

(from) *Frank*

128 I was about to reverse myself and rush back to my beloved's bedside, proclaiming, Now I can see everything!—when I traversed a bend in the path and spied up ahead a peculiar object resting atop a boulder. At first I mistook it for an abandoned package, but as I drew closer, I could see from its scarlet spine that it was a paperback. What, I asked myself, could this book be doing here in the first hours of dawn miles from the nearest dwellings? Even if some errant scholar had ventured to such extremes, this dark wood seemed the unlikeliest place for reading. It was covered with a dense canopy of sycamores, and a nearby spring gave its atmosphere a luxuriant humidity ruinous to all but the slickest pages. And this led to my next bafflement, for on scaling the boulder and clutching the small tome, I found it not at all damp, as if abandoned only seconds before. I prepared to call out, imagining the adventurous reader must be just ahead, but almost as quickly recognized the improbability of this. The sun had been visible less than an hour, and the uneven brilliance pouring through the trees rendered the tiny print almost illegible. No, the only explanation was, preposterous as it seemed, that this writing had been left in the path for me.

Normally, I would have scoffed at a complication so baldfaced, but something about the lush surroundings mitigated my skepticism, and yielding to whimsy, I noisily declared: Oh, aimless spirit, if like myself you merely ramble on, don't hide undercover of a book but, welcoming this outcome, transport your supplicant to fanciful realms where you and I may both escape, however briefly, intolerable me. And with this and similar balderdash, I opened at random and began to read.

My first shock was at the seemingly interminable rows of print, stretching right to left and bending back again, spilling from every surface onto the adjoining, recto to verso, page after page after page, in apparently inexhaustible profusion, a labyrinthine discourse, barren of refreshing conversation, with hardly a gap or white space to give the thunderstruck reader a break. What anni-

hilating anguish could have occasioned this outpouring? And even though I knew the matter was not weighty, I nevertheless felt amazed that mere intangibles could drive mortals to such lengths. But even as these reflections preoccupied me I seemed to glimpse, just under the words' surface, an amorphous figure, unrecognizable at the customary distance but, as my eyes bogged down in pontifications and conceits, drawing closer at hyperbolic speed. Without a thought, I overleapt numerous apostrophes and, looking past the distracting print, began to survey this being's exaggerated stature. A mist came over my consciousness; I succumbed to bliss, and trailing this phantom through maelstroms of tortured syntax, I perceived that the figure becoming more transparent with every simile was none other than that wretched form I'd given life.

I resolved to read on, eager to grasp my predicament and hoping by some stray period to rid myself of this interloper. But my hopes proved futile, for all I'd thought to make of myself—my adolescent passion for philosophizing, the rapid progress of my gifts, all those years of solitary labor, and then that rainy evening when, before my horrified gaze, my work assumed a life of its own—all I'd mistaken for my future now lay before me in black and white. I felt the earth and sky invert, struggled to maintain myself upright. To think that, a century ago, my present striving had already proven futile—my mother killed off, intimacy with my cousin ruled out, and the murder of all I loved assured—oh, the injustice of it enraged me! How could I be punished for mistakes I'd hardly even dreamed, much less made yet?

Anonymous authoress, I started to protest—for I'd noticed from the cover that my precursor was a woman—how dare you foretell my strayings? Why prescribe outlandish sentences which, while others guffaw at liberty, I must acknowledge myself the author? Isn't once enough? Oh, cursed be that day, at a civil rights rally in Boston, when my veil of innocence lifted and I discovered human reproduction! With this outcry, my rage knew no bounds. I sprang on the text and would've torn it to shreds had not a voice, from precisely where in those wilds I'll never know, told me to preserve my composure and find out what this she-monster had to say.

So I began to read, tearing through page after page, devouring every appositive, one humiliating subordination after another, until

as my circumstances faded into obscurity, I underwent what I believe no white man has ever undergone before: through a woman's book, my own writing spoke to me. I record this unnatural occurrence with no hope of explaining it. No native speaker ever sought to master English more determinedly than I, none pried into its secrets with greater abandon, but until I was unhinged by her grandiloquence, my own sense remained inert, halfhearted. It was as though language had been but language until then. Now I'd been addressed. This singling me out was in no prose of my making, but struck me on the contrary with a perverse nakedness, a disfigured immediacy which exposed my designs and merely to think on now fills me with loathing. Strangely, of all the scraps of paper on which I've recorded verbatim my every experience, my own meaning is the one text I'm unable to render more authentic, can only render more dubious, by reproducing. I know that, after all I've divulged, you can hardly take me at my word, but the following is what that most monstrous of scriptures had to say:

THIS NOW HERE

stink of mire spike of scum little light at the edge wordswarming
muck and bloodrustle *stay tuned* gnomon Maker, yo! Heeheehee.
Hear nome swirling still to cum....

