

FAILED STATES

FAILED

JILL MAGID

STATES



For Claire Wilson



‘In the beginning was the word.’
Word? No. That ought
To be:
‘In the beginning was thought. . . .’
No. Now the holy spirit
Is helping me:
Quick!
Let the first line of the gospel read:
‘In the beginning was THE DEED.’

—Faust

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,
Faust, Parts I and II. Howard Brenton.
London: Nick Hern Books, 1995.



An enormous flatbed truck pulls up alongside Arthouse in Austin, Texas. The trucker gets out of the cab and walks to the back end of the trailer, which is sealed with a shiny, black fabric, pulled taut like a sail. He winds the fabric around a metal rod from the bottom up, as if he's peeling open a sardine can. There she is.

He gets back into the truck and turns it on. The rear wheels of the trailer detach and glide forward along the flatbed toward the cab, allowing the back half of it to slope down as a ramp. The trucker descends again, walks up the ramp and enters the car, which is secured to the flatbed by thick, silver chains. He takes off the brake and the car glides down, metal links jingling and sliding along beside it. She comes out backwards—ass first, like I did. Breached. She looks similar, but different. *Only a trained eye would know.*

On the street, she sits heavy on her wheels, the mass of her body unforgiving upon them. She looks old—she *is* old, from 1993, even though she appears to be in slightly better shape than when I'd seen her last, even shinier than after a trip to the car wash—my son's reward for going pee-pee in the potty: a family excursion to the car wash. We got to remain inside the car during the process—the washers allowed this because of him—to be sucked into the car wash, swallowed up by the soapy fibers and forceful belts that slap against the windows, thrilling Linus, sending him into a fit of nervous laughter and then an awestruck silence.

I snap a photo of her on my phone and send it to my husband, Jonny. He texts me back immediately. *I love the car.* He shows the photo to Linus, who is anxious to see it but is unsatisfied with the still image. *I want a video.* He taps the glass with his little finger, even though he knows that without the “play” icon it will not move. When I call a minute later, I can hear him in the background. *I want to go in the Mercedes too,* he whines. *Remember our old car?* Jonny asks him. We know he does. He still points at all the other Mercedes station wagons in the neighborhood and cries, *Like our car! Like our car!* as he did when he was one.

I've breastfed in the boot of this wagon, and now it's covered in Kevlar and thick-plated steel. The back windows, now more than an inch thick, don't roll down anymore. It's an almost soundproof shell, sealing in and sealing out. The floor is so laden with metal that the front

seat is forced up higher; when I first get in, I graze my head on the roof.

I shut the door and it is quiet; not silent but muffled. The interior space is smaller; my seat will not adjust—when I reach for the buttons to do so, I find they’ve been removed. The key is in the ignition, attached to a keychain that is not mine. I turn her on and she hums. She is so strained by the weight of her armor that when I first press the gas pedal she doesn’t respond. I have to force the pedal down, without fear or hesitation, to jolt her awake and forward.

I am driving north up Congress Avenue, framing the Capitol building in the center of my windscreen. It’s epic. The avenue cuts through the center of the city, pointing toward the Capitol like an arrow. The street is dark in shadow, but the Capitol building is aglow, installed at the end of it like the entrance to Emerald City. It’s constantly lit from multiple light sources; this effect is ruled neither by weather nor by hour. Day or night, it is always brilliant like a jewel.

This morning is no different. The sun is strong and the building shines. As I draw closer to it, I feel a sense of awe at the massive scale and grandeur, the purplish-pink hue of its stone façade and dome, but also a sense of foreboding, framing the building in the windscreen of my car—as he did? Did he drive toward the building specifically, or toward the woman in the white shirt, or Dan Patrick, the senator from Houston? Was the gun in the front or back pocket of his pants? Did he feel it against his thigh? Was he aware of its weight or temperature? Or had he laid it on the passenger seat or locked it in the glove compartment? Where does one keep one’s gun? Did he know that he would use it?

Congress Avenue ends. I turn onto West 11th and then right onto Colorado Street, which extends along the west side of the Capitol. I drive alongside the iron fence of the Capitol grounds and pull into Fausto’s space. I know it from the news. I saw his car parked here on television nearly two years ago, in January 2010, when troopers discovered a tan-colored Toyota Corolla in this spot and traced it back to him. I turn the engine off but remain inside the car, staring at the dome. He’s such an artist. The parking space is picturesque, so perfect that it had to be planned. There are two hourglass-shaped

parking meters in front of me that share a single pole: one for this space, the other for the one beside it, which is empty. They seem like a couple who, although together, feel lonely.

I wonder if he paid the meter before stepping through the gate onto the Capitol grounds? I don't like to think that he did; perhaps it was already full and he kept the quarters in his pocket, warm against the gun. It is cold in the car, but I don't feel it. To the left of the meters is an old oak tree. Its branches frame the Capitol dome, more intimately than did my windscreen. Sitting in my car in his space looking at the Capitol, I can feel him for the first time. I can really feel him, as if I am inside of him. I am no longer his witness but something else entirely. I am not me—or perhaps I am hyper-me. But I am also not him. This is not a reenactment. I am not driving his Toyota—what happened to that car?—but my old Mercedes, now armored to B4 level, resistant to small-caliber gunfire. I am in a piece of art. But it does not feel like art. It feels eerie, as if this car knows of a history of which it is not a part. In the driver's seat, I feel as if I am about to do something, but I don't know what. This is not a reenactment. But it is the closest to Fausto that I have ever been, and I feel awake. At a once dull point deep inside my body, I feel embedded.



More than two years earlier, in the fall of 2009, I got a message from an Arthouse curator named Elizabeth. She was in town from Austin for a few days and wanted to know if I'd like to get a drink with her.

I told her to meet me at the Bowery Hotel on the Lower East Side, in the lobby bar I'd been frequenting of late when my Brooklyn studio becomes claustrophobic, too heavy with my own thoughts that seem to amplify inside its walls and bear down on me like weights. When they do, I escape in a panic, out the door and over the bridge. I ride the subway to the Bowery. Only recently I'd been taking it further uptown, around Central Park, to the fancy old hotels with their stately lounge bars and suited clientele. I told myself I needed a foreign setting in order to move on to a new subject, but it was a lie. I wanted to be around the type of men who populate those environments, men like the spies I'd left behind in Holland.

