket put it between my knees  
my chest, purged, weeping  
when I had time to breathe.

purge

heave

your head right off from the base of your neck

body became weak as nausea grew exploded in colours - dark thick colours  
emerald and ruby, moss and blood.  
i lifted my head

cried out



he is dead

i remember when we became friends

maybe i should ask for help

but there is nothing to be done

I remembered the bucket. I needed the bucket. Between my legs. I had legs. I could throw up. Throwing up existed. It is still cold.

I put my elbows over my knees and hell

d my head in my hands as I w

retch

ed and choked and

became

more nauseous at the smell of the vomit. Eyes open, I looked down to where the bucket would be. I saw its outline in the dark and I watched it transform.

The circle outline in the pitch black.

It was a deep dark tunnel.

I was tunneling in the edges of consciousness and it was cold and I was suffering.

When I had the strength to control myself, I wailed.

*My brother is gone.*

My body was probably still, if it still existed. My mind moved through the tunnels. They were dark and solid and familiar. Amidst the music I could hear retching and cry

ing and tried to e

stab

lish whether it was

me or other forms of me or others who were there or others who were not there

Sounds like children playing vomiting monsters

OOOUGGEEEEELLOOOUUUUUUUUUAAAAAAAAAAGH URUURIIIIILLLLAAA  
UGHUER

Maybe the music was coming from me. The band sounded live but there was no band. It was too much effort to lift my head. All of my energy was being used to cope

with the rushing overwhelming lurching hurtling exploding draining flying fleeing continuous ongoing.

consci

*I can't do this. I can't leave myself and come back and relearn that he is gone.*

I moved through the dark tunnels

I was cold and nauseous and

I wanted to be sober so I could suffer differently.

orange fireworks under my eyelids

growing glowing green leaves

form familiar shapes

of nothing in particular

I retched again

and again

and my brother my closest person is dead

Cassy never found out about that day in the hospital.

it did not seem like there was anything left

to throw up.

I was weak and I was cold and I was crying loudly. The nausea worsened and light  
ened in waves and I tried to gain energy in those moments when I had more strength. The  
tunnel I had

found myself

in was comfortable though chilly but I needed to come up for air. I lift

ed my head and opened my eyes. Around me people were little

more than outlines in the dark. I could not tell if this was because of the drug or the light.

It seemed that Olivia was the retching unclear mass besides me.

her words those talks

prefigurative band society

affinity

The green candle flickered warmly in the darkness. It was bright and it felt real. I could  
not keep my eyes open among the hal

lucination

s; the patterns were overwhelming together with the world around me. I closed my eyes  
and

the spiral

fractals

took on the green of the candle and

flowed and

pulsed and

shocked through themselves

in endless transformations. On top of it all the green brightened and began to merge into a  
shape. A lizard was appearing. Or a woman. With mosaic skin bright like the light from a  
blowtorch. In front of me occurred a chameleon-woman, lying calmly in a seductive pose.  
Her skin was green and speckled with red and yellow and black and brown and she had a  
beautiful purple line on her hairless head, like a mohawk that continued down her spine. She  
smiled widely with her mouth closed. She only smiled, but both of her eyes were on me and I  
knew she didn't have to do that. Her name was Liz. It was a misnomer. The patterns around  
me overwhelmed and the music slowed and I was less nauseous and managed for one  
moment to relax.

I gasped  
for breath and started breathing quickly as I  
realised I was not sure  
if I had been breathing. I desired more  
air and I opened  
my eyes and she was gone. I turned my head and Olivia was next to me, she was  
watching me

I could see she cared. She cared in my direction. Her presence did not bring relief but it  
did bring the idea of relief and the reminder of its possibility. I existed in my direction. I was  
Henry. My brother has just died. I started to grieve all over again. I became terrified that for  
some moments I had lost myself enough to forget something so immeasurably painful,  
terrified that this had happened several times already. I could not help but wish I would lose  
myself again.

nausea

stench of alkaline guts  
plant bubble outline  
in the bucket  
round deep deep bucket  
tunnel

all existing muscles balled and ripped forward  
out through my throat

I cried out again and wailed and I felt a hand on my back. It must have been Olivia. It  
could have been Liz. It could have been anything. It was comfort  
ing and un  
comfort  
able. Gravity based in front of my face and I heaved into the  
bucket

tunnel.

*It is easier not to exist than it is to be here.*

I felt a part of my mind break off  
break away

And then it  
re  
ally  
began.

\*

Ennie passes through the tunnels and comes upon the platform where I sleep. It is smaller than he remembers from his childhood. It is cold. He is feeling weak; I rest his arm around my shoulders and sit him down on the cardboard.

“Ennie, remember these words? *I’ve mostly just liked my aesthetic and mostly just not had an opportunity to explore others*”

The little piece of feeling he has inside him, the piece that feels like the thing that is him. That ethereal squiggle, that indistinct quale, that aesthetic thought where he locates himself in his body; it cries out for mercy.

And our life flashes before our eyes.

I am there, in those moments when he is able to fathom that another self is possible, on the far end, like a spectre of a wholly separate life in the world he might want. We live ourselves together separately.

