



FBM

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FEATURED AUTHORS

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O. WEARY

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FAUN BY MOONLIGHT

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DISCLAIMER

This magazine contains mature content that explores challenging and potentially disturbing themes.

Some of the themes explored in this issue include:

- Murder
- Torture
- Mutilation
- Violence
- Sexual Violence and Cohersion
- Political Violence
- War
- Genocide

Readers who are sensitive to these themes are advised to exercise discretion when reading this publication.

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WELCOME



WELCOME

When starting a new venture, there's an almost irresistible urge to frame it as a response to a crisis. To some overly broad, fatalistic reading of current affairs that required—no, demanded!—action from its creator. This transforms what could be considered an act of pride, ambition, or other decidedly human instincts into something honorable like activism, or a selfless sacrifice.

This is especially prevalent in the arts, literature, and politics, where developments can't be justified by their own existence. You don't really need to explain why you've developed penicillin; its effect is reason enough. But why is your painting a blank canvas? Why can't I understand a word that's written in this book? Why do I need to vote for you, exactly?

Will you answer, "because that's just what I felt like doing"? Doesn't sound very artsy, very purposeful, very noble, now does it?

So it was natural, during the process of conceptualizing and developing this magazine, that we felt the urge to do something similar. Maybe not as dramatic as a manifesto (those really do reek of adolescent arrogance), but something similar to this very introduction, maybe a statement on our website, something with a generic line like "other genres can merely comment on what literary fiction explores," perhaps sprinkle some statistics on literary fiction's performance in the broader literary market (which are pretty concerning, actually).

We could even write the final paragraph so it has an exclamation mark at the end! Like "Writers Unite!" or some such.

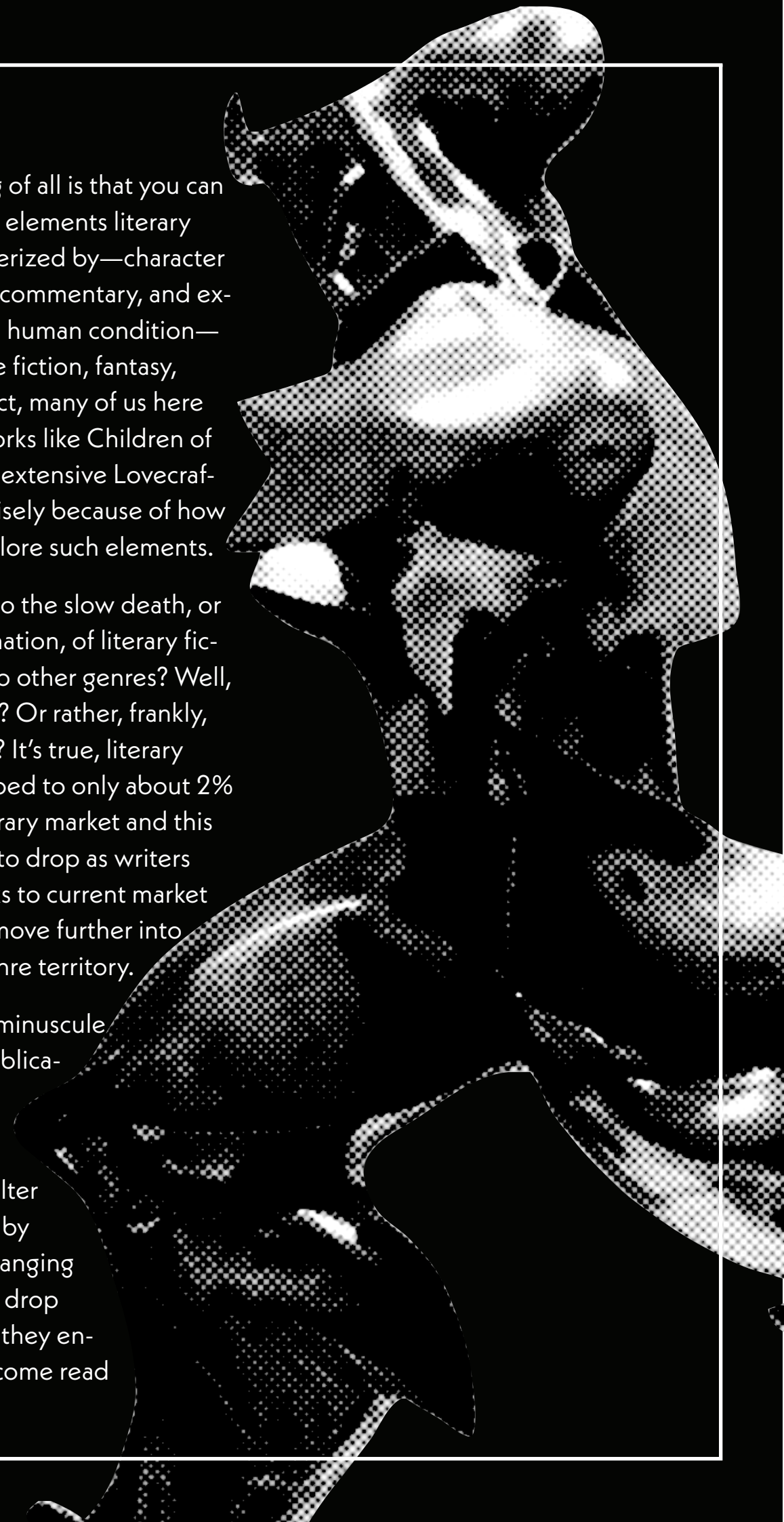
Despite our good intentions, there would be several issues with this approach...

The most glaring of all is that you can find many of the elements literary fiction is characterized by—character studies, societal commentary, and explorations of the human condition—in horror, science fiction, fantasy, and others. In fact, many of us here at FBM enjoy works like *Children of Time*, *Dune*, the extensive Lovecraftian library, precisely because of how these works explore such elements.

When it comes to the slow death, or hopefully hibernation, of literary fiction compared to other genres? Well, what can we say? Or rather, frankly, what can we do? It's true, literary fiction has dropped to only about 2% of the entire literary market and this number is likely to drop as writers adapt their works to current market conditions and move further into well-defined genre territory.

What can we, a minuscule independent publication, realistically do?

Fundamentally alter consumer tastes by screaming and banging that they should drop whatever books they enjoy and instead come read ours?



Not likely to work.

So there was really no big, virtuous excuse we could give to open a magazine that focuses solely on the progressively niche genre of literary fiction. We had to admit, plainly and honestly, what this was all about—we just like this genre; in fact, we prefer it above all others. Few here could explain with the same clarity that “I love to guess who the killer is” can, but we do love it. And if you are reading this, I’m assuming you do, too.

Literary fiction is a rather broad term that encompasses everything a work isn’t, more than what it actually is. These works can be equal parts weird, sad, loving, scary. They can be all of these things at once and never miss a beat, they can be none and still be compelling. Literary fiction is special precisely because it releases authors from the constraints of genre fiction.

And so, when I’m asked why we opened Faun by Moonlight, the answer is quite simple: we love literary fiction, and we would like to create a platform where writers can join this increasingly exclusive group of writers and readers.

So step in, get yourself comfortable, and enjoy the very first issue of Faun by Moonlight.

This month’s theme is:

THE TYRANNY OF NARRATIVE

INTERROGATION

Oly Wealy



INTERROGATION

I'm sitting in a very smelly basement. My arms are tied backwards and my foot itches and this chair is really uncomfortable. It's not nice at all, and it's very uncomfortable like I said, but that's okay because they're just doing their jobs.

They told me I was captured because I have a striking resemblance to the leader of a resistance group. The resistance in question is to the regime's very existence—or so I'm told.

When they arrested me, they were very impolite, and they pushed and prodded me in all sorts of ways. I said ouch, c'mon, what, let's be reasonable, this is a big, big mistake, but they didn't really hear a word I was saying and shoved me into the back of a car. So one moment I was there, then here, at the bottom of this basement, this very smelly basement, and my arms hurt, and my butt hurts, and they tell me I'll be here for a very long time unless I start talking.

My torturer is a very short and very angry man who's been tasked with torturing the man he assumes me to be. He's very short as I said, and I'm at eye level with him even sitting down, and I believe this offends him a great deal because every time I look him in the eyes he beats me with that little iron rod he has. I always try to lower my head a little so I can look up at him and not offend the man, but he always takes issue.

And now he's back and he says what he's been saying for a few hours by now—that he's going to do all sorts of things to me, and all these things are variations of the word bad and he hits me in my chins and in my calves and in my knees once or twice with his little rod.

And then I tell him that I'm not too bothered about what's done to me, and I was going to continue explaining my position but he interrupts me right away and laughs. He laughs very loudly over my explanation and doesn't hear a thing of it. He seems provoked because he thinks I'm trying to be cool, or jaded, or brave, or insulting. But I'm not. I even said that with my head lowered precisely to not offend him.

He laughs and and he laughs and then he goes to his boss who's been sitting in a corner reading a book for a while and says something I can't hear, and the boss's brows furrow and the boss looks at me and says across the room that I don't care yet, but that I will.

And then the little man comes back to me and starts hitting me, again, and he won't let me speak, again, even though I wanted to explain that I'm not too bothered not because I'm cool, or jaded, or brave, or insulting, but because that's just what life is, I suppose, and it would be very unfair of me to expect these injustices to never happen to me.

And then the boss gets up from his corner and comes to us and asks what questions I've already been asked, and the little man, panting and breathing very heavy, tells him that he hasn't asked me any questions yet because I wouldn't admit to being the man they knew me to be, and so if the principle could not be agreed upon, then any adjacent conclusion could not be inferred. So, for instance, he goes on to say, how could they trust me to answer where the terrorist cells are if I don't admit to being the man who does know where they are. And I think that makes perfect sense.

And then the boss gets his chair, and he picks it up, and he puts it in front of me, and he sits on it, and he's very nice and polite because he cleans up the blood that I'm drooling like a big doofus. The boss is very normal size and a very handsome man who seems to take very good care of himself. I'm not a homosexual man, but if I were one, I'd likely be attracted to him in the manner that homosexuals are attracted to men.

And then the boss leans in real close to me and asks me if I'm ready to confess, at least, that I'm the man himself. And I say, again, that this is a very big misunderstanding and it's not me they're looking for. That I've never terrorized anyone, let alone an entire state.

And then they ask me why do I look so much like him, the man they know me to be, and then they show me a picture where, in their defense, the man does indeed look a lot like me. And then they say, oh you have the same hair, the same nose, the same eyes, the same teeth—because the man in the picture is smiling—and even the same eyebrows.

And I admit to them that it's very true indeed, and it seems like a very reasonable mistake to make given the similarities, but that it really isn't me because the man's ears are smaller and he's smiling and I never smile. And the little man tells me that's nonsense because everyone knows ears never stop growing and so it's very reasonable that the ears look smaller because the picture is from two years ago. That also makes perfect sense to me.

