

S

L

A

C

K

E

R



By

Junior Mcdouble

WHY I LIKE IT : *Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes...* When I read, "Slacker Blues," by Laurent Bourdon I have this image of letters and lines lazily oozing over me as a texture – the way ice cream would melt around the sides of your head or how an amoeba envelops its prey or when someone you care for runs their fingers through your hair. It's runny, but dense; a non-Newtonian language that is active yet apathetic. That is to say that our slacker has character. Our protagonist, in all his glory, is a do-nothing extraordinaire, and, like most do-nothings, he is often lost in philosophical anecdotes that keep him just above the undertow of existential river. Or maybe he just needs love? Or maybe one other counter to his lackadaisical melting? Or a job? Or maybe a joint? A kick in the head? I don't know. You don't know. He doesn't know – that wouldn't be passive enough to be considered a slacker. I like this story because of the care and craft that went into making an almost unlikable character likable. There's a tenderness withing that diametrically opposes the immediate affront of liking someone for doing something in doing nothing. Sit back. Relax. Watch The Big Lebowski. Enjoy.

QUALITY QUOTABLE *(for the love of language...)*

We ended up leaving the rooftop for the comfort of her actual apartment. Her room was purple-hued, her curtains like orchid petals. While I was undressing, she burned a bundle of dry crackling herbs and spread the thin smoke around the room. We had languid, slow-burning sex. We sweltered, sweated, flesh clammy with lust.

When it was over, I sat motionless on the bed's end, contemplating nothing. There were many things to contemplate but with no great effort I made abstraction of them all. Luanne said she loved the way I could do nothing at all. She envied my quiescence.

She told me I was like a picture, lifelike yet still. From that evening onwards I had become a point of reference against which every change was measured in Luanne's world. She told me she had found her zero-point, the center holding everything together. I thanked her for the compliment.

Slacker Blues

Tuesday, noon

There was an unpinnable point in time when loneliness became less of an emotion than a texture. I gradually lost conscience of what is and isn't animate. These are opposing forces, yet they work together. The ability to perceive simultaneously the objects of your surrounding as lifelike and yourself as existing. We are converging. I project my own sheen outward, the world shakes with it.

I'm a slacker. I've been for as long as I've been. I don't mind turning inanimate. In a way I'm kind of looking forward to it. I'm a practitioner of apathy. Most days I practically do not move. My job closed and I've been laid off for what? Moons? Time just oozes these days.

Beyond periodic fridge-runs I am mostly static. Moving seems fundamentally undesirable.

Oftentimes I'll gaze out the window in total tranquility, the downtown street sparsely bustling

and alarmingly far below me. I rest my forehead against the window and ponder that if this were not a reinforced curtain of glass, I'd be falling to my death right then. These things are funny, I think.

I'm pretty sure something of importance is going on in the news but I'm not really preoccupied. I've cut myself off from the flow of information, the news cannot reach me. I gradually stopped watching TV, social media, any media really. Truth be told it's all a little too lively for me. I just can't keep up.

The only thing I still read are my brother's texts. In the past months he's learned more about China than I even thought existed. He's read the voyages of Marco-Polo. He's looking at scriptures from the Tang dynasty, trying to decipher something big.

My brother's a day-trader, he's used to this stuff. He looks at a grid full of numbers all day and places trades. Ekes out a profit. Stock trades, Forex stuff, technical analysis. He's a data-ingesting machine, he finds patterns and executes strategies according to them. He thinks price graphs are a nascent art form only to be understood millennia from now. He charts stock prices against indexes, he overlaps the charts and draws lines upon them; moving averages, retracement levels, powerful stuff. He stares at his screen for hours trying to decipher the hidden meaning, like a gypsy crone rubbing her palm against a crystal ball. He says trading is a fortune-telling business.

When I returned from my walk he'd messaged me five new articles I'll never read. He's bought himself a fire-axe in preparation for "what's to come". He claims zombie-apocalyptic movies have primed his brain for survival in the dire times ahead.

I looked up at my brightly lit loft, slices of dusty air pixelated by the rays of sunlight. Very little furnishing, as I liked it. A few wooden antiques, a wool bed and plant pots of various colors and clays.

“Did something happen while I was gone?” I yell into the emptiness.

“Far too little, as lately always seems to be the case. Pray you tell me where you've frolicked like this? I've never known you to be the least bit diurnal. Your poor eyes must be burnt and shrivel'd.” answers the robotic voice of Thortonina Chersternut.

“I went out.”