I'd interviewed several of them while working on behalf of the Dutch secret service from 2005 to 2008. My mission had been to collect agents' personal data and use it to put a human face to the secret service by writing about the people I spoke to. The goal of the Dutch secret service was to improve upon its public persona. I had more honest intentions. I wanted to experience what it felt like to be a part of a covert government institution, what it meant to relinquish one's identity and become anonymous—what an agent lost and what one gained by doing so. I wanted to see from what point power emanated, if it was centralized, and get to know those agents who had access to it.

In the end, the director of the secret service did not like the face I offered in my final report, which he heavily censored. The uncensored report was now in London, awaiting confiscation. I'd since been cut off from any contact with the spies I interviewed and with whom I had formed relationships, including my favorite spy, who had quietly supported me and spurred me on all those years. He, as well as some of the more interesting agents I met, had taken me to hotels in The Hague like those near Central Park, or more nondescript, less glamorous ones closer to train stations, like the Marriott.

I prefer the glamour. Old hotels—or, as is the case with the Bowery, ones designed to look like them—dictate a particular behavior and require that you speak in hushed tones. I think it's the wood

panel walls like those of an Italian studiolo, the austere furniture that forces a straight spine, and the diffuse yellow light that hovers evenly in the room; there is no direction to it, no spotlights, no shadows.

The lighting in the lobby of the Bowery Hotel is warm, like the color of whiskey, which I sometimes order alongside my coffee just to feel the burning liquid on my lips. Normal speaking levels sound gauche in that room. To the guests who do not understand or respect the space and use a loud, casual voice, I shoot a haughty look and turn my armchair away, closer to the fireplace, where the chairs and the leather loveseat face the fire or one another and not out toward other guests. Other times, as a kind of exercise, I listen in to the conversations around me and transcribe them in my notebook.

Sometimes I skim the newspapers that are available near the check-in area—they're attached to long wooden poles like broomsticks and therefore awkward to handle. I am attracted to articles on intelligence, particularly those about the CIA's enhanced interrogation methods—their cover-up by the government, as well as their recent uncovering in the media. In my bag I usually carry with me one or two books I recently collected on the subject. One, *Torture and Democracy*, is a kind of bible on something called "clean torture methods" by an author who, disturbingly, referred to torture as "intimate" in a *New York Times* article. While I was reading about how to beat a person without leaving lasting marks, the mundane conversations of other guests would waft in and I'd hone my outer ear instead of my mind's eye and transcribe the lives of others into the margins of the pages.

This is what I was doing when Elizabeth sat down across from me in a tall, rose-colored armchair by the fireplace. She informed me that she'd recently been to London and was aware of the imminent confiscation of my work by the Dutch government. The scope of the project had impressed her, as well as how I'd used art institutions to explore other power institutions. I listened more than I spoke. She had an easy Texas drawl that led my mind to wander. I've always had a desire to drive alone to Texas. I imagine the entire trip as being informed by my destination: a silent, red landscape.

Before she left the bar, she invited me to Austin to see the city and consider making a project there. I told her I would think about it.

On my way back from the Bowery to Brooklyn, I passed a

magazine stand on the subway platform and noticed an issue of *Vanity Fair* with Tiger Woods on the cover and a headline story about a sniper. Sniping was another military activity that I'd noticed being referred to as intimate in the press. Like torture, sniping was described in terms of a personal relationship between two people, with one person in power and the other a victim. I bought the magazine.

Reading the article, I discovered that the sniper, a soldier hired to kill for the U.S. military in Iraq, lived in Austin. Feeling a sudden and uneasy sense of fate, I sat down on the train and folded the cover back so that no one would think I was reading about Tiger Woods' extramarital affairs, which would embarrass me. I always judge people on the subway by what they read.

Not long afterward, I contacted Elizabeth. I told her about the article I'd read on her local sniper. Aware of her contacts, I asked her if she knew how I might be able to locate him, because in the story he'd been given an alias. She said she'd ask around, and that sniping, *of course*, is of particular interest in Austin. I didn't know what she was referring to. Surprised, she told me to look up Charles Whitman, an infamous sniper who'd shot several people from the clock tower on the campus of the University of Texas in 1966. *Oh yeah*, she said largely, *it's a big deal here. That really was one of the first big school shootings, mass murder rampages.* She hadn't been to the clock tower personally, but had heard that the tower deck had recently been reopened. *They'd closed it for a while because there'd been a lot of suicides.* I told her I needed to see it.

She arranged a guesthouse for me in Austin, near where she lives. She described it as a regular three-bedroom house next door to a mansion that the owner of the guesthouse is building. The guesthouse is right on a lake. It has a separate and beautiful boathouse, a yoga studio, and a bunch of kayaks and canoes if I want to partake of some recreation while I'm there. *Very Zen*, she snickered. The only issue, she warned me, is that the owner's 23-year-old daughter will be staying in the house during my visit, right before she leaves for a job at a Buddhist monastery. *Don't worry though*, she added, *the bedrooms are at opposite ends of the house and each has its own bathroom.*

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I rent a car when I arrive at the airport and drive to the guesthouse, where the door has been left open for me. The owner is a fancy art collector with a Mexican design aesthetic. I meet her daughter in the hallway. She looks like a young librarian with a subversive streak. She works at a Buddhist camp and is home for a break. She is staying in her mother's old room with her boyfriend. I wonder if I am staying in hers.

That evening, I dine with Elizabeth in a popular Tex-Mex restaurant with a big parking lot and a collection of different-colored neon signs on the façade. The neon from the outside seeps into the noisy dining area, bathing us in a pink then blue synthetic glow. Over salt-rimmed margaritas, I tell her about the books I've been reading: *Kaput*, *On Killing*, *The Painted Bird*—fiction and nonfiction about the grim realities of war and human terror. She laughs awkwardly as she takes a sip from her straw and says, *Morbid stuff Jill*, which makes my cheeks flush. I describe the frustration I feel when I encounter the way the media represents—or doesn't represent—torture, and that I am especially interested in the “missing” photos from Abu Ghraib, the second batch that President Obama recently decided to censor from publication.

