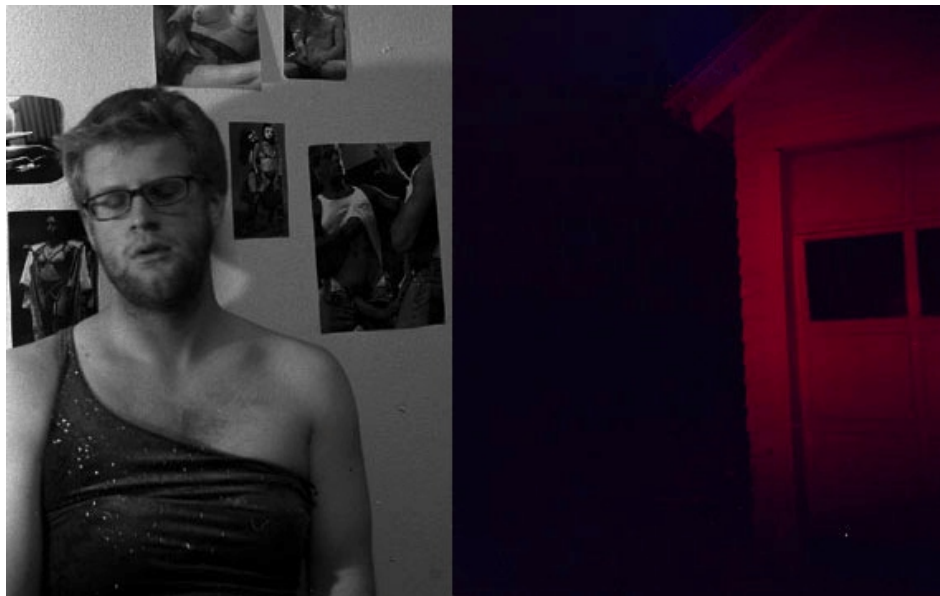


DIPTYCH

A double catalogue, containing in one part the names of the living, and in the other of the deceased.



When I lived at home, my mother and father would retire to their bedroom between 10 and 11 o'clock. Once they were in bed with their light out, I would make sure my door was locked .

I am 14-35 years old and either male or female. I am either straight, gay, or bisexual. I had either a tough or an easy time growing up, and the experience has affected me and created the real person that I am today. My name is James, John, Robert, Michael, William, David, Richard, Charles, Joseph, Thomas, Christopher, Daniel, Paul, Mark, Donald, George, Kenneth, Steven, Edward, Brian, Ronald, Anthony, Kevin, Jason, Matthew, Mary, Patricia, Linda, Barbara, Elizabeth, Jennifer, Maria, Susan, Margaret, Dorothy, Lisa, Nancy, Karen, Betty, Helen, Sandra, Donna, Carol, Ruth, Sharon, Michelle, Laura, Sarah, Kimberly, or Deborah. My last name is Smith, Johnson, Williams, Jones, Brown, Davis, Miller, Wilson, Moore, Taylor, Anderson, Thomas, Jackson, White, Harris, Martin, Thompson, Garcia, Martinez, Robinson, Clark, Rodriguez, Lewis, Lee, Walker, Hall, Allen, Young, Hernandez, King, Wright, Lopez, Hill, Scott, Green, Adams, Baker, Gonzalez, Nelson, Carter, Mitchell, Perez, Roberts, Turner, Phillips, Campbell, Parker, Evans, Edwards, or Collins.

At the moment of orgasm my eyes roll into the back of my head, which tilts up, and I shudder violently, the fluids leaping out of my reportedly essential organ.

A. Incongruent List of the Living

I met L. while working at the bookstore one summer. It wasn't long before we were fucking. There wasn't really anything between us that I couldn't find between myself and someone else. After a month we were still sexually compatible, so I had nothing to complain about. Neither of us felt the need to demean the sex act to an empty game of power, domination, Hegel's master/slave dialectic, etc.

I got fired from the bookstore. L. kept working there. Since we weren't actually dating, it didn't make anything awkward. I ended up not finding another job, and spent most of my time in my apartment-cum-studio drawing genitals on napkins. Sometimes after fucking we'd wipe come on the napkins. I didn't always have money for food.

One of L.'s friends heard about my come-napkin-art and set up a show for me in the lounge of a dive bar. L. didn't come, and I didn't tell my parents, so the only people who showed up were fuck-ups and losers I had met in college. And some drunks accidentally wandering in from the bar.

L. got promoted to management at the bookstore and told me that I could maybe have my job back. I told L. that I didn't want my job back. It went unmentioned after that.

At the beginning of August I got a job at a video store, where I met N. It wasn't long before we were fucking. I didn't tell L. for a while, but one night when both wanted to come over I decided that N. was better in bed. I told L. that we wouldn't be fucking any more.

