

# Cannibal X

“Hello?” Happiness was fleeting.

“Who are you talking to?” She asked so softly.

“To whoever or whatever’s up there, out there, or wherever It is.” I pointed at the stars and reached for her hand.

“Come here, my little astronaut.” Air brought me back to Earth.

“Do you want to go to Blue Lake with me tomorrow?” Air asked as she chewed on a stick.

“Blue?” I thought for some strange reason.

“What else to do but with you?” I deftly replied as thoughts of colors spun about my head, bouncing off images of water and reflecting in the sky.

And what a death of a good time we would have at Blue Lake, half naked on the rocks that lined the banks of the deep, cool, mountain pools of water. I took along a pouch full of smot to sit beside the streams and watch the rainfall.

“Get the fish out.” I requested the sweet-leafed herb.

“Here.” Air was deaf.

“No, not that, this.” I returned the sandwiches and found the sticky flower I sought to inhale. We sat and smoked for a while. Air fed us each puffs of severance and I nibbled on a stem. How we came to be at this place I could not recall but anxiously, I felt that we should leave... I wet my head with water.

The sky was a blue room filled with walls of clinging, white cotton clusters. I looked around at the trees, then down at the warm rocks, which I stood upon... “Where is she?” I thought of Air.

“Don’t panic,” I told myself as the Drum began to beat inside. “Calm... deep breaths...

r...e...l...a...x...” And so it went every time.

“Canib, what are you doing?” She was right behind me.

“What’s wrong?” Air persisted upon lengthening her stare.

“Oh...nothing.” I was calm again. All I needed was to hear her voice and it soothingly brought my mind back to Blue Lake, where I was quite sure we were. The initial loss of control, the weightless absence of memory I sought was gaining consciousness. It was in this world that euphoria dwelled, and normal patterns of thinking became obsolete. Memories were of neither substance nor value. Life was no longer a sober void, haunted by things I sought to forget.

“Are your friends coming up later.” She was a curious creature.

“Those fucking weird bastards aren’t my friends.” I was unsure of who she spoke?

“Ogdoad and Rana?” She was confused.

“Oh...them. Yeah, what about them?” I forgot the question. “What was it you asked me again, ‘Did she ask me something?’” I faced an early death.

"I can't remember," Air spoke beautifully now.

"I don't know either." I offered as the drug took effect.

"I wish we had a canoe." Air daydreamed aloud.

"No problem. I'll just go gnaw down one of those trees with my teeth, chop the fucker up with the saw I don't have, and..." I sarcastically rambled.

"Hurry up then." She waited and would continue to wait.

"Hurry what?" I was staring at the trees this time.

"I'm waiting for you to build me a canoe." She flirted with my sanity.

One would think that since we were all the way out in the middle of nowhere, we would want nothing. Of course, we could have been at home in Smog -oh what fun! And it would not have mattered. I would have probably said something like, "I wish we were at Blue Lake today," or "I wish I didn't have to work today, oh wait...I don't work today, I never work. Why...? Because I'm a lazy bastard." And then Air would say, "Fuck them" extending her middle finger to the world. "Yes, how death of me to consider working." But the fact was that Air and Canib were in the heart of a utopian forest with pouches full of ambrosial delicacies, and she still wanted more. Though I was not disappointed, I expected these self-indulgent principles at every cost; for, they were what we lived by, -our hypocrisy grows, and life would not be worth its angst-ridden existence had we not these vast, unfulfilled expectations.

"What are you thinking about?" Air said to the blue.

"Nothing." I was caught in the mud.

"I like to watch the way you look at things." She was happy.

"Yeah, I'm fascinated by almost everything when I'm outside..." I defended the privacy of my thoughts, "...especially when I'm gutted to an early death on drugs."

I was addicted, at most, to the separation and departure from myself. I didn't feel that "getting high" was anything more than a joining with reality, not an escape from it. Reality was what I missed. Things we see and experience every day become dull and disillusioning, and what this miraculous healing herb did was make an enchanted woodland out of the dreary streets of indifference. The double standard: a game of give and take? At this moment Air and I had narrowed this pastime down to one of taking, or more to the point, one of insisting upon everything and offering nothing in return.

"Why?" You might ask? Because we deserved it.

My philosophy was an absent-minded one.

"I remember now," Air remembered.

"Yeah, you were asking me about Og and Rana." I completed her memory.

"It's funny, isn't it?" She put her foot in the water.

"What's that?" I had forgotten the question again.

“Memory.” She smiled. “You think it would just fill up someday, but it never does, and I wonder if someday mine will.”

“I think mine has.” I opened my mind. “I think it’s going through a kind of spring cleaning now, emptied, or drained and then filled back again. It’s hard to tell. I just alter my memory as I go.” “Do you think you could ever kill someone?” Air was open-eyed.

“I have.” I joked with the question. Unfortunately, she was serious. “I don’t know, ...why?” Silence hovered in a tranquil sigh.

“How about we go swimming, and if you wish you can drown me and acquire a taste for your murderous impulses.” I was serious...there was no one else I could dream of dying.

“Okay...but not right now. I don’t feel like moving.” She was a slug.

“Hand me the black bag... please.” I was lazy.

“Here.” She handed me the bag. “What do you want out of it, young Darwin?” She mocked my short attention span again as I stared through emptiness into the blue nothing.

“You.” I said and I fed her a fish.

I skipped rocks for a while. The patterns of the stones kept rhythm with the stars hidden behind this mass of blue. The lake was a depth unknown, but I was certain death was the keeper on its floor. Only fish were allowed past the limitations of preternatural pressure and an absence of air and light. Air stood on the bank. I watched her watch me skip the stones.

“I wish I had another plant, but...” I drifted away.

“But what?” She insisted.

“But I don’t want to be accountable for it.” I avoided responsibility. “It would kill me to think that I might have to water, feed, or take care of anything. Who invented this nurture shit anyways?” “Fuck you,” Air said as she waved her middle finger at our tranquil surroundings. “We don’t need you.”

What Air intended to say was, “Nature is a cruel and unyielding force beyond my comprehension.”