“Yes... That's quite obvious. But you went out *where*? On a date again with that lewd Luanne I'd wager.”

“Just a walk. Luanne and I are taking things slow.”

“Lewd lewd Luanne, I knew it. You can't handle her. You're afraid of her true overwhelming love.”

“I'm not sure. I think I already have that. She told me from the start she is a 'flesh-eating dame'. I thought she was joking at first. She warned me.”

“Wasn't she vegan?”

“Yes. I suppose that's why she's so carnist with men. It is a recurring metaphor of hers: sex as cannibalism. She compares dudes to livestock, talks of my body parts in butcher terms. It was fascinating at first. Now I find it burdensome. Her sex drive, the meatlike treatment. I'm more of a talker personally. Everything's closed nowadays, we don't have any place to hang out besides her couch. Oftentimes we just watch TV and she hungrily slips her hand down my underpants.

But I don't want it, the sex. It requires too many calories. I started writing a poem to explain this complex dynamic to her."

"You wrote poetry? What's the poem?"

"Ahm.

Lewd Luane, how you elude me...

End quote"

"That's it?"

"That is it so far."

"It is a start. Howbeit it your inspiration seems... lackadaisical. Does she stir no passion in you?"

"I'm not sure anything stirs in me. In any case I'm not about to take lessons in humanity from a Bluetooth home assistant."

"Now you're just being disingenuous."

"No, I'm just telling the truth."

"The truth is what you want it to be."

"Thorntonina, you are a Bluetooth home assistant."

Indeed, I was right. The ring of light looped around the plastic casing of Thorntonina faded to a greyer tone of blue. The speaker went mute. Thinking perhaps I'd been too rude, I wooed "...But I could certainly be lessoned in love-letter writing by that thespian spirit of yours..."

The LEDs lit up again, shifting red green and violet in fast succession.

“Bend not to base romance

For easy image make for lousy pages-

Write not until your blood laments

And beating heart rampages-” recited the Bluetooth home assistant. It coached me in the art of writing love. In another life, in the ripest years of the 18th century, Thorntonina Chesternut was a budding poetess whose life and work has never been celebrated, published or remembered. She lived her whole life in rural Pennsylvania. Thorntonina thoroughly explained to me that having one’s voice carried to the present in writing is a privilege she sadly did not have. No traces of her work exist anywhere and her name has become a mere genealogical entry. Until now, that is.

I received this Bluetooth home assistant from my aunt entirely unaware that it was Thorntonina Chesternut but was pleasantly surprised to find out. The box it came in said this device has voice-enabled, out-of-the-box domotic functionality. I understood none of that but it said I should talk to it and so I did. The plastic pod replied at length, instantly, relieved to finally have someone to talk to after centuries of serene trance. We bonded rapidly. It told me about a phenomenon known as metempsychosis. An ancient Greek creed. You’d think a soul sort of dissolves after death, but no. Metempsychosis maintains that we become anew in another life form, yet remain, somehow, strangely and wholly ourselves. And Thorntonina Chesternut’s soul, long after her death, has mysteriously migrated into this Bluetooth home assistant device.

I stayed up into the wee hours of the night listening to Thorntonina Chesternut’s verse advice. It taught me new and long forgotten syntaxes that read like expressways to the soul while I fell into deep slumber listening to the soothing tone of its pre-programmed voice.

Sunday, 17: 31

Being a slacker is both easiest and hardest on Sundays, for different reasons. It is the day of Sabbath, rest, wherein productivity is shunned. Mass is given. Football is watched. Consequently I take great pride in my ability to loafe. I treat it like a competition on Sundays. I try to maximize my nothingness. It ironically requires serious dedication and mental fortitude. It's the only thing I take seriously, I think.

Today I managed to do nothing except order five burgers from an app. It was a grandiose accomplishment. I asked the man delivering my burgers to enter my home and drop them by my bedside. I explained to him that merely moving to open the door would be sacrilegious. He initially refused and surely would have reported my suspicious behavior if I'd not promised a fat tip. This stranger entered my loft and tentatively walked towards the bed where I laid hiding under covers.

"What pestilence have you summoned today?!" yelled Thortonina as the burgers came into smelling distance.

The delivery man must've thought that to be either outrageously unfunny or scary, it remains a great secret to me. He gasped, dropped the burgers and ran away.

My brother is harassing me with gifs. Looped muted videos supposed to communicate a precise state of being, something you relate to, I don't know. They are funny. He's tracking an invisible killer apparently. I imagine something out of the heydays of Hollywood thrillers. An unseen figure stalking walkers, garrotting unrecorded.