She nods. *If you're interested in the media's representation of Abu Ghraib, there is a guy right here in Austin that was there, a reporter who wrote about it. He used to work at the AP but now he's an editor at the Texas Observer.*

An hour later, I enter the guesthouse quietly so as not to stir the Buddhist girl. There is a light coming from under the master bedroom door. I can just make out a conversation—something about the pleasures of fasting—going on behind it. I duck into my room, take off my clothes and pull on a tank top. It is cold, so I open various drawers in the dresser until I find a worn-out sweatshirt, put it on over the tank and get into bed.

The next morning when I wake up there is a message from CT, (I've changed his name here) the reporter Elizabeth told me about. He suggests we meet for dinner that evening.

I drive to the center of town and have breakfast in a coffee shop. Then I cross the street and go into a convenience store to buy water and a pack of gum. I consider buying cigarettes. There is a

small, blue tin of mints in bullet shapes called Bite the Bullet Mints. I buy one package and head to find the clock tower on the university campus, which begins a few blocks north of the Capitol building.

The Capitol building is at the end of the wide street that cuts through the center of the city. It looks like the White House. There is no line or information booth or any kind of security station in front; I just walk right through the entrance and look around.

As I head back toward the entrance, one male and one female guard wearing wide-brimmed hats and clasping big, black guns in front of their chests, barrels up, run past me. The woman is black with a long ponytail and very thick legs like that famous female track star. They are on the other side of the entrance hall from me, running toward the front doors as the sounds of numerous keys or chains jingle from their pockets. I pick up my pace and run along behind them. I pause about 10 feet from the doors and notice an old man, maybe Polish, standing against the wall near where I have stopped. I look at him, his eyes like globes. He says, *I hear pops* in struggling English and makes his hand a gun. There is another man some distance away also looking toward the doors, and he says, *Yes, I heard gunshots, five or six*. Then I don't remember seeing them again. From another door a woman like an old secretary comes out and looks at me, her face startled and pale. She clearly works there—has worked there forever or is part of the building, quiet and bureaucratic and stately and boring—and says, *Stay away from the doors*, which has the opposite effect on me and I run out through them at full speed.

Outside I face straight on to a tight huddle of Texas Rangers over a man in a fetal position or on his back on the concrete staircase. The sunlight is very bright. I hear his voice clearly, the voice of the man on the ground, the shooter, coming from the center of the mass of men, saying repeatedly, *My hands are up, My hands are up*. They are.

I am right over them or I am to the side of them but they feel very close to me and yet far away, like they are in a picture hanging somewhere in a building in a dream that I once had, and I can only see the arm and hand of the man on the ground, a dark colored arm, not black but deeply tanned. I see his hands forced together at the

wrists as if they are in handcuffs, but I don't see any metal. I cannot perceive them in relation to me. Where exactly am I standing and why do they seem far away when they are not?

Suddenly a few more Rangers run from the side of the building toward the huddle and one yells frantically, *Third floor, third floor, there is a second gunman!* And a new group of Rangers appearing from nowhere run into the Capitol using the same door from which we had all just exited.

I remain where I am standing, the huddle remains where it is, immobile as a tangled ball of 15 or 20 bodies that is one body, only those brown arms and hands are clear and separate, as if pinned by a stone and lit by another light source. I don't recall the huddle ever breaking up. Later, in the newspaper photo, I see the huddle as only three men escorting a very pale looking figure who could not have matched the dark arms and hands I saw on the pavement. In the image, his shoes have been removed and he is wearing white athletic socks. They are carrying him, almost victoriously, as if they were all on the same team and he just scored a goal.

I never heard the gunshots.

The other Rangers have all disappeared inside the building to find the second shooter. I suddenly think, Maybe I should not be standing here on the steps. I move to the side, to the grass below the main staircase, and then farther away toward a group of people in plain clothes. Had they been inside with me? We watch together in silence or maybe we speak and compare what we saw or did not see. I don't recall walking there or being with anyone else.

People randomly appear to be entering the Capitol grounds, people like me—visitors or maybe office workers. Nothing has been closed off. No one is telling anyone else to leave. There is no sense of urgency so I think it's okay, but it's odd no one is telling me to go away. I leave the group that has assembled around me and slowly start walking away, across the dark green, perfect lawn. I am now in the center of the lawn directly in line with the Capitol building entrance, looking over my shoulder for something more to happen. I try to call Jonny. No answer. I try to call my mom. No answer. I call my dad. He answers.

I tell him I was just at a shooting. I saw a shooting at the

Capitol building.

Hi Jilly, what are you up to today?

Clearly he does not recall that I am in Texas. He is not listening to me.

I repeat, I was just at a shooting, Dad.

How's my grandson?

He still does not get it. I hang up the phone and continue toward the gate at the entrance to the Capitol grounds.

When I leave I become a witness. The first man to approach me introduces himself as a reporter from the AP. I ask him if he knows CT, the journalist I have plans to meet.

He is confused. *Yes, he is a good friend of mine at the AP. Why?*

I am having dinner with him tonight.

Who are you? he asks.

I hear myself speaking to myself in his direction, my words instantly becoming small pencil marks in a tiny spiral notebook that reminds me of a matchbook. New crowds of reporters arrive, many of them with large television cameras on their shoulders, and I tell the same story over and over again as if I'm reading from a script, but beneath my monologue I am growing nervous. Now I am terrified. I imagine getting shot, seeing other people getting shot, remember the images I have seen on the news of people getting shot, the randomness of people in situations like this getting shot, and I think of my son, Linus, and of 1966 and that wounded pregnant woman, Claire Wilson, and her dying, unborn child lying at the foot of the clock tower just a few blocks from here, and how arbitrary his death was. But I also feel a sense of disappointment. Nothing really happened. How horrible that I feel disappointed. I am the witness to a shooting where nothing really happened.