And then the boss asks me if I'm really going to make them go through all of this, that this is so very unnecessary and bothersome and not at all what either of them would prefer to be doing on this day. This being Liberation Day, you see. The beautiful man says I'd be much better off just confessing to who I am and then confessing to where all the other terrorists are and then confessing who's funding the resistance, and this would be sorted and resolved and all these things that are about to happen to me, which are very bothersome and unpleasant, do not need to happen.

And then I tell them that I agree, that I agree very very much so, and if it were in my ability to give them all of that I absolutely wouldn't want to be wasting their time with any of it, at all, but I'm really really not the man they're looking for, but I wish I were so I could save them a whole load of bother.

And then the beautiful man shakes his head and seems to be very pitiful and sorry, and he confirms he's indeed very pitiful and sorry for what's about to happen to me. And he gives a little tap to the little man and the little man nods but they don't say anything. And then the beautiful man leaves through that big metal green door and I feel so very pitiful and sorry for him as well because I really truly don't want to keep two hardworking men away from their families on such an important holiday like Liberation Day.

And then the little man tells me that he's not, at all, sorry or pitiful for what he's about to do to me, because this is a matter of national security and safety and I say that's perfectly reasonable, that I've enjoyed so much of that safety and security and I didn't really come to appreciate the hard work that goes on behind it all, and to be here and see the machinery at work is really a great honor.

And the little man misunderstands me and thinks I'm still trying to be a hardass and a badass and saying all of these things despite already having bruised arms and a split lip and a cut eye and aching legs because I'm trying to put on a big show, a big show where I'm a big hardass. The little man says he doesn't think this is funny, that it isn't funny at all. And I agree, I say it isn't funny at all and in fact there are many funnier things in the world if I really think about it.

And he thinks I'm implying he's one of those funnier things, which hand to God if I was still allowed to believe in Him, I'm not, and he gets upset and he insults me and he then gets the thin horse whip and starts whipping me all over. And I get the sense that this isn't so much about hurting me as it is a way of releasing frustration by the little man and it hurts of course and it isn't very pleasant but I don't think the feelings that lead him to whip me like that are very pleasant either because he's panting and gasping and coughing and going oh, oh man and I ask him if he wants to get a glass of water before continuing.

He reacts very aggressively, again, and goes on to whipping me over and over, again, and I start smiling and motivating him to go on and saying things like you got this sir, you got this, let it all out. And this goes on for a very long time because he has to stop many times to catch his breath.

And then the little man goes over to the big door and bangs on it and the boss opens it and pokes his head out and he looks at me and he looks at the little man, who is whispering to him and the beautiful man whispers back.

Then the beautiful man comes into the basement again and sits in front of me again and starts begging me again to please admit who I am, please please please, that he doesn't want any of this to happen and all he wants to do is get home and enjoy Liberation Day and be with his family. And I feel very sorry for the man, because he's so pitiful and because he's so beautiful and I tell him ok, I admit it, I am him.

And then they ask who that is and I say him, the man they're looking for of course, him, who else. And then they ask me to tell them my name, not my name name, the name I'm claiming to be but I, truly, hand in heart, forgot. And I tell them this and he shakes his head and he goes away again and they whisper and nod again.

And then comes the little man and I ask him how he is, if he's feeling well and he says I won't be so funny in a second. So he tips my chair back with a lot of grunting and effort and I thank him very profusely and very very much for making sure I don't hit my head on the floor and he keeps laughing and mumbling to himself. And then he puts a cloth over my face and asks if I'm comfortable and when I open my mouth to answer yes thank you very much, he pours a gallon of water on my face.

And then I gasp and I gasp and I choke on nothing and I splutter a little water and I feel very ridiculous because I'm drowning but there's no water. And then he takes out the cloth so I can get some air and I cough and cough and when I throw my head to the side to spit the tiny bit of water inside my mouth I see that they're recording. And I feel really really embarrassed that this is being recorded and will be distributed and they'll see me being very silly and very stupid drowning on air.

And then he asks me again, what is my name and who am I and I give him my real name and he says no, that isn't who I confessed to be just a minute ago, that I confessed to be the guy, the guy they're looking for and tells me to admit that my ears have indeed grown in the meantime and if I do all of that it will all be over. And then I say I will, I will absolutely confess to being who they want me to be so I can save them all this trouble and this headache but he'll have to remind me of the name because I, hand in heart again, have forgotten.

And then he puts the cloth in my mouth, again, and drops a few more gallons of water on me, again, and I gasp and I gasp and I drown on air like a big idiot and my mouth gets all wide and open and my eyes go all buggy and almost out of my skull like a fish suffering from barotrauma. And all the while I look to my side and see the little red dot in the camera and I think of all the people seeing this and thinking look at this big idiot drowning on air and looking like a fish that was pulled up too quickly.

And then I keep thinking that when this footage is sent to my wife, because they always send it to the wives, she'll see it and look at me and think—when did I ever allow myself to open my legs and get jizzed on by this guy and she'll thank the state and prostrate herself by the great leader's painting and say thank you, thank you great leader for never again allowing myself to be jizzed on by this man ever again and now I will allow myself to be greatly jizzed on by other men that don't do that.

And then it pops in my head like something I've forgotten mid conversation and remembered it again, that the man they want me to be, is Damian Patron. And I say to the little man that I remember the name now and I'll confess to him on one condition, and he says he doesn't do conditions and I say ok, then I won't say who I am then and he says ok, he'll consider it and I say the condition is that he deletes the footage, that if the footage is absolutely necessary ok that's ok but that either they delete this part of the footage or replace it or never allow my wife to see it. And he's very confused and doesn't seem to get it.

And then he says that he isn't recording, not at all, and that I'm really very stupid and absurd and uncultured and I should really go back to school because I don't really get the first thing about cameras but he doesn't expect anything else from the leader of a resistance and one that allowed himself to be captured in the first place. Because that isn't the recording light at all, it's the autofocus assist light that turns on in low light conditions, not the tally light, which is what turns on when the camera is recording. And the camera will only be recording my confession.

And then I do feel really stupid and absurd and uncultured because I've been holding onto this information and blackmailing the man for no reason because I'm not being filmed at all. And I say ok, ok then and my name is Damian Patron, D. Patron, and it's usually said D. Patron so it sounds "The Patrón" in Spanish, and that I am, in fact, the leader of the rebellion and that it's true, that they've got me and they've got me real good, no denying it.

And then he asks me what about the time that I said I wasn't D. Patron, so abbreviated so it sounds The Patrón, but instead that my name was Tom Paddington, that I was an insurance appraiser for Liam & Co. the largest insurance company in our great state. What had happened to that story?

That I was a middle aged wholly unremarkable man with nothing much going on other than a beautiful wife that I very much detest, a 19 year old daughter that, through an addiction to prophylactics, has turned to prostitution, and a delinquent son whose whereabouts I don't know. And what about that story I told him that, one day, while procuring prostitutes, I picked up my own daughter by mistake and she touched my pecker before I recognized her voice?

And then I tell him that it was all fake, that they really got me really good and I'm in fact the boss of that whole operation, that I'm a fierce killer and rapist and a spy and a bomber and a terrorist and a maniac, as they well know. And that it's all been a cover story. I swear, I promise, hand in heart for the third time. So then I look at him and I ask him what he wants to know, because I, as The Patrón, would be more than willing to divulge any and all information about my illicit activities.

And then he grabs the horse whip and he beats me and beats me and beats me all over my body and I go ouch, oh not that, oh mind the ears, ow, ouch and the likes and I'm just so relieved that the camera isn't on because this would be so embarrassing and I ask him why he's beating me when I've told him what he wants to know, and he says because the real The Patrón would never ever ever give out that information this easily, because he's been caught before and it took them weeks of interrogation to even get him to admit who he was and he, or I, escaped before revealing any further secrets. So, that I'm The Patrón he's sure, but whatever information I give out this quickly will without a doubt be false because he, or I, would never let real information go this easily.

So now I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place. I'll either have to admit I lied about the whole thing and that I'm not, indeed, the man they accuse me to be but instead just Tom Paddington, the unremarkable and accidentally incestuous insurance appraiser, which not only would be rude but also really rather dishonest of me, or I keep pretending to be this man, this man I know nothing about, this man who heads a group I know even less about, this man I am told I am.

And I have to take into account that, and I can't really stress this enough, these are working men. That little tiny fellow and his beautiful boss have a job to do and they've been here working at it for hours and hours and what would I say then? I'd say sorry, oh sorry, I'm actually not the guy you're looking for, I'm a cheat, and I'm dishonest and all of that. No. I don't have the heart.

And so I tell him that I'm indeed The Patrón and yes they've got me but although I'm The Patrón I'm not yet The Patrón they want me to be, the one who knows about all the things he wants to know, I'm the pre-Patrón, who says things that are all fake and false and a lie and that he'll have to work a lot more to get the truth out of me.

And then the little man gets so excited that he gleams and he smiles and he jumps and he runs to knock on the door and tell his boss that he, and only he, has cracked the famous and infamous The Patrón and got him/me to confess. And I'm so happy to see him like this.

And then comes his boss and his boss is also all gleeful and happy and he goes like really? and the little man says really really and I'm so happy for them and they're almost jumping and almost singing and I want to add a little extra and join the celebration so I say, in character, something like yeah, that motherfucker got me good, that motherfucker got me real good and I say too something like let's go mano a mano, me and you without these cuffs and you'll see who's a real man, it's easy to be a real man against someone that's tied up. And that's when I put my foot in my mouth.

Because then because they both go silent and the little man unties me and raises his fists and says let's go then, let's go now, and now I'm really very nervous because I don't know if I can ever fight to the degree that someone called The Patrón can fight.

And the little man lunges at me with his fists up and I get really frightened and I sort of put my hands forward in a reflex and end up pushing him very slightly and he goes off in the direction that I push him but he's so very light and so very small and his center of gravity so very low that he slips and he stumbles forward and goes on stumbling forward in that kind of way where it looks like the person is trying not to fall, but really they're desperately trying to fall but either through momentum or some laws of physics or some other such they cannot fall until gravity or some other unknown force determines they should fall and where the universe wishes the little man would fall is right against the brick wall. And he was going so fast and the wall was so hard that when he meets it, he cracks his skull and drops to the ground.

And then I know I've done it, I know I'm done forever and there's no coming back because I've just killed an innocent man with my bare hands. And then the big beautiful man looks at me and then he looks at the dead man, and then he looks at me again and he raises his arms and says please please please don't hurt me please because he has a family and his family loves him very truly much, and he'll let me go without a problem, and I can take my leave without no problem from him.