Our brother is dead and we must rebecome.

We see the flat-topped mountain together. It is a familiar sight, green and bold, standing over us. But we are crammed together, we are on the edge of the narrow balcony at Emily's. Charlie is nowhere to be seen; she must be tending to her mother inside.

Ennie looks and sees Table Mountain - it is majestic, or regal, or stately, or palatial, or noble. The image of the mountain is the symbol of the city. The mother city.

But we are crammed on the edge of the balcony and Charlie can't see it because she is tending to her mother. It is cold. Ennie can feel a wounded mother in a wounded flat in a wounded city.

But Ennie, nobody on the margins can see the mountain from where they are. The bergie resting on the yellow-and-black plant pot cannot. The car guard waiting for your money on nights out cannot. The person with their hands up against the wall being manhandled by the police cannot. The mountain is not a symbol for the city - symbols, like ethics, or free will, are not strictly things, they only exist-and-don't, because they are in consciousness, which only exists-and-doesn't.

A short feel of the margins of the the city makes it clear. The city is not wounded.

The city is a wound.

The city is a wound on the mountain.

Our brother is dead.

Our mother is dead.

Our father is dead.

blends of

precarity-anxiety

dissociation-alienation

boredom-complacency

These are Ennie's options

These killed our family

They verticalise

They help you forget you are stamping heads against the dust  
into the dust  
dust that neatly obscures the history of civilisation

Our family died of normal.

We need new options.  
immediately

You leave the tunnels. Ennie and I stay behind. I feel only relief to cease.

\*

I started to emerge from the consuming state of consciousness I had been in. My face is mucosal from tears and snot and vomit. Olivia is beside me still, sitting. Vimbai is lying down behind me.

“You went somewhere else,” Olivia said, placing a towel in my hand, “I was concerned.”

I wiped my face and took a breath in. My body was still shaky and I did not have the strength to get up, but I was back in my body and my perception of the world matched up across my senses again. The guide was out of sight, but I felt the residue of his experience with Olivia, the person who had been at our side throughout. Even though this whole outing had been arranged for her, by her, Olivia had given it up in an instant to help me. I cried silently in gratitude.

“Thank you so much,” I said, when I felt I had the energy.

“Sure,” she replied.

*I was dead, I thought. I have been dead as long as I can remember.*

Around me some of the other participants were still very much in the peak of their trip, if the grotesque sounds of regurgitation were any indicator. My body was wracked with exhaustion in every muscle. My persistent awareness of the difficulty I had summoning the

strength to breathe seemed to signify the lifetime I had spent in those hours, if they were hours. Lifetime? Lifetimes?

I laid down and breathed. My brother was dead. I would not be going anywhere for some time - we needed to wait for everyone to finish their trip, and I could hardly move against gravity anyway. The rushing sense of relief and calm I was feeling was characteristic of the tail-end of the experience, but could last for some time.

I was still alive.

I thought about how much I appreciated Charlie for introducing me so openly and wholeheartedly into her world. I had been here long enough that a few more hours would not make a difference with contacting my family.

I rested my eyes and allowed a mild euphoria to envelope and cushion my thoughts that hurtle outward in all ever-changing directions.

my grandparents moved to this country and had my parents, and all of them certainly did take risks and work hard towards getting what they have

but they stole

they relied on the labour of others who also worked hard and took their own risks  
exploited racist labour

so little of value comes in words



Everyone recovered around me in their own time. My whole mind felt revolved and was setting down again in a new set of relations. I felt both new and like something timeless had pierced my forehead, like the primordial had washed some of the debris of modernity from me. I lay flat on my back, completely immobile from enervation, eyes half-open and still shedding water, staring at the few stars above me in the now-cloudy sky, and listened to the space around me. Olivia and Vimbai checked in with me to let me know they would be available to help if I liked, always speaking in ways that did not require a response. I did not respond.

After some time, maybe an hour, everyone must have been finished; some lamps were turned on and I heard the sounds of movement and talk - people were packing up. Olivia assured me I need not move yet; I summoned the strength to tell her I could not, and that I was cold. She placed blankets on me.

It felt like my brother had died years ago.

Once they were done packing all around me, I was helped into the front row of seats in the kombi. When I saw the others' faces I did not recognise most of them. They had been something else for so long.

Though I did not recognise them I recognised a kind of affinity formed through our shared experience. I imagined what it might have been like for them, with ayahuasca, reconstructing themselves while the grief of another human invaded their space. I would have been a large part of each of their experiences. Vimbai checked in again and I tried to express that I just needed rest.

The heater was on in the kombi and I was reminded again of how cold I had been throughout the whole experience. It was a euphoric joy not to have coldness invade each thought.

I passed in and out of sleep. In my incomplete engagement with the waking world, I heard the anarchists talking seriously about the ambush by the police. The conversation was heated, for reasons I did not grasp. I could not know what resolves each had come to on their trips, but they approached the topics as if they were new. Beyond the dull wall of exhaustion the atmosphere was tense. They had been opposed so fervently to the world for so long - I could not imagine how much they had at that point solidified themselves in the desire for an absolute restructuring of everything.