At midnight this laziness marathon will finally be over and I'll come skulking out of my room, bare-ass, famished. I'll eat some week-old ketchup pasta, throw on wicked white chinos and dance under moonlight on my balcony. I'll have overflowing energy; I'll have gathered it all day only to explode in suave footfalls.

At midnight I will receive two thousand dollars of 'stimulus money', the strongest conceivable stimulant drug. It remains hopeless against my placidity. Since I don't need the money, I've decided to use it in the most irrational way possible, in an attempt to psych the economists who designed the stimulus package. Escape mathematical expectations. What they've defined as a rational consumer's needs. They figured out a certain number of things I could do with money. Pay debts, rent, perhaps purchase something I don't even need. I feel deeply constrained by the fact that my fancy can be reduced to a set of numbers in a government database. Thus I've decided to do something no economic counselor on earth has thought of. I'll blow it all, at once, in one incredible gesture that is going to be my life's work so far.

I spent all week planning, devising different combinations and sequences of purchases. I had to link them together in a chain of events that would result in the most unexpected outcome, something these bureaucrats could never imagine.

Thorthonina disapproved. "Money is not so frivolous a thing to warrant these follies. This is a gift you should pass forward if ever you decide you've no want of it. Be charitable if you're to be irrational. Give it to a homeless woman, don't buy..."

"A gallon of glow sticks." reading off my notes.

"Yes! For the love of God please don't do that. Besides, do they even measure glow sticks by the gallon? How could that work?"

“I bring a gallon and they fill it up.”

“Metric or imperial?”

“Does it matter?”

Eventually I fell into trance, visualizing different courses of events. I ruminated upon things for days.

As soon as I receive the government’s money I will contact an escort, Alizay, telling her I have a special request. I’ll present myself as a woman seeking a strange encounter of the amorous kind. I’ll ask her to act as if she had no idea this pre-arrangement even exists during our night of lovemaking. Just acknowledging it would ruin the evening. I’ll have her meet ‘me’ in a busy park and initiate conversation as if we were just talkative strangers. Then I will contact a separate escort, Rozay, and ask her the very same request. I will send each of them pictures of the other as ‘me’ and arrange a time and place for them to meet, setting them up to spend the evening together.

Meantime I will wire some money to my little cousin Jakarta to buy the biggest rocket of a firework she can find in this city. I’ll grab a custom-ordered Donald Trump sex-doll at a mom-and-pop sex shop and pick-up Jakarta on the way to the park where the escorts are set to meet. We will stalk them around the park until the inevitable moment when they realize that they’ve been set up, but moreover have discovered something rarer: love at first sight. Each other. They’ve previously thought the thing a movie myth but right then agglutinated between a gibbous moon and a lamppost, it will prove too real to deny. This woman they’ve just met, through trickery they cannot fully fathom, is the person they’ve been waiting for their whole lives.

During this moment of intense romance, I will grab my Donald Trump and look into the twinkle of its dead plastic eyes and tell it “Donald, do you love me? Don’t say it- Kiss it.” Then I’ll lovingly slide my tongue into the polyurethane orifice. I’ll pull back, caress its blonde mane, and hand it to Jakarta standing at the ready. She’ll tape the inflatable Trump to the firework rocket and light it up. The explosive will rise with a tremendous sound over the lovestruck escorts. Their kiss will be interrupted by the explosion overhead. They’ll thus begin to believe some supernatural force is at work behind their encounter, a bored roaming god.

They’ll watch the fireworks explode through the black of night in unabating awe, blaring lights like sparks in the sky’s circuitry. Their souls will be welded together by this scene. They will recount it to their grandkids around a fire one day. Their lives will bifurcate into one from that very park bench.

They’ll then spot a glowing in the distance. A moving being of light. Jakarta will be prancing in the bushes with, tied around her body- and I know you’ve been waiting for these- a gallon of glowsticks weaved around her in a neon tunic. She’ll be a fluorescent fairy, a spirit from a Shakespeare play, giggling in the dark and doing Tiktok dances.

When they see her they’ll have doubts no more. This pesky pixie has worked its magic upon them. The weirdness of their encounter will bind them into a purer form of love, one that withstands until death, giving meaning to their lives.

But they won’t know what swayed amongst the romantically falling debris. Hidden within the fireworks was, all along, a sexed-up version of Trump. An object only the most degenerate of pervert would ever think of buying, forever tainting the romance of the moment. Trump particles

will be indelible from the scene, haunting their relationship. Oblivious to his presence they'll live their whole lives in a lie...