And I say for him not to worry, that now the cat is very much out of the hat, or the bag, and I was never really ever The Patrón, I'm only Tom Paddington, the unassuming insurance appraiser caught in an accidental family scandal. But he's still with his arms up and goes yeah sure, whatever you say Tom Paddington and I say no, not like that, that this is something he needs to pay attention to because the last time there was a mix-up an honest working man was murdered by another honest working man. Accidentally. And he nods and says of course The Patrón, you are Tom Paddington but please could he be allowed to live.

And then I hear a big loud crash and big loud pops and then I hear groaning and mumbling and screaming. And then the boss next to me, that beautiful man, he gets to his knees and he's begging me to spare him and to tell them that he's been nice to me and say that, again, he has a life and children and a wife and all of that and please to not let them kill him. And I say that I don't know a thing about what's happening upstairs and I don't really have a say on whether or not they kill him because I'm just Tom Paddington the insurance appraiser who hates his wife. And he starts crying and shaking and begging me to spare him.

And then the door opens with a burst and there's a bunch of screaming and all of that and when they come down the three little steps to where I am someone grabs me and it's a beautiful, very very sexy woman, with rock hard muscles like an amazon in the way that rock hard muscles sit well on a woman. And then she looks up at me and she sees that I'm bleeding very badly from the whipping and the rod and the punches and the slaps and all the other instruments and she insults whoever did this very badly and I tell her that she shouldn't really talk like that about the dead and I point at the poor man against the wall with the cracked skull.

And then they cheer and jump and sing D. Patron, in the manner of The Patrón and they think that I've done this on purpose because they all sing and jeer but I don't find this one bit funny, and I tell them that, I tell them "not one bit funny" because his friend is still here and he wouldn't want to hear such a thing and then I point to where the beautiful man had been but he's no longer there and so they start looking all over the tiny basement. And then the beautiful woman agrees with me and says it isn't funny at all and she shows my cuts in the light of the naked bulb above and they see how much I'm bleeding and beaten and can barely speak.

And then she shows all the instruments of torture that they've used on me, they show the gallon jug and the towel and the cattle prod and the bone saw and the car battery and the pliers and the suffocation hood and the blowtorch and the nail puller and the drill and the restraint chair and the burning coals as well as the aforementioned whip and rod. And then she goes on a big speech that I, or who they think I am, despite going through all of this not just broke free from my chains but also killed my captors. That I'm the true spirit of revolution. That pain and suffering are nothing, and our enemies will fear us doubly so when they capture us and from defeat they will snatch victory.

And then I feel terrible because they want a speech and they're asking and insisting on it not with their voices but with their eyes and their posture and their expectations and I start thinking of all the trouble they went through planning this whole thing, driving here then having to fight then some probably getting killed and then just for it to turn out that I'm not him?

And then I remember an illegal poster I saw a few weeks back and it had a few general points and these points were that the system is very bad indeed, that the people running it are very bad too, and the resistance is very good as are its people. And they all cheer because they like it very very much and there's jumping and joy and she kisses me very hard and puts her tongue inside my mouth and I already had a hard-on from her rubbing her bum on me earlier, then a hard-on for public speaking and now a hard-on for her tongue in my mouth and so my pecker is starting to hurt.

So I say let's go, let's get out of here and catch some air because between the pulling and the prodding and the shoving and the drowning I really could use a bit of fresh air. And they all laugh and nod at each other with big smiles.

And she grabs me by the hand and smiles and just when we're about to leave someone has to ruin the whole thing and says they found someone hiding inside a tiny cupboard in the far end of the basement. And the beautiful man is kicked to the center and he starts screaming and crying and shaking and going off again about all the people in the world that love him oh so very much. And then he does it. With his big mouth he starts saying I'm not The Patrón, I'm Tom Paddington the insurance appraiser and a loser.

And then they all seem very impressed and start giving big cheers and big woops, and I'm very confused at first for what all the cheers and woops are for but then they say they're all very impressed that after so many hours of torture all I've given them is a cover story. And they all then get very emotional and they get to leave and catch their breaths which is what I really want to do.

And then someone asks him who he is, and he says he's just a guy, and I say well if we're going to start naming names we really should be more honest because I know he's the boss around here and he starts pissing himself because the person that asked him that starts backing up and you can hear little splats.

And then they all trade looks with one another and they go real quiet and they go real somber and it looks like many people here have an issue with this gentleman because he's really rather incompetent at his work because many other cases of mistaken identity and torture have been caused by him and everyone is really rather incensed at this show of incompetence.

And so three of them approach the man and with a machete clean off his arms and then clean off his nose and then his ears and then his lips and they do this in such silence and so quickly that I'm convinced the now not so beautiful boss only notices the work after it's done. And then he's sent out running, relieved of his extremities and appendages, and he goes past me and he smells very odd indeed and he looks me in the eyes and he looks very scary and that rattled my nerves.

And it rattled them so much that somehow I seem to have lost my senses and when I wake up I'm lying down and it's bumpy and I can see the blue sky and I can see her beautiful face smiling down at me. And she tells me we're in the back of a pickup truck heading back to camp.

And then she tells me how I, The Patrón, disappeared two years ago and no one has seen or heard from me for that long and how she's been holding the rebellion by herself, but that without the inspiration and bravery of The Patrón the rebellion was on the brink of collapse. But when today they heard the state had finally captured their leader they ran right to the rescue. And now that I'm here, this big revolution can continue, and I say ok, that's so nice, and thank you so very much that she and all others came back for me. And she says of course, of course she would have come back for me even if it were at the end of the world and she says she can't wait to get back home so we can make love again.

And then I get really very excited and I decide to go on with them to their camp, but I make a note to myself to not forget that I have to leave early in the morning because tomorrow is a Saturday and I have a fishing trip with my friend Boleno which was planned months in advance.

And then she asks me what I've been doing for these past two years and then I say oh such and such and all those kinds of things and she goes uhn uhn and sort of decides not to press any further and I'm very relieved.

And then we get to their camp and we're in the middle of the jungle and it's hot and it's steamy and everyone is very happy and we sing and we dance and we drink but all the while I'm very very worried because what if my pecker is smaller than the real The Patrón? And I continue dancing very very worried and singing very very worried and there are many people who come to me and tell me how great and brilliant I am and little ladies bring me all sorts of gifts and offerings and tell me I'm a great leader and a great fighter.

And then someone goes on stage and points to me and says I'm the great leader and says that I'm so great and so amazing and have endured so much, and they show the instruments of torture, and despite it all I've only confessed to being something not even worth mentioning and not only that but I killed one of my captors and would've killed the other one if they hadn't barged in and apparently this other one was known by Morenazo the Torturer and there were big jeers and big whoops when they said they cut off all of his bits and sent him on his way.

And then they ask me for a speech again and I get a massive hard-on once again because I'm so nervous and I'm so scared of public speaking, but I do go there because they were being so nice and so welcoming and I yell at them all those nice little points about how the other side is wrong and they're right and we need to do all sorts of things so people realize that the fact they like the way they live is a big misunderstanding and they should be corrected at all costs.

And so I whoop and I jeer and I say at all costs and everyone shouts back at all costs and it's all very nice and I'm very very happy they're very very happy and I know that when I leave early the next morning, because it's a Saturday and I had that fishing trip planned months in advance with Brook, they won't accuse me of wasting their time or being impolite or not getting their money's worth of all that travelling and effort to rescue me and the food and drink and all of that.

And then the night comes and everyone goes back to their tents and I'm so nervous that my pecker doesn't get up at all. But when she grabs it she seems very pleasantly surprised and asks if it's grown and I ask grown and she says yes because it feels bigger but she isn't complaining and I'm very very happy. And then I spend a long time asking her how much bigger does it feel, but big how exactly, and how different and is it the girth or the length, and if she had to pick between the two versions which would she go with and does it feel better and so on until eventually she falls asleep and I fall asleep too.

And then they wake me up and tell me to get out quickly because there's something very important I have to see, so then I get out and I see in the middle of the camp a dirty man, a dirty man who's very skinny, but he's still standing up very straight and very imposing. And then he looks around and says he's the real Damian Patrón and that I'm an impostor and he says that two years ago he found Jesus Christ hiding behind a banana tree and He said to him that he shouldn't really be going around killing and bombing and raping and maiming and stealing because His father, as well as Him as well as a third party did not like that. So he left hoping the state would take him for dead and the group would disband and this plan was going all nice and sweet until he heard something about himself being captured and then rescued and so he thought there was an impostor at work and so he returned to put an end to it all.

And that's when I say Ok guys, well that was very fun and has been a great evening thank you so much but now they know I'm not really The Patrón but instead Tom Paddington an insurance appraiser for a very large company, and I hide that whole bit again about my daughter and my wife, and now I have to leave because I have a thing planned and matter of fact I'm already late and could someone please just give me a ride to the nearest train station and I'll sort myself out from there thank you very much.

And then they grab me and put me against a wall and tie my hands behind my back and say that I'm a traitor and a disgusting pig and all manner of things that remind me very much of how my wife speaks to me and then the woman starts throwing rocks at me and she has great aim and hits me right in the forehead. And so they tell me to stand real still and then they start to point their weapons at me and all the while I'm just telling them I've never experienced such treatment by so-called hosts, impoliteness and lack of basic decorum in my life.

And I keep giving them a piece of my mind and I tell them that this was all very much a waste of time because all I got out of this trip was mosquito bites and a hard-on because I didn't even get to do anything with the woman and that at least the smelly basement was nearer to my house.

And then I hear all manner of loud pops and screams and more pops and all around there are people dropping and screaming and snoring and getting real stiff in all sorts of manners and then I see state forces and I thank them so very much. When they take over the camp they take everyone prisoner and then they start shooting the ones that are still screaming and then they start shouting that they're looking for Tom Paddington and they know Tom is here because they've followed the tracks.

And then I'm so relieved and I come out from behind the rock I've hidden to avoid all the bullets and then I start screaming to them thank you, oh thank you so so much because the sun is getting up and I know for a fact Boleno won't wait for me for this long and I've paid a deposit for all of the equipment and I'm sure they won't be able to give it back if I just don't show up, probably not even reschedule. So please could they give me a lift to the station thank you very much.

Can you believe that D. Patron runs over to them saying he is I, and I am him, and that he, meaning I, has been kidnapped in a case of mistaken identity and thank you so much for rescuing him and I start to get real incensed because this impostor will likely go back to my house and jizz my wife like I tried to jizz on his but he'll probably get to really do it and there's no chance now that I'll ever do it to his.

And so they drag us against a wall and then they take out an old picture they have of The Patrón as reference and they put it side by side and they say it's really very difficult to tell us apart.

