

*MKS Volcofsky*

*Stump*

She left

but she left her egg behind. It's a small, shiny silver electric egg, could fit inside a chicken egg. From one end of it a thin black cord runs to an index-finger length power source, two AAA batteries inside black plastic, with a slide-lever like a volume control on a tape-deck. The slide-lever varies the speed of the egg's vibrations. I dunked the egg into a jar of coconut oil. It was a humid day and the white paste had melted into pond water. On the bed on my back our mirror at my feet I inserted the egg into my ass. All I needed do was push and not resist. Yoga has taught me that. It hesitated like it was looking around to see if anyone was watching, and then suddenly disappeared like it had found an escape hatch. It settled in my ass. Inside me —some place I couldn't pinpoint— I felt the strange soft missingness of a fresh-pulled tooth. I waited a second, then I slid the speed-slide halfway up. My cock was already hard, and the electric tickling of the egg made it harder, looked like its head would split like a ripe abused plum. I watched in the mirror. I had an electric cord running out of my ass. Well. Who didn't. I noticed the skin under my chin. I was older. The thought ran into my mind like a moth into a windshield. I started to laugh, but I noticed lubrication had started to run out of my penis' sidewise smirking mouth. This took my attention. I ran the speed-lever up higher. I couldn't tell if it felt good or not. A confusion of concern, curiosity, fascination, and the ridiculousness of it all — underlay by an intense thickening and condensing of time as I could feel orgasm start to boil — I grabbed my dick and squeezed it, and I could feel the egg be sucked deeper into my ass. I ran the speed up to the highest setting. My teeth began tingling. I could feel my eyebrows contract in a pose of worry. I wasn't moving anything much. I tugged on my prick like a bell rope twice, once, could feel the egg suck even deeper into me, like I'd swallowed it,

and then a puddle of sperm was panting out of my cock's mouth, onto my belly. I'd barely felt me come. My eyebrows were still knitted. I slid the egg-control to off. They undid. My teeth cooled and seemed to float. It was like I'd forgotten what I was about to say. Something had been there, right there, and now wasn't. I knew it was gone but I didn't know what was gone. I pulled on the cord, and the thing wouldn't move at all. I lay off. I got nervous, it would break off, it wouldn't come out, I'd be killed, this silver insideless thing would keep making its way up into me until it interfered with my heart. I pulled again, and I realized it was me holding it in. I felt a little afraid, at pain I expected would be coming. I pulled again, trying not to resist. I stopped. I felt like I was going to take a shit on the bed. But I realized it was the silver electric egg, not shit. I'd heard this from them before. With that in mind, I began to pull steadily and slowly on the egg, and allowed the shit feeling to come with it. And there it came. And then the thing hesitated, like it didn't want to leave home, and then suddenly it jumped out of my ass. A small dab of oily excrement on one end. I cleaned it up, and put it back in its nest by the bed. It had been fast and too strange to have been good. I had had a camera up my ass a week ago. Maybe I'm hooked. I got up and showered. My long week was over. I went to the shiatsuist.

Tiny amber gelatin capsules of suffering lodge under my skin. Living, they collect. With her intense pressure, they split, break, and their contents flood my entire body. The breakage of these amber capsules of suffering through my body sets off an explosion of peace inside my deep mind. I leave, speaking to her in a language I only remember then. One I used to think in, once. I walk home, feeling the cleanse of deep sobbing. My breath steady, deep slow, without trying. Deep, deeper, deepist.

Everything was alright. I'd made it through the week.

The game was going on. Interleague. I'd been invited to a show. The game seemed more important, but being amongst people seemed crucial too. I watched the first four complete, some of the best I'd ever seen. The light in Boston, from here, looked beautiful. The dark sand of the diamond, the great wall in left, fine batteries on both sides, the genius haunted strokes. I took it with me listening on the way to the show.