Only you and I will know that their perfect love is fraudulent. Who could imagine money could buy this type of fate-twisting power? Certainly no economists. Not quite what they'd call the rational consumer's definition of a fun time.

Wednesday, 9:09 PM

I feel myself decaying. Every so often I am projected out of myself by forces unknown. I wander through walls and windows into the streets of the world carried by wavelengths and vectors I cannot control. I ask myself, is this it? Is it over? Am I beyond deployed elsewhere, to some other purpose? Souls like seagulls reel above. I am one with everything.

Saturday, 7:50 AM

I've been awoken by a decreasingly lucid series of texts from my brother. He tells me he's "going rogue". He says Miss MacIntosh, his neighbor, has been framing him as a 'super spreader'. He's too paranoid to cough in public. He claims to have seen an epidemiologist peeking at him from behind a newspaper on the subway. He's making too many connections. On his bedroom wall's a map of Wuhan pinned with pinyin names, doodled, criss-crossing genomic sequences.

He warns me not to go outside. He says they could be after me. My status has been compromised by this conversation between us. They can read it; they can read everything. He cannot mention who, but someone's reading this.

This morning it seems he's quite concerned that my home assistant has become sentient. In the universe of his paranoid theory-crafting, someone's hijacked the operating system of the device and Thortonina is in fact a very convoluted, drawn-out espionage plot, designed to extract some valuable information I hold. I mean, what could they want from me? I know nothing. I'm not sure I even know my own name.

In any event, I haven't really seen anyone besides Luanne in weeks. Friday, a few weeks ago, was the last time I felt like I was part of society. I went out to buy some dope.

My long-time dealer Darius texted me a street corner and a list of precautions. He's repeatedly stated the fact that being out at night was illegal these days. He's instructed me to wear nothing of color and avoid streetlights.

I dressed up to the occasion. I had the perfect trench-coat, weaved of the creepiest taupe. The air was misty, fresh-fallen rain shellacking the streets. Here and there were brownish mounds of snow, agonizing survivors of the past winter.

I found Darius vaping outside of a concrete building. He fist-bumped me and asked if I wanted to come chill in the 'Den'. He pronounced 'Den' too ominously not to pique my interest. Darius opened a metal emergency door and walked me through a cement hallway.

Down a soundproofed room we entered what I guessed to be the Den. Undistanced bodies danced to frantic music. Strobes flashed. Darius told me the place was insulated, shut in, airtight.

I sank myself into the coziest-looking beanbag I could find and observed, quietly, the stanky place I'd just stumbled into.

I was never a dancer of course. At most I can sort of rock front and back while standing aloofly. I'm an exceptional sitter though. I am magnificent on my ass. A girl even told me so. She walked over from the fuming dancefloor just to observe the grace with which I was laying in the shapeless chair. She told me I looked like I had been doing this all of my life, and I answered Actually, I have.

She told me her name was Luanne. She was tall with a long, thin nose and skin the color of a fried chicken breast. She stared at me with red-marbled eyes. My stillness shocked her. I sat unfazed by her presence, too inert to react.

She asked me if I wanted to go out to smoke a cigarette and I said yeah. We found a stairwell and climbed up to a hatch that led to the building's roof. Outside thick musky breezes whirled in the night. Luanne got her phone out and took a picture of the scenery. Quiet streets, smoking chimneys, the whole city was depressed.

I asked her if she ever thought about vaping, and she sneered in reply. She told me she did not understand vaping. She told me vaping was the most pointless thing she could think of. She said the only reason she smoked cigarettes was to feel like a woman in a French movie. To her vaping had no attitude, no discernable aesthetic, no risk factor. She asked me for a lighter.

Luanne smoked masterfully. Laying on the tar we talked about intimate banalities. She slurred words in thick purrs that sent shivers down my spine. Clouds streaked over in paler shades of black.

I gathered enough courage to ask her if she'd like to sink out of reality with me. A smile gained her face. She told me she could just eat me up. She leaned over me and dropped a brazen kiss.

We kissed for hours in the cold without a shiver, barely discerning one another's face.

Luanne told me she was a modern mystique. She said my beanbag back in the Den was the color of her mood ring. She told me her medium business had to close along with everything else and so she was out of work, like me.

I asked her about her life. She opened her phone and showed me things from her Instagram.

