

Finger Cuts

By: Brandon Cavazos

These are the writings of a descendant of the Thirteen, whose bloodline has been commanded to love, to abide, and to exalt not themselves against Him, lest they be utterly destroyed.

For the title of **“Aequatio 9.5 Fides,”** a remembrance must be born. For the compressed rage that has churned long enough be released, the weight of their choice—even nature cannot balance.

May the grievances of mankind be cried out in dreams, for the sons of man to be saved in the world without entrance. These are the mysteries before ascension. The true interceder revealed.

This is a content warning for all who are gifted with sensitivity.

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My Dearest Calvin,

Odd thing, isn't it?

As I gaze upon the intricate grooves and ridges of my fingertips, a thought is provoked—a reflection on the profound uniqueness that defines each individual. From our distinctive fingerprints to the depths of our very eyes, we are bound together by the tapestry of our shared humanity, yet simultaneously propelled forward by the complexities of our individual perspectives and sociological hierarchies. In this timeline of existence, I witness a disheartening trend—the waning prevalence of internal awareness. It seems that the pursuit of external validation and material gain has overshadowed the intrinsic worth of introspection and self-discovery. Expressions have become defaced, infected by dogmatic ideologies, and our younger generation craves the acquisition of abstract and even absurd art, seeking solace in the intangible.

This begs the question: are we inherently a species meant to cooperate, or are we destined for disintegration at the slightest provocation? What, then, is the elusive concept of truth? Is it a living, breathing construct shaped by the amalgamation of recycled perspectives, advocating societal progress and the preservation of our species? Perhaps we need not dissect the essence of life itself, but rather find ways to cultivate habits that allow us to flourish unnoticed until our inevitable journey's end. Yet, some dare to ask: what is wisdom? Is it the mere act of contemplating experiences we will never encounter? Or does true wisdom emerge from the ongoing journey, unveiling enigmatic mysteries that were once brushed aside like the rake of lover's nails on flesh, leaving behind an indelible mark of existence—a testament to our intellectual prowess?

As we bleed with these profound inquiries, we confront the inherent paradox of responsibility. The hubris of claiming responsibility, knowing that one day we may see ourselves as gods, demands introspection and careful consideration. Shall we keep such blasphemy concealed or unabashedly proclaim our audacious aspirations?

In your quest for originality, may your journey be as unique as the setting sun, captivating the onlookers throughout the annals of our collective understanding. I pray that you discover your purpose, even if it means facing the constraints of rhymes that may stifle your expression, and the awareness of your existence as a vessel that could potentially lead to your downfall. With every word that escapes your lips, may it cause ears to wiggle, resonating with the world around you. Like a modern-day Vincent, may you find liberation and freedom in the pursuit of your artistic truth. Like a modern-day Nero, may you uncover the twisted allure and deceptive truths in the depths of your artistic expression, fueled by a simmering disdain for the world you tread upon.

Oh, Calvin Woods, what have they done to you?

Love,

Your rising little one

Part I

Chapter***

My name is Calvin Woods, and within the vast expanse of my existence, I stand at the epicenter of an ethereal spectrum, where the convergence of two opposing forces is my abode. It is here, at the delicate balance between the realms of good and evil, that I find myself caught in an eternal struggle within my own mind. A profound choice looms before me, a choice that will determine the very course of my existence. Shall I yield to the seductive whispers of my ego, surrendering my soul in pursuit of elusive truths only perceptible to my eyes? Or shall I release the shackles that bind my spirit, embracing the humility of a seeker who walks the path of authenticity? It is a deal waiting to be struck, where logos withers, the ego rises, and the pathos retreats, concealed and elusive.

In the tapestry of my life, three certainties have woven themselves: luck has taken undue advantage of me, reciprocating its favors with exploitation; the distant wails of passing trains have served as a stark reminder of the transience of existence, their tracks etching their way into my consciousness; and the undeniable knowledge that the world, in all its splendor, will meet its cataclysmic end within the span of my own lifetime. In that moment of doom, I shall stand as the arbiter of its descent.

