

Monument

Destroyer

The moment his body crashes through the restaurant window, I realize how drunk I really am. This wasn't supposed to happen, I think to myself. I didn't throw him that hard. I watch the glass shatter, each shard seemingly so significant, spraying out around his fallen body in a widening electric halo. A crowd gathers instantly, though I'm hardly aware of their presence, busy as I am hammering this guy with one fist while pinning him against the windowsill with the other. The following day I'll learn, via the usual backchannels, he needed thirty-eight stitches to close the ragged gap in his lower back. I won't feel bad for him at all.

He starts to corral my face with his hands, forcing my head up. All I can hear are shouts from behind. And there, in front of me, I see three Denny's waitresses staring at me with that look, that one of fear, excitement and astonishment I've seen so many times before. Smiling, I just keep throwing punches, flinging shards of glass everywhere.

By the time the police arrive we're long gone. I can't really remember anything, not immediately, but as the four of us flee the scene everybody is talking furiously at me, filling me in painstaking detail. I feel like vomiting as the memory of what just transpired overtakes me. Still, it was nothing out of the ordinary. Just some guys outside a Denny's looking for a fight, and our condescending to oblige them on this particular night.

Either way, my hands are the most mangled part of my body, a sign I won the fight, which is probably a good thing.

I throw up in the backseat of the car, and realize it's my own car I've just thrown up in. I stick my head out the window and let the wind calm me down, while Vancouver's

buzzing lights stream by in a blurry mess. Cancer and I head back to our apartment, the one we've been living in for close to three weeks and have yet to put anything in except for a TV and some towels stolen from a hotel during our last hockey tournament.

I check my wounds in the bathroom mirror. My figure appears—scattered tattoos, fresh scars and hockey hair, with lean sculpted features resulting from sports and labour, not some downtown gym. Once in my bed it's a mere minute or two before I pass out into a deep, noxious sleep.

By the time I wake up, some eleven hours later, I'm reasonably late for my first session with the court-ordered psychiatrist. I speed through Vancouver, knowing full well being late or missing this appointment might land me in jail.

I open up the mahogany door to an office packed into the corner of the tower's third floor. An empty waiting room contains a standard receptionist behind a standard desk, with business cards that match the office's contemporary interior design.

The receptionist looks up from her computer. "May I help you?" she asks.

"I've got a three-thirty appointment with Mr. Gustafson," I tell her.

I sit down, and then glance over at the dated stack of *MacLean's*, *Reader's Digest* and *Time* magazines. I'm too tired and far too hungover to read. Instead I sit and stare at the receptionist, thinking how good she might be in bed, or atop that desk, otherwise allowing my body and mind to rest. I'm pretty sure I'm going to throw up again sometime today. I've got a bad headache and an excruciating amount of pain in my upper neck. My knees and calves are sore, a dull sore, and my lips are dry and chapped. I feel dirty because I haven't had a shower yet and I've got day-old gel in my hair.

I'm exhausted, sick and sore. My knuckles, splattered with dry blood, are held together with band-aids, and I continue to

find little shards of glass hidden in the various cracks and creases of my body like little razor-sharp grains of sand.

Before I know it I'm in the doctor's office, sitting in a dark blue leather chair, quite obviously his patient chair. I glance around at all his credentials framed in glass, and at all the pictures of his kids and his wife and his dog and think to myself, *Who takes pictures of their dog?*

I wonder if he cheats on his wife. I'd maybe like it if his wife cheated on him—with me—and meditating on this I zone out completely by the time the conversation starts in earnest. The first ten minutes are a blur of disconnected sentences and bad answers I regret as soon as they leave my mouth. I felt uncomfortable as soon as I sat down, but he didn't even seem to notice, or care, so now I've decided to return the favour.

"So what do you think that means?" he asks after a time.

"What means?"

"What does that mean to you?" he attempts to clarify.

"I guess it means what my view of life is. I guess it means maybe I'm not looking for what everyone else is looking for."

"How so?"

"I think this searching for meaning is doomed to failure. I think we need to look beyond the question. You can't expect an answer to a question that doesn't truly exist."

My hands are now moving around with my words, spelling them out in the air. He can tell I'm trying to focus when I do this, and I can tell he can tell.

"So you're saying there's no meaning to life?"

"No, I'm saying there's no question, 'What's the meaning of life?' It doesn't exist."

He looks perplexed.

"Okay, if you really think about it," I continue, "we structure our life on the erroneous assumption that life is a means to an end. Something that has a form, a structure—a

beginning, a middle and an end. We think life's purpose is to find the meaning to this question of the end."

"But you're saying the 'question' doesn't exist."

"Only in our heads."

"But doesn't that make it real?"

"Nothing the human mind creates is real. It's simply a creation of thought. If I think life matters, I'm convincing myself of that even though it's not possible, or at least highly unlikely."

He contemplates this a moment.

"So what are you getting at," he says eventually. "You're running in circles here."

"I dunno," I shrug, "you're the one who's supposed to have all the answers."

He studies me over the ensuing awkward silence.

"So do you have any questions?" he asks at length.

I lean forward momentarily, and then lean back into my seat. "Yeah . . . well, I just hope this works, you know," I say, rubbing the stubble on my chin.