Up where there used to be lapdancing there now was overpriced schlock theater. Incidentally, the lighting person never showed up so the show, tonight, was cancelled. A wish secreted in my heart grown granted. I knew, sitting there, waiting, where so much sperm had been given but not received, where eyes had squeezed minds into tight murderous fists, where hearts small and hard and beaten flat as quarters had raced and crashed as finally as a subway train into an unfinished tunnel, I knew, there, that the game was more important, better "theater", and written by my master. The master.

I left, signaling goodbye with the radio in my hand.

I wanted to fuck the actress, but that's what they're there for. Then when you meet them, you realize you never will. Even if you fuck them.

I walked down Broadway, and at around 31<sup>st</sup> St the unbelievable catcher did it again. I shouted towards the twoday-shy full moon. People passing looked at me from behind their conversations, but I kept to myself, and didn't give my pleasure up just for a place to hide. Four blocks later still walking south I found myself alongside a system of interlocked corrugated boxes, their bottoms and tops punched out. It ran the entire length beneath a block-long strip of scaffolding. Men, black men, white men, asian men, latino men were laid out head to foot inside this cardboard tunnel. I saw buttondown plaid shirts pulled up above oily swollen bellies. I saw bare scraped wifebeater shoulders turned towards the street. I saw open mouths above shaved and not-shaved chins panting the

damp air. I saw no feet, no shoes. This long line of boxes didn't smell. The men inside lay like sickened animals in containers at a vet's, injured, helpless, pitiful, defenseless. It was the containers. The boxes –leaning, jerking, losing their square then falling still– was like a nightmare. Trees at night coming to human life, attacking. Walking by rats fighting to death in trash. Like a syringe draws up blood I feel pulled up to a ragged point a desire to smash at something, to stop this movement. The two teams were at each other's throats. What had begun as a mind-fuck had led to a physical confrontation. Players, managers were ejected. There was a heated argument about the earth around home. There were great plans drawn out in detail on the surface of the ocean. My mother and I, we don't talk. The long cardboard vent of men heaved and heated. I kept moving by them. I felt my bad knee begin to tire. Down ahead I could see Broadway cross Fifth in the wide x-ing convergence, the middle of the x cut straight through by 23<sup>rd</sup>. I was aware of an acute lack of space: around me, in the men in their turtlenecks of heat and spastic sleep, and in the invisible receding green brightly-lit tiny cheering planet glimpsed disappearing through the peephole of the radio. Another couple passed, a woman being walked off by a man. I only looked from the shoulders down. I was limping again.

At the x the Toy Building was lit up and guarded. Fenced. Past the reach of its lights the moon, tired, winded, wingless, rested on the asphalt shingled roof of the sky. I needed a place to sit. I crossed east over the blending of avenues, and sat outside the park there on a bench. If it's called anything I don't know. I rested my knee on a leg. The game had gotten back to itself, they were playing again, everyone was waiting for someone to get hit, but the thing was moving again, the hurt feelings poisonous and volatile, treacherous and a shame. But they continued. Now it was essential.

Rarely a person passed.

A man in a dark industrial uniform walked diagonally across the interpenetrating streets. He seemed to have decided I was someone he needed to talk to. He walked up to me, stood just beyond the threshold of my home, and signaled hello with an open palm, facing it at me. His other hand was hooked on his belt. The moon had caught its breath, had floated up off the roof, was shining without reserve again. One of his shadows was cast by it. I looked at him. He stunk of being alone. He was Indian, or Pakistani. Thick black hair brushed up tall, round hairless cheeks of dark brownred. A mustache you could count the hairs. Black eyes, sad with effort. He wasn't young. I felt my mouth fill with spit, my gums throb swell then sink back down, to normal.

Looking for a friend, he said, asking.

I've got friends, I said.

Feel like talking, he said, asking again.

I looked at him, then down at the radio. I showed him the radio.

The game's almost over, and I'd like to hear it. It's a good game.

Ah, he said. Well do you mind if I sit for some minutes before I go back home?

I said no saying nothing.

He sat next to me, a body's space away on the other side of the hooping green steel armrest.

My name's Herman, he said.

I looked at him.

Mine's — .