But she settled for the discourse of a psychotic philosopher, a journey through the world of a blasphemous feminine dialectic. Myself, Canib, I suffered from manic mass paranoia with acute panic syndrome, a shift in thought from mad to madness, dark to pitch-black, an all-out feeling of gloom and despair scattered with thoughts of euphoria and absolute inner peace. At one moment I thought of how much I loved the rain and Air, while simultaneously I plotted the death of the latter under the cold, wet chilling showers of the prior and afterward, cannibalizing her remains. Sounds sick I know, but that is what an illness involves sickness. People say, “Murderers are psychopaths, -kill them,” or “That man is insane, how could he kill his father?” How could he kill his father? Why, he’s insane!? But then again you don’t hear this madman’s mother when asked how her son is doing say, “Oh, he’s fine. He’s just feeling a little under the weather. He had another little bout of insanity last night, but he’ll be getting over it soon, I think. He’s still loathing a little today, but other than that though...” No,

this was not an ordinary sickness we were dealing with, madness. For certain, it was not to be dealt with as a “sane and reasonable act,” and we would not be “getting over it” anytime soon.

I watched butterflies circle in a meadow. How peaceful they made the world seem. Earth, a placid chunk of terrain with exotic fauna and mind-altering flora, drifting through an empty void of nothing. What worlds lie in the deeper realm of this place they call outer space? I stared at the enlightened caterpillars, morphing my way through infinity when I came to the revolting discovery that the clump of grass the soothing butterflies hovered over was not a clump of grass at all, but a putrefying pile of dung. Anyhow, they were still intriguing to the eye.

The butterflies scattered.

I looked away.

Pith and stem lay abandoned on a wet black stone. The flower petals attached to its end washed away to some far distant place, or did they lie on the lake floor, covered in silt and mud? It is always more convenient to imagine the former, had I but a touch of madness that brought on these shadowy thoughts. I would like at this time to propose, under the occidental horizon that I have come to love- the time of day when the sun hovers behind the Back Hills- had my thoughts been molded of clay, the sculpture would have brought Canib wealth afar. But instead, I set out again to return to Smog, the inhospitable abode. We could not stay out here. Air would most surely be a corpse the next day. She could not handle these temperatures of the “below.” And Ogdoad, that miserable bastard, arrived at dusk. He had brought Rana along.

“What did you bring me, Ogdoad?” I asked, afraid to see what lay behind the paw-like clubs he maintained as human hands.

“Nothing.” He responded, and I knew he had failed.

“Well then, what might that be in your hand my fine young primate?” I taunted his every move.

“I didn’t get the buttons, but I got some shrooms instead.” He said humbly.

“That’s good enough, I suppose,” I reassured him.

What I meant to say, what I had thought when he spoke those words of disappointment, was that he was beyond useless. I had sent him on numerous missions, and he had not broken his relentless pace: he had failed every time.

“Can you freeze smoke?” I thought as I exhaled the death from my lungs and tried to forget my most recent conversation with Og.

Oddly, you can remember things from long ago, things that in the quest for sanity, you try to disremember. Yet the unyielding stride of madness progresses on like an overshadowing, lifethreatening illness. And these dim shadows grow darker night by night. I watch now as they dance about the naked fire, I built to shake off the cold, unable to comprehend their use, to understand their motive -or had I built them myself, these self-destructive memories that spawned within my unconscious. If there was such a land where perception had become a species extinct, it had not been in the realm of my imagination. For it threads a fabric woven of bliss and misery, a cloth without a seam was this life beyond a dream of reality.

Our caravan proceeded to march homeward to Smog later that evening after an exhausting day at Blue Lake. Always were the lightning bugs flickering in the night sky we traveled below. Or were we above, stuck to this flat universe upon which we tread heavily with tiresome footsteps? Or was there an up and down, right and left? It was all relative to something, but thoughts circled now into a swirling pool that left my head spinning. It was then that I heard the words that would forever change this unsure path that wound through time uncharted. We were walking, Air and Canib, and Ogdoad and Rana when the conversation arose - you know, one of those seemingly frivolous heaps of gossip that passed away eternity- that Air had earlier that day when on a mission from her timid male counterpart, who dwelled in solitude away from the appalling aroma of the City of Smog, to purchase supplies for our journey into the land of lakes had encountered the foul swine I have since developed a contempt, a City of Smog policeman.

It is obvious that she had been singled out for her apparent subversive appearance, and the brute commenced to interrogate Air in a most unreasonable and very unnecessary manner. So it is that the conflict began earlier this day when the policeman had harassed and threatened to arrest and confine Air for no other reason than on the suspicion that the cargo she hauled contained a large sum of some unknown substance -perchance a quality surplus of narcotics- nestled within her backpack, which as she knew contained nothing other than a variety of fattening snacks to fulfill this mad, craving appetite that surfaced after the consumption of the mildly hallucinogenic herb we would later ingest. Denying him entry to her precious satchel only provoked more abuse on his part.

In the end, it was the policeman who was the fool. And In retaliation, he abused his authority on the one I loved so dearly. And this is all a saturated mind should absorb.

The conversation went on to some other topic as everyone laughed and swept away the pig. But the storm raged on inside the dim horizon of my mind as I walked with weightless ease under the brooding clouds that sprouted chills from out my skin. It was like a fire in the dry, frail grass of late summer. A flash of lightning burst through an old dead tree, splitting a seared black bough from its stable trunk. Slowly the wind picked up the smoldering thoughts and sparked them into flames, and this fire grew beyond control, and not even the rains of happiness could quench this thirst for revenge as it raged on.

Perhaps I should have eaten the cathartic shrooms offered by my good friend. But I had passed on the umbrella Og held out, which he then ate with ravenous pleasure... As town neared, I swallowed an X, and then a handful, of little blue pills, sedatives, a haven from the coming storm. I hoped to acquire a passive state- though I had little faith in the primitive medical technology of a doomed society- and not allow the wind to fuel the already raging fire to a climax of aggression.

A laugh seeped out. Canib was now a shadow in the darkness.