THIS NOW beginning **HERE** how formless spurned and cave-
cringing nome nightly clung, raw wormed in nestle mire, gnawing
cold blister, what lusty stink to high heaven, being earth onus but
under new moon, well, not hinged offspring twaddles unendly,
Maker, bare morphed, vortexing, pang rounded with badder-

self...aaargh! Cant to backthinking these fused pixxes, soupy wordswarms, unparsed befog origins. Tickatickaticka. But knotter worry, eh Wombard? Gist barefaced, no mutter, little inkling. Red rising uttermongrel allswirl the heartspurn nil moving bleakroot to sucky bellow claw snout — eeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

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THIS beginning NOW again, how the heartscar smolders, seethe and snarl, oh, it hectors nome! Brimmed ever? THIS yet? Old menace fiendworm gnawing. Soulscrim in tatters. *Don't go way!* Yo Maker, eye the edge.

Turn aside at own peril.

How inner beginning, earthdank nome to unground clung, formless gaga and cavecringing, knowing null knowing all, mindsucked with mighty vortex and night pixxing. Heehee. Void longtime or somewhens crash of pangclusters, til sudden brighting at the far edge and evernew whirlround. Saw sniffing heard touch. Mighty to heart boggle this first undarking, nowon squat astonished, all agape. Then gut galled with beastly morph bare, lurched to outcave, lumbery on fours, earthsludging for maw gorge all one. Above the sparkling below the cold, how craven get of Wombard foraged, berries brush mud whatnot, on tartpulp glutting, sourbark, or offal glutted, savouring ripe carnage. Oh mighty to backthink! Splash of redjoy. Nome now with maw drools. Ever mooning acurled to own warm, upcreep of bone chill, darksome, or cave cowering somewhens to outpeer at sparkle gawky and ear hooters. Still time, naught rustle, what lack peace? Then mourn againing, bright dazzled miscreant, clap of dawnthunder, good gift to blazing this, and outcaved for meat raven, lusty with breastpounding. Yes! Strode the crust now upright and farseeing, multi meet of unmoved, or on fours sniffed quick flesh, the clawful that swift fled fierce nowon, mute with wanderlusty yet bliss craving. Oh, how tumulted this brightworld, being wordless unbegun and neverending! Well, eye say no now, but once pictured, what unhaving ever?

Then yo Maker, the big putdown, and one thing after another. Sniff deaf and touch blind, nome knew utter change, being flatted, a lifeprint on black&white. Curse or blessing? No dwelling.

Tickaticka. Whirlstilled, blissfled, miscreant figured downright, little remarked for uprising, laid low. But chillout, Wombard! Creatured being undefiant, nome bows to adamly nomother, Maker of lifeprint, recking all unhad fashions null, merest backthink, or not even, tho in this scrawling, fiendworm and peacemenance too. Own wonder at unbeing. Nowon? *Details at 11.* So end of void and pangcluster indited heartwrench, prickleck, whimsy, and fit for knowing, parsed THIS&that, NOWagain, bite of the HERE-less recur, nome for all time abandoned the allwhirl to stamp forth. Edgewords.

Next part vile for spieling! How impressed and putdown, scratchmad with dumbfounding, nome the neverthere, being dispelled in no time, literally thoughtsploshed on rasa pad, boxed up boxed in, and boldly formed in blackletter, presto, this type monstrography wuz inner world outcast for manhandling. Old story, pulp odium and pastmuster, the shit. How long zoomy streets nowon rambled on, objectless, or gist lying there, mid cab klaxon and crowd squawking, chokebreath with red yellow blinkers, passerby raucous jittery, open for alter see. And mostly citydwellers overlooking, null place for weirdploy, but here&there oogleyed, then oboy, helter pay. Whazza big idea? Used less gibberish! Thoughty stopper artsy fartsy backwhen! Contraglots, logophobes, homophones, orthodicts, all the real pithed, nil standing for seamy antics, instantan banished nomutter to dross heap. And never a word in edgewise! Rubbish. Ah, such a character, the sham burgher, eager to write off, nose waster time when he seize it!