I gave him my real name, not knowing why as I did it.

You live around here?

No, I said. Just walking.

I never see you before, here.

That's 'cause I don't come here. I rubbed my knee.

I live in Queens. You?

No.

Home eighth finished. I turn it off between.

Nice night. He pointed at the Toy Building. I work in that building. My shift is finished midnight, but we are usually ending somewhat early. But everyone is playing cards. So I leave.

If the umpires do not see it it did not happen. Forty thousand sets of eyes have seen it clearly, and it does not matter, it did not exist. This is the rigid, unyielding core of the game, what makes the thing not a game of chance —that would be a lonely, languageless gambler's affair— but one at the mercy of the hunger or satiety of — the Law. Everyone saw it. No matter. What you saw happen, and what you are told has happened. What history is written. What story is told. The writers take their positions on the field no names on their backs, no team on their fronts. Businesslike, professorial. A number on a sleeve. Nameless integers dressed in the elemental blackness of space. What you saw happen, and what you are told has happened. What is and what was make a violent switch. Language awakes, awoken by lies. What you saw happen, and what you are told has happened. It not adding up, the math, the bar, the division, the remainder: wrong. Impossible. Unspeakable. Take a bat in hand and smash something. There is feeling, then knowing, and then the attempt to make it speech: the wind up, the pitch, the swing. Why it is called a battery: Generating source of all things human, this four part union exploding into

separation: pitcher batter catcher ump<sup>8</sup>. This all things four, tetric, tetralogical. Tetradooids. Tetradooidics. Tetrapoidals. Tetrapuntals. Tetrafugals. Tetraphonals. Tetrapons. Tetraextragrammatamicals. Tetraextragrammaslamicals. Tetragrammaslammaextricalpolysintiluswhammatoms. That there is law, and there is application of law; the instability of perception being primary access to the law. That the law sees — that the law enacts itself — an unmurderable hope. That the good ump sees with the eye of the law, having clear instantaneous contact with reality. That between perception and the call is where the instable moment —history— erupts. That all managing, action, strategy, effort, force, await their outcomes in the mouth of the ump, while homeruns, swinging strikeouts — these seem to get past, be external, be prior, to the root of language itself —are language-proof— and so are bedrock, fundamental, ahistorical, timeless: impossibly meaningful: unspeakably pleasurable. Winning, or losing, in a split ocean-deep second. What the game is about. Winning and losing. Getting home. Safe. So what, everyone saw it? No matter. The umpires' teeth clamp down on the neck of reality, below white uprolled sightless eyes, and shake it into stupidity. There is no path of appeal. Ninety feet of quiet, grass-lined dirt on a very. nice. day. You can die mighty well there too. Alone.

I turn it back on. I can feel the interval between innings, same way I can feel the width of the car when I drive.

Herman.

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<sup>8</sup> Conscious, as I am, that *battery* is normally applied to the pitcher|catcher unit, here I am deliberately using it to describe this unit of four: pitcher|batter|catcher|ump. They are never separate. They cannot be isolated and maintain their meaning. Each implies, each demands, each begins, each is the imagination of the other. One kid, alone, throwing a ball at a chalked brick frame, has the other three watching, calling every pitch. Two, one pitching to another, the same. Etceteras. So that even when just the *batter* is changed, the *battery* as well changes; kaleidoscopically the entire system shifts, adjusts, and becomes completely new in



Yes?

I want to listen to the game. It's almost over.

It is?

Baseball. It's baseball.

I see.

I feel his gaze move over me as I watch the radio in my hand rest against my aching crossed knee. His eyes feel like a mouthful of bugs spit out along my neck. The impulse to leave is strong. The game, deep in the ninth with a run to decide it is my reason to stay. That, and my knee. Herman waited. It was finished. I clicked it off. With everything that had happened, the ugliness and lies, the win was almost an afterthought. But the unbelievable catcher and his men had won. And that is good. I don't know why, but that is almost better than everything else.

I was smiling, I turned and looked Herman in the face. He smiled, using the moon to show me himself. I showed him the radio.

