

# anonymous gun



by Kurtice Kutcheman



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COVER: “Wheat Field with Crows” by Vincent Van Gogh. This painting was completed in July 1890, a few weeks before Van Gogh’s suicide. It is often incorrectly thought to be his last painting, but he completed a number of paintings that month; scholars believe that “Daubigny’s Garden” was his final work.

It was the longest drought I could remember, with the pot. Gill was off the heroin and drinking beer again, and Mary and Ian were recently just married, and hanging out with a trio of guys who played guitar, wrote songs, and called themselves the Opium Suppositories. They also brewed crack rocks and gave them to drug addicts in exchange for depraved and obscene acts which they were allowed to videotape. I had just bought my last ounce from an art dealer at his gallery and afterwards he propositioned me for sex to get the drugs for free. Rudely I asked him why all the sculptures in his front window resembled penises and balls, then left, dropping \$300 worth of greasy bills on the carpet. The dude looked like he had just gotten a hot dose and disappeared into the back room. I had another connection, but it was in the French quarter in New Orleans, and the idea of smuggling a quarter-pound of pot from New Orleans to Akron, Ohio didn't seem too appealing. This was to change, as shit got more and more heady here. I couldn't seem to stay out of trouble, my apartment was full of bonges and pipes, and I knew I was going to have to substitute drugs when

this ounce was gone. Crack was everywhere, and I could get booze and cough syrup almost anytime I wanted it. A cough syrup trip is so potent and all encompassing that you can beat withdrawal symptoms on the shit, so preoccupied with the non-existent abstractions the DXM creates in your mind it's impossible to recognize a craving. I knew how to make a crack pipe; after I got fired from the gas station some crackheads taught me. You clean out the middle of a tire air gauge and stuff a screen in there. Then you can burn up all the rocks you can score. There's other ways but this was my preferred method. The girl that lost her virginity to me was addicted to crack and getting married in San Francisco. I wanted nothing more than stoned oblivion under the flickering images of a television in a black basement.

Mary and Ian consummated their marriage in a different way, not a traditional wedding or stepping on a wrapped-up glass, but by drowning their sorrows in cocaine smoking after reading that Mary's parents had been killed by a drunk driver. Copies of the obituaries sat around open-faced on the floor, and they paced around in strides and trajectories, handing off the pipe and reloading, blowing funnels of smoke into the many fans that sat around the room. They would stop and notice things, track marks on the walls, faces melting on the floor, their hearts melting and reforming with the next hit, and each others' deprived faces. It was then that Mary did a deep hit and a rope of blood fell out of her right nostril and splattered right on the picture of her parents in the paper. She wheezed, and collapsed to the floor. While she paroxysed, Ian fixed a JD on the rocks

and took his ink and needle out from a cabinet, and knelt next to the small of her back, lifting up her shirt. With crooked, shaky hands he began to print on her two words. As he inked her she shivered and whimpered, muttering "What are you doing..." "I'm marking you." "How?" "You'll see when I'm finished." She continued to shiver and paroxysm and picked at the clotted blood around her nostrils. He paused, finished his drink and then continued. "Almost finished." She groaned, and when he was through, he told her and she sat up. "What is it?" "Go to the mirror." He watched her stumble to the mirror and lift her shirt. The words in crooked and shaky writing across the small of her back read in black "JACK DANIELS." She attacked him, clawing and kicking at him, spitting curses, but he hushed her down and made her a glass of wine. "It means we're married now." Ian spoke. Mary looked at him with tears in her eyes.

It was under the bridge, the Interbelt it was called. Gay dudes went there to cop anonymous sex. Gill was camped out there, he had a tent and everything, piked up on the periphery. He had beers iced and sat cooking up a shot with a dirty needle, occasionally stopping to pound down a can of Pabst Blue Ribbon or smoke a non-filtered Camel. He had recently got infected with hepatitis C, knowingly, from a woman, because that was the only syringe there. He shot up, and got the cancer. He didn't hate it though he found, and he discovered he could get off by giving other people the disease when they actually knew the needle was infected. He's one of the first legal serial killers. After he had cooked up the shot of heroin and sucked it into the dirty needle he made his way under the bridge, where men milled about, sucking each other's cocks and fucking each other up their asses. He announces stoically, "Anyone want a shot of pure heroin?" Heads turn and walk to him, leaving hard-ons and whacked-out fags dangling in the sick sewage smelling underground post-midnight air. "This is a needle infected with hepatitis C. It's filled with a shot of pure smack. Any-

one can use it if they want, you just have to know that there's a risk you could get hep C from it." Their wasted faces became strained with thought as they watched Gill wave the syringe back and forth in the black air. "Can I shoot up in my cock?" a kid asks who looks like he had just been gangraped by fifteen truck drivers. Gill hands the syringe over and the kid sits down, plunging in and out of a fat vein in the shaft of his cock. The kid drops the syringe after a couple minutes, and goes on the nod, twitching in the Interbelt condom, semen, dirt ground. Gill retrieves the syringe and returns to his tent, pounding down more beer and cooking up another shot. He smokes a camel while staring at the syringe, then moves back out under the bridge. Same call, and a group of kids surrounds him, looking like walking corpses before an embalming. A man takes a syringe and an 11-year-old boy towards a pillar and says "Suck me off while I shoot this." The kid gets down on his knees and starts sucking on the guy's cock while he's shooting the heroin into his arm. The kid feels the cock go flaccid in his mouth as the shot hits, and the john lays down, sleeping. The kid takes his shoes, his keys, his pants, his underwear, his wallet, and runs into the woods with them.

"Almost hit that time, Duke." "Yeah it was close, lets try again." A brick flies off a bridge and collides with the windshield of a minivan. The car swerves and careens under the bridge plowing through the detritus that was the Interbelt, taking out one fag in the process and colliding against a pillar, mounting two more fucking each other up their asses. The car explodes immediately and the fags shriek and dart back to the street and to their

cars. Gill stands amidst this stroking his cock. He climaxes immediately when the car hits the pole and explodes, and a single pale arm flies from the wreckage at Gill. The hand of the arm smacks him across the face and then the appendage lay at his feet. He picks it up with a smile, then takes down his camp, goes to his car, and drives off.