Sometimes when only N. and I were working we would fuck in the break room. The video store was in a mostly abandoned area of town so I doubt we ever missed customers. We could always hear the audio from whatever movie was playing on the store's TV through the overhead. N. and I insisted on exclusively playing horror movies when working together, so our fucking was generally complemented by the sounds of chainsaws, screaming, and bad dubbing. I

got more of a kick out of it than N., who always had to call on an intense concentration to come.

N. got fired from the video store in October for renting porno to a minor. I stole a bunch of VHS tapes and got fired shortly after. I left half of them on N.'s doorstep and left town.

I found a cheap apartment on the west coast and found a job selling hot dogs at the beach. I only had to work 15 hours a week to cover my rent, and when I was hungry I would just steal from the dining cart. I don't think the manager ever noticed. M. lived in the tiny apartment next to mine. It wasn't long before we were fucking.

M. was a junky and at first it didn't bother me because I didn't care. M. died two weeks after we started fucking of an accidental overdose. I didn't go to the funeral because I didn't know what M.'s last name was and I was too embarrassed to ask any of the other neighbors for details about the event. The next day I stole the money out of the hot dog cart I was manning and moved again, further up north.

I ran into L. in a bar yesterday. We didn't acknowledge each other's presence. I silently acknowledged the absence of anyone else.

B. Accordant List of the Dead

I woke up with an utter sense of lust, sweat dripping off my vacuous body with the velocity of an exploding airplane. My bedroom was still dark. I looked at the alarm clock sitting on the ledge near my beaten up mattress: 5:42 am.

I had kicked the layers of blanket off my bulk in sleep. My dreams were lost now, but as my eyes began to adjust to the darkness, vague hints decorated my mind with punctuation marks of an explicit nature. Language failed to do its job of describing my hypnagogic adventures. A figure on a poster from my bedroom wall, clouded with the ever-present darkness, stared down at my still shaking body. I pulled my clothes off and got out of bed.

I stumbled the eight feet to my computer desk and clicked on the monitor, the artificial glow forcing a harsh visibility to the former darkness. Sweat found my skin sticking to my chair.

I navigated to a folder bluntly labeled PORNO and clicked on the first 100 pixel thumbnail my body reacted too. Two figures popped up on screen. Turning the volume of my computer down to a minimum I watched an arm explore the body of another. I set the speed of the video to 50% of it's normal pace to evoke the oneiric state I had just exited.

At any other point in the day I would prefer pornography on video, the medium allowing me to fast-forward through unnecessary scenes without a blocky digitalization, the tape itself simply speeding up to a chipmunked rate. I could still see everything this way. With video, my control over the temporal elements felt more material: I was controlling an actual object, not a conglomeration of 0s and 1s compiled into something I could never physically grasp.

As the two bodies continued to entwine on screen, the hum of my apartment's air conditioner clicked on. The sound soon meshed with the barely audible slow-motion screams of pleasure emanating from the machine in front of me, the result an abstracted pleasure zone that

existed even with eyes closed. The hum helped me isolate the experience as my hands worked my own body, echoing the hands of the artificial bodies on the screen.

I never moaned while masturbating or fucking. I became utterly silent, preferring my sense of excitement to be expressed via my surroundings. In this case I felt my body absorb into the atmosphere of my dark bedroom in the early morning— I floated out of my seat and hovered, briefly, in a purely abstracted plane of existence. It was only once I had reached this pleasure zone that I could come.

I never paid attention to the specifics of whatever porn clip I used to launch my reverie, needing only the signifier of nude bodies and an immaterial

physical connection. My body joined the bodies on the screen, the moans of the file becoming my only voice. My displacement into the land of pixels never lasted very long, as my pornographic extensions provided an almost instantaneous release that my desperate body needed.

It was during masturbation that my body was both free and non-existent; absent.

“Hey L., do you have your camera?”

“It’s in my bag. Why?”

“I want you to take a photo of me as I come.” .

The photo ended up as a remarkable indication of the sense of immanence I felt with each ejaculation. L.’s lens, with a low depth of field, had place an emphasis on my facial expression, the blurriness of the rest of my body demonstrating nothing but my angled posture.

I looked inhuman, dead, stoned, completely out of my mind. The camera’s shutter speed was low enough to capture my eyes in both their open and closed states, an absolute truth layered on top of an absolute escape. The camera had never before been honest.

Once I returned to the world the flicker of the bodies on screen continued, my visceral reaction now dulled, the expenditure complete. I continued watching out of a sense of sheer spectacle. The acts that had, only moments before, launched my mind into ecstatic corporeality now became a visual representation of the noun “ennui.”

The sun was beginning to rise, and with my newly accomplished sense of release I knew I could safely return to bed, to sleep, without the worry of unsufferable hours of tossing and turning. I left my clothes off out of laziness and pulled the blankets back up over me. My eyes shut and I tumbled back to sleep.