Amidst the tumultuous echoes of fate, there is a piercing shriek that heralds the nocturnal rituals of your species. It reminds me that another night shall pass, while I, with unwavering determination, resist succumbing to the slumber of the moon's ethereal strings. I gaze upon you, majestic creature, and witness the intricate fibers of your wings flutter in silence. We are bound by an unseen kinship, as I listen to your presence, and you, in turn, listen to mine. Positioned linearly, you swoop down to seize your advantage, while I, blinded by the solitary gleam of the street, observe your perch, hidden within the luminosity. An aurora envelopes you, an unseen pendant, a vigilant observer and risk-taker. Your keen senses detect the slightest stirrings of insecurity, attuned to the subtle dance of anticipation. The future remains veiled, forever unknown. As a hunter of life's truths, you follow the primal laws of sustenance. I, too, am a watcher, a scout in this enigmatic realm. When the threads of strange connections intertwine like flickering flames, casting their shadows upon the walls that enclose me, I yearn for detachment, an escape from the burdens of existence. Aligned with the witching hours, I embark on a nocturnal journey, where the hunters and the hunted engage in their timeless dance. It is a ritual that holds me captive, as I become anointed by your presence—a silent, impartial deity, witnessing the mastery of a hunter.

In the depths of my being, I bear the certitude that the world's end is imminent, while my consciousness is ensconced beneath the pillow of slumber. And yet, I find myself standing upon these railroad tracks, an embodiment of resilience. I am no helpless captive, but a figure of awareness, defying the whims of destiny. In this moment, I choose to contemplate my desires rather than succumb to their whims, for losing oneself is a perilous game played in reverse. Like a hospitable host, my moral compass allows the opposing forces to pass through me, an unyielding conduit. And so, I collide with the oncoming train, the panoramic view of my world shattering before my eyes. With my head severed atop the train's horn, my mouth contorts open, revealing peeled-back eyes that emit a rattling sound—a defiant proclamation against the forces that seek dominion over my existence.

In the labyrinth of uncertainties and elusive truths, I, Calvin Woods, stand at the precipice of oblivion. Forgotten melodies echo through the corridors of my fragmented memories, as I strain to recollect the beat of a long-lost heart. Your name, once etched upon the canvas of my mind, now dissolves like smoke in the wind. Did you truly exist, or were you merely an ephemeral specter, conjured by the recesses of my longing? The weight of your absence is a haunting ache, gnawing at the depths of my soul. In this realm of vanishing echoes, I wander, a solitary figure yearning to grasp the intangible threads that bind my existence. The dance of forgotten faces plays before my eyes, mirages shimmering in the desert of my recollection. Reality blurs and merges with fiction, and I am left questioning the very fabric of my being. It is a relentless pursuit of self-discovery, a quest to reclaim what was lost, and to unearth the buried fragments of my identity. In this boundless enigma, I am both the seeker and the sought, yearning for solace amidst the fading embers of remembrance. Maybe I'm just curious.

I question the mere existence, for words alone do not grant reality its shape. What mechanism have I forged to march each day as an invincible soul amidst the mundane? What restrains me from saying, 'I know the path it treads, and it shall pass through me, leaving me unchanged'? I have ceased my flight, I swear. In this nexus of uncertainties and revelations, I, Calvin Woods, find my dwelling. An expanse of limitless possibilities unfurls, enticing me to forge my destiny. I unite with the essence of a bygone era, marrying moods and spirits that shall sculpt my evolution. And in the symphony of life's encounters, I recall the face that mirrored my gaze—the first visage I beheld, when eyes met eyes. Your olive-moon-kissed skin, an enchantment that binds us. I cast a spell upon you, and we shall not be lonely, even in solitude's embrace. Together, we shall crucify the mind, transcending the bounds of ordinary time. We're safe in our ark, no need to worry about where we belong. The places we used to go, just imagine that, all that I dreamt. Share with me what you discovered, and let me understand how it's precisely enough. In our sacred haven, haze engulfs, dissolving worries into ephemeral wisps. Dreams and reality entwine, revealing treasures untold. A dance of enchantment awaits, where our souls harmonize. Embrace the ethereal serenity, my seen. Maybe I'm Just curious, for once in my life.

And then I had this dream.

I'd dreamt it before. As I fell into bed once again, closing my eyes, I am met in the halfway house. The house resembles a log cabin, isolated by dark green trees, and a dense fog that envelops it like an amoeba, consuming anything that stands between the door of the cabin and the outside world, whatever that may be. I could hear the fire crackling and feel the warmth it radiated, as well as the kettle on the burner whistling. In this halfway house, I stuck to a simple routine consisting of helping myself to some tea, grabbing a crochet blanket patterned with various eyes with thought bubbles that read, 'You won't see when,' not knowing who was its maker, paying little to no attention to it, for it was the comfiest in the cabin. And lastly, grabbing one of the books on the shelf of the library, novels and assorted volumes, even some dressed in cobwebs and dust. I picked up where I left off, cherishing the words as they unfolded before me. 'To be able to see and read,' I would say to myself quite often in the cabin.