But I had only picked up bits and pieces, and put them together with the incoherence of dreams. After more time, I could not tell how long, Vimbai's weeping beside me became felt as rising from a new problem. I heard about arrests, I heard a phone call being made and I heard desperation in the words spoken. I did not try to make sense of the blend of dreams and reality.

I noticed eventually that we had not been driving for some time, that we were stationary, that we all sat in the kombi in the parking lot of a petrol station. I managed to tear myself from semiconsciousness, and in that moment the remaining sense I had of the guide faded away.

## Henry's Journal

I lifted my head and moved my weary limbs to test them.

“Are you okay?” Vimbai asked me, lines from her tears still visible on her face. The faces around me were distraught, but attentive of me.

“I’m fine, I’m in a pretty good place. Just exhausted.”

“You sure? I can’t imagine what you’ve just been through.”

“I think I’m managing. I think the ayahuasca turned out to do me a lot of good. What’s happening?” As I asked her, the picture that had eluded me fell into place.

“They bulldozed through a wall in the squat and mass arrested everyone,” Vimbai said. “They raided our homes and the farm and our other spaces all at once. They got almost everyone.”

“Almost everyone?”

“Well, there’s us. We’re not sure if anybody else managed to get away.”

I was afraid that the more I hesitated about it the more my hesitation would seem justified, so I spoke unchecked.

“You can hide in my factory if you need somewhere.” I paused to breathe, to swallow. The kombi suddenly felt stuffy. “The industrial area it’s in is quiet, especially on a Friday night like this and over the weekend. I don’t think the police are going to bother looking for you there.”

The anarchists looked to each other.

“That might be a good idea,” Vimbai said. “Everybody?”

“Good with me,” Alex said. “Ironic though. *Your* factory?”

“Don’t worry, I’m done with being a capitalist as of today.”

“Charlie said he’d be interesting,” Andreia chipped in from the back, smiling.

“Sounds serendipitous,” Olivia said, “I’m for us sticking together right now, and this factory seems like a safe bet. You sure you’re up for this? Don’t you have stuff to deal with right now?”

I was starting to get some strength back.

“I’m sure this is what I want to be doing. Unfortunately though I don’t have much by way of bedding enough for ten people. The factory gets pretty chilly at night. There are two couches and a handful of benches. I can probably get more pillows and bedding from my place. And though you’ve mentioned you want to be together I’m also happy to have a couple of you at my apartment.”

“Extra bedding sounds like it’ll help,” Vimbai said. “But we’ve got the mats and blankets here already.”

“Right,” I said. I had forgotten about the mats. “Let’s head to the factory and then I can find my way to Obs to pick up my car and get the stuff. I can also buy some food.” I looked out at the road and turned my voice to the person driving, Vukhile. “You can get on the highway and head towards Milnerton.”

Much of the next fifteen minutes were spent with little conversation. They had not been given any time to settle down after their trip before being faced with the next urgency. What I did glean from things implied that some of the people in the kombi were Bandits, and that though the differences between The Bandits and the squat anarchists were now benign, the divide between them was not wholly mended.

We arrived at the factory, pulling up to the steel roll-up door my workers use to load trucks with geysers. I walked to the front door with Vimbai and turned off the alarm system and pressed the button that rolled up the door for the kombi to go through. Vimbai seemed devastated; her face looked as if it had weights hanging off it.

She and I went through the inside of the building to the factory floor to meet the others driving in.

“It’s empty,” Vukhile said, noting that much of the factory floor was unoccupied.

“It’s a new business. Sort-of. I’ve just got the minimum basics.”

“What do you make?” Andreia asked.

“Solar geysers,” I said, pointing to the pictures of them on the stacks of boxes against a wall.

“Ah, green capitalism. Have you read the new Naomi Klein?”

“Nah, I’ve been reading a fair bit but I haven’t gotten to it. I suppose since I’m done with this way of relating to people I don’t need to be in a rush to read it though.”

“It might not hurt to have some intelligent backup if you have to deal with people you answer to.”

I almost laughed.

“There aren’t any real green intentions, not even the pretence, from my father. But I can see how it might be useful to read.”

“People,” Hlumelo said. “We’ve got shit to deal with. Let’s deal with it.”

I showed the anarchists to the locker rooms and they all started to get settled into the men’s. Olivia and Vimbai told me they would like to come with me on my errands, but after Vukhile and Olivia suggested that she stay and rest and I assured her I’d be alright, Vimbai decided to remain.

I was exhausted, but my body would move when I told it to, which was enough.

I waited in the entrance hall while the anarchists got set up in the locker room until Olivia in a scarf and a wool hat came out to join me. She had tied back her crop-cut hair into a tiny ponytail. I tried to remember what she looked like before today. I was not sure. We started walking to the road where we’d take a minibus taxi toward town.

“Thanks for being there earlier,” I said to her. “I think it made a massive difference.”