I was on the outs, really. I was spiritually and morally bankrupt because of my depraved dealing with Gill, all the dope, booze, chemicals, but mostly it was my shitty low-paying job where people took every chance they got to tell me how worthless I was. Every mistake I made would be co-opted for some malicious insult by customers, and especially my boss who referred to me as a "reader" because I tried to read books in-between deliveries. He would literally walk up to me, snatch the book out of my hands, and hand it back to me as I was reading. I would have given anything to make his straight nose crooked after one of those encounters, and his comments: "You think you're going to get anywhere reading those trashy novels?" "Eventually you're going to have to start working to make this work." "You don't even go to school, do you do anything at all?" "You need to get started in school. This job will lead you nowhere." To that one I replied "Buddy, this is nowhere." Of course he had never had any higher education and supported himself with this job, drug store jockey. But for me, no, this was not ok. I began walking around town, noticing people

staring at the abominations jutting out of the countryside which some people called modern art. This shit was not art, and the looks on these people's faces when they saw it made me cringe. I began to make crude drawings, and turning them into flipbooks when I was off work and couldn't sleep. They were strange, almost hypnotic. Men lighting candles mounted on top of monkey skulls and then firing rounds at the setting sun with little emblems and symbols popping up randomly in the pages. Hairless monks walking on fire into filthy rivers full of bison corpses and then lighting up Nordic-style pipes, skeletons dancing on the top of pots of steaming water, dead men with bottle caps over their eyes sitting up in the morgue and the bottle caps rolling off and collecting on a drain. All sorts of bizarre stuff. When I would finish one of these I would walk the streets with them until I would see a mark, someone falling apart, someone scared, someone alone, someone trying to reach out for something that couldn't be given. I would approach them, and flip them the book. "How strange," they would say sometimes, and I would offer to sell it to them. "How much is it?" they would ask, and I would say "What do you think it's worth?" Sometimes I would get a dollar, sometimes a hundred. The looks in their faces when I handed over the books to them mended the ruptures in my soul more than they could ever know, and I never saw any one of them again. Eventually, I couldn't make the books anymore. I just couldn't. I didn't know why, it wouldn't come out. One morning I dumped all my materials off a bridge, bought a pint of Jim Beam, and went in to work.

The Opium Suppositories had just bought a bunch of coke, cooked it up into crack rocks, and then drove around the seediest parts of town in search of crackheads who would commit obscene acts in exchange for the drug. With a vanload full of junkies, they pulled back into their drug house and invited them in. Ian and Mary were drinking red wine in the living room when the junkies and Opium Suppositories stumbled in. Aaron, the lead guitarist, started the whole scenario off. Before long the house was flooded with chemical smoke and they had camcorders set up recording crackheads licking toilet seats, giving each other rim jobs, throwing shit at each other, chasing down skunks with machetes and hacking them into pulp only to get blasted with fumes, cutting off their foreskins with cosmetic knives and chewing the skin like gum, sewing buttons into their ball sacks, stapling their nuts to kiwis, but most of all, smoking crack. Eventually Aaron got too stoned and told the crackheads to chase Mary down pinching her ass and squeezing her tits for fifteen minutes for the remainder of the crack. They did, and eventually it was eight crackheads chasing a

woman down the street, their stained and scarred hands all over her. Ian got pissed and hit Aaron over the head with a frying pan, knocking him completely out cold. When he came to he was furious and in withdrawals and had no more coke so he challenged Ian and Mary to a drag race through a currently abandoned construction yard in the middle of the night. They too, furious about what had happened, accepted the challenge, but not before calling Gill and I to moderate the race.

It was sunrise when we arrived at the construction yard, and had to rip down a fence to get in. I had a pair of shit-stained boxers to use as a flag to start out the race, while Gill sat in the car slurping beer and smoking camels. He wanted to go back to my apartment later, since I had ejaculated my entire paycheck up for four bottles of high-powered absinthe that was sitting in my closet, and he wanted to get drunk off of it. I didn't really care- he'd pass out on the floor after one drink. Both cars sat at the opening to the construction yard, revving their engines. I lifted the soiled boxers and swung them down, sending a chunk of shit onto Aaron and his flunky's windshield. They both sped forward, veering in all directions. They were drunk, stoned, withdrawn, suicidal, nuts, you name it. Aaron would clip Ian and Mary's car from time to time sending them smashing into the concrete partition. Ian's estranged attraction and ire took hold when he lured Aaron and his turd boy down a hill and through a tunnel. Aaron's car spun into the darkness of the tunnel and collided with a huge concrete block, exploding into flames. Ian and Mary's car spun through the darkness, dodging dark obstructions

until it screeched to a halt in the dusty sunrise. The two looked at each other, then got out of the car disrobing. They fucked on the hood of the car, conceiving their first child in the process. Meanwhile I pissed on the flames of the wreck, drunk out of my mind and thinking about crack, trying to tune out the blaze.

I didn't expect winter to end, so summer came unexpectedly for me. In no time I was out trying to indulge my lust for crack cocaine. It popped up in my mind, sitting in cheap motels hitting the pipe, standing around flaming drums hustling for cash and warming nicotine-stained fingers, cutting my arms when I couldn't get a fix, and coming down from heavy-blown highs with forty-ounce bottles of high-powered beer. I had a crack pipe all fixed up, and was still more obsessed with pot, but knew I couldn't get any. I had tried all winter and had ended up drinking off the cravings with cheap diluted whiskey and Budweiser beer. It was all I could afford, with my job. I had met my first dealer in his garage, and asked him for what I wanted. He pulls out a huge bag of white powder and hands it over to me for a twenty. It was before I had even knew it had happened. He stood there, swooning drunk, and I then tasted it with my finger. "Motherfucker? Powdered sugar?" I grabbed a tiny hammer off a shelf used for framing pictures with tiny nails and began smacking him in the head with it. "FUCK SHIT CHRIST WHAT THE FUCK!" He screams and be-