Your people win, he said, asking.

My people, that's right, I said. Wasn't easy.

You are a sportsman?

I looked away from his face, turning my head.

No, I said, to no one next to me.

Me too no, he said.

I turned back towards him.

You come here every night, is this what you do after work?

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relation to the prior at-bat. A transcendence over duality and a striving against an almost biologic trinity seem to be one or two of the hearts of baseball. Tetrality.

Mostly only Friday.

I looked down at the sidewalk. I felt him look at me. Something in me very quietly moved. I imagined us behind a tree. Well, that was that. He said my name.

Yes?

I looked at him. I looked. I looked in him. I felt around with my looking like I was reaching in a paperbag and trying to tell what I was feeling. The inside of the bag was dampwarm, but everything I touched was dry and thin like twigs. A couple of them snapped quietly in my fingers, and I could feel a gritty, papery dust. A grieving kind of suction pulled in me, around my heart. *Ah Herman* a voice in my head whispered a kind of sob. What had moved stilled, dissolving. I dropped my eyes. His thighs were thick, female. Like my mother's. Like my sister's. Like my grandmother's. Like a farm animal. I withdrew my hand roughly. I met his waiting eyes again, this time not looking at anything at all.

Yes?

I am going home to Queens to shower and relax. You wouldmaybe like to?

No. No. I'm walking back downtown. Home.

Alright, he said, rising. Very nice to have met you. Maybe I will see you again here on Friday?

Probably not, I said, looking up at him. I showed him a palm. Good night.

He said my name, with an ironic saluting tone, showing me a palm.

Good night.

He turned away and walked up Fifth. Fat ass thick thighs knock knees heels touching toes out.

There are two kinds of people in the world. Me.

Like nothing subtracted from anything. Like begging for sweets, for supper, for a safe time to go back inside. Like a cheek pressed like a toothache against cold brick waiting for the signal it's quieted it's safe again, inside, home. The demolition has stopped. And the shouting. Thighs like surveillance camera looking years later down on the rounded back of the livingroom alone. Up there from on high. Nine and a half feet. Thighs like you shouldn't, ever, have done that. Thighs supplicant before death, like it's mercy. Thighs excluded by everything written in the paragraph of life. Thighs breasty, thighs making cleavage, thighs that have never worked a day in their life. Thighs without mind. Like a farm animal. Like the pez-dispensing ass of a cow. Like a bullet in the fat back like a egg up the soggy butt. Like an ear to the keyhole of another world. Hearing my footsteps make their way without me. Turning to shush my friend. Turning to reach for a shoulder to hold on feeling the knee go bad. Turning my face up to the moon see I were bringing a dinner-tray in bed. Showing the moon my empty hands see they just been washed.

I packed the radio down inside my jacket got my way up off the bench and began making my way south. I used my arms like an oar in shallow muddy water, pulling myself along the bench backs. For the first few steps or two. Then I was back in the middle of the river, and pushing off from shore and walking on my own two feet again.

What is love?

Twice I waited for a bus and decided to stop waiting it was so long in coming and as soon as I left as soon as I walked down the Avenue as soon as I was in the no-man's land between corners a bus came moving brightly empty I waved and the driver waved without stopping like I was a sidliner at her parade and she was making a royal shower of beneficence on her subjects, returning our displays of adoration honor filling our cup of

thirst for recognition with dismissive random unlooking pours from a basically empty ladle or rather her *subject* here in this case. There was no way I could run, the knee was now heavy and hot like bent iron thrown thudding on a campfire. The hip above it was attached by a coal-hot rivet. And another piece of heated metal had been inserted into the side of my calf. The distance to home felt great now because I wanted to be there now. With or without her. I was about ready now to let the home be itself, at last, and contain me. I deny it this one pleasure, it's true. Postpone and postpone its moment of becoming itself. The asses of the buses looked like Herman's ass because Herman's ass looked like a face. Unwondering dumb wide brake eyes lumbering heavily potholey away. Ending walking the whole long way. As if this was the only choice. Twenty southern blocks and ten eastern avenues. Midnight Friday summer and rarely a person passed.