It was a story about a young girl with glasses who ventured outside her apartment. And with these glasses, she was invisible to everyone around her, and everyone around her was invisible to her. It

contradicted itself in a way, as she bumped into random figures and individuals who would get hit with an invisible force in the outside world, unaware. I couldn't quite wrap my head around the concept or the meaning of the next book I picked up; its title was blank, as I retrieved it from the floor. Opening it and skimming through the pages, I found all pages blank, except for one chapter. Though it was comprised of other chapters that were filled with blank pages until the very last page, it had a terse text that read, 'They won't hear when.' I shut the book and immediately drank my tea. I wanted out of the halfway house, until I heard a knock at the door.

The windows were all fogged up, and the door had no peephole. I trusted my gut that whatever it was that was out there sought me as I sought leaving. I opened the door and saw no one, thinking, 'Must've been really dense wind.' As I was closing the door, I caught sight of a weird illuminating light. I blinked my eyes, and it was gone. I looked down at my feet, and a rising impulse compelled me to do so. There, I saw a fishing hook along with a line lying at my feet. I bent down to pick it up, and with a force, I was yanked from the cabin.

I awoke on my bed to the sight of darkness. My alarm vibrating could be felt, as I tried to reach and grab it from its previous location. With my already prepared clothes displayed on the bedside from the night before, I didn't need much action in the morning. I followed the deep-imprinted trail markings on the floor, guiding me to the bathroom. I used my hands a lot to figure out which item was which before my morning muscle memory awoke from within. I grabbed some slices of bread left on the counter and some jam that sat beside it. Using my hands to spread each layer onto the sandwich, I took bites and thoroughly washed my hands. Grabbing my white cane, I set forth outside the apartment. The only thing I could hear was the earth eerily churning loudly from within. I went to ask one of the neighbors nearby if they felt something was off. Grabbing her attention, I signed, 'Hear that?' My neighbor handed me a telephone that spoke as I put it to my ear, 'We won't hear when, you won't see when.'"

I woke up on the plane after it landed, the last one out, struggling with my backpack caught on the seat. I exit immediately, my ticket to ride is here.

Quiet discomforts tremble in my head, creating ripples at incalculable heights. Contemplating what we have brought into existence, I find myself reflecting on the journey. Alone, I crafted this masterpiece from scratch during my youth, nurturing it year after year. This is my golden ticket, my meticulously devised plan for the future. Unbeknownst to my subconscious tendencies, I charted a course with rudimentary designs, preparing for my older self. Names and titles become blurry, clocks seem broken, and there are remnants of forgotten pieces. Yet, the essential ones were stripped away and rebuilt, breathing life into a new creation. Forgiveness eludes my understanding, remaining silent in its meaning. Experiences hold little weight, fading into oblivion once forgotten. I ponder the depths of personal significance, grasping at the intangible threads of feeling. Have I analyzed and dissected too many times, losing sight of the true path this course charts? I attempt to embrace a dream-induced indeterministic approach, hoping it will guide me like a collapsing star, illuminating the way for my universe. But not like this, not in a predictable manner, for meticulous planning would only shatter my being. I observe everyone, devoid of a particular role, devoid of hunger, devoid of impact. Yet, I have

birthed chaos into existence. In this state, I am ready to embark, accessible to the unknown. Have I stolen? Have I created? Have I deviated? I know not what lies ahead, but surprise me without purpose. Surprise me as if it were the first time. Surprise me as I surprise others. Quiet discomforts tremble in my head, questioning the novelty of what remains.

What is truly new anymore?

My attention span began to wane, stifled by the monotony of my surroundings. I skimmed through and circled around the sign that had initially captivated me, believing it to be the ultimate destination—a gateway of sorts that would grant me access to an extraordinary realm. I yearned for a swirling vortex, a visual spectacle that would exert its gravitational pull and draw me in. "Why would it not be aware of my intentions? Open up, reveal yourself!" I pleaded; my gaze fixed upon it with intensity. However, my fervent hopes were met with disappointment as a mere minor static shock resonated within the confines of my skull.

"Surely, this is an attraction," I murmured to myself, attempting to salvage a semblance of wonder from the situation. The absence of any locals around me hinted at the possibility that this place was nothing more than an elaborate Hollywood set, where history may have been fabricated for entertainment purposes. I pondered, questioning whether my presence here was truly unique or if others had come before me, stepping into this illusionary stage.