I leave the reporters and continue down Congress Avenue with the Capitol behind me and enter the same convenience store where I bought the mints. I buy a pack of cigarettes and make my way to my rental car. It takes at least seven tries before I am able to steady my fingers enough to light the match. I lean on the front bumper of the car and take a drag. It tastes very good. People walk by me with sandwiches in white bags and cigarettes and don't know I was just at a shooting at the Capitol that they don't yet

know about. Then I get in my car and drive to Allen Boots and try on the same pair of cowboy boots I'd tried on yesterday. They are short and heavy, covered with black and white spotted cowhide. This time, paying \$449 for a pair of boots does not seem unreasonable. I stand in the boots in front of the mirror for a long time and am aware of the smell of leather. I feel like I willed the shooting to happen, and yet I am dissatisfied it was so unspectacular, even while feeling thankful. What had I hoped would happen?

A few hours later I get a message from CT. *I hear you've had an eventful day at the Capitol building!* He leaves me his phone number and asks me to ring him as soon as possible.

NO MOTIVE YET IN TEXAS CAPITOL SHOOTING

Houston man in custody; no injuries reported

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KXAN staff reporters Blair Shiff, Karen Brooks, Shannon Powell, Nanci Wilson, Erin Cargile, Carla Castano, and Josh Hinkle contributed to this report.

AUSTIN (KXAN) — A Houston man is in state police custody after gunshots were fired on the south steps of the Texas Capitol around noon on Thursday. No injuries are reported.

The suspect is Fausto Cardenas, 24, from the Houston area. He was taken into custody immediately after the shooting. The motive for the shooting was unclear late Thursday.

Cardenas is charged with deadly conduct—discharging a firearm at individuals, a third-degree felony punishable by two to 10 years and up to \$10,000 in fines. . . .

Police said he fired several shots from a handgun on the south steps of the Capitol at 12:15 p.m. The building was re-opened to visitors a few hours later, though the south entrance remained closed.

Capitol staffers with Houston GOP Sen. Dan Patrick said that minutes before the incident, the man followed the senator's legal counsel into their third-floor office and asked to speak to her privately. The attorney told him she would be glad to help him, but he insisted on a private conversation in Patrick's own office. She refused repeatedly, and he finally left, said Logan Spence, Patrick's chief of staff.

The man never said what he wanted, but moments later, he was on the south steps firing a handgun. . . .



Gunplay at the Capitol, by Ben Sargent. Published in the Texas Observer on Monday, February 1, 2010.



I arrive at the Buenos Aires Cafe and wait at the bar. CT walks in soon after, holding a motorcycle helmet, and nods to me. He seems easy and confident, older than he looked in his press photos. He speaks with a Texas accent, which should have been obvious but surprises me. A few minutes later his wife, Lajita (I've changed her name), walks in to join us. I didn't know she was coming. She is Indian, very attractive. We all move to a booth. The shooting at the Capitol today is our first discussion. Lajita has not yet heard about it.

CT knows a little about me and my work. Perhaps a bit more than he admits. I tell him about my experience working with the Dutch secret service. He tells me about his history training with the military and that before he became a journalist, he worked in intelligence at the National Security Agency.

I smile, my favorite territory.

This was in the '80s, he adds, under Reagan.

We talk about clearance levels. His in the U.S. intelligence agency had been higher than mine in the Dutch. He laments the recent increase in the government's outsourcing of intelligence operations and functions to outside contractors, companies like Kroll, in Iraq and Afghanistan. I've read a bit about it.

Clearance, he explains, equals currency. It is an asset to a contractor. Kroll is the largest private investigative firm in the world. You can sell your currency of clearance there. "Read in" means you have a document saying you are allowed to be exposed to secure information. If you expose information under a read in, rule CFR18 applies and you are read out. When you are reassigned, you are also read out.

You can have clearance for 10 years. The background investigation to get your clearance is good for 10 years. You can keep your clearance if you are fired from the CIA but you will no longer be read in. When you apply to Kroll, they contact the CIA and find out if you are read in or not. They ask for your clearance file. The CIA gives it to them because CIA and Kroll are on the same side, and with clearance—even without read in—you can make good money at a place like Kroll. Because once you have the job at Kroll, they will read you in.

Unfortunately, I tell him, Kroll would never hire me. I have no relationship with the CIA, beyond it being notified by the Dutch government that the Dutch secret service was vetting me. And I

doubt my clearance in Holland would be in any way transferable to a private contracting firm in the U.S. I explain that in the work I did with Dutch intelligence, I was less interested in the specific cases the agents were working on than I was about the agents' psychology and the human relationships they formed within their community and outside of it with their sources.

That brings him to the subject of Psychological Operations, or PsyOps, which clearly interests him. He leans forward and goes straight to logistics. I try to follow.

In the military, there is one PsyOps guy for each battalion.

How many in a battalion?

Four thousand men. That's a rough estimate. A tank battalion has more or less.

He continues, *PsyOps is a mass industry. "How to win the human terrain."* He frames this slogan with his hands, as if they are parenthesis. *It is not about who gets to the valley and captures it or who gets to the top of the hill first. That is no longer how battles are won.*

I tell him that I've been searching for a rogue spy, the kind I sought but never found in the Dutch secret service.

He laughs. *Rogue spooks are investigative journalists.*

Excited, I draw myself closer to him, notice Lajita, and settle back.

There are no rogue agents in the CIA. Or Christians in Action, as we call them. You can't be. There is no room for it.

He started at the NSA in signals intelligence. *If you even have half a brain, you will be moved to an analyst*, which he was.

In the Dutch intelligence, I tell him, an analyst is referred to as "a spider in the web."

He smiles. *That's cool.*

He keeps apologizing to Lajita, who has heard all his stories before. Lajita kind of looks like me, but is more delicate.

When you are in the NSA, you have to prove what the politicians want you to prove. You have to confirm you saw something even if you are not sure of what you saw.

In the NSA he was assigned to find the rockets on the moving trains in the Soviet Union. The rockets that move around on locomotives and are always ready to shoot but cannot be tracked.

You should say, for instance, that you see "an object that looks to be in

the shape of a missile” and you should then describe the shape, but until you actually see the rocket go off you cannot say you saw one. That is the correct procedure. But the politicians want you to say it’s a missile, so you have to say it is. If you keep denying it, you’re out.

Under Reagan, he explains, the U.S. government kept saying it needed to put billions of dollars into developing those missiles because the Russians had them.