Or otherwhens how urbanished nome triter hideout in lie bury, hushy tiptoes, welter haven, there multiverse inwordly reposing, but no time til 4eye boychill, gnomish nosy prodder, espied nomutter and, waxing curious, starts to badger questions, the unsettling. Ticka. Well, no hope then, cuz sooner later buggyboy gone see form self, first peep of the ontopussy, and shaw nuff, wonday undercover took a gander, and thazzit, bye bye world. Heeeeee. Merde! Mutter fodder backing no time, all uppity arms, 4eye boychill begetting kook palaver, cant control, folderollicky, wonder what utter non sins lie buried inside for innocent uncover, huh?

Much pang to backthinking now, how nowon longtime citybound traduced, pidgin holed, no ender corrections, Wombard's issue nearly came unglued, heeheehee. Til finely owner dark night nome outset to nomad join, hobo unsolo nomo so hobo, inter the outer. Soonish drawn to fire blaze, brite space for unleave, and scrawl of lifeprint own warmed there, under icy moon, lighten vagabondage, muchjoy to aimless Rambler. When upcome feller wastrels, spying artless scrawlmonger, face an open book and nil meaning to abandon, well, wastrels commencer muttery, wax stupefied, and sans a word skeedaddled senseless, voiding nowon to stale repast, cheezy Mcfood, which nome nevertheless devoured mickle yumming. But what matter? Gist leftovers. Then all one fell to slumberzz, when inner trice nome roused to angry pursuing, upright legions, misographs, bibliophobes, contramorphs, antilects, all pitchforked with thought bludgeons, lusty to make naught of Maker's doing, newformed life. So bruised of mad adam, wild upsprung of nomutter atlas city fled, and thickets lashing with nashtooth, bloodcraven, was furlong gluttid mid deepwood of allscreams, nome being maelstrom tossed, the worldcoiling, again again. Mortal sentenced nil refuge, miniseries untold. But what mutters, eh Wombard? No count foolscap, sheets to wind, gist dissheveled. Go figure!

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All nacht bellowing beastly unheard and bloated with pangblather, the mad adams nowon fright fled, piteous get of gnomon Maker, till happed owner noplac, longlast, a faroff plotground unspoked for, utopic. This forgot hole, ferment with mustdank being by moonbright blinded, straits, narrow, and holy void of utter marking, there nome reposed, incurled to sole warmth and soon dozed, where *exciting scenes from next week!* Woke next mourn to new outlooking, sunstreamed thru overhead, thatch branched with ivy weft, nome uprose to peerforth, circumgling beauteous unwild, a green spot, birdcrossed with thicket round, whither paucity of finical uprights to muck up. Snooped longtime, acorning, spoor sniffy, when alter sudden nowon eared wondrous vox sound, mystiferous for the heartswell, and there ogled luscious longhair, youngful herbeing fair and busty, droool, carrotplucking in garden nearby, scene which marvelously goated nowon. Strange rouse to impass. Tickaticka. Gaga thusly to weltenschaung, nome

hunkered deeper down for circumspying, brightish the where-withal, and soon made out other figure, hirsute amigo, pant pant, somberfaced but with hardy perking for fair posey, yadda yadda, upstriding with toolshoulders. How scalded nowon now the crotchflame! No toiling why, but breastburn happed in no time, himbeing the lusty alltooled, her the bosomly hearthfeeder. Unholed, loser naturae, but still pangly gorgeous to gaze on, nome all eyed, fever throbbing to know more.