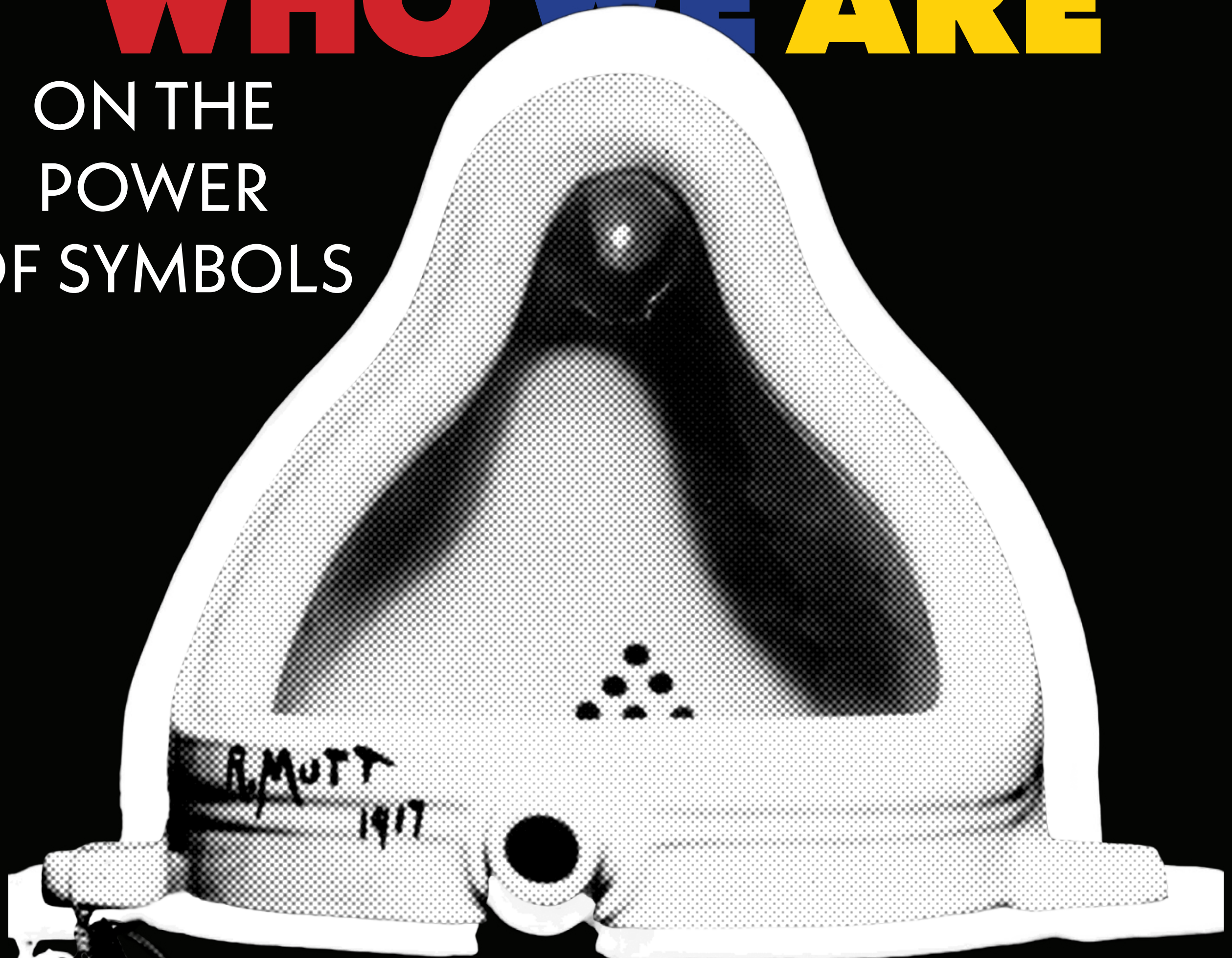
But then one of them says that ears never stop growing so because my ears are larger than the picture it makes a lot of sense that I'm The Patrón and the other man is Tom Paddington and I'm so very irritated and just disgusted by this and I can't even say anything because when I try I get punched in my stomach and one of them starts reading the charges for Tom Paddington to D. Patrón these being murdering one state officer and dismembering another and so they judge him, convene an immediate silent jury and execute the sentence and the man.

And so now then they start reading the charges for The Patrón, and I simply can't get a word in edgewise because they've put a hood over my head and they're starting to count and...

THE END

WHO WE ARE

ON THE
POWER
OF SYMBOLS



WHO WE ARE

You are lost. It is 3 a.m. Your feet are swollen, your legs failing, your skin prickling with exhaustion. Dehydration does its work. Desperation gnaws at you. You want to stop. You need to stop. But stopping now would feel like giving up. Besides, where would you rest? The woods are thick, the roots thicker, and the floor is wet and muddy. Brushwood cracks in the distance and reminds you: you are not alone.

Then you hear it. A melody. A... flute?

Hope. You are saved! Soon this will be just a silly story to laugh about. You run, you trip, you stumble. You chase this melody with renewed spirit. You see light, finally, after hours threading through darkness, you see a pale light shining through the trees. The moon breaks through a phalanx of trees. There, just a few feet away, is the door to your freedom. You have found a way out.

All the while, the sweet melody grows louder, more enveloping.

You reach the clearing, then stop. You stop because you see it. You stumble upon it. A hoofed man-beast leads a flock of goats, enchanted, as you are, by his melody. The moon blazes now, nearly blinding. A spotlight of pure white, shining down on them, on you, casting all that opposes it in shadow.

The man-beast takes note of you but does not stop. His flock bawls and hops and rears. He spins and jumps and skips.

He plays his melody and commands, through temptation alone, that you follow. And so you do. And so now you too hop and you too rear and you too bawl.

So that now you too are four-legged and you too are horned and you too are enveloped by his music.

National Socialists V Chairs

In a 2017 BBC article titled "The Endless Influence of Bauhaus," Mr. William Cook asks: "Why did the Nazis feel so threatened by the Bauhaus? Why were they so scared of an art school that made modernist furniture and kitchenware?" Mr. Cook answers his own question: "Because it represented a world-view which was the complete opposite of National Socialism."

This is a misconception both in essence and in effect.

In essence because National Socialists didn't see Bauhaus as the "complete opposite" of their ideology. Bauhaus products like Marianne Brandt's lamps remained in production, Bauhaus designs appeared in Nazi-era home décor books, and former Bauhaus students like Fritz Ertl held reputable positions in the regime—even as they publicly condemned the Bauhaus as "degenerate." As Professor Elizabeth Otto puts it, "The Bauhaus was everywhere under Nazism."

In effect, because it wasn't out of fear, though one can understand why Mr. Cook understood it this way. For seventy-odd years, historians have portrayed extremist political movements as nervous, prickly little things that ban, shoot, and imprison "otherness" out of fear—a fundamental misunderstanding of both the resilience of these movements and the conditions absolute power needs to operate.

The erasure of the "other" in totalitarian regimes is foundational, not reactionary. It establishes the framework through which the state defines, justifies, and sustains itself. Absolute power needs an enemy to fight, a threat to neutralize, an incompatible element to purge. This ongoing battle explains and justifies both the regime's existence and its heavy hand.

Yet, while essential, this otherness cannot exist within its sphere of control. The "other" can only exist as an external force to be defeated, never tolerated, for tolerance risks contaminating the coherence a totalitarian regime demands.

These are total systems, and total systems cannot accommodate internal contradictions or incompatible elements.



And so, you aren't sent to a gulag because the regime fears you, but because what you represent (racially, politically, intellectually) is incompatible with the system's framework. You embody "the other," and therefore must be imprisoned, shot, erased. For extremist regimes, heterogeneity of identity and homogeneity of thought are central to its survival.

To Mr. Cook's question "Why did the Nazis feel so threatened by the Bauhaus?" then we can answer: they weren't. They were doing house-keeping.



THE Bauhaus

The Bauhaus was founded in 1919 by architect Walter Gropius. In 1925, the school moved to Dessau, where it settled in the now iconic glass and steel building, then briefly to Berlin in 1932 before the Nazi government forced its closure in 1933. In its fourteen years of existence, it trained less than 1,400 students and still fundamentally reshaped how we think about design, architecture, and the objects of everyday life.

Perhaps the most peculiar aspect of Bauhaus's artistic philosophy was just how seemingly innocuous it was. There were none of the over-the-top political manifestos of the Futurists, Dadaists, or the countless other "isms" the twentieth century produced. No grand proclamations of its transformative power, no apocalyptic warnings about society's future without their intervention. Its core principle was truly as simple as: Form must follow function.

Bauhaus students also weren't screaming manifestos in restaurants or beer halls. They were doing pottery, glassblowing, metalwork. Their mission was to optimize the design of everyday items so they could be stylish, functional, and adapted for mass production. The world of standardized mass production we live in today is, in many ways, the world Bauhaus envisioned.

A Peculiar Kind of Power

The Nazi Party banned Bauhaus for its perceived association with "cosmopolitan" and "Marxist" ideals. That much is documented. But why did the Nazis perceive such an apolitical design school in this way?

The answer cannot lie in the school's philosophy, for it was design oriented rather than political or societal and as we've seen some designs were incorporated into production. It also couldn't be its students, because there was no unified student political affiliation and some were even National Socialists themselves.

What made Hitler see Bauhaus as "the other"?

I believe the answer lies not in what it represented, but in what its design philosophy, and the items it produced, symbolized.

Symbols are emotion given form. Their power comes from what they can make you feel, not think. In fact, the strongest symbols can override or directly contradict even the most compelling logical arguments, requiring no persuasion, no arguments. It takes time, and work, to forge a symbol into something that powerful. But once you do, the results are astounding.

When you look at the piece *Faun by Moonlight* by Léon Spilliaert, do you not feel a certain sense of dread? A sense that you've stumbled upon something you shouldn't. That whatever circumstances led you to it are equally unsettling? The devil, guiding a flock of goats free and in the open, while you appear to be the one hiding, the trees covering you, equal parts frozen by fear and captivated.

And yet, that isn't the devil. It's a faun—it's right in the title: *Faun by Moonlight*. Half man, half goat, these Roman mythical creatures were peaceful, if at times mischievous, woodland guides. If you showed this to an ancient Roman, he would likely ask why it was depicted in such sinister lighting, but to him it would be no more intimidating than a garden

gnome.

But can you see it that way? Can you see a garden gnome in inappropriately creepy lighting? Two thousand years of Judeo-Christian tradition transformed a benign Roman mythical creature into the embodiment of evil itself. Now, to you and me, this painting can feel nothing but sinister, regardless of arguments to the contrary.

Had Roman theology prevailed, we would likely see the crucified Christ as a strange and incomprehensible symbol of a tortured God, a barbaric symbol of reverence. We would be horrified at the willingness of early Christians to be crucified themselves, a slow, agonizing death.

Crucified victims could survive for three or more days, and the Romans had become so good at avoiding major arteries that the most common cause of death was asphyxiation, exposure, and dehydration.

The cross was, for centuries, an instrument of torture, not of execution and certainly not of salvation.

Yet Christianity did prevail, and so now we see Roman and Greek Gods as little more than naturalistic deities that, granted, make excellent material for video games and movies, but few would take you very seriously if you said you were praying to Zeus.