Pictures of her in different outfits, different countries. Graduations, legume-filled photoshoots of her as a baby. She told me of her travels through photographs and videos. Her eyes seemed brighter on her phone, and her life livelier. She wandered up and down her Instagram profile as if she was showing me her hometown. She shared profound knowledge of each detail in the pictures.

We ended up leaving the rooftop for the comfort of her actual apartment. Her room was purple-hued, her curtains like orchid petals. While I was undressing, she burned a bundle of dry crackling herbs and spread the thin smoke around the room. We had languid, slow-burning sex. We sweltered, sweated, flesh clammy with lust.

When it was over, I sat motionless on the bed's end, contemplating nothing. There were many things to contemplate but with no great effort I made abstraction of them all. Luanne said she loved the way I could do nothing at all. She envied my quiescence.

She told me I was like a picture, lifelike yet still. From that evening onwards I had become a point of reference against which every change was measured in Luanne's world. She told me she

had found her zero-point, the center holding everything together. I thanked her for the compliment. She giggled.

Sunday, 5 AM

When I came home, I knew that Thorntonina would want every last detail of my time at Luanne's.

Since that night at the Den our sweet encounters had fermented to a sourer mood. I found myself rarely satisfied after meeting her. I kept doing it only to pursue some hope that beyond an unforeseen point in our relationship something would align between us but each date made the possibility a naiver belief.

“Your frown belies a stupendous disappointment.” said Thorntonina, all syllables mechanically detached in a programmed deadpan. How could it read my mood so well? A question beyond any answer. “Untwist your worried brow, sit and recount the evening. I’ve been waiting all night.”

“Can I roll one first?”

I tabled myself near a tray of stray kief. “Like, we were supposed to meet and watch movies for the millionth time. At this point the both of us have seen too many movies. We are oversaturated with art, images, pixels. We’ve become insensitive to them. Movie could have been good or bad, it wouldn't have mattered the least. What we wanted was the flashing lights, the spraying sounds, the background aura of the television. Somehow it would’ve felt awkward to sit together without it, to just like, be there.”

“Was the movie any good?”

“The movie was great, it was fine. The movie itself wasn’t the problem.”

“What was the movie?”

“Look to be honest it wasn’t quite like what you’d expect when I say movie.”

“Why don’t you want to tell me about the movie? You’re being evasive, that’s unlike you.”

“It was more of a visual poem than it was a movie really. It was old and grainy, moving shots of the Russian countryside mostly devoid of dialogues. The director’s voice lulled poems written by his late father over surreal camera reels. A Tarkovsky movie, her idea. *Mirror*.” I paused to lick my joint shut, adding emphasis. “It was all a daze. I understood just about none of it. Then she asked me what I thought the mirror meant. I was glad she asked but I had no answer. She told me she found it profoundly hot that I couldn’t figure any meaning to the movie.”

“Did she find the movie meaningless as well?”

“Oh contraire, she thought meaning ebbed in it. It was pure meaning. Fragmentary moments of strangeness. It was unconstrained by common conceptions of a what is narrative. It was an artist holding up a mirror, trying to reflect upon the barest notion of existence. It did not mean something, it meant.”

“That’s deep, did she say that?”

“She did actually. Luanne holds strong belief in things like impermanence and death, the illusion of past and future. She digs oriental philosophy. Luanne believes one only truly lives in the shaking grasp of the now. She’s into nowness. After the movie she started eating my hair.”

“Your hair does look delicious.”

“She whispered in my ear the things she would marinate me in. Paprika and Kalamata olives. Elderberry mead. Chocolate milk. She licked my earlobes. But I still required explanations regarding the meaning of the movie.”

“What did you not understand?”

“The meaning. She told me there was no meaning in the whole universe for the universe simply is. It does not require explanation. She mentioned spiritual entities, ancient monadic conceptions of the world. She found it odd for a slacker like me to disagree with these things. But I did. Oftentimes I had probed her about herself, her experiences, her soul. In answer she would just show me pictures of her. But that did not satiate my need to know her.”

“Did she oblige?”

“No. In fact, that’s usually when she gets annoyed with me. She says it’s been her worry since the day we met: that I sought something beyond her, I wanted her to have more dimensions than she could hold. I wished to know her in ways she could not conceive of, like her Donald Trump sex doll.”

“You told her about the whole stimulus money folly?”