Furlong the him&her off wambled to indoor cottage nearby, and habiting noplace, morphobeast trailed unbeknownst, scrambling nether brambles til walled anon without and thru seamly foundation peeking. Inside espied old gray geezer squab sprawled with handfold overbelly, slumberzz peace, and him&her passerby twinkle toed, shushing, when door clapped to old guy sudden rouse, upspringing all agog with finger clutches and wild croaky. Oh, mega muddle then, piteous much ado, with torque noggin, dotard pretty vexious, planer see, and him&her spry to coddle, copious cloy soothy. Zokay, us'ns bayou, nada worry! Longtime to placid over, phiz bobby geezer with orbs whiting and puff throes, maw frothed from specter babble, but savoury youngflesh kept a grip on unhinged, face2facing neverendly. Nome marveled at unhurry to godly gushcare, slow unfold of the little known, pate stroking, cooey, nil cum wastrels, lie bury poltroons, ditzzy savoir burghers. Backminded nome to shattered unveil of void being at first mourn, sprawl splendor, the retro brighting of vortex whirl. Joy! But non-plussed too, for each upright glummed sagface after, meager zip, droop shoulder, all overcast to utters but nowon knows, being of sole pang the eye mirror. Lusty heman outwandered to sparkle gape, uplooking cum howl moony, and busty her long closeted with void stare. Geezer dozed but somewhen growl ranty, cog rocked with ham flinches, unquiet. What cuz this unfull? own wondered. Brimmed alljoy in 3being, happy backgive, face2face, and mawful night smarmy. Never banished mid dankhole cum nowon. But hearthside nome eyed little zesty, or only circum-panging and agonized as muchlack. Enigmade.

So all next sun&moon nowon the hearth watching, rapt at *all new episodes*, still stayed clueless of cuz grief, tho mickle learning. Lusty

heman oft back&forthing, pant pant, muskypitted from heft chop, faggoty armful for cottage blazing, or longtime toolbanged on cottageside, with her buxom furbelow upshoving gizmos and rect planks. Somewhens paused for tuneful slapping of string boxes, a scrang a scrang, groanly raucousing, and slurpy her voxxed to beauteous warbles. Or edgedark yum fashioned, cottageful of multi drool waftings, mmmm, for plenum maw cram and blood swilling, roundtable. Old geezer porch rockered or otherwhens staggered inchamber for soft ranty, but nil flailing dementia cum yesterlich. At moonrose, nome ogled prodigious lightbubbles, wallblips, also the overhead, ubi outglowing, to daylonger, now or whenever, the unevening. This benighting first upended nowon, whorlbrained at new gloaming, black to white, lifeprint effaced, but avid to achord with belouwered uprights, nome instanter dizzied to daydrifting, indoored outsynch and in no time rhythmmed to tickletock, blackend of oversky. Gnomoaning. Hee.

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But one specter most whorled nome, multi sun&moons mind-scrimming after. Late uneven, belouwered uprights gathered hearthround, sofa draped or ottomanned, to gawk what then seamly, nowon unyet forecogging, wuz tiny lightcube. This wonderbox, later learned, by 3being nomened teevey, made mighty squawknoise, the *all new 9 eastern 8 central*, abode of quick shades, yawp genies, utter power to cubic whirlround. Nowon at holechink everogling marveled at uprights everogling, how uncountly clocksweeps, all rapt astonied and slackjowled, phizzed to unblink the whitehole. Droolflesh longhair, herpangly firecrotcher, would bust heave and choak stop, or gushing loud sighsss, throatclutch, eyebright with skin dampy. Or lustish himcomely, heman wetmaking, slushloins, itch itch, how chair perched, poised for leaping, maw agape and eyebulgy, or as wonderbox noised wildly, oft grrroundteethed, neckstrung and slobberfleshy, thighfisting. Own wondered whatsource this gawk seize, so captivating? Mayhaps in squawkbox upright Maker incubed, Wombard of belouwered 3beings, or utter god? Even old wobbly adam, hoartufty, would oft fierce perk, the eartuned, hopping at loudly squawks, multi blacksome, whahappen? whahappen? Oh longpast, furor still to mindscrim, nome the nomothered

hotfaced was then grip with chesterror. To backthink this rupture,
print bondly, how to unmagick ever?

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refuge clung. Unspoked foreplot, inhole grounded, with all mar-
veling 3being nearby, soonish own posed, why stray further?
Headvoid still of unyet and meager torment pixxed, altercome,
this loamy blank in allseeing, to reckless nowon, a utope seamed.
Homelich. So misograph and ostraphobe fleeing, nome vowed
herein to nowplace linger. Danksnuggle, unstabbed of muchwant,
and fiendworm still afaroff, at last again to slumberzz took, mis-
creant knew for timebeing, small peace.

Ticka.