“Don’t mention it,” she said. “I’m happy if I was any help. I’m concerned about you though, you must be- I can’t imagine you’re- and I know ayahuasca is great for dealing with trauma and grief, but you just got that news a few hours ago. It’s hard to imagine that you’re holding together well.”

“I’m a wreck. But that’s ok. I’m doing what I want to do. I think I get what you were talking about. About everything? And I know that I don’t have any time to do anything other than try to change it all.”

“Well don’t forget that sometimes a person can be more effective at what they wanna do if they take the time to get their head in the right place, love.”

“My head’s fine. The only way for it to be okay is for me to be able to tell myself honestly that I’m doing my best to make this all less shit.”

“How come you’re telling me this?”

“I feel like I’ve lived a whole life with you there for me.”

I turned my head to see her reaction, and she was looking at me with a bare, unmediated stare - like I had become used to with Charlie - absorbing the words for what they were. We made our way through the softly humming, dimly lit industrial area.

Most of the few taxis running at that time were going in the other direction; after a quarter-hour wait we caught a taxi going to the Mowbray rank, and then took another down Main Road past the squat. We couldn’t see the side that was bulldozed, only that there were still police around. A couple blocks later we got out and headed to my car. We stopped at a house in Salt River and Olivia went in and came back with a large dark grey fabric bag.

Olivia’s index finger tapped against her leg throughout the drive to the apartment. We arrived without incident. I noted to myself that I had not completely changed, if even in this situation I wondered if there could be anything more to spending time with her, a woman, together in my home. It seemed an absurd fancy, a fantasy emerging from the relationship I had forged with her all in my own mind under ayahuasca, and not least because of her short hair and nails, and my memory of her, in a houndstooth collared shirt, suspenders and bowtie, at one of her talks. But I wouldn’t put that past an anarchist.

We picked up some blankets and some kitchenware and headed to the Checkers for food, where I told Olivia about my brother and my family and how I knew Charlie. She told me about her family, living in rent-controlled flats on De Waal Drive, and how she had a decade ago started an anti-gentrification project, once the residents there had been alienated and faced with threats of eviction by the city. She spoke about how she came across anarchist theory then, how the anarchists had helped her fundraise for her first degree, and how eventually the project she started became the larger anti-gentrification project run collectively by the squat anarchists.

She also told me that most of her academic work had been done collectively with her partner and a reading group, and that they often dumbed down aspects of their work because of who it would become available to and used by; there was no use in making anarchists

more intelligible to Power. It was uncanny how we were able to have normal conversation.

Olivia was not different to the woman I had spent all that time with in that other place. I never asked her if there was a framed picture of a yacht somewhere in those De Waal Drive flats.

I did not yet know where I stood with the anarchists, how included I would be in their thoughts and actions, so I did not bring it up, but it was a silent presence through all of the interactions between her and me.

We returned to find all the anarchists but Hlumelo and Alex asleep. They had left the couches in the entrance hall empty, so Olivia and I took one each. Despite my fatigue and the ridiculousness of it, I spent a moment considering whether to write up some brief notes for this journal, and another moment fantasising that I might be the hero to save the anarchists from their troubles.

I would call my father in the morning to finish the phone call that was cut short all those hours before.



When I turned my phone back on there were a few pained and frantic messages, and many missed calls from people I knew. I assumed they were condolences.

I procrastinated any return to that world for some time, first checking on the anarchists, who were already awake and brainstorming on crates in a tight circle inside the oval assembly line - though they took the time to ask me how I was doing, they did not invite me to sit with them - and then by reading the news, which seemed overwhelmingly unfavourable for the anarchists.

I also called each of my workers and told them they had a week of paid leave while I dealt with things. I could extend it if need be. Among other things, this would give the anarchists an empty factory for some time.

Eventually I sat at my desk, behind my computer, playing in-browser games and occasionally refreshing news pages or looking out to the anarchists through the venetian blinds, amused at the irony that even under these circumstances I did not escape my desk and the empty time-killing of my past. I wanted to do more but I did not know yet how to begin. I would allow the anarchists to take their time accepting me.

My brother would not have understood why I was not going to his funeral, but he would have understood that I had a reason I found good enough. My awareness of this helped little in the phone call I made that morning to my exasperated father. He had been hours away from boarding a flight to find me. It was a time to be with family, he said. For him, it was unthinkable that I wouldn't go to the funeral. For me, there was only a feeling that I had a whole life to catch up on and make up for. There was no way to explain it all. I just told him I needed time to myself, until he stopped insisting.

I boiled a kettle and set up a tray with cups and tea bags and instant coffee and sugar, then brought it over to the anarchists, and they took a moment to engage with me. They were weary. Alex seemed to have chipped his nail polish away. Lynn's knees always bounced as she sat. Mohammed's back and arms had broken out into rashes and he was often squirming or scratching. They invited me to sit for a while as they drank, and I found myself on a crate between Mohammed and Vimbai. I heard them calling Liz 'Lynn' and realised I had misheard her name repeatedly the day before, which was disorienting in light of that day's experiences. I also found out that Palesa had not been arrested this time, but the official list of people arrested had not been released, in part because the anarchists would not identify themselves. She would be under surveillance, and so practically unreachable. The group with me was surprisingly calm after the night's sleep, and I had to remind myself that for many of them, especially the Bandits among them, this was much like any other day, that they had long worked to prepare their minds for situations like this. I pretended to have matters to attend to so that they did not feel they were abusing my hospitality by keeping me at a distance. I wanted to do my best to answer their resolve with a strong one of my own.