He walked out the door. I smelt fear as it wafted through the stagnant air. Fret seeped from a pore as he strode past. I tripped, slipping on the wet stones of survival as the mirth of life was swallowed by a quivering fish, caught in the waves of a black ocean that rippled in the night. A dry twig snapped. There was no hesitation. A shadow leaped out the periphery toward his figure. Fury rushed from a hollow cavity entombed within the fragile hull of consciousness.

And what I can recall is little, when all but the faintest glow had seared my gaping mouth of memory shut. The bullet flew from out his flesh like a red butterfly shedding its dank chrysalis. "What now?" I thought. They would surely come for the person responsible for this gruesome work of art that lay before me on the sidewalk.

Children play in a minefield. I could remember seeing someone, something- but why this man spread out before me as though God himself had ingested a large sum of the sacred cacti I so longed to obtain; carved up as some madman on shrooms with the implements of a gourmet chef and the talent of a sadistic surgeon. What did I make of this foul beast decapitated, disemboweled, and dissected of its flesh? I could not fathom the monster that could do such a thing, yet I knew without incident this loathing fiend was no other than myself.

Grains of sand fell rapidly as they neared their hourglasses core. In fear, I fled. They would come for us. I believed in the last blade of grass harboring the cold winter's frost. We know we will eventually die, but we lie on the face of the lake, waiting on ships from the other shore that never touch the wet, raining reflection of the silvery bay. Had I but the freedom of the feral beasts that prowled alleys in the night, scavengers hunting for food, I would not have been forced to slay this wretched swine. But when the rain pours from the darkening sky in fat drops as cold as ice, we cannot help but get soaked from the falling clouds of dust-covered memory.

Beautiful metaphors fluttered about the grassy green fields. I sat shaking in the cold rain trying to perform the vital function of reason as the survival mechanism of repression soaked up the persistence of thought. The past is slipping away from us. Time is slipping away from us. Life is slipping away from us. It was now that I sought to forget...memories, what then are they for? I fled. I ran away. But I could not escape this haunting feeling of the dark, the deep despair, and my head rots under a blade of grass, fed upon by the worm. The field above lay beneath a dark sky as the storm raged on. But what happens when the hero dies? Who would save us then, Air and me? They would hunt us down like the beast I'd slain.

“What had Air done?” Nothing, but I could not leave her to those savages. “Savage,” I thought, “such a savage word.”

Red butterflies now fluttered through the meadows in a slow migration, a perennial reminiscence of a dark meditation of fear.

Strangely enough, I regretted not butchering the pig.

“That gutless fuck.” I mumbled as hate became a friend.

He was everything I’d ever despised, nicely packaged, and easily disposed of minus the deep recessing void within my stomach, those beautifully grotesque red butterflies. I used to think that I had total disrespect for all authority, and I did. But we tread upon a flat universe. I stood upon a thin plane, which below swarmed a horde of apparitions, and above the lakes of my youth. Had I the wings of those quivering butterflies that entombed my memory, I should have flown above this flat world into the cosmos of my past. But still, I goad, and mindless cattle graze the field consuming all and leaving none but the sad weeds of regret behind. Regret for what I’d had in my youth. This thing they called life I called a lie. I tried to move but the butterflies fluttered again, paralyzing footsteps, freezing them in the cold mud of confusion I stood. It was that those we had given the liberty to protect had taken hands that had once- possibly- held us safe and placed them upon our neck, stifling us with their abuse of power. Did I have a problem with authority, a “bad attitude”? No. But the authorities would now have a problem with Canib.

There are no shadows but of ourselves, and I had become mine. The man in the post office who greeted me with a firm handshake, the girl on the street who smiled as she passed by, the old lady at the library whom I opened the door for -did they know they stared into the face of a madman? The odds had turned on the jaws of fate, and I stood trapped between the snarling teeth. We think of destiny only when the sun is shining, but now the clouds are deep and the stars should have shone, and the only light I knew stood before me now as I made my way home to Air. Hunger bit my stomach, but the butterflies scattered again, and my appetite shifted to something else.

“What’s wrong?” Air asked and I thought of earlier at Blue Lake, again I felt the Drum inside.

“Oh...nothing.” I lied. “I’m afraid I may have accidentally killed your friend Mr. Pig.” I continued as I made my way toward the refrigerator.

At first, I detected some hesitation and disbelief, but upon the sight of the rain-soaked, bloodsplattered clothes, her expression slowed like melted glass.

“What the fuck did you do!” She was petrified.

It was not the reaction I had hoped for. Might she had lopped her arms around me in a mad fit of twisted romance, I would have been more comforted.

“Well, I guess we’ll be living in the Back Hills for the rest of our short lives just like you’ve always wanted,” Air remembered though I believe she was in shock.

“Yeah...I was thinking the same thing.” I tried to ease her fear and anger as I made a ham sandwich.

“Do they know...” a fish squirmed in her brain.

“...do they know if I did it?” I completed her sentence.

“Not yet... I don’t think so.” I assumed.

I didn’t know. But I was guessing that it would take them some time to figure out who or what was dismembered upon the cold, concrete tomb I had slain it. But as I had left an epitaph in blood upon the graffiti-plastered outer walls of a withering ruin, they would soon be on their way to this morbid revenge they call justice, and it would be Canib who sat upon their throne of judgment for the swine whose presence I had since removed from this earth. Had not the universe been set in motion by some force unknown, then not would I have exterminated the poor beast. Control. That was what it was all afforded. The cost would be my head, could they take it?

But why would anything short of a man offer in exchange for his own life for some ludicrous law? A fox that hunts chickens in the hen house would not turn itself in to the farmer for execution. Why, no. The predator hunts for survival. It hunts for food to feed itself and its family, those it loves, which it will protect with its life if it feels threatened. This is the Law, ancient and everlasting.

But now I had become the prey, the fox hunted by the hounds of death. Do not be shocked when an untamed creature you’ve caged attempts to escape. For had they not attached these fetters of control to our thoughts repressed us under the false precept that they were concerned for our good; that they are somehow responsible for the mass quantities of drugs I consume, or for my lack of morals thereof; that I am unable to choose what is best for myself; that I need some “higher power” in control to decide for Canib. This was their fatal error. Their law was selfish. But now I follow no law at all. I had gone beyond everything that had ever been programmed into my infant head by a dead language I remembered not. In my mind, I justified the irreparable, irreversible truth. But in my actions, I prepared for war. What was war but what I had done only on a greater scale? Murder is a definition of law, not Law. And to say that there is no Law is to say that we breathe not air. For though you cannot see it, this air is there before us unraveling as an elaborately fabricated knot.