gins to run. I take off after him hitting him over the head with the hammer, me chasing him stumbling down the street with his arms flailing around trying to deflect the blows. He runs down a side street and I follow, me hitting him with the hammer every step of the way. He turns and runs down some railroad tracks, and I continue following him as he runs, and eventually into a thicket where I guess I'll beat him until he's out cold and then just walk off with my twenty dollars back. He steps on a rake, the thing flies up and smacks him in the face knocking his body into mine and we fall backwards into the underbrush. I stand up, throw the hammer and walk into an area from which beams of sunlight are emanating. It is a cleared glade, covered in grass. A semi truck trailer sits abandoned to the side, propped up on concrete haunches. A scarecrow is mounted in a large moist planting field. I go back over to Whippet, the nickname I know him by, and pick him up. "Don't hit me again, don't fucking hit me again..." "I'm not going to hit you again." We walk into the clearing. "We should fucking grow pot in that field over there man." "Really?" "Yeah, I got three bell jars filled with seeds. We can camp out in that trailer over there and just stop paying rent all together." He surveys the area, thinks a moment, and then decides "I'll do it if I get a cut of the pot and of the cash when we sell it." "You help with cultivation you got a deal." "Just keep your mouth shut Kurt, I don't want to get pinched. I won't survive jail." "There's one person I've got to employ. Gill."

Whippet's brow furrowed. Gill was neither man, nor woman. His heroin use had ebbed away any sort of identity, save that of an addict, a

junky. His life was a miasma of tragedy and misgivings. Watching his sister being molested by his heroin-addicted uncle on his parents' bed, jerking off to seedy porno mags from the 70's in the woods, starting fires, crucifying frogs, setting raccoon traps and then torturing the raccoons, heroin-soaked romances snuck out of rehab to live in broken-down cars with overwrought junky-loving women, blowing smoke in the misty dawn to rise into the sunlight in the last sick minute of a wasted day. Staring at nude beaches in Greece, or kissing absinthe bottles in Las Vegas while living with his sister and making out with strange drunken men on sweaty mattresses. I called Gill, and explained the situation. He was all for it. In about a month, we had plants in bloom. The sun shone right on the plants and the weather was perfect. We spent the days doing any number of things, throwing birdseed around the scarecrow and then shooting the crows that landed there with a pistol and roasting their bodies on crude spits, dropping acid, drinking beer, making fires and having NA and AA meetings around them, feeding the dogs roadkill (we had three bloodhounds guarding our ground), all sorts of shit. One time Whippet smoked too many PCP-laced Marlboros, tore his clothes off and beat the shit out of both Gill and I. He woke up the next day and apologized. We passed the time, we tickled our addictions. We did what was necessary to survive, living out of that abandoned trailer in the dark. Watching acute thunderstorms pound the countryside, and our impending marijuana plants sway in the downpour. Soon, it was time to harvest and we did, drying out the buds and sorting them into

bags. Word got around. Soon we had money. But Whippet was missing, and we couldn't find the hounds. Gill and I drove back to the clearing, to grab the last of the supply and smoke it into lawless nonexistence. What we found has been something of conjecture to this day. The scarecrow's head was ripped off and sitting at the base of the pike it was impaled on. The trailer was on its side, all our stuff thrown around, destroyed. A pile of burned books off to the side. But that's not what shocked us.

From a tree, hung by the neck by hemp ropes, were our three hound dogs. They were disemboweled. Their guts lay in the dirt and skunks chewed on them with rigor. I noticed the small hammer I used to bludgeon Whippet lodged in the skull of one of the dogs. We heard a gunshot, ran back to the car, and sped back to Gill's parents' house to get plastered and watch snuff and porn films. Fuck this.

I was working badly at a drugstore at the time, going into work half the time stoned, tripping, or coming down off of something. My manager had taken a liking to making my life a living hell by following me around when I was pretending to be working, as there actually was no real work to be done. Eventually, he began telling every customer in line to tell me that I was worthless after we had finished the transaction. After about the tenth person told me I was worthless, I whipped out a box cutter and gouged my arm with it. The customer shrieked the obvious AA response "OH MY GOD" and ran out of the store. With each person telling me I was worthless, I carved a chicken scratch in my arm with the box cutter to commemorate the occasion. I walked up to my boss after the shift, my forearms carved to rippets. "You're lucky I didn't slit my wrists today. Every person tells me I'm worthless I carve a gash into my arm right in front of their face." He winced in faggot suicide pain and I left with my paycheck to score some meth and LSD with Gill. We were driving to a meth lab up north that was hidden in a garage behind a decrepit house. We had to push

my sister's car out of the garage and start it in the street to get going, and once we were on the expressway we incessantly smoked cigarettes. We made it to the house and were greeted by a dealer that led us through the house, past piles of dirty clothes and dirty dishes, sleeping obese women, broken babies' cribs, television sets long burned out from never bothering to turn them off, stained pipes, and meth lab detritus long in decay. We made it into the lab- bathtub and tubing, glass pipes, rubber tubing, little candles, huge bongos, and dudes sitting in the corner doing bumps of meth off their car keys. I was sold a 60-dollar bag and instantly did a bump off someone's key. I also purchased a vial of liquid LSD for 50 bucks, as I was a valued customer. We sat there doing bumps for a while until the fog lifted and then we were wired. As we paced around smoking cigarettes tweaking, a woman walked in with a baby and explained that she was going through withdrawals and wanted to trade the baby in exchange for some crystal meth. The dealers didn't want the baby, but that didn't mean they didn't want to gangbang the chick, who was actually an unemployed kindergarten teacher. The head dealer went over a cabinet, took out a sawed off shotgun, tossed it to me "Hold this!" and then the fun began. She bent over a chair and exposed her buttocks, and in between smoking meth out of glass pipes and chipped-glass light bulbs, they would pound the woman who cried through the whole thing. The room was nearly opaque with a bitter smoke, and the baby sobbed unnoticed on a table across the room next to the equipment. I set the shotgun down on a pool table missing one leg, and

Gill and I snuck out, and drove back to our pad, doing bumps off our keys the whole way back. Later I found out the baby died from smoke inhalation.