Her man. I had been that once. Her man. There was nothing I wanted. I was done with that. Me on many missions through the years prior and now this was the mission I was set out on. That I wanted nothing all in your face. Her man not. Showed Herman I'm not her man showed the night moving through it untouched, through the crowds and through the silence on the streets. That nothing I want. That I'm all over it, all done with it, all let go of it and her man no more. When the voice comes to rise in me want is like hair stuffed in my mouth it is unswallowable it is it is bitter it is husked thready tasteless chokingdry. It is. I'm not pretending I arrived that I don't want just I'm on the mission not to. And not just because she left. I'm gonna plug her in so hard and mighty? Her? Who was she really? She was the one who left even before she arrived. The roster is finite and everyone plays their position. Maybe you see one diamond but there's two there's always two. Everyone brings their own. That's just mostly the way it is. Certain things are not allowed. Certain things. There is a degree of rundlement. No, not that

that's not the word. There are degrees of what is possible as opposed to the dreamlife she ruined by arriving and being too real. One name per person that seems to sum up the problem. And even if we all had two three four and any other amount of names, this wouldn't really suffice to express the truth of this mismatch. This mismatched truth. What is singular seems never to actually appear. Or arrive. Call me by my singular name and the experience is one of being electrocuted with fraudulence. Of being fell on by a collapsed tent. Of being surprise-captured and placed under arrest. I am manifest in the instant of the name-calling, and this is really what it is, name-calling on the most fundamental level — mockery, taunting, ridiculing, excommunication, this name-calling — the moment I am called-in I am cast-out forever — in the instant of being called-named I am manifest in the voice-shape of whoever has called — I am the receptacle of their voice and am molded instantly and according to their call — The name they call me props me into position, properties me, turns me into a prop out there in their thing-littered landscape. Their outfield. And my me, my coins, my I-voice takes on the tone and want-source of their call. Then I know I'm me, and only then, when I have been called. I am a richly full bedpan of deposited voices. I'm my name in your mouth. I'm only me when you make me yours. And I'm not talking oppression and slavery and the political and the economic and the state of war I'm talking the moment of speech between friends. Between lovers. Between teammates. Between me to myself. That war. I'm lost when the voices stop. I'm listening to someone else speak and hearing my voice in the air. I'm not shirking responsibility. I'm denying the possibility of having ever been *one* at all. That was the bad bad dream. One for all. One for her. And she one for me. She won. The webs between my fingers remind me make me of her. Seem to have become more female, there. And the darkening of my of my beard reminded as I shaved then moved unshorn through the week

that reminded me often of the makeup she made around her eyes And now whats in my belly pain in my belly And but still I'm not her man no more someone else. Someone was. Someone would to be. But me I'm not I'm never will be I would have been I should have been no more. Two diamonds not even one home. That's why the thing never calms down. How could it? Find yourself in the middle of something and the place it was supposed to have started is gone disappeared and the place the same place it's supposed to end is also gone so it's just the middle and the middle all the time but that doesn't mean it's the same middle all the time it's middle from beginning to end but there is there *are* all these things this middle this beginning this end. I've seen. This body in me maintains a swiftness the body I'm in no longer can, I'm off the mound springing on the bunt making the whirling throw ballet the men say it's like ballet one-four-one perfect play and this body in me has the move the body I'm in no longer can make and still I don't know how this can be still the entire thing escapes me, me I'd rather kneel right here and beg forgiveness for forgiveness for not understanding for letting it happen, for not being able to stop it, right here on the cement pushpuck the red of the stoplight right out my mouth I don't know how it can be I'm old now I'm knee broke and belly hurted and listening-in like onto somewhere else the footstep music of my heart stomping out the windows of my home.