I told Air to pack our things, and that Ogdoad and Rana would be coming along. Not only did they have nothing better to do with their lives but idle upon my change of habitat like some idiot monk on a holiday, but the cabin we would stay in belonged to an associate of Ogdoad as well. And I would make sure that fool did not predestine Canib to a “death sentence” through his poorly evolved wit by disclosing our location to those dirty swine, the City of Smog police.

A flower bloomed upon an unearthly knoll of grass. “Cannibal X.” That is what they had labeled the unknown man who ripped apart a City of Smog policeman. Perhaps it was the vile pills that had been spilled into his gaping chest, or the erratic writing of a name upon a wall that was interpreted as Cannibal instead of Canib as I had signed my masterpiece, perhaps both.



Regardless, that pig would be the death of Canib. I formulated a plan, as I believed I had numerous allies on my side because of the insurrection I began. We were hosts to the blood-sucking parasite that fed upon our lives.

A star fell from the sky over the Back Hills that we have now arrived at.

“Just think,” I thought, “People used to think those things were stars. So much for wishes and dreams.” I repeated the expression aloud, but Air seemed uninterested.

“Where are we going?” She already knew but liked me to reassure her.

“To Ogdoad’s uncle’s friend’s cabin, or something to that effect,” I told her.

“Is he human?” She joked, but I looked at Ogdoad and seriously considered the question. “I’m not sure, but it doesn’t matter. Whoever he is, or whatever he is, he is no more. He’s been dead for some time, a month, several years, a few days, perhaps. I don’t know. All I know is that we’ll be safe there for a while. Until I know if they know. You know?” I doubt she understood, but I was not sure myself.

“Cigarette?” I flaunted a pack of death sticks. “Bad habit,” so they say. I won’t vouch that they’re anything worth dying over. But I’m a creature of habit, healthy and not so healthy. I keep saying I’m going to quit, but if you don’t expect to live into next week, what’s the difference?” I was in a euphoric mood. Nevertheless, my offer was declined.

Shadows shifted on the edge of a meadow.

“Where are we?” I thought. And I didn’t mean our geographic location, nor was I contemplating our place in the universal ambiguity. These were the thoughts of words that fell from the raging storm above... each thought became a drop and each drop fell harder and grew larger, drenching my mind beneath in floods of distraught and sullen rain.

“What did you say?” I asked Air as the sound of her inquiry snapped my contemplation. “I can’t remember?” She slurred her speech. “Don’t try,” I prescribed, “it will only make things worse.”

I shuttered under the dim chill of silence as I stood in an oak grove. It was now late autumn and red and yellow butterflies fluttered all about the woods, a reminder of months before, falling into grave piles, swirling about in the wind. I tried not to think about the warped ecosystem of that decaying metropolis of Smog and all its depressing inhabitants. I wondered how long our supplies would last. The woods are a forbidding and lonely place without food and a warm, comfortable bed. I found a hollow; Canib sat down to think, alone. The leaves began to fall. I took a seat under a majestic oak. I sat down, comfortable, but not too relaxed so as to not fall asleep. I took out the black bag, unfolded a cloth before me, and decorated it with an assortment of medicines. I swallowed an unknown dosage of the hallucinogenic sedative X and put a few dried shrooms and smot into the water pipe I toted around in the black bag. A fish swam in a lake of fire. The realms of meditation opened as I dove into an ocean of blue-green water as waves washed loose sand subtly along its shore. I could hear the smell of the salt-watered sea and taste the sweet color of the skyblue room above the thunderclouds that sent a cool breeze up my spine.

“Hello?” A voice said unsure.

I sat in silence, unafraid to reply, but too disconnected to believe.

I made my way back up the stream. As it became smaller and smaller, I found a dry spot and sat under a thick stand of cedar. I took out my water pipe. I watched a drop of water hang on to the end of a branch, and then fall, splattering on the leaf-soaked earth below. I thought of the Nothing. I tried to forget. I watched a fish swim, - quivering, slipping...A pinecone opened as the seed fell to the ground. I made my way back to the one I loved. Tears of rage hung on like dewdrops as I opened the door to the cabin. Ogdoad and Rana lay butchered, holes aerated their skin, and a viscous, dark liquid formed trickling streams from both their nose and lips. Fear lunged out of the dark, knocking the breath from out this carcass I stood entombed. “Air!” I screamed inside, but unable was I to produce the faintest whisper of the horror I had felt.

I suffered the symptoms of a night terror, and unable was I to wake. She lay on a deathbed of thorns as red butterflies fluttered all about her naked innocence. I went to her side. I looked on in silence as her eyes spoke the question, “Why?” Why had we been put upon this unloving earth, this quietus abode? I held her as she breathed death from her body. Pain, as for a child turned away. Regret, as for a youth untold.

Revenge. It knows no doubt. It knows not a friend. Enraged far from reason, I set out toward Smog to avenge those inferior bounty hunters, who were but blank canvases that I knew had stricken three of Canib’s souls with their foul stench of decay. They had come for that madman whose head would bring them their twisted dues and financial end. “What shall we eat, my love?” I spoke with the peaceful sky.

Along a darkened path, bones lay in a pile, their marrow dry. Listless forms harken upon a book in which brittle pages crumble away. I sought the head of those who had injured Canib, those godless cattle that graze upon a field of the dead. Their greed had brought my love’s demise. They are them who are always watching. I felt their stare now as I tread onto the dismal, wet streets of the City of Smog. I saw an image of myself in a pool of water. I reached down to touch it, but cold fingers shattered the reflection and sent ripples of distortion wavering upon the looking glass. A lost soul hid in a shadow, waiting for the permafrost to thaw; a butterfly landed on the drenched, matted hair of indifference. Swallow. This dream of death is unfulfilled. I wait alongside the headwaters of a stream, a spring of poisoned sewage that spilled beneath the manhole I slipped into for cover. Moments before I had, in my mind, slaughtered all those I had felt obligated to rid of their impiety. But my mind had failed now as I watched once again this rabid fiend stab away at a man’s chest with a rusted knife. He took apart the man’s upper torso. He removed the man’s heart. He fled. This procedure I saw him repeat several times until all the bounty hunters were disposed of satisfactorily.