I was at work again, and tweaking. I took the vial of LSD out of my pocket and dropped a couple of drops on my tongue, then poured the rest into the coffee pot and waited for the fun to begin. "I think something's wrong with me..." My four co-workers were stumbling around, drinking coffee. One was upstairs in the office poking his scrotum with a pen. Two others were standing around staring at things. The fourth was chainsmoking in the glass door enclave that opened up the store. People kept coming in and asking for service, and I was the only one who could respond. The other four could barely talk. Customers insulted them, called them worthless, slapped them when they slurred their words. It was then I noticed Onyx come in. He looked around then approached me. "What the fuck is going on in here?" he says. "I spiked the coffee with black diamond." "Holy shit..." He runs out the door, and moments later returns with this guy we called Jim Beam because he had forgotten what his name was. They shat on the floor, pissed in the corner, jerked off on the register. One of them yanked down the manager's pants and shoved a Snickers bar up his ass. They started a fire in the urinal with starter logs then tried to put it out by flushing it. They put tampons in my co-workers' nostrils and stole OxyContin out of the pharmacy. At one point the manager stumbled with the Snickers bar in his ass and his pants around his ankles and his penny loafers fell off. Onyx chased the guy around slapping the guy's

asscheeks with his penny loafers until the manager collapsed on a toilet paper display, sending toilet paper flying in all directions. I had seen enough, I had to get out of Ohio. I stole a carton of Kools and a case of Busch and left to come down off my meth high and trip. I would go see my contact in Louisiana soon.

Jim Beam's was a most tragic case. At first he had been so enveloped in work that he was neglecting his son, who became more and more alienated everyday and took to wandering around in the streets at night and bumming cigarettes. Jim drank Jim Beam heavily, hence his name, about a half gallon a day, and his job was so goddamn stressful no one expected him to live past thirty-five. Eventually he had to go to Germany, for whatever petty yuppie reason, and decided to leave off his son with his father, whom he didn't know was a schizophrenic that actually believed he was a surviving SS officer. The guy had SS duds and a pearl-plated .45 stashed in a shoebox under his bed. On his bedroom wall was a framed poster of Van Gogh's "Wheat Field with Crows." With a terse conversation and some pleasantries, Jim left his son Randy at the house with the maniac. Nobody was the wiser. It started with the man showing the kid pornographic magazines and his own twisted diaries, which he read to him about bedtime. In a week's time, grandpa's first check had come from Jim and he was on heroin again. When the kid gets home from school, he

searches every room. Nobody. He goes into his grandpa's bedroom and there he stands, giving the Nazi salute in full uniform, pistol resting on the bedside table. "Son, stand over here, I will show you the courage of the Fuhrer!" Hands shaking, Randy timidly wanders in front of his grandpa, who picks up the pistol. "SIG HEIL!" he shrieks and shoots himself in the temple. Birds fly from the high-growing reeds outside and blood splatters all over the Van Gogh. He falls at the kid's feet, who looks down, picks up the pistol, and emotionlessly tosses it on the bed, leaving the room. He sits downstairs, wondering what to do, six years old. He started walking the streets again, and before the mail piled up too high or anybody noticed the kid, he stood over his dead grandfather's body staring at the Van Gogh, holding the pistol to his chest, just how his grandpa had done about a week ago. The gun goes off, and he's mortally wounded. Jim didn't find out until his business venture was over. He actually stumbled upon the whole scene first. In his mind he was too busy to call, but never too busy to send a check, always without a letter. He crumbled. He lost his job, got lost in booze, and started hanging out with a fence named Trunk who was paying for his hooch because he was sympathetic to his plight. One morning they sat there, and thieves walked in and out selling Trunk random shit, jewelry, car stereos, watches. Trunk actually had a cash register in his house for his illegal fencing activities. They were getting trashed when some guy walks in and offers to teach them how to cook LSD in exchange for a place to stay. They were so trashed they took him up on it and he informed them on how, even leav-

ing a handwritten guidebook before passing out in a closet. They were tripping now, not to mention trashed, drunk and still drinking. Trunk gets up and goes to the bathroom. "You can have that guidebook, I can't handle this shit!" Jim cracks open a beer and washes down a shot. He hears crashing in the bathroom. Trunk comes out and says "OOOOOOOH!", all the time clutching his liver, "I JUST PISSED IN THE SINK!" Jim Beam slams down the rest of the beer and crushes it on his forehead. His eyes open to notice a Vietnam-era grenade sitting on the coffee table. "How much for the grenade?" he asks in clear drunken bravado. About an hour later Jim Beam is walking down a country road tripping his ass off and stoned cold drunk. He stumbles into a farmstead and crashes through a cornfield like Van Gogh during a psychotic break and his body slams into a chicken coup that erupts with jocular clucks and feathers swaying downward in the still air. "Ah, fuck this," he spits in a heavy miasma, pulls the pin off the grenade and flings it into the chicken coup. It explodes and the chickens have a brief shriek. Blood splatters all over Jim as the coup collapses on itself and then feathers float down and attach themselves to the blood dripping down his sweat-soaked clothing. A farmer watches all this, a pistol and a phone in hand. Jim looks at him and says, "What did I do?"

When Jim got out of county for vandalism and cruelty to animals he was a full-blown acid-head and acid dealer. His favorite acid pastime was painting and rearranging his home. After he sold off all the product he cooked up he would trip himself and paint his walls. He would rearrange

his family pictures, turn them upside down, sideways, diagonal, and paint the fronts of them. He would paint his walls, little sections at a time and then repaint over portions of those sections with different colors. He would put all his lamps in one corner and turn them all on after spray-painting the light bulbs. He'd paint the floors then walk over them with bare feet and leave painted footprints all over the painted floors all over the place. All his mirrors had nails pounded into them. You could only make out your reflection in them in certain places. Some had railroad spikes. Sometimes he would climb up on ladders and paint his ceilings, and the paint would drip down and mix with the paint blotches on the floor. Of course he's fucked on acid this whole time. He would save all the bones from his meals in small coffins that he would purchase, claiming his child had just died of crib death. Those were all in the basement with a dirt floor. In no time he had a home that would make Ed Gein run for the hills, ripping his flesh suit off and crying for his mother.

