**Death of a travelling man**

For some time now, Mathieu had been committed to an idea his life was bound to the banalities of transport. The sheer immensity of the indifference of travel blended with a perennial problem of scheduling and locations. The human condition, he had long surmised, was doomed due to suboptimal commuting, and a general problem that events underscored would be lengthened out, flattened in the most aesthetic way.

He had tried to explain his theories. He joined groups and societies, but enthusiasm and support quickly waned, and his gaze was avoided. He searched large libraries for evidence of his beliefs. He cited detailed literary and historical examples, mounting the somewhat impressive (though admittedly opaque in the final analysis) argument that drew from numerous continental philosophers. His approach was both industrious and thorough, but he would be met with only the most bemused and vacant looks. For a time, he attempted a mathematical method, creating complex structures and derivations that filled the pages of numerous dog-eared notebooks. But no one (for now at least) could seem to make head nor tail of the ramblings. Mathieu came to believe that language itself was the culprit. So, in what would be a last-ditch attempt, he started delivering lengthy lectures in hired halls of suburban hotel chains that that were interleaved with other sessions on self-help and get-rich-quick types. He outlined of the fatal flaws in semiotics, the linguistic turn that presaged an end of true knowledge. But he became a failure in this regional circuit, his enterprise not getting off the ground.

Mathieu had been fired from this job. This was both inevitable and somewhat anticlimactic. But having nowhere in particular to be set off its own chain of events, bringing confusion to the locations into his life. He took the airs of a spiritually enlightened being, floating into the different time zones and blurred schedules, a travelling salesman without wares all alone in the ether. The travelling man circumnavigated a world of pre-discovered things, coming to dwell in a network of infinitely connected highways.

Mathieu had been seeing a therapist, a serious figure named Wendel who wore a fittingly serious ensemble. During their sessions the patient had attempted (unsuccessfully) to transition from patient to collaborator. But Wendel would have none of it explaining, politely at first, that Mathieu’s actions were simply the clumsily erected symbol of his need to escape the present moment. Wendel explained that it was all well documented in the literature, and the incessant need to travel through a network whose nodes were becoming smaller would no doubt end badly. Wendel, during his more career minded moments, had come to be secretly fascinated by his client’s colourful descent into madness and planned to publish a series of articles with the theme of content-free connections and its relation to the unsound mind (Mathieu had neither given consent, nor was even aware).

In the present moment, many months after the failure of therapy sessions and in the minutes just prior to the end, Mathieu was travelling in a new car on an almost deserted stretch of highway between cities whose names he could not recall. For the last few weeks, he had taken to travelling this intertwining infrastructure, that appeared an endless loop of interchanges. It was an attempt to underpin his life’s work with practical application, to ascertain the missing parts of his theories. The paperwork squeezed between the seats, full of paper, In the passenger side of the car Wendell sat in discomfort, zip-tied, and full to the brim with sorrow, finally out of things to say.

To the logistics of current hijinks: while whizzing down the highway at breathtaking speed, Mathieu’s plan was to kill the headlights on the car, leave it in cruise control, climb out of the side window, get to the roof of the car by leveraging upper body strength specifically conditioned for the task at hand, before sliding down the windshield to the bonnet and adopting a lotus pose. Exact motives for the carefully concocted plan would never really come to light, forever buried in Mathieu’s disorganised papers and his general lack of celebrity. However, in obscure journals the matter would sometimes be related to a human desire to uncover hidden existential spaces. Had anyone actually stayed for the entirety of Mathieu’s lectures in the burbs, they might have heard complicated theories that our longing for death is so profound, and life itself is just a suicide that lasts too long, and immortality is more a problem of neurosis than biology. Wendell had heard the theories about four months in, had politely steered the conversation laughed, hackneyed but scribbled drooling later in a notebook into the early hours, a singular person seduced by the argument.