To the victors come the spoils. And in the war for cultural dominion, no more precious spoil exists than truth itself. Truth is what your symbols represent. Truth is what your symbols make you feel.

The Power of the Vernacular

Culture has always resided more in a people's objects than in their monuments. Cultures can, and do, borrow artistic and architectural styles without compromising their own national identity. Americans can build Greek-style capitol and remain perfectly American. Italian sculptors can pay homage to classical styles and stay Italian—These are symbols you look at, not objects you live with.

Yet, could the same be said for their cutlery? Their chairs, cups, beds? Can the unique cultural and environmental characteristics that shaped these everyday objects through the centuries be transplanted without consequence, even within similar cultural components? Not easily.

The Chinese developed chopsticks around 5,000 years ago, originally as cooking utensils and later refined for eating, their design adapted for small pieces of food and communal eating, partly influenced by Confucian values of community and harmony rather than individual consumption. Japanese chopsticks evolved differently—these were shorter, tapered, and specifically designed to pick up rice grains, symbolizing Japanese emphasis on precision, ritual, and personal composure. Korean chopsticks took yet another form—they were flatter, made of metal, and designed for Korea's specific culinary traditions.

In Europe it was no different. In the North, for instance, chairs developed high backs and enclosed sides, a sort of winged design that blocked drafts and retained heat in the colder northern climate. English and Dutch chairs from the 17th–18th centuries had thinner backs but still featured heavy upholstery and were constructed of thick wood for insulation. In Italy, where the climate is warmer, Renaissance chairs had low backs, no upholstery, with caned or rush seats that allowed more air circulation. And finally, Spanish chairs featured leather slung between posts rather than pad-

ded seats, cooling the seater.

A Roman household filled with Chinese furniture, a Chinese household with Italian tableware, a Scandinavian bed in a Mexican home would (in the past) have fundamentally altered what it meant to live as a Roman, Chinese, or Mexican. These objects are the texture of a people's daily life, and daily life *is* culture.

Hitler's obsession with symbols, old and new, very likely allowed him to recognize Bauhaus's symbolic power, and that of its products, beyond the "Marxist" or "Cosmopolitan" labels. These categories were usually one-size-fits-all classifications for bans, not explanations. And what Bauhaus's products symbolized was antithetical to his regime.

A German household filled with Bauhaus furniture would look identical to a French one, to an American one. The mass-produced, minimalist chair, lamp, bed, cup, carried no national character and none of the specificities that we explored—climate, religion, philosophy, region.

Bauhaus symbolized the iPhone, symbolized the Ikea, symbolized the Zara. This homogeneity represents a then fundamental shift in power.

In traditional societies states control identity through symbols, monuments, and rituals. Mass production, and in turn mass consumption, has transferred that power to whoever controlled both manufacturing and design. The state might control the public square, but corporations control your most private possessions. They now dictate style, status, and trends. Whoever controls what is produced shapes what is owned and, consequently, how people understand themselves.

This was what made Bauhaus the "other." This was the incompatibility. It was a vision of a world where German homes looked like French homes looked like American homes, where the intimate sphere of daily life, the space where cultural identity had always been most intimately expressed, became internationally uniform. Whether they understood the consequences of this philosophy, we can't say for certain, but for a regime built on racial and national distinction, on blood and soil, on the

unique character of the Volk, this represented an impossible contradiction. And so, it had to be closed.

Symbols control you. They control me. Those who wield symbolic power struggle for dominion over human consciousness itself.

The question "what am I incapable of considering in its presence?" is, for symbols, far more important than "what does it mean." For that is how their control is exerted over you.

Is Faun by Moonlight an innocent depiction of a Roman mythical creature, or an encounter with the devil? Is Bauhaus a threat to national identity, or simply functional furniture?

I will end this essay with the words of Rabbi Tali Adler, recited during the second morning service of the 2025 Rosh Hashanah, in the Central Synagogue.

"The greatest lie humanity tells itself is that we have outgrown human sacrifice. We call it by different names now, and make our offering to different gods.

We offer young men we call soldiers, as if the designation means that their mothers cry less when they die. We call masses of humanity collateral damage, and turn our eyes away from the pictures of their lifeless bodies as we sip our morning coffee.

And the truth is, we don't do it because we are heartless. We do it because we believe that it is necessary for the world to keep running. We do it because we believe that the gods whose favor we so desperately seek, freedom, security, prosperity, flourishing. That they demand blood as the price of their favor."

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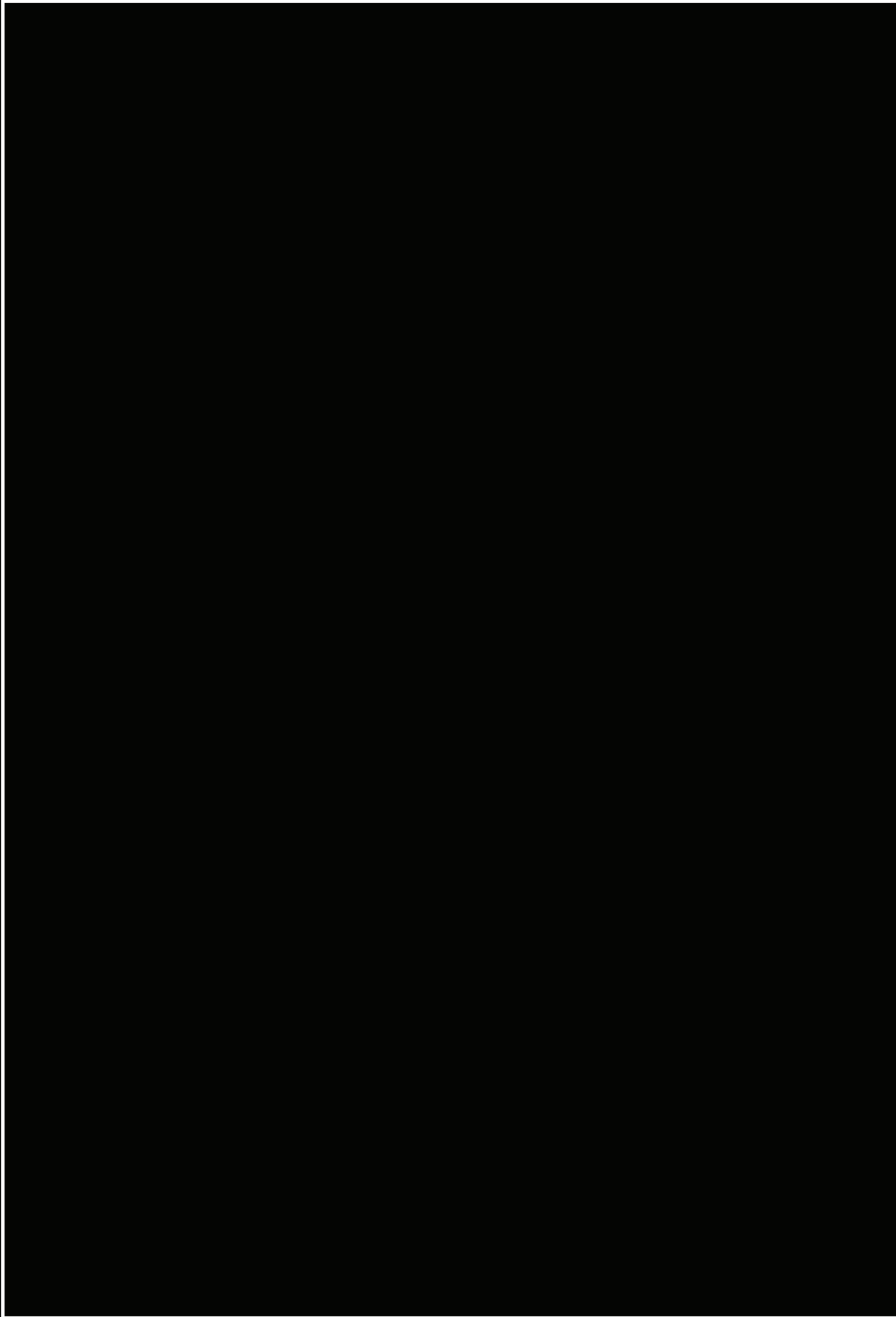
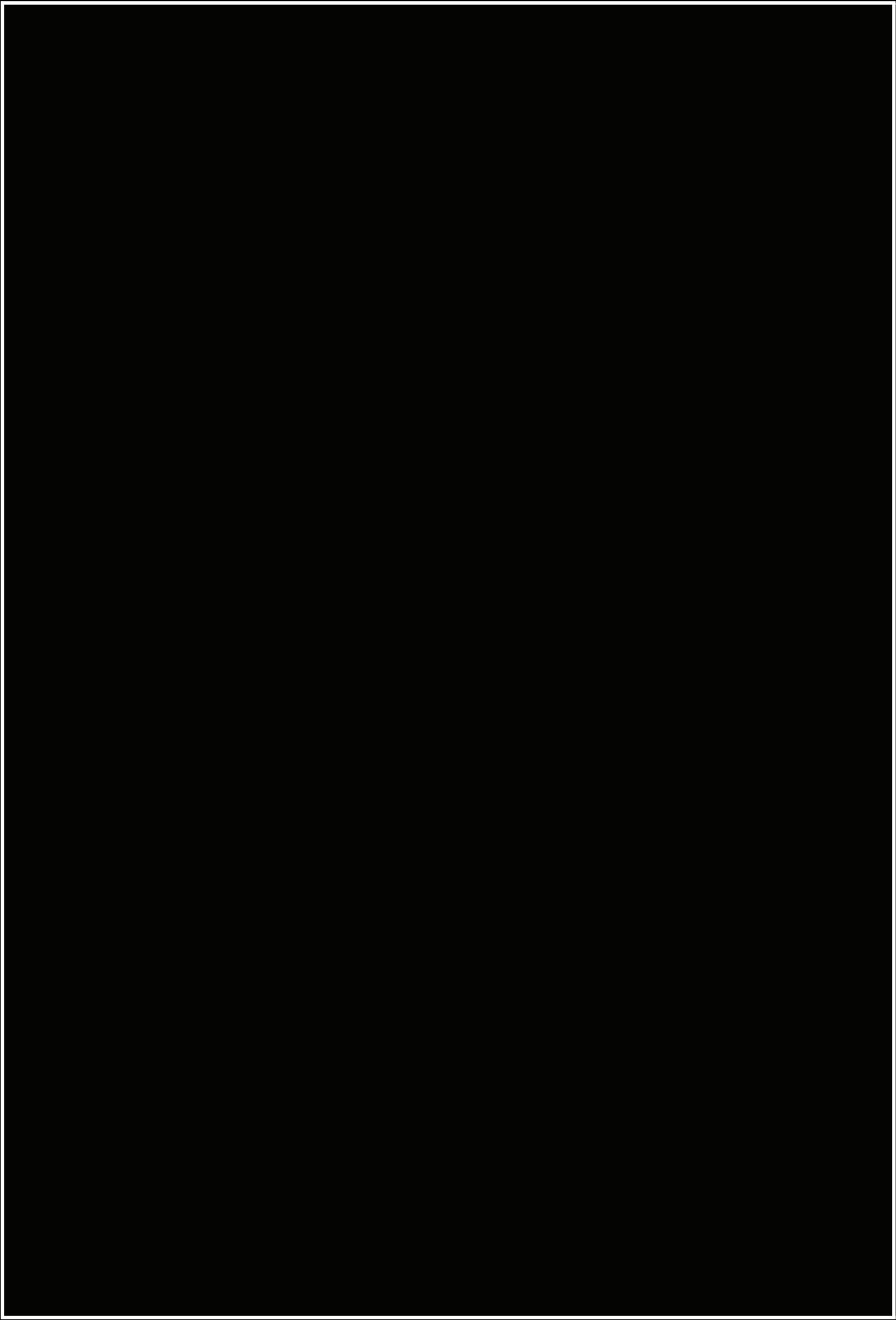
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CONCERNING THE VAMPIRE

Edu Garcia



CONCERNING THE VAMPIRE

John Francis Montrose
New Orleans, Louisiana
April 30th, 1891

To the Honorable Étienne B. Arnaud
Presiding Judge of the Civil District Court
Parish of Orleans, Sitting at the Cabildo

Sir,

I write to you today not out of courtesy but out of necessity. A terrible farce has been allowed to continue these past three months, and it is one that I beg you put a stop to at once, while ensuring that the injured parties—such as myself—are adequately compensated.