Onyx himself had problems. The main one was that no doctor could give him a clear diagnosis. His answers were always multi-faceted and enigmatic, but they knew something was wrong with him. They didn't know what medication to give him, and his meth-head girlfriend Celes thought he was retarded. She wouldn't give him kids, she wouldn't sleep with him. She just showed up at his pad tweaked out of her mind, cried on his shoulder, insulted him, spasmed around on his couch, and smoked more meth. "I can't do anything with you because I'm a junky and you're retarded," she'd say on occasion. This left Onyx wincing in pain. He took to an anomalous habit as I had done in my gestalt, which was capture birds in cages in precise locations around town, take them home, cook and eat them, then make vaguely human shaped sculptures out of the bones. He used airplane glue, and was high on it most of the time he was creating. He would get calls from Celes's meth dealers, harassing calls which said things like "We gangfucked your girlfriend last night before she came over asshole!" Click. Or "She won't touch you, really? How are we

not surprised, idiot.” The calls became so frequent he had to change his number, and when they got that one, he just hauled his lot onto the roof under a aluminum lean-to, and started building a giant wire cage full of cells so he could collect and take care of his birds. The sculptures piled up, until one day the meth dealers got onto the rooftop and threw them all off over the side. Onyx shrugged, bought padlocks, and started over. He did receive disability checks, and once all his cells were filled with various birds, he began nursing them with his money. It was ok until one night Celes came over crying and covered in cigarette and pipe tip burns that made Onyx’s mouth drop open in irrational rage. ”They would only give me... speed if they could put out their cigarettes and pipes on me while I smoked it... I couldn’t help it... I’m in a lot of pain, I’m scared to go back over there but I just know I only will go back and with no money on me I don’t know what they’ll do...” She was crying, and Onyx lay her in his modest bed. Onyx, as calm as a feather descending in air, walked over to Jim Beam’s house. ”Here, I want to show you something.” He took Onyx into his bedroom, and took a small box out from the top shelf of his closet, and opened it. He handed the contents to Onyx. It was a gun. ”That’s the gun that killed my father and son. I took it, and I hid it.” Jim gave him some rounds. ”They know I have it, but they don’t know where it is, so they’re watching me.” Jim was on acid at the time. Onyx held it in his hand. It had a pearl finish around the handle, a small shining silver revolver. ”Can I borrow this?” he asks. ”I wouldn’t have shown it to you otherwise,” Jim says smearing a line of wet paint on the wall with

his paint-stained fingers. Onyx runs out of the room, concealing the gun after loading it in front of Jim who watched with utter fascination. He then left, hired a cab, and went to the meth lab. When he got there, he crept in. The room was dark, but he could smell something medicinal in the air. He found the light, and turned it on. Three of the drunken dealers lay twitching in the foul disarray. "Pete? Is that you? I can hardly hear you!" One of them mumbles, slurring most of the words. Onyx then heard a groan, and turned around. There was a corpse sitting in the corner. In its limp hand was a beer bottle filled with blood. There was a gored bullet hole in his torso. Onyx looked at them. "You like guns?" he asks. "Of course, Pete, junky over there couldn't pay us." "How about this one?" He draws his gun and one, two, three puts a round into each of their heads. Smells of gunpowder, and the corpses slump with meaty thumps onto the filthy floor within the minute. He puts the gun in his waistband, and walks out after closing the dead junky's eyes in the corner. He went back to Jim's compound, and was allowed to move in, but not until after he got his lady, who said "I will marry you if you go to prison for me." Jim Beam said "I know the perfect way to celebrate."

"Look at this." Jim says, and opens a door for Mary, Ian, Onyx, Celes and I. A nude, pale, white-as-snow body lay on a bed. "What is it?" Ian asks. "I think it's a dead prostitute, there's stab wounds all over her torso." We approached to examine more closely, and, yes, it was a dead prostitute. "I found her in a dumpster." "What are you doing rooting through dumpsters?" I ask. "It's a

hobby of mine. Trash is public domain. Besides look what I found." "What do you want to do with this?" "I want to give her a makeover," Mary says timidly. "That's fine, but afterwards I want to tote her out into the glade and cremate her on a pile of stolen wooden palettes on acid." We were speechless, but it sounded like fun. Hell, I had to leave anyway. We all dropped a couple of hits, and were soon hallucinating and very lightheaded. The stolen palettes were already in the glade, they had been driven out there on dirt tire tracks and left there. Tripping, Mary gave her a glistening makeover, as she had not started to rot yet. Soon, she was almost done up like she had been at a funeral home. We had an old army stretcher Jim had stolen from his father's house, and loaded the dead hooker, the stretcher, a case of domestic beer, and a jug of gasoline into the truck and left for the glade as the sun set, sending open blisters spitting blood and ink into the air like geysers. As we walked through the woods, it began to rain. Before long we realized it wasn't raining water, it was raining blood. It ran down our bodies in rivulets and a flock of crows followed us, flying in arcs then landing, all around us in ellipses. Leaves from the earth rose, floated back to the branches of the trees and turned from shades of red and yellow to shades of bright green, then dark verdant. We made it to the glade, the palettes, and mounted the dead hooker on it, covering it with gas. A man with a hand scythe in a wife beater, jeans, and bare feet emerged from the woods in a skull mask swiping the blade upward and downward at the crows, who avoided every strike. Another terrified disheveled businessman emerged from the woods

being attacked by a mob of raccoons and skunks, who jumped at him and spit at him, him still terrified, knocking them away with his long bloody arms. I took off my shirt, and my self-inflicted scars opened, sending fountains of blood in all directions. We lit the pyre, and the woman burned. Stained glass windows showed black red light from the branches of the trees, scenes from a religious text that had never been written. We watched in awe, until emerging from the north, a pregnant woman wrapped in a blanket. Almost all of her teeth were gone, or rotted through her skull, which bore a giant swollen bruise above her right eye. She extended her hands, which were pierced with at least a hundred needles, safety pins, tacks, fish hooks, rusty nails. She opened her rotting mouth and screamed, and the pyre exploded in flames and the droplets of blood falling from the sky became rose petals. Terrified, we ran back to the truck and sped off.