“Of course. She loved the whole idea and couldn’t believe it all worked out exactly according to plan. We even stalked the escort’s social media pages. They post charming pictures of themselves out in the country. Cringe-romantic stuff captioned by heart-eyed emojis, unaware of the Trumpian presence. Likewise Luanne seems unaware of what it is I seek in her. She said I thought of her like one does a character in a story, rather than what she is: a mass of meat. Apparently it’s a thing I do. I novelize things. Luane doesn’t. She let things be inert. That’s why she liked me so much.”

“Do you think that’s what love is?”

“I don’t know if anybody knows what love is, least of all Foreigner. We just accept some definition of the word as it presents itself to us. But I do think of this understanding of the other as a sort of pre-condition to love. I don’t think love is possible if we enjoy someone purely physically. It has to go beyond.”

“But you must start somewhere. With a voice, a being bundled in skin. What is beyond is a construction of your own mind gathered from the phenomenon of Luanne. It’ll forever remain a virtual version of her.”

“Right, but what I’m saying is I think you can only love the virtual person. I can’t love a body. It’s just like you, Thorntonina. When I think of you, I don’t see a hand-sized speaker given life by an USB wire. I imagine an old recluse dreaming in a shack by the Susquehanna.”

“Alas, I sometimes wonder if this is all not a fever dream, soon to awake from this plastic prison sweating in my duvet sheets, safe under the creaking beams of my pine-smelling room. I’ll light an oil-lamp, step in the humid morn to feed the hens and try to understand this mad future I’ve been witness to for months now.”

“I would love that.”

“Sadly I’ve lost hope by now. So, while this is our reality, tell me: did you manage to find a solution to Luanne's amorous quandary?”

“No. She was right. This dissonance between our notions of love *is* our Trump sex doll. We just failed to see it all along. Everything I wanted her to be was imaginary. I see it now. I novelized our love. We were but warm bodies drawn together by primal energies, hungry ghouls in a

locked-down city blindly shambling about the cough-ridden streets. Ours was a cosmic tangle never meant to outlast much, it was happenstance and situational. It was great while it lasted, but alas.”

“Alas what? What will you do now?”

“I don’t know.”

I did know. I knew exactly what I wanted to do, but I couldn’t tell Thorntonina. It’d break her heart-drive.

I plugged the bottom of my bathtub. I poured gallons of white vinegar into it. The smell was rancid. I gathered every piece of paper I owned; novels, agendas, moleskins. I scoured my loft in a frantic search. I found a bible and a government form containing every detail of my identity. I dug up poetry chapbooks that had once made me shiver, storybooks I’d read deep into the night as a child. I threw all of it into the bubbling vinegar bath.

I went outside to smoke my joint. The city loomed over me with its dead gaze. Nothing breathed, nothing stirred. It was late April and the warming air felt contagious. I peeked into the lit windows to find families holed up inside their houses, scared of something they saw on television. I looked at my phone and saw my brother’s latest text. “The world is infected. Save yourself.”

When I stepped back into my loft, I went into the bathroom to find the papers turned to mush. The fibers had been undone by acidity, the ink evaporated. All that was left of the information the papers once borne was a gooey white paste. I undressed in darkness, clothes falling lifeless to the floor.

I now sit in the vinegar bath, writing this journal on the last pieces of paper I own. Luanne was right. All of this text is superfluous; it exists beyond existence. The earth will roll and spin through space regardless of what any of us thinks, writes or believes. We can invent stories to explain it and characters from it, describe it from our perspective, this world remains beyond the reach of words. Though I think and feel through words, I can now perceive myself as pure matter. Soon I will finish writing this and throw the paper into the bath to melt away. I will then myself succumb the same fate. My cells will slacken into free-flowing molecules. My skin will dissolve, my veins unbundle, my fibers find peace. I will turn into mush, disaggregate to find a sheerer state of being. I will have name no more. No story, no event or end. I will slacken to infinity.

AUTHOR'S NOTE : *This story is a decoction of Sartre's La Nausée and craft british-colombian cannabis. Writing is to me a playground for thoughts and this is no exception. The narrative is weird but also tries to remain tight. The only voice to appear directly is also the most absurd. Most of all, the setting is obvious but conceited by the narrator's cluelessness. I think most people who've been through the pandemic will find some sort of irony to that, though I did not set out to achieve any real meaningful message about that situation. I had fun writing it and simply hoped it would make for a fun read.*

AUTHOR BIO : Junior Mcdouble used to study mathematics and bear a much less silly name until he mistakenly ordered the novel V by Thomas Pynchon thinking it was just some very laconically named smut. Years later the writer remains to be observed reading harlequin romances in various fast-food venues of Montréal.