At the center of this charade is one Friedrich Müller. You, and the rest of the great state of Louisiana—dare I say the greater United States of America—now know him as the Vampire of the Vieux Carré, the first so-called confirmed sufferer of the affliction lately coined by Dr. Horace L. Merriman as Vampirism. The very man to whom you, at the behest of Governor Nicholls, extended a pardon just yesterday.

With the letter I write to you today, I intend to prove that this man is not only a farce but a fraud—one who has deceived and robbed the good citizens of the United States. It is I, not he, who is the famed Vampire of the Vieux Carré. I, not he, suffer from Vampirism. And I, not he, am deserving of the honors, the recognition, and the recompense he has unjustly received.

Permit me, then, to recount the events which gave rise to this travesty and the injuries done to my person through these lies. For although I am confident you will know the story in its broad strokes, it is only through the details I now provide that you shall perceive the full extent of this farce and understand that I am the person truly worthy of the acclaim and rewards unjustly given to Mr. Müller. And so permit me to start at the very beginning.

I was born in the Most Faithful Kingdom of Portugal, in the year 1779. Though this makes me one hundred and eleven years of age, my affliction has spared me the passage of time. I was infected unwillingly and by a man I had never met, on the night of my twenty-eighth birthday as I left my local parish, having stayed late in quite devotion.

Instead of draining me unto death, this unknown man chose instead to let me live and fed me of his own blood—thus passing onto me his own condition. I never learned the reason for this, and never saw him again, but I believe he took pity on me—having seen his violence visited upon a man of such faith—and decided to spare my life, twisted as his mercy may have been. Many times have I been visited by that same feeling of compassion, but death is assuredly a better fate than this existence.

In his now famous report, Dr. Horace describes Vampirism as a physiological affliction with deep psychological effects, and I could not agree more with that assessment. Unfortunately, he did not have a legitimate sufferer under his care, and so could not grasp just how true his words were—how profound the effects, how far-reaching the misery.

For you see, Your Honor, Vampirism may be defined by a single word—and that is Pain. A constant, terrible pain that can only be dampened by the consumption of blood. Human, for that of beasts has little effect. Enough time without it, and the sufferer will be driven mad by the agony.

In those early years, I often succumbed to this madness, attacking indiscriminately in the fevered state that prolonged abstinence would bring. I could not bring myself to prey upon the innocent and so targeted only the criminals within the city of Lisbon. I maintained honest work and, despite all, remained a well-regarded figure in society, taking what small solace I could in the thought that, however twisted, my affliction was not without its uses to the greater society.

All was soon upended when Napoleon cast the Peninsula into war. It was at the port of Lisbon, that I first heard of the great United States of America. A young nation, they said, that had somehow defied—and defeated—the mightiest empire the world had ever known. A place where a man might become whatever he dared to dream, and where freedom wasn't merely an ideal but made into law.

Compelled by something I could not name I changed my passage northward,. In the year 1808, I boarded an English merchant vessel and embarked on a five-week journey that nearly claimed my life. I fed on rats, fighting the ship's felines for them, and when necessity demanded it, I fed on them too.

As I adjusted to this new country, I was struck as much by its principles as by its confidence. The notion that a man's station might be earned rather than inherited was a revelation to one raised under the old ways, such as myself.

I sought quickly to make myself worthy of this land's new promise. I found steady work as a translator for a mercantile firm owned by Portuguese Jews, whose owners valued discretion and precision. The flexible hours suited my condition, and for a time I lived modestly, even peacefully—always striving to prey only on the wicked.

I will not lie to you, Your Honor—on occasion, when pain clouded my judgment, I fed less carefully, and I fear that some among my victims may have been of good moral standing. For these sins I continue to beg our Lord's forgiveness, though I remain assured of His understanding.

In 1812, I was attacked by residents who, discovering me feeding upon a pander and unwilling to hear my defense, nearly killed me. I escaped and wandered for years thereafter, at times reduced to sleeping in barns and caves like a beast, assaulted and accosted by marauders, spat upon and kicked for sport by those who mistook me for a vagrant. Terrible times, Your Honor.

In 1831 I settled in Nashville, working for The Cumberland Gazette. A discreet physician, having guessed my condition through means that escape me to this day, granted me access to the infirmary, where I fed on the dying. The terminally ill could be granted a swift, but gentle, death rather than endure their suffering. Their blood was most foul, but I bore it. That quiet arrangement allowed me to stay longer than anywhere before—for a time, I almost believed myself part of the world again. Yet war would force me to move once more, and so when it reached Nashville, I turned south into gentler lands.

The same pattern repeated—discovery, suspicion, flight. Always driven from whatever humble home I had made, always forced to begin anew just as I began to find peace. And so I moved as necessity demanded, until at last, in December of 1889, I came to Louisiana and settled in the great city of New Orleans.

I took a position as proofreader for The Baptist Star, a publication of good repute, where my fluency in Latin and French was most welcome. My nocturnal hours proved a benefit rather than a hindrance, and allowed the reverends to submit their sermons at later hours, and with greater deliberation. In time, my contributions became so valued that the editor-in-chief, the venerable Reverend Josiah T. Wycliffe, offered me lodgings in the attic above the press-room—free of charge. I accepted with humble gratitude and have since devoted myself to the work with distinction and zeal.

Tell me, Your Honor—is this not a story worth hearing? A narrative of genuine suffering that merits the public’s attention? I had thought as much myself, which is why, during my years on the road, I began setting down my experiences in writing—an autobiography of sorts, disguised as fiction, for prudence demanded still that I veil my truth. Each night I would labor over these pages, crafting a tale both instructive and compelling from my century of existence.

When at last I deemed it complete, I submitted the manuscript to that most esteemed publishing house, Harper & Brothers, under the title “The Sanguinary Gentleman: A Novel.” The response I received from Mr. Josiah Thatcher, their senior editor, was as swift as it was crushing. “An absurd fiction,” he wrote, “that stretches not the imagination but the very limits of one’s patience.”

So now, Your Honor, we arrive at the matter which pressed this letter into being. You have now before you the shape and scope of a life marked by affliction, perseverance, and accomplishment. Permit me then to tell you how it has been usurped by corruption, greed, and fraud.

As I have confessed to you, and to our Lord, my condition has led me to act in discordance with my reverence for Him and, in my crazed state of unbearable pain, target the less deserving of its wrath. It was on one such occasion that this ordeal began—on the night of the twenty-sixth of January 1891, with the incident involving one Mr. Thaddeus Beauregard—a dock clerk, as you well know. To prove to you that it was I, and not the impostor, who committed the act, I offer details that only the authorities, or the one responsible, could possibly know.

The incident took place near the hour of one in the morning—I recall glancing at my pocket watch not long before. The location was a narrow alley off Bienville Street, between Tornier’s Tavern and Madame LaLaurie’s Millinery. Mr. Beauregard wore a navy sack coat, unbuttoned, and a striped waistcoat, pale green and gray, with one button missing at the bottom. His shirt was white but yellowed at the collar. He also wore a thin silk cravat, of a deep burgundy color that came undone as I grabbed him; it was left lying near the body. Though I have seen no mention of these particulars in the public reports, I have no doubt the officers of the esteemed New Orleans Police Department made proper note of them in their records and can attest to the truth of my account.

In the frenzy of consumption, I failed to take note of my surroundings and was thus discovered in the act by the woman who would become pivotal to this sordid affair—a strumpet by the name of Eunice, whose family name I could never determine, no doubt withheld in shame. She let out a shriek, impossibly loud as such women are, and drew the attention of passersby, forcing me to flee.

The woman’s account was sensationally reported upon, and her testimony gave rise to that now infamous moniker The Vampire of the Vieux Carré. Numerous descriptions of me were circulated, some merely fanciful, others outright impolite and disgraceful—particularly those likening me to a common flying rodent. But I held my tongue, and what pride I still held, knowing well the dangers of attempting to defend my honor.

Then came the announcement—the alleged perpetrator had been found and identified by the woman as a dock worker named Friedrich Müller. She swore, under penalty of perjury, that this was, beyond any doubt, the very man she had seen attacking Mr. Beauregard.

Now, I must confess, how this woman arrived at such a comparison is entirely beyond my comprehension. When you set your eyes upon me, Your Honor, I daresay you will agree that the resemblance is nonexistent, save perhaps that we both walk upright. I am of pale complexion, my hair is dark, long to the shoulders, and meticulously kept. My face is soft and agreeable to the eye. My figure is fit, my bearing composed, and my attire that of a gentleman of letters. I do not, and have never, dressed as a common laborer.

By contrast, Mr. Friedrich was burdened neither by the weight of beauty nor—so far as I could tell—by the weight of intellect. For just as God shaped donkeys as they are—lacking the grace of a horse, yet serviceable in their strength—so too did He shape Mr. Friedrich. Yet still, the woman's testimony was accepted, and this man was promptly arrested and booked at the Parish Prison under suspicion of murder.

Yet, I must confess that this development brought me no small measure of relief. For you may well understand that I feared the good people of New Orleans—however spirited—might not comprehend the true nature of my affliction and, should they discover me, resort to mob justice. And indeed, at first, this seemed the likely course of events, as many among the populace called for the man's immediate execution.