A couple of girls stomped by. One of them met my eyes as they were along me, she was saying "Nigga's got another thing coming" but looking through the words right at me while her mouth seemed someone else's. She was very pretty. Broad nose, petite mouth and eyes shaped like she was formed facing the wind. She saw something in me and it was not menacing. We were close. Her mouth shaped itself like her eyes and looked at me as they passed. A chokedoff word turned to music. My hollow mouth

electrified then inflating my whole skull. I turned to watch her firm denim ass and deeply creviced backbone move into the night. It was like watching the last escapepod float away without me. It always was. Neither turned to look back.

At First Avenue a bearded guy in a bloodstained white smock crosses my path. He's taking fast tiny toe steps and his eyes don't leave the ground. A heavy sagging yellow plastic bag hanging from his wrist. I hear him pitching singsong just above his breath. "T-bone, filet mignon. T-bone, filet mignon." The bottom of the bag filled with blood.

Then I was almost home.

Years pass and a certain street is unwalked. Routes fossilize and necessity topografies. Loss of blood flow to the brain really is what forgets. And these streets pursue themselves, without your help.

Before the accident, the knee, all that and all that time, this lot had been a garden, filled with animals. Stuffed animals. A ballgame etcetera and here I was, in front this lot on this street I hadn't been on since.

It had been a lot. Between two buildings backed by a third. Not really ever a garden. A crust of hard dirt and incinerator coal spilled out of overturned steel-rimmed cardboard drums. Man-size sidewalk-to-bedrock chunks of concrete fossilized with seashells and pebbles. Tiny broken bottle glass catching winter sun in gigantic flashes of color. Cat piss, rat shit, human excrement, herb, summer smells. A wild, forgotten smell given off by the weeds in springtime, a smell of somewhere else that was highgreen and unwalked and thrilling and remembered like a crucial face separated from its name. This was that lot. The pusheddown chainlink. Then it had been filled with stuffed animals, it was the Stuffed Animal Graveyard called so by all us who talked about it it was a kind of monument to the thing that was dead no not dead but buried in most of us, it was very haunting, very simple,

very terrible and moving and funny. They're there, some with tongue-depressor name-markers jammed into the crust, tutus fraying and tearing, fur matting and flattened by rain and greying down with exhaust and soot, propped up between mounds of garbage slabs of concrete stiff thickneck weeds sitting on discarded chairs one in a cartire-swing some with syringes hanging out their neck or an arm hung from nooses from makeshift gallows one like Mussolini hung by the feet speared through by broken baseball bats surrounded with flowers ringed by botanica candles mauled by animals one-eyed no-eyed amputated stuffing knocked out their heads all over and they're there, just there all the time, all the time, everytime you passed by there they'd be, looking and waiting and watched like photographs of civil war battlefields, arranged phony mesmerizing and telling of a moment that had just passed in which I stood up to the waist like in the middle of a fatal disease, and of an urgency I could not bear to meet and could not stop from hounding. This was long before. All sorts animals. I'll not name more of them. All the ones. All the ones you know.

There was nothing in the lot now but a couple of cutoff trees. The dirt crust. Thickstemmed weeds along the building edges. Streetlight shadow stones.

When Everyone thought Everything was okay again even then this street apparently didn't get the whole treatment. Somehow it's hung on, or maybe the thing died just before it got to it. No chain coffee, no advertising sold as food, no rent-priced head-cutters, no outlets to dress the whitewound of the face. No new rich ramshackle rooms. A palm reader and a bodega and a bar and a barber. Whether or not things are okay, these stay. All of them open, now. People around, now. So aside from the missing animals, on this block nothing much seems to have changed. The neon hand shining, a crescent moon in its palm, two empty chairs a small round table a curtained door to a back room. A few men in shorts and white socks, knees wrinkled above pigeontoed sneakers, sucking straws



from paper bags in front a window bricked up with espresso, diapers, matches, detergents, animal food. Music deliberately too large for its speakers, like bottle shards blooming from the lip of an estate's wall. Blinding blazing light showing the men in red&white striped smocks working on the men in their chairs, the wall behind them lined with men, all glances and conversation plunged in and hauled out of the mirror, baptized. And every now and then the bar door opens exhaling music like gas, and man and woman people move in and move out.