I retired to my office and time-wasting. I even dusted the place and wiped it down. Every half-hour or so I would feel anxiety burst at me from my insides as I felt the potential consequences of helping the anarchists. I would remind myself of the person I wanted to be, until it stopped insisting.

Those anarchists imprisoned or killed were people who were each invaluable for whatever skills they had to contribute to the collective as a whole, and when this was considered together with the dedication each had brought to their work-play, so much of what had previously been possible was lost. Beyond this, none of the places or people The Bandits had relied on were necessarily safe anymore. These seemed to be some of the reasons why that evening I was eventually included in their conversations. The anarchists still had access to many of their extended networks, though they would have to be very careful not to expose themselves while trying to make contact with them, and this seemed to be the only way that they would be able to recover their caged friends. There were people out in the open who

were fundraising for lawyers and bail money, but the anarchists were not the type to rely too much on things beyond their immediate realm of influence, and preferred to let others take the initiative there.

We sat for hours, but at a reasonable pace, taking occasional breaks, discussing our options. The practiced patience of the anarchists alone gave me a real sense of what collective decision-making in a different sort of world might be like. Urgency is terrible when it calls for patience.

During one of the longer breaks, where Lynn and Vukhile worked on my computer to set up a secure connection to people who could help, Vimbai asked to borrow my toiletry bag and disappeared quietly into the women's changing room. Hlumelo, Andreia, Alex, Olivia and I were taking it easy on benches on the factory floor when Vimbai emerged half an hour later with a cleanly-shaven head and a bag full of her old locks.

“Wow,” Andreia said, leaning back in their seat. “Alright!”

“Hey hey,” Hlumelo smiled. “Guess it was time.”

Vimbai handed me my toiletry bag.

“Thanks,” she said, bowing her head and lifting the bag of locks like a drink in a funereal toast. “I can always put them back on!” I thought she looked better.

Hlumelo and Olivia stood up and walked over to give her a group hug. Vimbai waved the rest of us over and Alex and I joined. Andreia just rested a hand on Vimbai's shoulder.

There were still whole worlds I did not know about the people whose lives had become so thoroughly enmeshed in mine.

More meeting, more brainstorming, into the night, through the early morning of the next day. We considered the social climate - most people were opposed to the actions of the Bandits, and overall the anarchists did not have very good public relations. Though many had pointed out how much of the state's actions had been in accordance with the anarchists' interpretation of the world, there was enough counter-information out there that it amounted to little.

Aside from the twenty-fifth birthday of the provincial government in the coming month,

there were no significant events in the near future that could be considered in planning, but the anarchists could not think up a way to make use of the event - a celebration in Green Point stadium. Eventually we hovered around a few options, each preferred more by specific subgroups in the factory. It's safe not to name names.

One group argued for prisoner exchange, which would involve invading the home of the mayor and kidnapping her. One of us had previously done some work towards making something like that possible, so it was not wholly unthinkable.

Another preferred to hold buildings and infrastructure hostage - continuing to bomb or burn down buildings and destroy roads around the city. This was less popular because it was a less singular action and would come with a higher risk of arrest.

They did not have much else, and the options were disconcerting for me. I started to anticipate that the anarchists saw themselves as out of luck, and preferred to go down with the ship if it was the only way they had any chance of getting back their comrades. I was uneasy, not having been a part of it all from the beginning, not wanting to go down with any ship as soon as I got onto it, but simultaneously ashamed that I had not been on the ship from the start and wanting to take responsibility for that. The more I listened, however, the more I understood the anarchists to be considering each option seriously, because for them these possibilities were more real, more a part of their everyday consideration of the world. They had no common sense to tell them something was not rational.

I was relieved when after the seemingly endless exhausting of options the consensus became that the anarchists would wait until they made contact with the outside world, once they understood better the situation that their comrades in prison were facing, and what those comrades thought their options to be - while simultaneously doing any preparation possible to enact any of the plans they had discussed. It was Sunday afternoon and we had covered every thought we knew.

Lynn and Vukhile spent most of the time afterward in my office continuing to try to set up a secure conversation with friends on the outside, aware that anyone else besides them would likely be under surveillance. None of the people with me were very experienced with computers and encryption in that way, so it was taking some time to be sure about safety. I went out on a food run with Vimbai, who had recovered dramatically from Friday night and

was probably the only one who was cheery. We also got some prescription skin cream for Mohammed. We were strung out and tried to pass the time waiting, each in their own way.

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After the remainder of the weekend spent sighing and pacing, Monday morning came with news. Lynn had managed to get a secure connection to a lawyer. We bundled up in my office around my desk to receive it. The prisoners were fine, but being held separately and not allowed to interact. Their best understanding was that the state would not have nearly enough evidence to sentence a good half them, but some of them would likely get significant jail time.