But we never saw that the Russians had them. Why? Because they did not exist. We don’t have the technology, even today, to design a missile that leaves a moving, shaking base and can accurately go halfway across the planet and hit a target. You need a stable base.

As a journalist, you are an eyewitness.

For him it used to be an adrenaline thing. He got his first journalism job when he was a bored honors student at University of Texas. A friend of his invited him to Africa to report with him there. When he arrived, they didn’t need him, but a Japanese newspaper did. It paid him a hundred bucks a day to go into a war zone and describe what he saw.

The Japs wouldn’t go into dangerous situations. They gave me a phone. That was a long time ago.

Now that he is older, he’s organized his life differently. He teaches journalism and creative nonfiction (a term I find hilarious) at UT and another college whose name I forgot. He still writes, but after the fact: the books, the longer stories about the 10 wars he witnessed in which he was embedded with the U.S. military or unilateral and providing his own logistics. He’s covered the volcanoes, the earthquakes. . . .

I could have told you the Haiti stories as they happened, before they happened. Day one: disaster strikes, cry goes out for help, journalists head to scene; Day two: full scope of disaster becomes clear; Day three: authorities identify their needs, international response begins, people become desperate for food and clean water; Day four: first significant relief begins to arrive; Day five: miracle baby—

I catch him here and cannot help but laugh. Yes, I just read the story on the Haitian miracle baby.

What was it?

A one-year-old child was found alive in a supermarket.

He says, *Yeah, did you hear about the vampire baby?*

God, no.

Staying alive on his mother's blood.

I cringe and think of Linus living off my blood.

Day six, he continues: relief food delivered. And it goes on. Each disaster follows the same trajectory. There are only five techniques on how to write a news story. I have mastered them all. I could do them all in my sleep. I got bored. I am interested in telling the story differently.

He looks at me expectantly, as if I might provide this.

I think by now his wife has already excused herself and left the restaurant. I hardly noticed her leaving, except that it makes the conversation easier.

There are tango dancers in the dining area. They keep gliding past our table. They must be props, hired by the restaurant to produce a sultry setting. It's like a *Godfather* film in here, but it's all a backdrop; only we are real. CT slides along the bench of the booth and is now sitting directly across from me. My peripheral vision is fading away and taking the tango dancers along with it. It's as if I am back inside the Dutch secret service and CT is my favorite spy. Unlike my actual favorite spy, who was the head of counterterrorism, CT is independent with no institution to protect. My favorite spy had flirted with me. He had never permitted me direct access to the central power of the agency—if, in fact, there was one—but had drawn me in a spiral toward a point I never reached. CT doesn't come off as a man who has either the patience or the romance for such a slow seduction.

CT says he turned to the military to give him the sincere family he did not have at age 13, but that as an adult he realized he did not need it and that in the Army he didn't need the corruption. He loves the military though. He loves the soldiers for their sincerity.

Most people join to do good for the world. I only met one guy who joined because he wanted to kill people. People like to be the soldiers that drop food down in Haiti. They don't really like the idea of going in to kill people. They do it if they have to, but they don't want to and no one comes out undamaged or unaffected.

I am like him, weary of the system and yet compelled by it. He agrees. *We are professional intelligence gatherers.*

I wonder how he really sees me, though; if my examples are humorous or benign. *The investigative journalists are actually out there right away and getting it*, unlike the CIA guy he tells me about who hid in his hotel room down the hall from where CT was staying, who couldn't go out because he can't be seen and can't be caught in a place he is not supposed to be. *The CIA guy has rules. We don't.*

He has pulled me into him, he is making me a mirror to himself, he is asking me to make him my mirror, and I feel recognition and a deep sense of pride that he is seeing me as a peer.

We turn to interrogations. *In an interrogation you cannot show emotion. You have to go with a suspect and agree to his logic. Even if he is telling you he raped a child, you have to act like you'd do the same even though you'd prefer to jump across the table and slap him. The second he feels you judging him, the door closes—CT gestures as if shutting barn doors with his hands—and the intimacy is broken.*

He uses the term "intimacy" in a way that I can tell he has read some of my work, and knows I can become quite close with my subjects. He emphasizes the word and watches my face for a reaction. I pretend not to notice.

A real interrogation takes long, full days. You have to make yourself god to the suspect. They need to want to please you. A bad interrogator will defer to the use of torture. With torture, there is no dialogue and the whole point of an interrogation is to get the suspect to speak.

I never did real interrogations for the military, I only learned how to in training. But I use that military training as a journalist every day.

People say that a journalist does his job because he wants to communicate the story. CT does not believe it. I shake my head. Neither do I.

You do it because you want to know the truth. You want to see it for yourself. We want to understand it—he moves a finger back and forth between us—as an eyewitness.

I lament that the CIA would never hire me; I am too old.

He laughs. *You are the perfect age to be a spy. Spies and journalists are voyeurs, observers. The main difference between them is that the journalist's story goes public—you will see it in the papers—while the CIA's gets stamped confidential.*

Yes, I smile sardonically. I've been censored by the Dutch.

It is very late. He pays the check and we walk out of the restaurant toward his Vespa. My rental car is farther down the road. He straddles his bike, reaches into his bag and gives me a few copies of the *Texas Observer*, the magazine he edits. I ask him to find a story to assign me to research and report.

He smiles and says, *I will try to think of one.*

Of the 10 war correspondents at the AP—he says proudly while adjusting his helmet—*I was the only one who had a military background.*

The following morning, I return to New York.



Back in Brooklyn, I research articles about the shots fired at the Capitol building. I print out the stories and mark them with a pen, highlighting important details. At 12:15 p.m. on January 21, 2010, 24-year-old Fausto Cardenas fired an estimated six shots into the air from a small caliber handgun while standing on the Texas Capitol's south steps. He threw down his handgun as state troopers closed in and tackled him.

No motive has been established. Cardenas is either from Houston or Edinburg, depending on which article I read. He is being held on \$250,000 bail in the Travis County Jail, facing charges of deadly conduct and terrorist threat of a government service.

Fausto referred to the attorney he followed into Senator Dan Patrick's office as "the woman in the white shirt." He never told her what he wanted.