"Why's that?"

"Well it's just that nothing's seemed to stop me so far. I've been drinking and driving for ages, and this just happened to be the first time I got caught, that's all."

"It's up to you, Seth. It's always been up to you. The decision will come from you. But I think your being here is obviously a step in the right direction, and really what more can you ask for right now?"

I sigh.

"Yeah, true, I just hope I'm right this time. I'm getting tired of being hungover all the time—it sucks. It's expensive and it's tiresome. And I'm sure it's not good for me in the long run."

"Look at it this way," he replies, leaning back in his chair. "You've got everything to lose, and even more to gain."

I burp under my breath, and blow it out the corner of my mouth. Another long uncomfortable silence arises that I decide not to break.

"Are you hungover right now?" he inquires in all seriousness, and I just shrug at him like he should know full well.

Afterwards I hit McDonald's on the way home for some of the best hangover food I've ever had. Then I hit the sack only to be woken up by Cancer barging into my room in a too-small grey suit complete with white shirt, yellow cuffs and a baby blue tie. He looks awful and he knows it. He's just returned from one of his many cousins' weddings, an event I had to bail out on because of my psychiatrist appointment.

He jumps on me, and then proceeds to dry-hump me ferociously. I try to squirm out from underneath but he's much too big, and I can feel his crotch grinding into my stomach. His sheer mass disgusts me.

"Oh Seth, I love it when you talk dirty to me," he wheezes, and I can tell he's drunk. I try to reason with him, half laughing, half gasping for air. Finally he lets up, stands up, and I see he has two beers in hand, one unopened.

"Dude," he says, trying to appear serious. "Get this. You're still allowed to come to the reception. And guess what, they have my two favourite words there."

"Open bar," I say as he drops the beer on my nuts.

"It doesn't start for another hour or so, so get your ass in the shower, throw your suit on, and quit being such a fucking pussy."

I sit up and crack open the beer. I feel much better now that I've had some food and a nap, but I can feel the McDonald's already trying to escape my intestines, grumbling all the way.

"I need to take a shit," I say.

By the time we get to the reception I'm already drunk. We hit the open bar hard, and Cancer explains to the poor little

Hispanic bartender that if his hand is ever empty, even for a moment, he's going to use it to shove the bartender's face through the refrigerator door.

We get so loaded the two of us eventually find ourselves on the dance floor with some forty year-old women who look like they might watch *The View*. Or maybe host *The View*. Either way, I end up hooking up with some other girl, a roommate of Cancer's latest conquest Samantha. Cancer brought Samantha as his date, but the bastard didn't say a single word to her all night, and proceeded to hit on everything else that looked like it might have a vagina. Poor girl.

We all end up back at this Samantha's house, and I end up losing my favourite black tie. I have anal sex with the girl, whose name I never take the time to discover, and then we come back upstairs to find Samantha verbally assaulting Cancer. So we go.

We meet up with Caleb and Ryan and some guy named Sol, who looks like some metrosexual faggot who works at the Gap. But he turns out to be a pretty good guy, sharing his Special K, buying us drinks and not being a clown, so he manages to escape unscathed.

Sometime during the night Cancer gets the idea that we should head back to the golf club in Kerrisdale where the wedding was held. Rumour has it they leave the keys in the golf carts overnight. All one would have to do is break in, he explains, unlock the chain link fence by busting the lock with a shovel and voila, fresh horses for the men. Before anybody realizes this is a very bad idea, we're parked a few blocks down from the golf course snorting the last of the K and cramming beers into our suit jacket pockets.

Cancer is the first to find a plausible spot to hop the fence into the enclosed yard where they keep the carts. The only light, coming from the clubhouse, is hidden from view by several massive pines lining the first hole, a par five it turns out.

There's dew on the ground but it's warm out, warm enough that I'm sweating by the time we scramble over the fence and gather ourselves up.

Cancer is so drunk he gets into the first golf cart he finds and drives it right through the chain-link gate, smashing open the lock in the process.

"Weren't we supposed to find a shovel?" asks Caleb in all seriousness.

"Change of plans," I tell him, hopping into a cart and driving out onto the course. Cancer nearly T-bone's me as soon as I get off the cart path and onto the fairway. He speeds by, beer in hand.

"Watch where you're driving," he yells, shaking his beer furiously at me.

It's a great time. Something inside the Special K is making me sweat, while at the same time imbuing each sense with a new vibrancy. I snorted a bunch of it, and the wind rushing past my ears as I speed around the course in a golf cart is only making it better, or worse.

Caleb spends most of his time tearing up the eighteenth green, trying to Tokyo drift his cart. Ryan rips up and down the fairway playing chicken with Cancer, and ends up having to swerve out of the way at the last second, clipping Sol's cart and sending him onto his side at high speed. I run Cancer with my cart but miss him entirely, and head instead straight for a pond. As soon as the cart hits water I bail out, only to have Cancer plough into me from behind. I try to jump out of the way, but get knocked head over heels anyway. Cancer comes screaming around as I get up. I can see he's got his pants around his ankles and a wire driving range bucket over his head as he drives, beer in hand.

"Get the hell off the grass," he yells, throwing the last of his beer at me. "You're ruining my short game, fucker."