We learned that Charlie, Mahlatse, and Marc were not in custody - the story that the authorities had given was that they had evaded arrest. None of us had heard from them. Vimbai started crying, and I became terrified as I saw tears fall down Alex and Mohammed's faces, and then Lynn's. More than anything, this information affected the anarchists most, and I came to dread what they silently suspected.

Lynn wiped her face and moved on; she had better news. The Khayelitsha and Woodstock project communities had both begun campaigning for a general strike once they had heard of the arrests. A few hundred people either ignored their jobs or took leave and instead of going to work started organising for a strike that would start officially on Wednesday. Khayelitsha students got involved and groups from different schools had come together to discuss how they would participate in the strike.

It would not be easy for us to do very much in public with arrests looming over everyone. Each of my eight guests had their faces printed in the newspapers. Just as we had been made aware of the plans for a large-scale strike and its support for us, we could be sure that the police would be aware and looking for us in the various groups organising the strike.

In the meanwhile, I thought more about the stadium event for the local government's birthday party. The city was under pressure to make things run smoothly. The anarchists had even conjectured that part of the reason why they all had been arrested was so that they would be resolved as a problem by the time the birthday came around.

Because of the flight risk, none of the anarchists were given the option to post bail.

“Well fuck,” Vukhile said, scratching his emerging beard. “Three unions on strike! How do you think a few organisers managed to get the fake-socialists off their arses in only a few days?”

All nine of us sat in my office that Wednesday morning, some on a couch from the entrance hall, some on the floor, receiving the news that Lynn had read off my desktop there.

“The pretender socialists have their politicians too. They were tired of going nowhere and having no presence in the news, and jumped at an opportunity to ride the wave our people made,” Alex said.

“Co-opting fucks that they are,” Lynn smiled, and Henry noticed that she was missing a tooth behind her left upper canine.

“Farmworkers in the mix!” Hlumelo said, smiling. His smile reminded me of Xolile. I wondered if it was just because he was black.

“Finding it ironic that you’ve given your employees two weeks leave despite the fact that the metalworkers are on strike, Henry?” Vimbai said.

“Um, I suppose,” I replied, smiling, with too much in my head to know how to begin answering her. I felt an instant appreciation for her teasing in that space - for another level of acceptance I did not know we had achieved.

Even the major newspapers had commentary on how the strike was interesting on this occasion as something that was initiated by the rank-and-file members of their unions in all cases. Each group had their own demands relative to their professions and an overall demand for something more, for dropping the charges of the squat anarchists in and out of prison, and justice more broadly. Many of them had come to believe, after Marikana, that relying on liberal means of accountability like inquiries and commissions went nowhere and saw no justice.

With some help from Olivia and social media, I set up an event. I understood why I had no real support for it from the anarchists, and even as I did it I felt it was merely a symbolic gesture. But it was something for me. And maybe it could be something for a lot of people like me. Or maybe I just wanted to do something. The day I drank ayahuasca had only given me a sense of what I wanted, not the sense that I was empowered to do it.

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The strike picked up. Though the major umbrella union in the country was having no part of it, a group of unions that had been expelled from it recently had some of its member unions joining the strike at a national level, using it as an opportunity to show the impotence of the umbrella union. The farmworkers' union in particular had made a major effort - I learned that some of the anarchists had raised funds for them a few years back when the government had hit them with massive fines that threatened to close them down.

The anarchists themselves had no faith in any of the unions as serious revolutionary forces, and made an effort to express in online communiques where their ideologies differed, while accepting the help of the individual strikers involved as an act of solidarity.

In the meanwhile the anarchists learned more of the life of those friends in jail. It seemed that they had managed, between the pressure on the prison from media coverage and the good relationship that they had with many of the prisoners through their Pollsmoor Anarchist Black Cross project, to gain a minimal sense of safety within the prison from the guards and the gangs.

It would be months before their trial. The more privileged anarchists, when they had people who would be able to afford expensive lawyers, had often refused the help whenever their support base was not willing to support all thirty of them, which was in most cases.

A prison-abolitionist publication was released from the anarchists inside with the title, *Prisons are for Burning: All Prisoners Are Political Prisoners*.

Those of us staying in the factory - we had jokingly started to refer to ourselves as 'the syndicalists' - began venturing out for short periods of the day and got to work on developing



new networks and new spaces. They would be necessary whether their comrades were released or not.

I learned a lot about the other syndicalists. Aside from the Lynn-Liz confusion, I was struck always by how similar each was to the people the guide had lived with. The situation was terrible overall, but I mostly enjoyed myself. I continued to sleep at the factory, now together with the anarchists in the men's locker room, where I had brought in the couches from the entrance hall, and my mattress and couches from my apartment. Life felt real.

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Two and a half weeks into the strike and we were days away from the birthday event for the provincial government. My plan was coming along and had gained surprising traction over social media, and by then I did not have much more work to do there and had become more involved with other things.