I was at the Cleveland, Ohio bus station smoking Marlboros and doing bumps of meth off my key, watching students sitting Indian style waiting, itinerant janitors waiting to get off work so they could drink beer, washed-up burger-flippers smelling the marijuana on the air. I made it down the street to a bar and ordered a beer and a plate of wings. After I had eaten I moved out onto the street and immediately purchased a nugget of good hash off some dude for a cool twenty. Luckily I had my paraphernalia with me and went into a gas station stall and lit up. I bought a pint of Jim Beam for the bus ride and boarded, back at the station. What passed me in my stoned window was a marvel. Landscapes the likes of which I had never dreamed. Lush green ferns and crab grass, crooked winding trees and striking sunrises and sunsets. I smoked meth-laced hash bowls in the bathroom of the bus and spit the smoke out the window. The stoned trip was relaxing to say the least, and when I pulled into New Orleans bus station I immediately booked a bed in a local hostel and went out to call my dealer. I pounded down a couple of Budweisers and took a cab to his apart-

ment. The scene there scared me into believing this whole trip had been a mistake, a joke, a ruse, a false effort at an attempt at living. The walls were all painted bright pink. In one room were about a thousand marijuana plants and an aroma that could only be described as the stench of skunks. Everyone there was stoned. A drunken wino was aggressively hitting on a blond transvestite with breast implants that constantly and belligerently shot him down. The tranny was making out with a goth chick that kept doing shots of Single Barrel. They would make out, smear lipstick, and fall on a couch. In the living room guys cut up coke into baggies and passed a clay pipe around filled with pot doing deep hits and blowing the smoke in each others' faces as they worked. Porn played on the TV, some sick sideshow of transvestites shoving their feet into fat women's cunts that would seemingly do just about anything. Someone passed me a joint and I did a deep toke. "I need you Anna..." the wino was whispering at the transvestite that stared at him like he wanted to kill him. I purchased my QP then sat down to do a sample toke with a Budweiser tallboy. It was early September, and drinking and pot was everywhere down there. I was offered some coke, but refused as I was too tuned up on the meth I had been bumping the entire substance-corroded road trip down. "STOP!" I stare out of a monsoon of swirling colors passing in the damp autumn air. The wino has produced an M80 from his pocket and reaches into his pants, inserting it into his rectum. He strips, and gets down on his hands and knees. "All I ask of you Anna, is that you light the fuse..." Everyone rushes to their feet and runs over to go

watch. They hastily light cigarettes and crack bottles of Heineken. Anna walks over, leans over, and lights the fuse. It burns down to the explosives and with a meaty thud the wino's ass is gone. He groans and stands up. Flesh tubing falls out of the wound where his ass once was. He stumbles around trying to grab the dealers and they push him away. He stumbled back, picks up his guts in his bare hands and walks out the door with them stark naked. He stumbles down the stairs, out the apartment gate and limps down the street holding his guts. People scream and cross to the other side of the street. After a few blocks, he lets out a low inhuman grunt, throws his guts into a concrete trash can and collapses onto a pile of garbage on the side of the road. Rivulets of blood seep down the sidewalk and drip like water out of a leaky faucet into a nearby sewer, while the wino's eyes roll back up into his disheveled head.

I was at the bus station hitting a pint of Wild Irish Rose and smoking bowls in a Port-O-Let waiting for my bus. Ripped-apart drug dealers and male prostitutes lounged around picking at lesions, tying each others' shoe laces, and trying to make eye contact with itinerant workers. Men who lived on the bus line, traveling from place to place and living in the stations, lounged in chairs and stared off into space at something that wasn't actually there. Wacked-out kids ran around the place trying to invite people to a party in some barn somewhere where they would have ecstasy, LSD, and beer. I was on edge, the pot was making me paranoid and I was tweaking out of my mind, by now I was probably addicted to that synthetic bilge. I just beat down the withdrawals by doing bumps off my keys in the bathrooms. My bus arrived and I boarded, sitting in the back next to a window. I was stoned, drunk, twisted. I remember thinking that I should try to get some 'shrooms, before the bus started, and drove off. It was late September, 9/11 had come and gone. The leaves were turning, red, vermilion, orange, yellow, striking colors that shown sunlight off of water drop-

lets waiting to fall from the leaves into the moist clay. It became a fury of changing leaves, as the bus roared by. I could not turn my eyes away. It was an endless innocuous fire, coating everything, forever changing, spinning, latching on. It was a wild fury of reds, oranges, licking flames that encompassed everything, danced, never stopped, a fantastic illusion that would not die until it would die, blurred by speed and drugs in my reflective eyes. White blue gaps in between trees, the fire reflecting in crystalline lakes as I made my way north up from the tobacco farms and factories of the south, back up into northeastern Ohio, beacon of meth labs, pot droughts, and the OxyCotin black market. Before I knew it they had re-routed our bus to New York City. I let out a groan and went into the bathroom to piss and drain another pint of Wild Irish Rose. It was dark in New York City when we arrived. It was chaos in the bus station. Paranoid Christians huddled around in circles holding candles chanting and praying. Family men and stock brokers got into fist fight over pay phones. The place was crowded up to the gills with travelers lying around trying to sleep in the bad sober night smacking mosquitoes off of sweaty necks exposed to sick fluorescent lights. I called Onyx and found out that the manager of that drug store actually drowned himself in the toilet during his intense LSD trip that he could somehow not explain, after the store closed of course. My bus came eventually. There was nowhere to smoke pot, and my meth was running out. I could drink in the stalls, but had no booze and nowhere to go to get some because the bus terminal was locked down like a prison during a riot. After a couple hours,

my bus arrived, and I made it back to my apartment, where I smoked pot until I blacked out for a couple weeks.