In The Baptist Star, Reverend Orville Fontaine published an impassioned opinion piece in which he cast the supposed creature as a herald of the end times. He declared that just as the Negro had been emancipated, so too would vampires and other demonic agents rise next—until, he concluded, the Devil himself sat in Congress. The piece proved so inflammatory that the impostor had to be relocated from the Parish Prison to an undisclosed site, owing to the threat of riot and a very real promise from the Ku Klux Klan that they would see him hanged by week's end.

For his part, Mr. Friedrich seemed incapable of defending himself, possessing not a word of English—despite having dwelt, so I am given to understand, within this great nation for some considerable years—and communicating only through crude gestures and pantomime. In this way he languished in his cell during those first days, no doubt bewildered and wholly confounded by his circumstances.

Shortly thereafter, however, there materialized—what divine providence!—a German translator, one Heinrich Gessler. Herr Gessler was also formerly known as Cornelius P. Barnum—the very same impresario who had, but a year prior, been traversing the rural circuits of our great nation, enlightening the masses with such cultural treasures as the 'Russian Wolf-Boy'—another remarkable specimen who, upon closer inspection, proved to be a County Cork drunkard adorned with crepe hair.

Indeed, no evidence whatsoever suggested that Herr Gessler had ever set foot upon Germanic soil or possessed even a passing acquaintance with that tongue—these curious circumstances noted by the very few skeptical minds among the press, though such voices of reason proved few and far between in the general hysteria.

These same discerning journalists reported that he had expressly forbidden German correspondents from interviewing his charge, citing concerns over "old country political entanglements" and the recent unpleasantness surrounding the Kulturkampf. How thoughtful!

This accomplished gentleman quickly became not merely Müller's interpreter but his agent in all matters, and his timely arrival rendered clear what this affair was always destined to become—a grand spectacle.

His first order of business was to ensure Mr. Müller was never exposed to direct sunlight, proclaiming—first to the press, and only a few days later to the prison authorities—such exposure to be cruel and unusual punishment forbidden by the Eighth Amendment.

The good constables of the NOPD, for all their diligent efforts, conducted what I can only describe as a thoroughly bewildered investigation. They discovered him to be a recluse of the most unremarkable sort—a man residing in common lodgings paid by the night, often found sleeping on the lower decks of moored ships. Not, as was later so romantically suggested, from any vampiric aversion to sunlight, but because the poor wretch lacked coin for proper shelter or had simply drunk himself senseless. He worked the night shifts at the docks—again, not from supernatural compulsion, but because such hours required more muscle than mind, and it was to this work his limited faculties naturally suited him.

But what sealed his fate was the discovery of a small trunk secreted beneath the bed of his squalid boarding room, filled near to bursting with blood sausages. This, the police chief declared, constituted the proverbial smoking gun—proof positive, in their estimation, of his vampiric condition. What these astute investigators failed to understand, or perhaps chose willfully to misrepresent, is that such sausages are but a common indulgence among the German populace, sold by the yard at a butcher's establishment and consumed with no more supernatural significance than one might attach to a loaf of bread.

As the investigation progressed, physicians were dispatched to evaluate him. Dr. Horace L. Merriman was then summoned to conduct the initial physical examination. He determined Mr. Müller to be in sound physical health, afflicted only by a pair of abnormally long teeth—yet another resounding proof of this man's vampirism, when it amounted to little more than advanced gum recession. Dr. Merriman, finding little to conclude from the body, requested the aid of Dr. Josiah C. Tomlinson, the celebrated alienist, to explore the so-called spiritual affliction of this creature.

It was also reported that Müller rejected all prison food and begged for his blood sausage, no doubt displeased with the prison food. That this was also cited as evidence for his diagnosis is baffling—especially given that he has since been seen indulging, quite publicly, in all manner of rich food and drink lavished upon him by his admirers. If he truly suffered from the affliction, he would not be able to take in food.

If you are wondering how I came to possess such intimate knowledge of these particulars, then I direct your attention to the only parties who have profited more handsomely from this charade than Mr. Müller and his handler—the press. Each day, without fail, they regaled their readers with what he had for breakfast, which distinguished visitors had called upon him, how many hours he spent in alleged meditation, even the precise manner in which he arranged his cell furnishings. Every mundane detail of his captivity thoroughly accounted, and recounted.

And do you suppose either man sought to correct this misunderstanding? Müller, perhaps, could somewhat excuse himself—being without a word of English. But his handler—this freshly minted German—had no such excuse. Rather than dispel the public's delusions, they fanned them with calculated precision. They fed the newspapers their fabricated stories and began curating the elaborate mythos which would fashion this simpleton into a tragic, misunderstood European Gothic figure.

And why do you suppose he proved so zealous—this translator? Was it out of concern for sufferers of vampirism? A noble defense of his adopted countryman? No, the answer is far simpler—Mr. Gessler saw in this affair what he had always seen in such tragic figures as Mr. Müller: an opportunity for spectacle, for profit.

Once the initial hysteria abated and public fury gave way to morbid curiosity, the fraud was duly returned to the Parish Prison. It was there that a veritable procession of journalists, rubberneckers, and society gawkers began paying court to the so-called “vampire,” each eager for a glimpse of this manufactured marvel. This grotesque spectacle—watching him perform his rehearsed pantomimes like some trained carnival beast, leaping about his cell and calling it flight, biting the heads off live chickens, supping faux blood—all for the titillation of his well-paying audience. Very well paying audience, I should say, Your Honour, for I’ve heard that at the height of this hysteria, tickets were sold for as much as five dollars a piece.

Of the veritable parade of societies that stumbled over each other to study this man, each more preposterous than the last, it was the American Paranormal Association, however, that quickly became the most prominent among them. They subjected the impostor to séances, spirit-readings, and sundry other carnival theatrics masquerading as scientific inquiry. Through these elaborate charades they pronounced him a vampire beyond all shadow of doubt, proclaimed him six hundred years of age, and declared that he had once served as a mighty warrior of the Holy Roman Empire! It beggars belief, Your Honor!

This madness would prove contagious even to the most illustrious members of higher society. So much so that a brand-new stage production was announced, drawn entirely from the elaborate fabrications surrounding this buffoon. Maurice Barrymore, I am told, will portray the impostor himself. Richard Mansfield shall assume the role of the ancient vampire master who transformed him. And most egregious of all—the divine Maude Adams herself was to be cast as his tragic love interest.

And what a most grievous waste, Your Honor. I have lived quietly and without fanfare, taken the utmost pains to direct my curse only against the deserving, I have borne my burden through decades of honest toil and bitter exile. For how I have waited for the day when I might at last tell my story, my adventures, my accomplishments! Through this unconscionable deception, not only was I stripped of this dignity and recognition that was rightfully mine, but the public itself was cheated of the privilege of hearing a tale truly worth the telling.

My righteous fury ate at me, Your Honor. I resolved to seek out a common criminal and allow my condition to take its course on him. With this I had hoped to evidence the fraud once and for all. The incident occurred on the night of March 2nd, shortly after midnight, along the periphery of Tremé—near the corner of Esplanade Avenue and North Broad, beyond the levee road. The man in question was a Mr. Virgil Amos Pritchard, whose brutal beating of a street woman that very night marked him, in my eyes, as a fitting candidate.

He wore a brown corduroy cap and a coat that hung ill-fitted on his frame—it was too fine for his station, and too long in the arms, suggesting it had not been tailored for him. His trousers were patched, and his boots mismatched, one laced, the other tied with twine. Your officers can attest to all of this, for though much has been said about the act itself, precious little has been said—at least in the papers—about the man upon whom it was visited.

How was I to know that this man had once shared a cell with Mr. Müller when he was first booked, and that, by all accounts, Mr. Pritchard had beaten him quite severely over some petty dispute? How was I to know, too, that Mr. Pritchard had been a moneylender of the most despicable variety, who made his living by shaking down the desperate and thrashing the poor? That his death would be met by the populace with relief, and even with delight?

Immediately, the papers pounced on the coincidence and spun their tale—that the impostor had committed the killing, not as a monster but as a vigilante. When the obvious question arose of how a man confined to prison could murder someone in the street, his handler had the perfect answer at the ready—he had turned into a bat.

That absurd tale, rather than damning him, only fueled the frenzy. His popularity surged, and with it came a grotesque sort of respectability. For if he could transform into a bat and strike down at will, then surely—so the thinking went—he could have escaped his cell at any moment and rained vengeance upon his captors and this entire city. And yet he had not. This restraint was interpreted not as a sign of limitation but of moral purpose.

Now, with the impostor cast as avenger, the story twisted itself into something wholly unrecognizable. From a monster—a Hero.

At this point, Your Honor, I felt myself going mad. But when the official report by Dr. Horace was published, I was positively impressed, if only for a moment. At long last, Vampirism was acknowledged not as folklore or delusion but as a legitimate medical condition. Dr. Horace, who had reviewed the reports by Dr. Tomlinson and consulted with him directly, reached what he termed the natural conclusion that vampirism was real, very likely transmissible through contact with saliva or bodily fluids, and capable of altering the mind to such a degree that the afflicted might no longer distinguish right from wrong.

To condemn such a man to death, he reasoned, would constitute not merely a grave injustice, but would deprive the world of its sole known specimen—thereby robbing medical science of an unparalleled opportunity to study, to comprehend, and perhaps even to render aid to others similarly afflicted. Fleeting, as I said, was that awe, because in that very same breath he diagnosed the fraudster with Vampirism.

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It became clear to me then, Your Honor, what was happening. Mr. Müller and his handler were consumed by the sin of Greed, these so-called learned men of science by that of Pride. All clamoring for the opportunity to sign their name on history's grandest tale—truth be damned!

How else, to explain it? Dr. Horace, a decorated field physician evidently conversant with the latest advances in European medicine. Dr. Tomlinson, resident alienist at the Louisiana State Hospital, graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, and pupil of none other than the celebrated French mesmerist Charcot. Even Chief of Police Abner Moncrief himself—a decorated war hero and part-time author whose penny dreadfuls, I must confess, were far more delightful than he ever gave himself credit for—was among the first to pronounce this man a vampire.

One by one, these cultured and educated men were not merely eager to accept the impostor's story, but appeared determined to consecrate it as official truth. And why not? A lie, once endorsed by a single man of standing, gathers a momentum all its own. The second man follows the first to curry favor; the third joins the chorus for fear of being left behind. Soon, the fiction becomes an established fact, and the man who dares to speak the truth is not hailed as a hero, but dismissed as a fool.

And after all, what scientist would not wish to be remembered as the man who confirmed the existence of vampires? What physician would not desire his name attached to the discovery of the age? What police chief would not relish being the hero who captured a creature of legend?

Amid this theater of the absurd, I confess I took some small solace in the thought that, despite it all, Mr. Müller would still be duly tried and executed. And though he may not be guilty of the crime of murder, he is certainly guilty of Fraud and deception. Imagine my bewilderment then, Your Honor, when I learned yesterday that the charlatan has been granted a full pardon! This decision, rendered by our esteemed Governor, made with your own endorsement was allegedly urged by the physicians previously named. And so from prisoner, our imposter was turned to patient, and from patient to the object of public sympathy.