The strike was going strong. Strikers were organising. I had never thought to wonder what people did while they were on strike. In this case it was a lot - the streets in areas around Cape Town were busy with people talking to each other and giving each other things to read. I had never thought of South Africa as a reading country. Some people used the time to try to organise other work sectors. Some started or joined community projects and independent political groups, especially in the townships. People in Khayelitsha had begun to set up two new community-supported-and-run social centres independent of any outside funding, and people in Gugulethu had started planning one. They were working to put structures in place that would solidify and strengthen the communities they were in beyond the strike, or at least, that was the intention.

The strike situation had only been convenient for me at work. I had managed to postpone dealing with workers coming into our hiding space and had explained away the problem of the lack of productivity at the factory to my father as a result of it, telling him I was going to take a break for the duration of the strike. This information made little difference to him, since I was already acting in ways that he found incomprehensible.

I ended up using some dead time to teach Andreia and Hlumelo to weld. Lynn and Hlumelo taught me how to cook some great simple dishes, and a few other skills were shared. I could see myself feeling capable one day. I stopped playing computer games and watching comedy series and started practicing.

Aside from the other things, it was a meaningful experience for me when we all sat on the ring of crates on the factory floor on a chilly night, eating a meal that I had put together for everyone, most of us drinking chai tea with spiced rum. I stopped thinking of the syndicalists as strangers.

For as long as I needed the space to house the anarchists, I was going to keep the factory. But it would not last long, so I spent some time planning the conversation I would have to have with my father about abandoning the whole thing, and looking up which costs were recoverable.

Olivia, Hlumelo, Vimbai and I found our way to Sea Point around one p.m. in my car, each of them dressed and made-up differently to how they looked before.

With some organising and promoting online, ten thousand people had said they would be attending the stadium birthday celebration in solidarity with us. This included a lot of strikers but seemed mostly middle-class types who had been intrigued by everything lately and wanted something to participate in. Which was fine with me. A few months ago, I would have been one of them.

The city knew well by then there that many people attending the event through us, in a stadium that could hold fifty-five thousand, and that was entirely the point. The next two hours passed quickly and pleasantly in a bar on Main Road - then from Sea Point I walked with Vimbai through the dense traffic in all areas surrounding the stadium, towards it. In a plain blue t-shirt and jeans and her newly-shaven head, and with plugs made to look like chunky yellow studs instead of her usual wooden snail-spirals, Vimbai looked nothing like the colourful earthy hippied-up dreadlocked woman the authorities were looking for. Olivia and Hlumelo would not be joining us - they were going to meet with some friends and see us afterward.

Security at the entrance was lax, to my surprise. Before the entrance people were funnelled through parallel lines of steel gate barriers and lined with staff - searching each individual before they came inside. Had my bag had a hidden pocket or if I'd brought a cooler box with a false bottom, I don't doubt that I would have been able to sneak in something dangerous. But we weren't doing anything like that today. Today was more of a battle for minds, if anything. My underarms were damp; I was nervous. I felt responsible for

the event.

Once we reached the entrance wall we noticed that people were expected to have paper wristbands to get in, but we were let through without them. We walked in separately around ten-to-three, as things were getting started, and sat together in the section opposite the stage across the field. The leader of the party and the mayor of Cape Town emerged onto the grassy stadium floor and began a walk around it, surrounded by other politicians and a layer of police, waving to the crowd like queens.

“You are really not going back,” Vimbai said. We sat casually in the plastic seats built into the concrete of the stadium.

“I think so,” I said. It was clear enough what she had meant - back to being a capitalist, back to being a liberal, back to participating in the world of my past. “But who knows, I haven’t been at this long. It hasn’t gotten too inconvenient yet.”

“Sometimes I think I would go back if I could,” Vimbai said, looking out to the field. “But there is no space for me in Zim anymore. I miss my family, even though we have a terrible relationship. It is something to not have family.”

I was shocked. It had not occurred to me that she or any of the others might feel that way.

“I feel like that’s how it works for most radicals,” I said, “you get pushed out to the margins and you’ve got to change everything just to have your basic needs fulfilled. I don’t know how to make sense of it all in my case, though.”

“Jamie seemed like a nice kid.”

“He was my brother.”

We watched the spectacle around us.

The stadium itself was just over half-full, but it looked occupied enough because people spread out over it and the sections behind the stage were left empty. Once the politicians had done their round they walked up onto the stage and settled in for the speeches.

The plan was simple, and for the anarchists, too symbolic and indirect. In light of where I had been and where I was now, I liked the idea of giving the party, the official opposition to the ruling party, an ultimatum.

We would present them with a crowd, of mostly middle-class, mostly white people - their

historical support base - and let them know that these people would walk out on them. If they did not at least commit to releasing those anarchists who had not been charged for the actions of The Bandits, then ten thousand people would walk out of the stadium.

If they did commit, beyond avoiding the embarrassment of a massive walkout, that would be ten thousand potential voters who stayed, which presumably was the only thing that got politicians off their arses. Between this and the strike I wanted to be hopeful.

They had until four-thirty to speak up.