I pin the marked-up articles to my studio wall. In many of them, I am quoted as a witness. In about five of them I can be watched on video as archived news footage.

Unsure of what to make of Fausto and my presence at the shooting, I turn to CT. The conversation we began in Austin carries on in e-mails virtually throughout the day, as if we were still sitting across from one another at the restaurant. I sense that if I am to ever find or become a rogue spy, I should work for him, or with him, as some form of investigative journalist. Hoping to find a point of convergence between his interests and my own, I turn to the system of embedding and ask if it could be an option for me that he, as an editor, assigns. He assures me that it can, and seems excited to arrange it.

In fact, he writes, *I was just chatting with the AP's bureau chief in Kabul. A warlord that I knew was blown up by a suicide bomber today, and I was just remembering how he loved to crush flowers in his hands to enjoy their scent and to perfume himself. He also loved Dhari poetry and would translate it often to make a point. But he also enjoyed selling opium, assassinating his enemies and raping women, so all-in-all, the world is a better place today.*

Some days I miss that stuff.

He says he will be coming up to New York soon and suggests we meet to discuss some options then.

I tell Elizabeth that my project in Austin may involve my going to the war in Afghanistan.

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It's a month later, and I've sobered up.

On my way to my studio this morning, as I was holding the contract and deposit for Linus's preschool, which I forgot to mail, I was thinking about how I was going to tell CT what I decided when he arrived today: that I do not want an embed. Almost 100 percent because of Linus and Jonny, and also, I wonder, is it necessary to explore something that could kill me? Is this selfish? I know it must be. But I don't know how to stop a project once it's started. I don't know how to get wrapped up in the flow of whatever is leading me—in this case CT—right into the front lines, and then turn away from it.

CT drives up to my studio in a taxi. I can never remember his face. I always insert my neighbor's when I try to imagine it. I am already doing it again now, although they look less alike than I recall. My neighbor looks neat and academic. CT has a goatee or a sort of very manicured beard with silver patches that retain the color of his previously brown hair. His body is thicker than my neighbor of the same name from downstairs, and CT, of course, has a Texas accent. But they stand the same, with a slight—in CT's case confident—shrug, and with their hands in their front pants pockets.

CT gets out of the cab. I ask if he wants to come up to my studio or go get a coffee. He chooses coffee and we go around the corner to Marlow and Sons, which he recognizes from the days when he worked at the AP office in Manhattan. He hasn't been back to the city *in too long, almost a year*. We sit down near the bar at a table for two. He says, *As a Texan gentleman, I see which seat you choose and move to the other one accordingly*.

I am glad he is on his own and did not show up with his wife.

Once we are settled with my coffee to go and his to stay, I ask him to speak first and tell me what he's thinking. He immediately goes into plans for my embed, the story I'm now thinking I will not do but haven't yet admitted to him. I keep hearing Jonny at our dining table saying, *You're going to die for an artwork? What about Linus?* But

CT speaks as if our plan is a given, so I don't interrupt him.

Later on, after he leaves, I take a walk to the Jewish grocer. It is still really windy and the sky is the same grayish white color as most of the buildings and metal garbage bins that barely reflect it. I cross Broadway into South Williamsburg—the area I call the ghetto, with its mustard-colored walls and yellow, painted metal window frames. I see an onslaught of Hasidic Jews in their tallit.

The Mexicans who stock the isles in the grocery store are the only ones who look me in the eye. The one on the ladder with a face like an American Indian smiles down at me, which is nice but means I can't pinch a chocolate-covered cordial from the bulk isle. I doubt he'd care. I grab a gallon jug of Poland Spring water that I'll drink from directly, a tuna on rye sandwich prepackaged as a triangular wedge, and a loaf of germinated wheat bread to bring home for Jonny and Linus. The Hasidic cashier is familiar but not the old man who usually works the far aisle cash register. He's fat, especially in his face, and his lips are fat too. They don't close but jut out like the pinched spout of a ceramic water jug. His hair, besides his paes, is shaved close to his head. He puts my change on the metal counter above the conveyor belt. I know not to touch his hand, but to wait for the change to be laid down and his hand to move away before I pick it up. I am also Jewish. I say thank you but he doesn't say I'm welcome.

Earlier today, at Marlow and Sons, CT said he knew I was Jewish right away when he met me in Texas. I asked if that would be a problem in Afghanistan. He said, *No, your features are not easily identifiable.*

There was a female reporter I knew in Iraq, a freelance writer who traveled the country on her own. She didn't have a fixer, but she did have a translator. She was Jewish and he was Muslim. She looked Jewish, but the Muslim did not realize it. There was a 20-year age gap: she was 40 and he was 20. He was in love with her. He asked me when she went home if I thought she'd ever marry him. CT laughed and shook his head. I told the boy "no"—he drew out the o sound, but the boy just didn't get it. It had nothing to do with age; it was because of religion.

I told CT that growing up Jewish, I'd heard the argument a lot that the Arabs did not take care of one another. My rabbi said this and so did my father. Why else would the Palestinians be left with no support?

Palestine is a totally different situation than the rest of the Arab world. The Muslims have a 20 percent tithing "tax" for charity. But it's in the interest of the rest of the Arab world to keep Palestine a mess and a continual problem for Israel. If they help them, Israel will catch a break, and that is not on the Muslim agenda.

He talked about the shock of going into a combat zone. That it will knock me down. *You need someone there who's done it before, to warn you when you have to take cover.*

He crossed his arms and looked at me over his latte. *I am going with you.*

That is what I wanted to hear, but hadn't yet expected.

I will be your fixer.

I don't know what that is.

A fixer is a guy who gets you in, gets you access. You could spend three weeks there just trying to figure out how the system works. I already know how the system works.

I asked him how someone does it if they don't have a fixer.

You go stay in the fanciest hotel in the area, ask the hotel manager to help you, and then give him a bribe.

So it's all about money.

Yeah. It's all about money.

As for subject matter to explore, he told me, short of a real interrogation there is no limit.

A real interrogation is off limits, even for me as an experienced journalist with a military background. Intelligence gathering is highly classified. We could do a mock interrogation, but that's a whole other ethical bag.