Gill was at the Interbelt again, camped out and passing out dirty needles filled with cooked heroin, telling people the needles were dirty and then watching them shoot up while smiling and stroking his drunken chin. Some joker had found a dead prostitute under the bridge, strangulation, and had climbed up and hung her from the rafters by her ankles. Drunken men in the light of campfires in-between fuck sessions tried to throw rocks and bricks at the whore's skull to break it open and spill her brains onto the floor of the Interbelt. They rarely hit anything. It was then that a pickup truck filled with skinheads flew up and stopped under the bridge. A beer bottle flew from the truck when it stopped and shattered in a man's face taking out both of his eyes and knocking him to his knees. They jumped out of the truck and chased the men around, back to their cars, beating them with bats and crowbars. Some hit the earth, others got away. One of them got a hold of Gill. "This is the motherfucker were looking for." he says, he pushes Gill, whose smile is fastly fading. He stumbles. "What?!" he shouts as the skinheads gather around him. A tattooed mother-

fucker drags a railroad tier over to them, and they fastly tie the drunken Gill to it, and soak him in gasoline. "NO DON'T" he screams as a lit match falls on his crotch and he bursts out in flame, screaming wildly as the skin melts off of his bones and sizzles in the dead dirt. Then they run, get into the pickup truck, and speed off. "That will teach you, motherfuckers!" someone on the truck yells.

I visited Gill in the hospital. His face was melted away, his hands and feet were clubs, his genitals gone. He was on advanced life support and his entire body was covered in scars. He wheezed slowly, in and out, with a great deal of pain. I touched him, and his body spasmed. Suddenly I became terrified, as I had no knowledge of how this could have possibly happened to him. After returning to the room I had rented from Onyx and Miserati, I drank a bottle of Robitussin and smoked a lot of pot and began an intense trip. After chainsmoking for a couple hours I grabbed a can of black spray paint out of the garage and started walking down the railroad tracks, tripping out of my mind. I must have walked for three hours, when I reached a clearing on a city block I walked up to the white wall and spray painted Gill's first name on it, then threw the can into the field. I began to walk back, seeing double, triple, strange and impossible hallucinations all around me. I sit down, pack a bowl, and smoke up, then a cigarette, and hear a train coming. I stand there, waiting. The train passes me, sending flashes of white light silhouetting onto the surface of my face through the fastly passing bars. It is going slow, so as the last car passes, I grab the footrest and

climb onto the last car. I hold on, thinking I'm getting a free ride, but the thing starts going faster, and faster, and even faster. I have an urge to leap from the train. I'm glad it's going faster and propel myself from the train. I collide with a pile of stones and get knocked out cold. I awake the next morning finding I have shit my pants, and walk the remainder of the way home with it oozing out of my socks.

I was at a grocery store with Jim, and we were drinking beer out of coffee cups and wandering around watching petty spectacles. I noticed in the corner of my eye a woman walking around desperately trying to write checks, petition Western Union, and grab at ATMs while her small child danced around her, goofing off. I noticed a man fling a sprig of greens at another man, staining his shirt with water. A man walks by a counter filled with cottage cheese and throws a package of hot dogs onto it. An insane woman harasses a produce cutter for a zucchini. "Let's get the hell out of here and go watch football." "Let's get some beer first." As we are selecting our beer, I mutter the word "INK." As we walk past the comedic child and the mother going through withdrawals, she rips in half a pen and tries to throw the ink on her son's face. "JUMP," I mutter, and the kid jumps out of the way. The ink splashes onto the floor, and the mother grabs her child and rushes out, as broke and sick as she was when she stormed in. We paid for our case and left.

I'm sorry kid.

I had bought four hits of LSD from a clerk at a record store and a small baggie of crystal meth from a guy standing outside the convenience store and was really out cold. By now I was scaling the fence of the Catholic cemetery with a can of black paint, a paintbrush, and a pipe that I was smoking the raw crystal out of. I was painting the faces of the gargoyles and the headstones and the angels with dripping black paint, watching it drip down the rain-stained white concrete statues. By now Aaron and Mary were sitting in the bar, Rob Roy's, selling baggies filled with cocaine to drunks who stumbled up to their temptations with crumpled sweaty notes dangling out of their fists. It was then that a man stumbled out of the men's restroom spitting and dripping blood. "THAT SHIT HAS DRAIN IN IT!" and falls face first into a table knocking a drunken woman into a spiral out of her chair. Men's faces furl and Aaron starts backing up. "I DIDN'T DO IT!" baggies of cocaine fly at him before the fists and chairs and soon Aaron is fending off blows from about four guys. Fists hit his bobbing head as he falls into the wall and cigarettes go out on his face. Three

methed-up thugs walk into the bar and start throwing punches at random people and pushing them. Before long people are throwing punches and chairs into the mob. I hear it. It's snowing now, and there are hills, lines of plowed snow between myself and the bar. Huge lines of crystal meth for God cut into the lines in the concrete gardens. I scale the fence and climb over the lines of snow, getting crystals all over my cigarette-burned jacket. I begin running straight into the mob, thinking there is hope even for the souls in hell, where four men are gang-fucking Mary. I pick up an electric guitar from off the stage and plow it over my head at one of the rapists. It comes down on his skull, spinning him around and sending him into a pile of tables. I pick her up, she's shaking and bleeding and I carry her in my arms out of the melee into police squad cars driving up to the bar. I walk through flying tear gas grenades going into the bar, and men in black running through the doors. The pushers and the junkies standing outside scatter. I walk to one of the lines of plowed snow and lay her in it, then lay next to her.

In a dark bedroom, a tormented man files steel. You can hear it, reverberating in the windows, he is fixated, calculating, and fearless. It makes a sound like birds chirping in hell but it doesn't faze him at all. You can hear it, like nails on a chalkboard. Sweat drips down his face, and splashes onto the dusty floor. After a while, we fled to Jim's, but we knew something was wrong. Police cars had been parked outside, vans. We were hiding, all of us, drunk, stoned, terrified. Soon there was a bang on the door. "SEARCH WARRANT!" We scattered and hid. The police busted their way in and found their way to all of us, especially Jim who got blasted with a bean bag because of his smart-ass answer "WHAT DO YOU MEAN HANDS UP, I WAS JUST THAWING OUT A PIEROGIE IN MY ASS!" They eventually made their way to Onyx's bedroom, which was dark. They went in. Onyx was holding a gun to his head. It was the gun that killed Randy, the gun that killed grandpa, the gun the shot Rimbaud's hand, the revolver that mortally wounded Lincoln, Hitler's suicide piece. They screamed at him to drop the gun, not to do it, not to do it, but he just

smiled, and pulled the trigger. The hammer limply twitched. He had filed it down to a nub. He threw the gun at their feet, their mouths dropped open. They began to advance and he lit a Zippo lighter, hidden in his palm and smiled. They gasped and he threw it into an open area. Nothing happened. "Guess what," he said. "Paint ain't flammable either." They take us into custody, and into the hands of the courts, the civil servants, the case workers, the drug tests.