Just standing and leaning off the leg feels better, good. The fire's gone down in it now. All this *space* has seemed to open up and I'm gonna take it in. Night. Like in the mountains. What I need with history and vocation? And why I should sweat just over the portrait itself? There's no man alive doesn't work everyday. Some just notice it more. There was a time I was a defender of a stranger's books, of an adopted family's ideas of the future. I met with an accident, an all new silhouette, and this shift in attention changed the appearance of the world. And that change in the appearance of the world, to my surprise, was because the world had changed. It was the appearance of the disappearance of the onces world. History, vocation, portrait. They all were changed. The vantage point of the mountains became something I go to, again and again, nevermind I've never been. Because I can get, here, what's there. It's here. There are long blackeninggreen sinking spaces between high whiteblazing windviolent peaks, and what seems near will take days to reach. This is just what happened. Open space got tipped and far. And I'uz strung between a tentative rest and a real long way to go. Strapped to the house on my back, its two rooms, one night, one day. My mind become a satellite of my body. Disappearing behind it at regular intervals. Blinded out like celluloid burning. Leaving nothing but the picturenaked light. And the unblinkable blazing brightness showing nothing more than the

coldblindest night. Around then, I stopped walking this way. Topography of necessity, as mentioned. What changed has changed again though. I didn't know, but here I am, so I do, know, now. The stuffed animals, now that I am reminded, here, they were kind of reverse mountainish. See the mountains, by their absolute voice, subdue everything around them into a languageless raving awe. By contrast the animals —language stuffed into mouths sewn shut— forced everything around them into speech. And their speechlessness was a cavity every thing around them was forced to fill with the speech of its kind. You saw them they punctured you and you flooded into them. Bricks, garbage, bodies, faces, sunlight, shit, all talking. When the weather changed and the snow or rain ended or began it was the delivery of a monologue by a great, subtle, articulate actor, crafted by a great, subtle, articulate mind. The animals incited their surroundings into a frenzy of eloquence. A magnetic lake of shimmering exaltation filled this lot, then. Above, below, each and every side, wetted, shining. Vibrating exaltation. And here I am. Again. But fuck a stump in the lot is —upholstered. I —. A stump in the lot is *upholstered?* I walk over. It is. It's upholstered. A stump about a foot high, to about halfway up my calve. In the streetlight it looks like red leather, fat brassheaded tacks dimpling it like a couch and making a crown around its rim, hugged tight around the bark. A grin splits me vertical from my butthole to my eyes. Like I swallowed the radio. I laugh. A floor in me buckles crashes and fallsthrough and lands falls soft in a hand. Caught Shimmering exaltation. Each and every side, shining, wetted. The long past years The body not yet to be Delivered a gift right here i remember. i I see tears make small puffs of dust as they hit the dry dirt of the lot. I'm quiet. I press a finger into the thing, and it is soft, padded. It's real. Upholstered stump. Someone's laughing I can hear it I can feel them. Someone's there. Someone's is. I feel relief. Whoever made this has helped me,

now. Like the animals. Making what's around talk. Giving every thing its own page of speech. An epidemic of relationships, sudden, clamoring. Fast friends made on a plane going down. Forever. I look, and as I look, the more I look the more I'm looking the more the page of speech feels crumpled in a fist and I can't really hear what is being said I'm hearing something like through a wall but can't make out the words like I used to something's missing. I'm unable. It's not reaching. I can't. I was invited to sit and now feel disinvented. What *was* has been cut off and covered up. Something's no good. Now I can't tell have I been healed or heckled. The tears aren't running anymore. I've been freud with. Played. Here I am, still alone, and this *visitor* was never without friends themselves. And underneath the cutoff place something's caught that can't get out, and this fucking grandmother's upholsterer has imprisoned it forever. I wipe my eyes with a sleeve. I look at this stump. I notice I'd forgotten all about my leg, which feels cooled. I go over to a lesslit corner of the lot to piss.