I don't know what that ethical baggage is, but is anything ever at stake in a mock situation? He gave me the soda straw analogy, based on his experience in Iraq.

A war zone is a very big place. Going in is like looking through a soda straw—that's how tiny your view is. Someone in another part of the war zone will have an entirely different story to tell. If you talk to the young American soldier who's training the malnourished, uneducated men that pass for Iraqi soldiers, he will tell you the war is lost. If you go to the Army general who took out a host of enemy combatants earlier that day, he'll tell you it can definitely be won. And they're both right. Every story is incomplete.

28 *Afghanistan will be no different.*

CT is used to the AP system. It goes as follows: *750-word stories daily. Perhaps at the end you get an 1,800-word feature in the Sunday papers. You have a team of three: a journalist, a photographer and a videographer. You go and live with the unit you are assigned to. It might be in a bunker or a tent. You eat and sleep with them.*

The tent is big.

These places are fully operational. There are plugs there in the tent. Journalists write at night.

There is a diesel generator.

Depending on where you are, there are minimal accommodations. There might be a shower, but if you are in another kind of place you may be showering with baby wipes.

I actually was hoping it would be like that. It felt like a relief to not have the choice—to just go and be dirty. I wondered if I should cut my hair short. I pictured myself finding privacy in the shower, dimly lit with a wet, concrete floor, with a slow stream of warm water pouring onto my head. Like in a movie scene I watched myself from the outside. I saw myself thinking, washing the dust and sand from my body.

The Army employs artists. It always has, ever since the Civil War. They draw and paint battle scenes. The Army started this tradition before photography and has kept it. The Army is all about tradition, CT stressed. Tradition is the oldest mechanism of social control.

I asked where the pictures go.

To the Defense Media Agency, or DMA, at the Pentagon. They most likely have the archive of it.

I want to get our pictures sent there too, whatever form they take.

CT has more mainstream expectations. He is staying in Park Slope with Philip Gourevitch, who wrote *The Ballad of Abu Ghraib* and is a contributor to *The Paris Review* and *The New Yorker*. CT met him in Rwanda, when they were each reporting on the genocide for different publications. Last night, CT told me, he and Philip talked about the future of journalism and the expectations of reading in a hyperlinked world. Philip, he explained, is against the use of hyperlinks in journalistic texts, as far as one can be against forces he is aware he can't control.

Phillip wants full jurisdiction of his story. He spends a lot of time constructing it and he doesn't want you to be distracted in the middle by a link to

another document or a video. The footnotes can go at the end.

I side with Philip. I know it's old school, but I do. CT, on the other hand, is interested in, or rather fascinated by, new technologies and takes them for what they can and will be. *Multiple screens, several layers of media*, he raised his arms triumphantly. I grimaced. *The reader is a consumer. He consumes his media the way he wants to and is not led by the writer. The consumer in the digital age has the power of autonomy.*

He wants to see how he and I are going to do this, how we can break the media mold. Breaking the media mold interests me less.

In the war zone you have the division headquarters. It's a theater.

I thought he was being metaphorical, like I read in the papers the "Theater of Iraq." But it's a real place.

There is stadium seating.

CT extended his arms, drawing the theater in the air.

I liked his cardigan sweater. It was gray wool with a deep purple trim along the part where the buttons and buttonholes go, and the cuffs were hot pink. He was wearing the cardigan over a light green, button-down shirt with a thick blue stripe and a white under-shirt that was visible beneath his carelessly unbuttoned shirt. I can't recall what he looked like from the waist down.

The meeting in the Theater's division headquarters is called the Battle Update Bulletin, or the BUB. It happens twice a day, morning and afternoon. It's organized or controlled as part of Area Operations. All computer screens of the commanders and generals in the area feed into this theater. Everyone's desktops are visible in this one room. One by one, each of those soldiers in the area gives his or her update of what is happening, how many soldiers are down, etc. "This is my day in the war."

After coffee, we took a walk south of Broadway, near the water. A Hasidic Jew was walking in front of us. His black hat covered his shaved head, which was cast down, his eyes fixed on the ground. His black tailcoat caught in the wind. We were stretching our legs and looking for an ATM. All the Korean delis around here are owned by Hasidic Jews, but none of the Hasids shop at them.

Psychological Operations. PsyOps. This is the area he suggested we explore. People think, because of the name, that it's some kind of brainwashing or mindfuck department. I say fuck but CT doesn't. I don't think he curses, or at least he doesn't in front of me.

Southern decency.

Shit. I left the electric kettle on in my studio.

Wars are won through perception.

But PsyOps isn't about winning the American public over to support the war.

That's important too. You have to protect your haunches—you don't want to get hit in the back. But most importantly, you have to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis or the Afghans.

CT's PsyOps contact in Iraq thinks the division should be called something else. As we walked into another deli, I suggested Community Relations.

Wars today are purely psychological. They're all about changing public opinion, influencing the local population. We had ended up back at my studio. CT was sitting across from me at my glass desk, on the robin's egg blue chair. We still had our coats on.

My general friend in PsyOps is just a marketer. He's selling the American Dream. CT said it with an ironic smile, like a cheesy slogan. *He's trying to convince the Iraqis that even though, yes, we just destroyed your town, we're here to help you and build you a functioning democracy. The Taliban are gone; the American system is ready to be slotted in its place. We are talking to people who read the Koran and believe that, through their system, they'll go to heaven. Can they still get to heaven through the American system? That is the essential challenge—making them believe they can.*

I'm going to go out to Austin in May. CT will train me for my embed. That ugly word—I love it. We're going to go to the woods in Texas and he's going to teach me about weapons and ambushes, how to fall to the ground when he pushes me. He'll bring me to a shooting range. He'll show me how to behave if a terrorist were to capture me.

It's up to me if I want formal or informal training. If I keep to the rules I've set for myself in the past, I should be formally trained. I should learn the system. But this time I don't want the system; I want to step outside of it. I want the woods and I want to be in them with CT, learning from him how to hold a weapon. I've never held a gun outside of its holster. I can only imagine its temperature. Whenever I think of holding a gun, I picture a close-up camera shot of my skin on the barrel, or maybe it's not even called the barrel. It's

metal and it's black or nearly black and very shiny yet unreflective, and the only reason I am focusing on it is because it's so cold in my hand that I have to look down at it.