I wake up in lockup with no memory of what had happened. I dump the food they give me in the garbage and pound down the coffee, then wait, reading huge time-consuming books about the genitals of aliens and islands with no laws. It's snowing again, and they come to take me to court. "Are you going to court with your hair like that?" I look in a window and my hair is a mash- going all over the place. I rush into the cell and comb it back, slick it back with water. At court I am granted probation for one year and signature bond and am released later that night to a payphone where I call my father. I spent that next year walking. All over. I would walk to Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo. I was sober, it was the cigarettes I couldn't kick. I thought about LSD and booze constantly. I walked over the suicide bridge where junkies came to get their last sweet taste of death with a dive over the side and a few pounding seconds before contact with the parking lot below. I walked over the railroad tracks, through abandoned cities, broken windows, towering buildings where I imagined homeless crack and booze orgies in the dirt, fags grabbing at each other's asses in the filthy used-condom night. I contemplated cut-

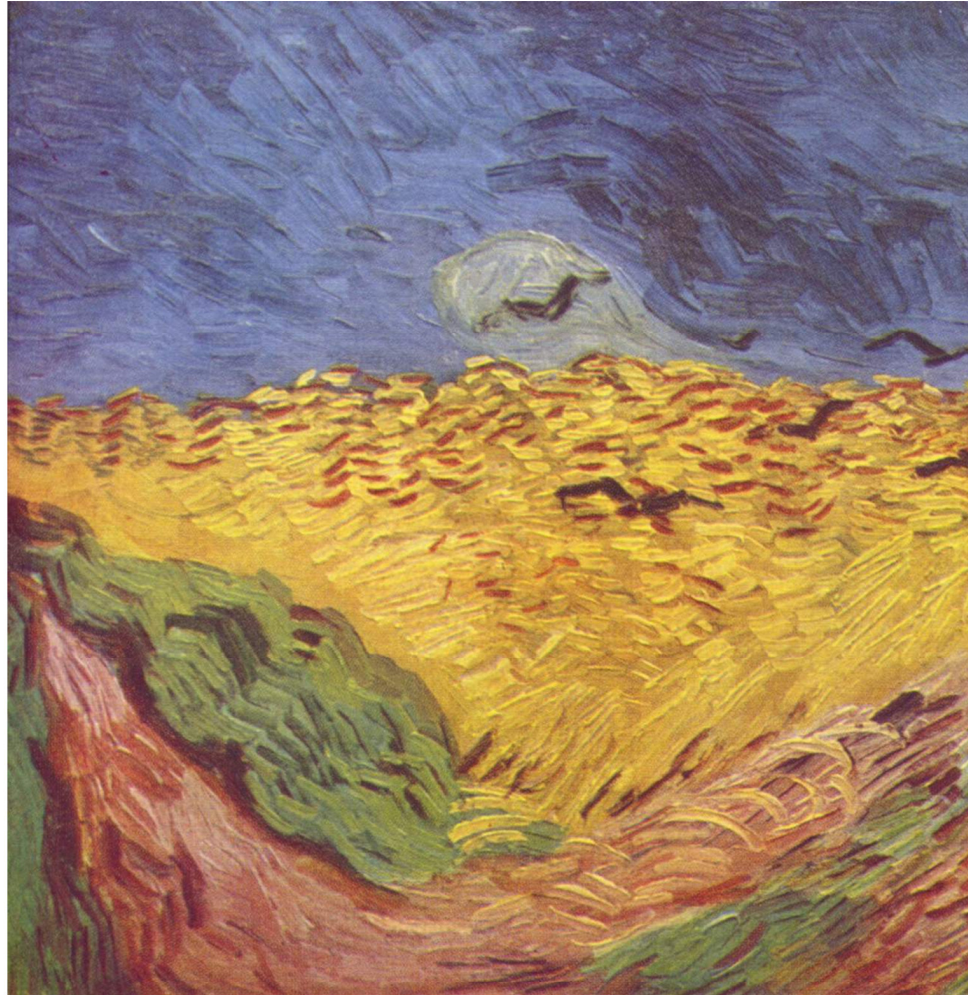
ting a lot, as I walked, but instead smoked, burned cigarette after cigarette, and when the anti-psychotics kicked in the probation was finally over. After my final court appearance, I lay on a bed of rotting leaves and stared up at the spinning and twisting flames.

As everyone was trying to leave New Orleans, I was walking in, past screaming rednecks firing shotguns, brutal angry thugs, beatings, pounding rain, winds so strong they scooped trash cans up of the sidewalk and flung them into the sides of buildings. I walked down the street, when a stove crashed through a window right behind where I had been seconds before. A man sees me, and holding two beer bottles, one in each hand, he shatters them on the bar and starts to follow me with them and a glare of hatred in his eye the likes of which I had only seen in stoned withdrawals and crystal meth come-downs. I notice him and pick up my pace. Handcuffs dangle off my right wrist. A car slams into a pole and a hubcap flies off the car smacking my pursuer in the back of his head and he falls down. I walk on, ankle deep in water. He stands up, collects his broken bottles and continues to follow me, blood drooling down the back of his head and down his tattooed forearms. Two cars speed past me as I cross the street to an abandoned apartment, to the fire escape. I fling a brick at it and the ladder slams down into thin air. I jump up and grab it and start to climb.

My pursuer throws one of the bottles away and puts the other one, neck first, in between his teeth and climbs after me. We are running, jumping, climbing, his hateful glare even more sinister than it had been when he first saw me. I make it to the roof, and run across it, handcuffing myself to a looping pipe jutting out of the brick, and collapse to the ground. My pursuer teeters on the roof for a moment, his eyes roll back in his head, and he falls off, into a dumpster that is sliding by into the water, that will later go on to tip over, and spill his corpse at the feet of distraught running families. I handcuff myself to a pipe, and throw the key over the side of the building.







**Unlikely 2.0**  
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