The event opened up officially at three-ten p.m. with the politicians settled in on the stage, the national anthem blaring over the stadium speakers, and people still slowly trickling into the building. Two large screens besides the stage showed the pixellated image of the national flag, and was subtitled by the words of the anthem, for the people who could read at that distance. There was a literal song and dance from some enthusiastic individual, there to cater for the party's understanding that such things were necessary to appeal to the relatively few working-class black voters in the crowd. A small speech from representatives of some major religions followed. Since South Africa was a secular democracy, the argument went, 'all' religions were to be included in the political event instead of focusing on just one.

Many people, presumably ours, had been prepared for the event's general mundanity, and were drinking and joking and smoking and generally ignoring what was being said over the speakers. On the other end of the spectrum I remember two women who must have been in their mid-sixties, both wearing blue visor caps and t-shirts branded with the party's logo, who were so annoyed by the merrymakers together that I assumed they had some joy in their shared irritation.

Eventually the mayor came up to speak, with little over ten minutes before the deadline.

She mentioned nothing of the strikes or the anarchists, even as around half of the stadium stood up and left the building in the middle of her speech. Leaving together with so many others aware of my influence on the event made my spine explode in tingles for minutes.

The gamble was explicit in the words used promoting the action; those at the stadium

would not be leaving it towards another political party, but into disenchantment with the whole idea of representational democracy. They were leaving party politics for something else.

Vimbai and I took a different route out of the stadium and saw a cordoned-off area once we emerged, with rows of nyalas full of and surrounded by riot cops, and five water cannon trucks.

“Well,” she said, “they might not have acknowledged us at all in there, but it looks like they did here.”

The vehicles and the police inside them remained where they were.

I felt downbeat on the way home - to the factory. The syndicalists would all have to remain in hiding, and the anarchists in prison would remain there. Olivia and Hlumelo were consolatory in their comments about the whole thing. Someone else was throwing a post-walkout party, in part to raise money for the anarchist's legal fees - I did not feel like going, and none of the other syndicalists could be seen there.

It is only when we decide to put our lives totally at stake, when individually or with our comrades in affinity, we strike power right where we can do most harm - only then do we have total control of our lives and are able to say with joy and serenity that we are making our revolution.

Nicola Gai

This is a kind of epilogue. There is little point in writing this journal now, as I do more. Most of what we've been doing lately has been off the books. I guess I'm going to have to learn to remember things.

It's two months later, and all of the anarchists are still in prison. The strike has disintegrated. The metalworkers' union pulled out after they received a significant offer for a payrise. For all the drama of the walkout at the stadium, it doesn't appear that very much will happen at the hands of that large group of people, though with help from some we have found a new place to hide in Walmer Estate, and we're covering our legal fees well.

Charlie is still gone, along with Mahlatse and Marc. I found out that each of them was a huge presence in the group. In hindsight it makes some sense, in the case of Charlie, that the other anarchists were so willing to go along with her including me in their events from so early on. It seems they trusted her very deeply. I have been trying to live up to her faith in me.

The major involvement of the missing three is why most of the anarchists think that they have been disappeared. I don't know what to think, and I don't know how to begin to cope with that possibility. I try to visit her mom once a week.

Anne looks like she'll get out sooner rather than later; the cops don't have anything on her for the moment. Nobody's holding their breath that it will be that easy. Contrary to our

early estimates, most of the anarchists are facing a couple years in prison, and if any significant information manages to find its way to the police then many of the anarchists may be looking at decades.

I started this journal about a year ago. A lot has changed since then. I have changed in some ways. Nevertheless, I feel like I started too late. I remember months ago my lazy procrastinatory reading of anarchist texts, my merely ulterior motives, but even then if I stopped at a robot and a crusty-snot-faced child asked me for money I cringed at my sense of how terrible our relation was. I recognise that people have their reasons why they are slow to move, but I feel that, for myself, too often I was just not interested in being inconvenienced to take on the weight of considering what it would take to do something real. Now some kind and authentic people are dead and so many others are locked behind bars, and instead of a vibrant fireworks display my community is a fragile ember.

I spent time assessing and reassessing whether there was any way for me to continue to derive an income from the factory without holding the relation that I did as a boss, and without having any real part of the whole thing. Maybe there was some way to do it, with a lot of effort, but in the end there was the simple fact that I did not want to work in a factory.

I told my father I wanted out. After Jamie's death and my own reaction to it, he had also changed.

To save himself from losing most of his money his solution was to move to Cape Town and start running the business, slowly closing up his own. He was going to start fresh, like I did, with his family. I might try to visit him sometime, if it is safe. In the meanwhile, I've posted him a copy of the Shap publishing collective's book, *Anarchy 101*, in the hopes that he could begin to understand me.

I've been doing more learning. States the world over are adopting crisis management as a technique of government, replacing the narrative of progress with one of impending catastrophe to fit their ends. I don't have any hope for the future of humankind, or this planet's current environment. Between peak oil, and climate change, and the current state of global neoliberalism and resistance, there's nothing to look forward to. I will live how I want to live despite that. If there is a way to make a different world possible, this is a start.