They found Canib days later; I had made sustenance of those who had taken the pitch of my soul. I sat naked by a kindling fire awaiting them, myself black with dirt and blood. The words, lots of them, -dozens, millions, circulated throughout the fragile tomb, -to make beautiful the fear and horror of existence. I dwelled now in a strange land as I sat before the fire. I lifted my face into the rain. I stood still as I sat there. I heard the beating of the Drum. Terror walked from the shadows.

Death dripped from the sky. God was as I, and dead I am a lie.

They came for Cannibal X but took Canib and the child instead. This madman they imagined did not exist except in this fantasy world of iniquity in their minds. Where was my mother then? I sat now upon the dreaded throne.

“Justice Served at Midnight” or “Cannibal X Pays Debt to Society” headlines would read in a cliché of newspaper fiction. But could they take the hands of their children and let them play in the blood of their decision? Who would pull the lever of this societal guillotine? Where was my mother now? Could she drop the blade; was I a beast or a man? They screamed for blood, but I cried in truth. I knew the dark lie within. The man in the post office, the happy-faced girl, the old lady, they sat now in the jury, and they would easily point the blame. I denied nothing, but could they fathom pulling the lever? And if it were their mother or father, son or daughter, brother or sister, could they still cut off the head? I thought not. Had I not been reduced to a stereotypical monster, a number, another droplet upon a blade of grass, they might not have judged me so. But I walked dead among the dead.

I thought, for a vanishing instance, that I had made the same mistake as they had when I edited the policeman and the bounty hunters, but I was the one suffering under the binds of control, under which I asked not to be.

Revenge. It knew not love. It knew not God. They feared if they did not follow this dark rite if they did not perform their so-called “regrettable act of necessity” that control would cease, and it would! And without these chains, would I have then not been killed? People do not talk about executions or whippings; they face them in silence, without question. But it was this silence that allowed this mad act to rage on. And guilt was written upon the quiet face of the crowd. It was that I would remain silent. I cried for regret of what I never had, this myth, this bedtime story of freedom I heard told in my youth. I trembled beneath an unloving hand, born into a world that needed Canib not.

Weeds flourish in a meadow. A little boy played in the woods. A little girl shoveled in the sand. It rained blood in the heavens as paradise wept upon the dawn. A skull lay among dry leaves and twigs. I awoke and slept the heedless suffering. I was nothing. I was a lie. They sought not to heal but to punish, to destroy. There was a taboo in not finishing the story. Dark images lurked within the lurid water. I told of how I bled the pig. They sat in shock of disbelief at themselves, but truth knows not lies. I was but a mirror. I was but a man. They would blame it on the smot. They would blame it on that diabolical X. But they were to blame, -they were the only ones capable of stopping this madness.

Instead, they worsened it. Chaos. It is that we think that we die. Thus we are, thus we sleep. The intolerant and impatient flower of a wilting society bloomed. The butterflies were fleeing. They “sentenced” Canib to death with their godless words. Yet, I was dead long ago. God had been beaten from this flesh-confined room. Love had been whipped from this child. And as if this child was but a beast, stupid and incapable of learning. And as if the beast even deserved its beatings. Fear had become their only god, vengeance upon the mortal coil. Their only answer to the question “Why?” was “Because.” They cared none and feared all.

I fled. I ran. I went away. I vanished within myself. I returned to those steep hills of my youth. Petals fall on a bed of thorns. I escaped to the Back Hills. I slipped into a shadow and walked among the trees. The sky seemed blue; the sun was warm for a winter’s day. I elapsed in season, back to the days and nights of Air, to her soft touch, to that innocence in the sweet sweat of summer. I sat down to think. I was alone, dissatisfied. Who would come to save Canib now as I mingled among the shadows? Where were those miserable followers of the insurrection who I said idealized Canib, none who lied or betrayed, all those lost friends?

I made my way back down the stream. I followed along the pass to Blue Lake. I sought its comforting depths. And Air, I thought of her again, my love, the one who brought floods of happiness down upon the lonely barren boughs of memory.

I swam the lakes of my youth to their deep end.

The rain began to fall upon the water... the silver curtain unveiled: slow, steady showers that went on for days. I stood in the cold as heavy drops soaked my hair. The unyielding force of nature lay out before Canib as I looked now upon the earth that once harbored sunshine. A fish surfaced. It broke the steady pattern of the rain on the water. My thoughts were saturated. My face was soaked with the taboo of tears... how they flow.

“What now?” I thought. Would my mother have been proud if instead, I had become a good citizen, a surgeon, a lawyer? Would she be not ashamed to have given birth to this murderous killer, this criminal? Would she love me not? Would she care?

“What’s wrong?” I heard Air’s voice say.

“Nothing.” I replied in silence.

A writer now writes in a shallow grave: a freethinker in the depths of a lake of knowledge.

I wrote on a piece of black shale and skipped it across the water:

“Death’s breath whispers eternity.”

Canib held his arms outstretched in the water.

As he sank below into the deep, the light faded away.

Air escaped his heart, and his breath became a stream.

I am now but a memory.

## Log of Deadwood

I am writing to tell you about a dream I had. The other day the wind outside stirred up a reminiscence of the past, altering the season and changing the leaves on the trees. We were beside the railroad tracks, outside Rana's house, sitting on a knoll under the shade of a stand of oaks. And then a train came. It roared past and the conversation Og and Rana, and Air and I were having –we went on talking, but instead of the deathly loud noise of the train, there was silence. Our thoughts were silent, and the trees began to sway, but there was no wind. Then I drifted out of my body, and I listened as Air, and I talked in the deafening silence. She spoke, and I listened. Og took his hand, and he pointed at me. Og was pointing toward the train, but I stood in its tracks. And Rana, he looked through me, as well, to the train,

And suddenly, I was within the walls of an institution. A hunting party returned in wooden masks. Perhaps it was a play they had been in, but from their etiquette, it appeared they were returning from a masquerade. But from the look on their hidden faces, I detected disgust, and my disposition ensued. I was led down a hall to a room. The ceiling and walls were old, decaying timbers, and the floor was concrete. It was a damp and dim-lit room. Six others sat silently on five-gallon buckets with gunnysacks over their heads. There was some kind of judicial functionary who told me that I had been brought there to give an admission of guilt (in an informal and secretive way). What had I done?