With two steps someone walks up behind me and hooks my neck while I'm pissing. I piss all over my hand and sleeve. Something metal to my cock. Whispers in my ear *Don't move* Hand emptying my pockets. My radio. My keys to the dirt. Whispers *Take down your pants* I jam an elbow back towards him. Hooks my neck again. I think my eyes roll like a horse. *You think this is a game?* I feel the metal cut me. *Faggot* He pulls down my underwear. *I ain't gonna fuck you Slut You smell son You don't move five minutes or I'll fucking kill you An I'm watching* I feel the night air and the edge of his jacket on my ass. I want him to. A torrent of infected sperm. He pushes me facefirst into the weedy brick and walks off fast. Leaves, sharp branches on my bare balls and thighs. Brickslivers in my hands. Pissedup mud. I let everything moving around me settle down. Til it's the same. Like it was. Transparentize. The street's the same, everyone's

still there. Somewhere there's a dog. I try to gauge the time. I do. I go and sit. I feel some twigs in my pants. I squint to see if anyone's looking towards me. No. Nothing. Not much of a cut. Not much of anything at all. A little drop of blood makes a small puff of dust on the ground between my feet. It stops in less than five minutes. I get up and go the rest of the way home. I look at the stump before I leave. Upholstered. I see it. I see the moon too.

Most people deserve to be killed I suppose. Me, sure. Why wouldn't I? If not me, who? I'm someone, like he is, and it could have been done, right then. And I wanted it, I wanted it to be done. Whatever it was do it. Whatever it is do it. Finish me. I wanted to be finished. It was as clear as anything ever was. Take it out of my hands. It's not anything anyway. It's nothing. It's nothing, nothing at all. This voice talking at the back of my head. It's the mirror run sick gone mad. Who'll shut me up now? Who'll lonely? Who'll side?

Back home I grab the visegrips and her egg. I'm going to find out what's in it. What is in it. I squeeze the fucking thing til it buckles in the center and its veneer of having no seam is cracked. It has two halves, like everything else. Piece of shit. No good fucking piece of shit. I twist it apart, chipping it's silvering off, mangling it, chewing it with the grips. I break it open. Copper wire spooled around metal in one half, a white plastic jig plus minus poles in the other. Nothing. Fucking shit. I throw it but forget to let go of the cord with my other hand, and it comes back and cracks me in the forehead. Freeze. Let everything get still around me, settle down. Like it was. Transparentize. I turn off the bedside lamp. For quite some time I'm there, sitting. There is a sifting noise, like rice pouring. Feint but steady. Someone trying to shush someone forever. I try to gauge the time. I don't know. It's not empty yet. Somewhere there's a dog. A little later an abrupt

change in shadow draws my attention. A light turned on, in the building backing this one, in a room. A floor lower. I've never seen who lives there. I lean and look. I can see through venetian blinds the edge of a bed, whitecovered. A person appears, moving slowly across the wood floor through yellow light. They are naked. Very very old. Very old. It might be a woman. Hair short and grey, tight and rough. Pelvis like it was dug up. Head never turning, moving all of a piece with the body. Shriveled breasts hanging below the hunch of the back, swinging with each step. Wrinkles everywhere, even the calves. After a long time they arrive at the corner of a table, covered with papers and books a plate and a glass. They lift the glass and drink, without tilting their head, without unbending their arm. They put down the glass, stand still for a little while, turn all in one piece, and make their way back to the bed. I can see pubic hair, shriveled breasts, their feet slap the floor with each step. The face I see can't be their real face. Pain in my belly again. They disappear behind the wall, and the light goes out.

I'm driedout thirsty. I drink some water myself, in the dark, from her glass, and come back in here. Sit on the bed.

I'm pregnant.

Madelon Galland's "Stump Project"

- Upholstered treestumps and branches, to be found on walks through the city, and  
in galleries as well -

Was the initial boot for this thing

Moved unspeakably, as I was, by her beautiful Stumps

And then the movement began into all the associations with *stump*

Which, in its way, led here

I thank her

Often

[1999]