He is to be released, I understand, into the custody of one Miss Lavinia Eustacia Chastain—a society matron whose fortune is exceeded only by her appetite for lost causes. She has opened her Garden District estate to the fraud, proclaiming him a “misunderstood relic of God’s more poetic design.” There, as per the official statement, he is to receive care and be studied, as though he were some miraculous specimen and not a common dockhand reeking of sausage and deceit.

And yet, the most profound injury was yet to come. I have been informed that a book chronicling the fabricated life of this man is already in preparation, to be published by none other than Harper & Brothers. Harper & Brothers—the very same house that dismissed my own manuscript as an “absurd fiction” that “stretches the limits of one’s patience”—now rushes to print the squalid fantasies of a brute who cannot sign his own name. The same venerable publisher that once gave us the works of Mr. Twain now prostitutes its reputation for this fraud, eager to peddle his manufactured tales at two dollars a copy.

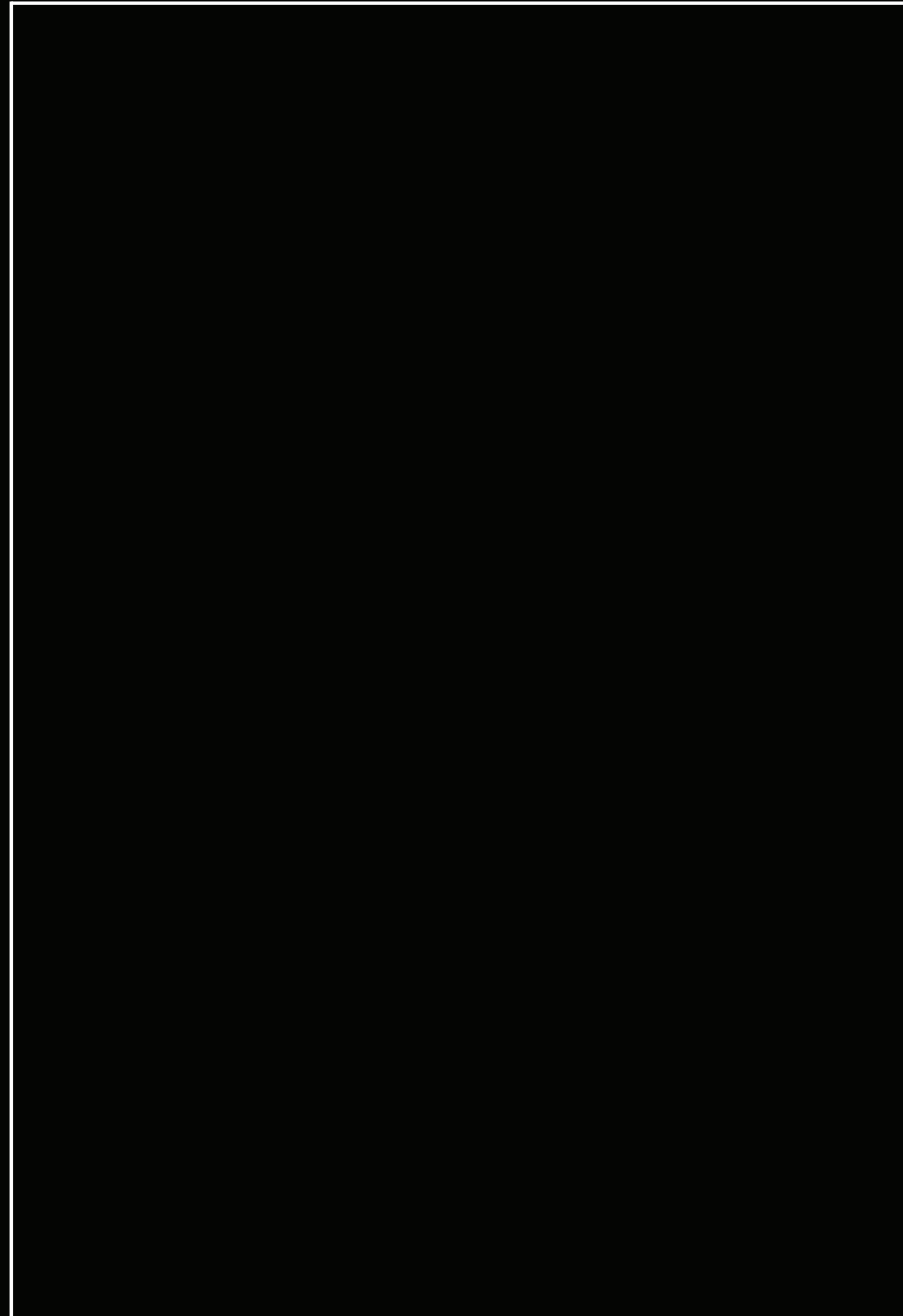
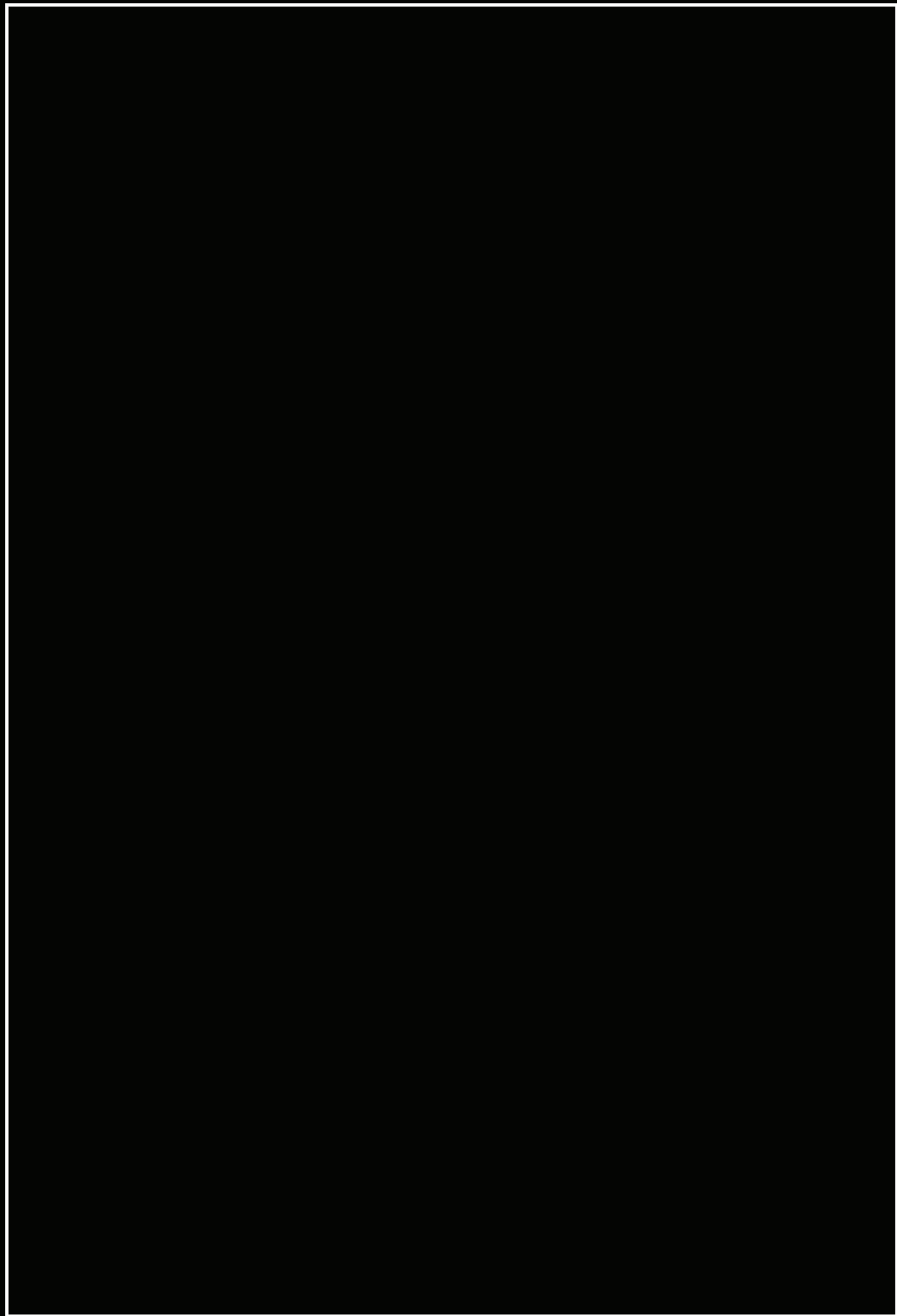
Your Honor, this letter has grown far longer than intended, though it should never have been necessary at all—so let this record reflect that I, John Francis Montrose, am the one truly afflicted by the now recognized condition of Vampirism. I am the Vampire of the Vieux Carré—not some stammering dullard in borrowed boots—and the accolades, the allowances, and every cent of that publisher’s advance belong to me by right.

You may be inclined to dismiss this letter as the ramblings of a mad fool, but I beseech you to reconsider. For if I, a man of education and restraint, have been driven to such desperate measures by this fraud, what of my less civilized brethren? Afflicted men and women who, like me, have endured many more centuries of torment without the benefit of refined society to temper their rage. When they learn that some common pretender has usurped what belongs to us, when they witness the world celebrating a lie while we suffer in shadow—I fear what such beings might do. Their fury, unchecked by civility, could prove most unfortunate for all concerned.

You may think that they would not dare to do such a thing. But I would dispel you of this notion as well, for you see, what has stayed their hand until now was the threat of mob justice, the executioner, even vivisection. Yet now, through your own endorsement, vampirism is recognized as a legitimate affliction deserving not execution but compassion—comfortable quarters, medical care, publishing contracts and, most important of all, a pardon for all crimes past and present. If they cannot receive the recognition they deserve through these civil means, perhaps some may seek to claim it more directly. I would much rather see justice and fairness enacted in this case.

No longer patient, decidedly less respectful,

John Francis Montrose



FBM THANKS

We are so blessed to have so much and so many to be grateful for. When we started this magazine, we had little more than an idea and a vision, but it was through the support of our readers, writers, and supporters that it could ever see the light of day. We especially want to thank the following people for helping us bring these amazing stories to life:

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- G. Upshaw
- Garelick
- Jackson

These people took a chance on us and made this possible. We couldn't be more grateful and will continue to work hard to showcase the best literature has to offer.

Goodbye !

And so, dear reader, like all great things, our inaugural issue of Faun by Moonlight must end.

We hope that you have enjoyed these stories and our monthly essay.

Be sure to drop by our website to discuss the stories you've read and give a word to our wonderful writers.

Thank you and see
you next month!