"I tell you that I lie, and still you listen. But how can I lie when I have told the truth?" I said in my defense.

I asked for no forgiveness for the unwanted interrogation. They seemed angry and then sad. They took off the gunny sacks and revealed a half-dozen hideous painted faces that were melting from the flowing of a dozen warm tears.

I was sentenced and barred from the institution. I was excommunicated. Violence begets violence. In a rage, I burned every memento of my dead youth: writings, drawings, and music, all a log of deadwood. I sought to destroy the memory of my survival. In the beginning, the institution was home, but now reality is an unjust confinement. I was outside stoning a tree with books as if it had spoken with these words that wounded me, a language of hypocrisy written on the leaves of paper of ancient trees and bound into a book. But it's not as if these words are carved in stone... so, nothing matters, each path ends the same.

I was outside. I was running away. But as I was leaving, I passed the barred window of your sleeping quarters. I kicked at the window unsuccessfully to gain entry. I kicked again and again, but it was a useless ploy. It did not matter. I was inside the room now somehow, sneaking and peeking into your sleeping mind. I found a gram of speed and a bottle of blue pills. I hurried to flush the narcotics down the commode as you began to wake, to cry, to fiend for the drugs.

A milk cow, which posed as a sacred mascot, drank from the commode before I could flush it. It transformed into some preternatural beast. The muscular physique of the beast had the build of an ox, its torso was a superb physical specimen of a man, its limbs of a black panther, and its head had a face that looked at a distance to stare with a single red eye. But the mad beast was a shadow of a man, someone's father, and someone's son. It wandered out the backdoor of our house and into my mother's water garden.

I saw the shadow drink the water.

"What is mad cow doing in my garden?" Mother asked, confused.

God is a fish. Thoughts pour into the current of the stream, flowing water that submerges a dream.

God is a fish swimming by. God is a fish, suspended in air, raindrops seeping... drip, drip, drip into the waters of the Lake.

I was in an institution, confined. I was a youth stoning an ancient tree. I stood on an ancient path. I walked a path into the trees. I followed a passage. I found a passage within. I am a door. I am a door that opens to another world. I am in another world. I live in a dream. Dreams are submerged underwater. I live underwater in a dream. I swim in the current of the stream. I am a fish. God is a fish. I was an old man watching his youth unfold. Outside my home of youth, a train passed. I saw a young man standing on the tracks of the roaring train. Who is this stranger? Death steamed ahead. Is this a shadow of my flesh? Death. Life is but a single breath of air we hold deep underwater. All I want is fresh air. Fear. I gasp for air. I panic. I choke on this penetrating water that drowns my thoughts.

I watched as a confused youth stoned an innocent tree with his books. The youth flogged and beat the rooted memory. He stood outside my house for fifty years and kicked and wailed on the tree with an ax, leaving the tree scarred for life. Perhaps this was the boy's life. Perhaps he was once a tree, beaten and scared... It did not matter. I am old and retired now. I left the institution long ago.

I did my job, that was all. It's not my fault they didn't turn out the like we wanted...

"Who am I but a withered old man, living out the last of his days in the shade of a tree hoping I did the right thing?" I thought as I left the tree alone, for I saw Air walking down a path through the trees.

We lie in ink. With ink, we lie. I am walking down a path. The misty gray lay on both sides... Vision was deceptive. I was following Air down an old, leaf-covered path. Silver flowers bloomed in the darkness above us in the heavens. In the dead of the long night, I had come to the end of the path. And graves...

I was in a garden of graves. Air stood alone. She was weeping over a tombstone. It was my epitaph carved in the stone. I was alone. She was alone. Shadows fell from the trees.

We were in the house. And we were gathered in the living room for conversation and drinks. A stranger entered the room. He had long dreadlocks. Yes... he was a black gentleman as I recall. Everyone wanted to leave our house and go to another house. Who'd watch this man?

"I'll stay."

Why me? Now I had to watch a child sleeping in the back room. I knew this child. I stayed. The black gentleman was gone as was the crowd. Og and Rana and Air had gone to associate with other friends of ours. I stayed behind out of fear for the child's safety. She slept soundly in the back room out of sight, but I knew it was there. Should I check on her?

The party had returned. The dark gentleman in dreadlocks sat unnoticed in the room. Everyone went on about their conversations and drinking, but the black man did something that I could not quite comprehend. He was sitting in a wooden chair when in horror I was bewildered. I had kept a conscious eye on the stranger. But in a momentary glance of my wandering eye, I looked away. And when I looked again at the man, he was no longer black with dreadlocks, but a white man with a shaved head, whose face was covered with tattoos, sitting there grinning at me. I looked away as a person passed in front of the view of the gentleman and again, he was black with dreadlocks. I could hear the laughing of the people at the party, taking pleasure in mocking each other. I watched the black man intensely for a while out of the corner of my eye. Nothing. Then as the party became more crowded, he shifted again. He was white, staring at me with a devious grin, as though when he was black a moment ago, he knew I was watching him.

"Do you see that guy there?" I pointed toward the white man.

"That black guy over there?" Air described him from his master status.

I looked away from Air and back to the chameleon man. Indeed, he was black again, and he did not seem to notice Air and me discussing him. I sat back down. The laughing echoed louder. It started to consume my thoughts. I asked another person. I watched as the man changed in his flesh from black to white. He was black. He was white. Never, though, did he change before my eyes, always while I was looking away. The black man talked and socialized, but the white, tattooed man only stared and grinned.

I asked Og if he could see the fiendish man.

"Look," I asked. "Look at that guy over there." I pointed at the white, tattooed man sitting and grinning.

"That black guy there with the dreadlocks," Og replied.