Now with his vehicle carefully prepared, its automation and AI smarts stretched to the limit, Mathieu enacted his plan. The chosen cruising speed speed was 123km hour (76.4 mph) and the car’s specs promised no more than a 5% variance depending on factors such as gradient and road curvature. Wendel’s eyes had been wide in horror for a while now and he tried to articulate an even higher level of despair through a tightly bound gag. But Mathieu’s focus was not to be interrupted. He moved slowly out of the window, careful not to touch anything on the car’s impressively featured dash.

In only a few minutes was on top of the car. He then reached inside the window pressing on the automatic window button locking himself outside. The final move was executed with elegance, sliding down the windshield and coming onto the bonnet, centring his weight. He adopted the chosen and behand upwards into the sky whose stars were now richly illuminated. He focused his third eye and waited for revelation.

It was impossible to quantify the passing of time and perhaps it was seconds, perhaps hours, perhaps days), the headlights of another car came further into focus, illuminating the scene. It undermined the perfect Zen scene. But he was not completely alone and on the periphery of his field of vision, he saw blips, cars both far in front or far behind, their lazy distribution increasing in density. Another vehicle out of focus and one came up beside him and there was a woman inside who peered out at him. It was convertible Mathieu her hair appeared windswept and mysterious graffiti inside it, counting days on the walls. She was older than him, perhaps twenty or thirty years, at least a generation, but it was hard to say in this light but. She cruised along-side him for a while, taking in the scene.

Eventually she spoke, half timid, like any choice of words would not be quite right.

“I too am going through a difficult time”.

Mathieu did not feel quiet in the mood for company but maybe it was the I have been thinking of incorporation it into my yoga practice to pull and push myself out of small places. But you might find a resulting ache and pain but its best to push through. And they half words from the wind and the sencene, the hours after midnight My kidnapped therapist says I am projecting. That I am scared of time. You know at the moment of birth I believe we have, shock of birth gives us a death wish that is impossible to shake,

But he trailed off, realising she was not listing, stuck in a soliloquy of her own on eachother’s periphery. She spoke a circle of people and she was saying that she had on the periphery. I have a circle of people: children and children of children. Loneliness of geometry An estranged daughter. My grandchildren. I am connected to the world. I ring and leave messages and then So she rang and then there was nothing. Unsure if she should leave a message. We are just the curators. Helooked into the car, sharpie on the wall. Network.

And for a moment they were in love. Because in travel, it would defy time if they

could imagine we are right now I suppose, she said. It would be timely, convenient. Maybe make sense. I would. Once in the carpark of one of those at least for a moment. In a romantic move he reached out and pulled her and her car wobbled before disspearing fromt eh road, humn of the car, and gag screams of Wendel You might like to speak to Wendel. It takes a breath, you get lost in its pause. And they turned back and looked at him, screaming out to silence in the car. We should run it by Wendel, maybe it’s the breakthrough we need. You know, we could be lovers. Imagine if we were lovers. We

But their speeches and their plans were cut short as Mathieu’s car reached its technical limits. Later investigation would reveal the uneven distribution of weight with her untrained body, her beautiful because right now there was no future. Perhaps unsure of how to keep hold in such situations, the woman disappeared, untrained. Falling off, and the speed making her disappear in a puff faster than magic. And around that time, Wendell had become partially free, reaching for the steering wheel but this of course added to the panic adding to the chaos and the car flew from the road, through a barrier over an embankment into tangled trees. Daniel felt that interruptions seeing how the world so often was, and nothing could be framed from fragments and final thoughts remained elusive. And it did not matter because just a moment later he became at least a thousand pieces, dissolving into the space.

Emergency services arrived quickly on the scene. Expert manoeuvres were undertaken with the jaws of life and Wendell was pulled, inexplicably, unscathed from the wreckage. He clutched the half torn papers of some of Mathieu’s writing, thoughts of his mad patient receding, tried to collect his thoughts and thinking of the future.