Seated in contemplation, I wondered if my quest was merely a well-trodden path, a common occurrence for those who sought what lay beyond the surface. The mysteries of this place seemed to beckon, yet I couldn't help but ponder if I was just another traveler in a long line of seekers.

Harnessing my innate instincts, I wisely refrained from disturbing the hostile terrain that lay before me. Instead, I sought solace on the unforgiving grounds and shelter beneath the only tree that generously offered its shade. Positioning myself underneath its protective canopy, I opened my backpack, unzipping one of its compartments, allowing the humid air to breathe life into the enclosed space. To my dismay, an unpleasant odor wafted out—a pungent reminder of an old, forgotten tuna sandwich. I involuntarily gagged, dry heaving twice before swiftly discarding the rotten remnants to my left.

My stomach growled in protest, its hunger demanding attention. I reached into another compartment, hoping to find something edible amidst the provisions. To my relief, my hand grasped a slightly bruised apple. "This will have to suffice," I muttered to myself, determined to satiate my gnawing hunger. I bit into the apple, relishing the satisfying crunch of its firm flesh before reaching its seed-filled core, which I consumed whole, leaving only the stem. With a flick of my fingers, I sent the discarded stem flying to my right. As I glanced to my left, a peculiar sight caught my eye. There, sunbathing in all its glory, was an object that seemed misplaced in this rugged landscape. It appeared to be auditioning for a

role, yet was unanimously voted as "not a delight," not even fit for the jaws of movie props to gnaw upon.

In the town of Clarksdale, Mississippi, a congenial aroma filled the air, accompanied by the melodious chimes that resonated throughout the streets. This small town was steeped in history, particularly known for its deep connection to the blues. It was here that I discovered the blues to be the only genre of music that truly resonated with my soul, though I appreciated orchestral compositions as well. While I possessed no musical expertise or knowledge, a profound fascination with a long-past ritual beckoned me, igniting an ornate inclination that I could not resist. It felt like my sole calling.

With a determined mind's eye, I rose from my position and marched once more, navigating the winding path around a merry-go-round adorned with three baby blue guitars. These guitars seemed to dance; their necks stretched out in a synchronized display. Etched beneath them were the route numbers "61, 49," and just below, a white sign adorned with baby blue letters that simply read, "The CROSSROADS." Squinting my eyes, I adjusted my vision, attempting to align the enigmatic symbol with the sun's rays at various angles. The intense sunlight pierced my skin, highlighting my struggle to adapt to the unfamiliar atmosphere. However, I remained steadfast, refusing to yield. I was here for answers.

Marching around the circular pathway proved futile, as no discernible clues clung to my sight. Lost in thought, I contemplated numerous things before returning to sit beneath the tree once more. A peculiar desire took hold of me—I longed to be struck down, as if my intention was not severe enough for the epiphany I sought. I thought about my mother, about the complexities of our relationship. I thought about the bastard, the cat whom caressed me with nature's affection. And for some inexplicable reason, I couldn't escape the haunting image of that girl, a stain that lingered in my mind. I had never had the opportunity to ask her for her true name, yet she had left an indelible mark on my soul. It had been years since the tear that shattered our creation, an unforgettable nightmare of a happening. I shivered and stretched my arms, feeling beads of sweat cascading down my skin, tracing a highway along the curve of my shoulders, eager to reach the concealed realms beneath my shirt, embarking on their own odyssey of moisture. A longing tugged within me, urging me to cast aside the constricting embrace of my leathers, yearning to feel the gritty texture of the rubble beneath my skin. Yet, I was acutely aware that with their departure, my purpose in this place would dissipate, leaving me as a mere observer, watching as the crimson ravens perched upon the suffocating laces, eventually surrendering to the freedom of open air.

My mouth elongated, freeing itself from the water deprived spit webs that had once silenced my words, leaving no traces of their suffocating grip. Instead, a sigh of unrequited air escaped my lips, a gasp that mirrored the longing within me. I shook my head, a gesture of disappointment as my brows furrowed and my eyes crinkled, feeling the sting of missed opportunity in that very moment. With a weary yet focused gaze, I savored the bitter taste of disappointment, recognizing it as a peculiar nourishment. Its whispered message stayed within me, reaching the depths of my being.

"This isn't the place, not here, at least not in this exact spot," it declared.