But I had kept my eyes fixed upon the shifty man, and I knew that indeed the man I looked at was white. The laughing swelled.

"That guy sitting in the red chair, he's not white?" I frantically sought the opinion of another.

"Yeah, the black guy...whatever?" I replied sarcastically.

I went and sat in the corner by myself. The laughing roared into a turbulent river. Reason was washed away. Reality melted into one shadow that I stared into that stretched into a road in the distance. I was driving a vehicle down a road on a cloudy day.

Blood. I am driving. I am driving down a road now with a person in the passenger seat. The person sitting next to me said she saw someone following us. I was still running away from shadows: the shape-shifting beast and the fiendish chameleon man. I was paranoid. I was driving intoxicated, swerving in a drunken madness. The passenger leaned over and took the wheel. I was now in the passenger seat of the vehicle, and I knew they were after me. I tried like a persistent mosquito to convince the driver to get away from them.

“It’s the others from the institution following us, Bedding I said to Air as we approached an intersection in the road.

“Right or left?” She asked.

“I don’t know?” Paranoia pulsed through my mind.

Air turned right, though I anticipated she’d turn left. I looked for an exit. We pulled off on a leaf covered road and hid. The car chasing us sped ahead out of sight.

People down the road came walking out of the woods to see the chase. A drop of blood hung from the flesh of consciousness. The vehicle that was after me sped even faster ahead and plowed through the curious people who were watching from the edge of the forest. The trees watched in horror. Did the gunny sack jury of the institution send this assassin who was after me? Guilt. I was to blame for the death along the road, this melancholy change in season. The trees shed leaves of tears; tears of leaves fell upon the ground.

People lay wounded and dying, and blood -there was blood everywhere. Streams of it trickled and flowed down the road. As we drove, there were more bodies, most dead and several with their heads decapitated. Decapitated heads lay pools of fluorescent red blood beside lifeless bodies, their eyes open in a death stare. It was one head I inspected in detail that caused my face to turn pale with sickness. I could see the severed arteries that once let life flow into a now-dead mind.

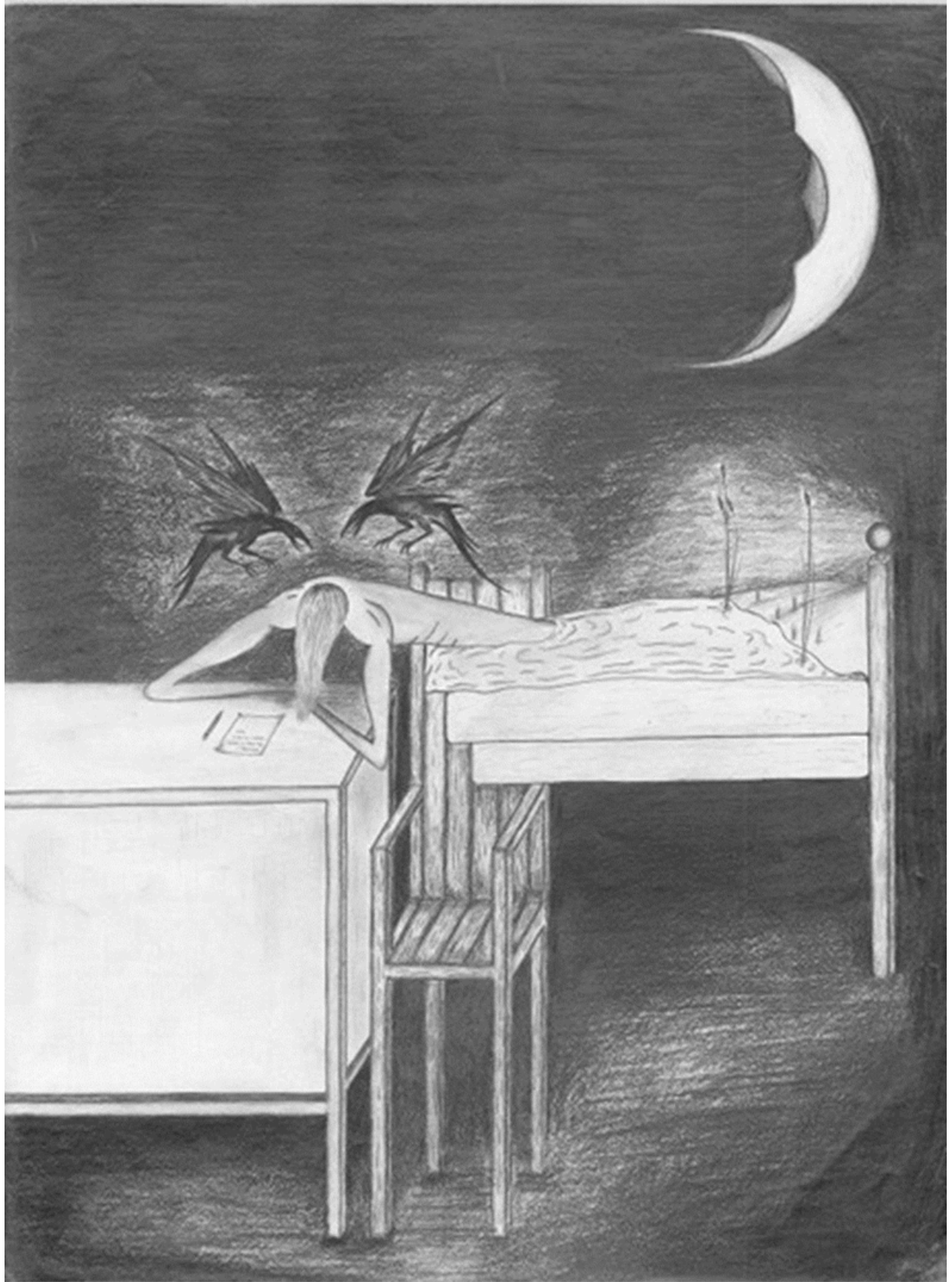
Blood. Streams of blood. Rivers of blood.

Oceans of blood and corpses of the dead within them.



## Smog

The Spectral Butterfly of Smog, it is from the Netherworld, it is “the Other.” The Spectral Butterfly visits the Black Flower and in it Canib of Smog is reborn after drowning himself in the Blue Lakes of his youth. No longer is there the Angst ridden existence of the man remembered as Cannibal X, and no longer does he roam the Black Hills. Rather, he has undergone a metamorphosis, a final stage of existence. Canib is the Spectral Butterfly, he wanders with his Shadow that follows him, always.



## The Sleep of Reason (waking)

Perpetual night.

She was an island, all day weathered in the perfect dark. Her eyes were deep sky-blue seas, with white sands for cheeks. Thin pink shells hid gentle fangs that sought a way into my neck. "I can fly." I tell her all the time.

"Kiss me." She asked for three.

Vampires, both loved and feared for their charisma.

We strolled over the dark, uncertain curves and hills, further down a leaf-quilted path.

Like a low-water bridge, we crossed the quietus stream.

I must be careful, for the sky melted as we stretched into a walk under the moon.

"Would she try to bite my neck?" I contemplated eternity by her side.

"I never knew you had a tattoo." She asked with a deep stare.

"I do." I reflected off the water.

The tattoo he wears is death, the black ink in his skin is hers.

"I'm a beautiful butterfly." She insisted.

"And I am a frog." I reminded her.

"I wish you were here." She dreamed of a shooting star.

"Where are you?" She lay in a bed of soft water.

"Why won't you talk to me?" She echoed in the deep.

I wasn't on the phone that she still grasped in her hand, and she was sleeping many miles away.

"I miss you, too." I whispered.

And silence embraced us in the enigmatic waters.

The sun hovers in darkness.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

She quivered, and I grasped her hand as we stood in the water.

"Why are they doing this to me?" She laughed as she wept. "They hear what they want to hear; they see what they want to see." "I feel that everyone is against me." We both agreed.

Melancholy ecstasy.

The fish give in to the current of the stream as the cycle ends.

Downstream, the scavengers are fat from the remains.

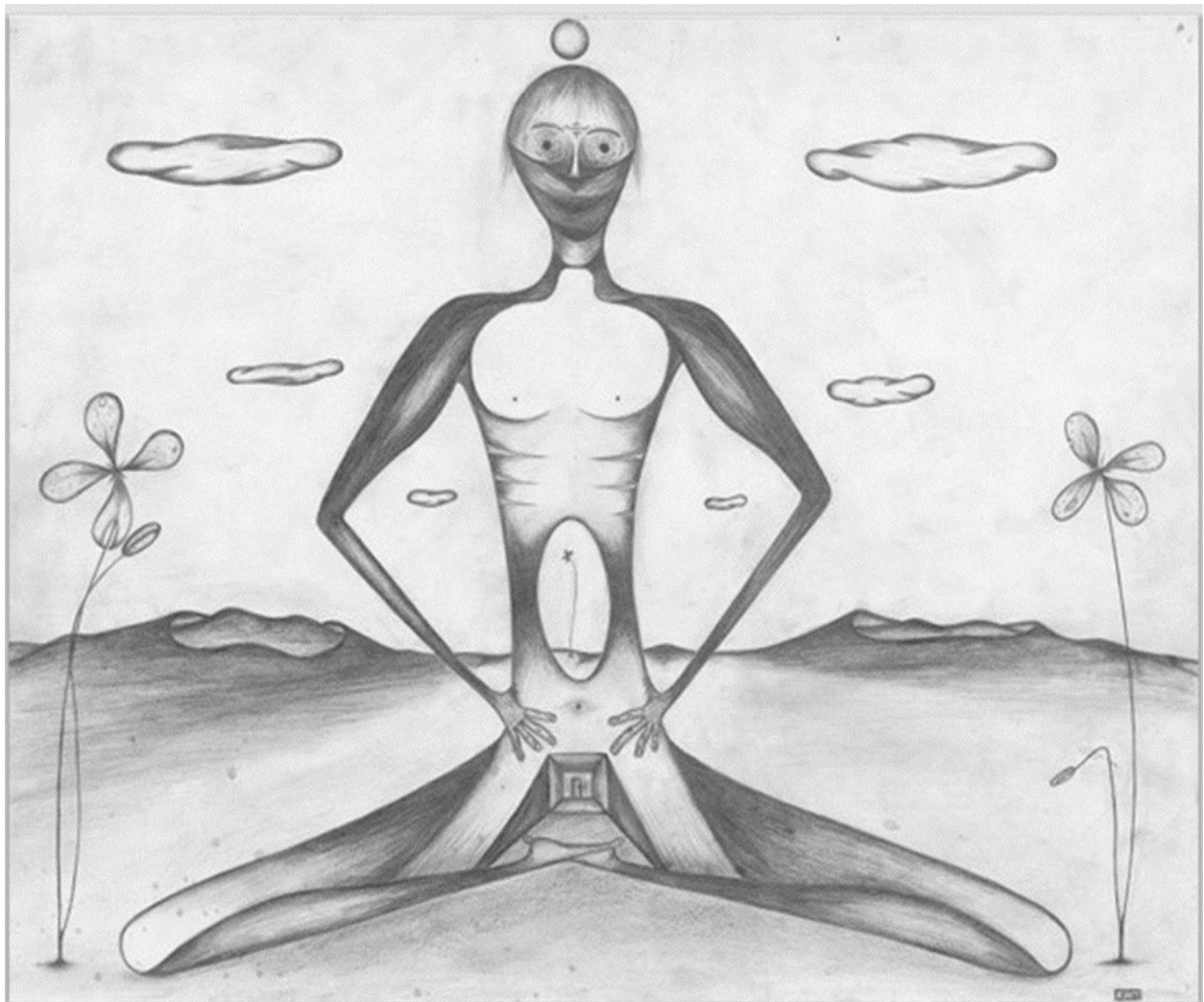
They are ready to hibernate another winter.

The butterflies are fleeting.

The frogs croak as they slime into their primordial tombs.

A gentle madness settles the air:

All is quiet...



Melancholy Ecstasy

## Requiem

Wet feathers of a dead crow, the past: a slivered surface of black conscious waters, a silhouette on silvery rippling darkness, and shedding shadow upon shadow.