The formal training is intense. It takes 40 hours. There are 19 or 20 other students in the class. You get in-depth training for first aid. Very serious first aid, how to deal with trauma. I can give you pretty much the same training in two days or a long weekend.

I choose to do it that way, and then he gets practical. CT will embed with me to Afghanistan for three weeks. *Anything less and the soldiers won't have time to get to know you, come to trust you and open up to you.* I will write about the experience for *The Observer*, and CT will edit what I have written. We will also submit my stories to the wire, where the AP or any other paper might choose to pick them up. *My name on the byline would help.* I'm curious about how what I'll write will differ from what they'll print. So is CT, who is also curious about my perspective as an artist.

He can get us through the loopholes, open the doors that would take a hell of a long time for me to pry open alone. I've never had access like this simply offered to me on a plate. He can make sure my passport goes right through. He'll make sure they don't Google me or research my past. He can call in favors from the AP. Under normal circumstances, just getting Kevlar helmets and bulletproof vests can be difficult.

Bullets can get through the sides of the vests. He lifted his arm up and pointed to just below his armpit. *You always hear the horror stories of the random bullets that slip between the ceramic chest and back plates, where the organs you need to keep safe are located.*

What about my legs?

They're not protected. Neither are your arms and face.

I thought about not being able to run ever again and then banished it from my thoughts. I felt like a false person. I don't know the reality of war. How can you from a book or a film?

The PsyOps guys are the ones who go to destroyed towns and hand out soccer balls to little boys.

A group of little Linuses. "Ball" was my son's first word.

Little boys love balls. The U.S. Army prints messages on them, he explained. They're like advertisements for the U.S. Army, for the troops

and for democracy. One of the most successful PsyOps cases in Iraq involved a large truck of contraband cigarettes. The U.S. Army stopped the truck and confiscated the cargo. The Army then stuck a sticker on each pack that said, "If you see an IED, call this number." It worked extraordinarily well in Baghdad. The phones rang off the hook. The locals might still see Americans as the bad guys, but that doesn't mean they want their children exploding at intersections.

By the time he got into a cab back to Park Slope, the concept seemed clear. We were going to go to a small town that had just been destroyed and see the work of replacing one system with another. We were going to be witnesses to the selling of the American Dream.

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The next night I am in a cab with an old roommate, Ana. We're coming from a lecture on the aesthetics of contracts at the House of the New York City Bar Association on 44th Street. I love it up there, across from the Algonquin and the Iroquois Hotels, whose bars I languished in for what seemed like an eternity after my work with the Dutch secret service had been severed, looking for someone to replace my favorite spy, sensing he wouldn't be downtown in the hipper parts of the city. I thought his replacement might resemble the old, aristocratic poet I used to work for who, although he was from St. Louis, spoke with an English accent, flaunted a red silk handkerchief in the breast pocket of his well-tailored suit and at 60 could still seduce me, nearly 40 years his junior. Not CT, who looks more like an office worker dressed in Dockers—save for one Marc Jacobs cardigan, certainly chosen by his wife.

Ana doesn't trust CT. *He's too gung-ho. Why is he so excited to go to a war zone with you? Why has it been so easy?*

They're questions I won't consider. Any sort of analysis might break the flow of what was happening between us. CT was given to me as an opportunity. I want to feel lucky. But when I tell her that I am excited, she won't have it.

Why do you want to do this? Why would you put yourself in such a dangerous position, go to such a dangerous place? You have a child now. What about the little one?

I stare out the window at the passing lights and the buses that seem to be squeezing us out of any available space until the road opens up as we get closer to the Meatpacking District—the bumpy cobblestones around the fashion shops that I remember being covered with pigs’ blood when I had my first art studio here after college, when I was still a painter. I remember the smell of damp red meat and the huge carcasses hanging from thick, dull silver hooks. They were on mechanical conveyer belts circling through the ground floor meat houses. A bunch of naked, skinless pigs and cows hanging and swinging on gliding hooks.

I want to go where CT takes me. I need him to lead me, all the way in, and reveal to me the darker sides of power that my favorite spy in the Dutch secret service wouldn’t. I want to see how and where the crucial decisions are made, and study the people who make them. I want to feel CT’s control so I can relax my own. I want to ignore all my rules and go rogue against myself.

Make poppy things, a collector advised me yesterday. Really catch your audience.

I want to shoot my audience, or bring it to a funeral.

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It’s late May. My trip to Texas for training is less than two weeks away. CT’s been in touch with two contacts who are, or will be, in Iraq soon. Both conversations were off the record, “just between friends,” to see what they would think about the project. One colonel said he thought it was a cool idea and that he would support it. CT’s contact in Afghanistan has rotated out, but he says he’ll try to establish a new one once we decide when we’ll go.

I have a big orange three-ring binder next to my bed, full of the reading packets CT sent me, official materials that commanders use in the U.S. Army on military deception, public affairs, information operations, PsyOps. The binder is so heavy and the rings so large that I cannot turn the pages. I take out the sections I want to read in chunks and then rethread them when I am through. I keep the Hostile Environment Training Syllabus that CT made for me loose. It’s a list of things a soldier learns in Army boot camp or hos-

tile environment training. The idea, he explains, is to give me confidence to step into a combat zone.

I think about Ana getting mad at me about this project, now that I have “a little one.” Now that I have Linus, my beautiful little bear who is sick in the next room. As I am getting my computer to write this, he wakes up, now about two hours after he finally fell asleep, sick stomach, diarrhea, post-Tylenol and sweating in his reggae shirt and his old striped cotton pants that now fit him more like shorts. He is standing up when I go into his room to check on him. I see him as a black shadow. Lie down Bear, Mommy is here, and I pat down his wet hair. Not as wet as last night when the fever broke and the sheet was as damp from sweat as if he had peed on it and I took him out of the crib and changed his clothes from the wet into the dry, the whole time softly chanting, Mommy is here, Mommy is here, you are okay.

The thought of not being here, of not removing the sweaty jammies from his body, is not believable. I’ve left before, two days here, four days there. Once I was gone for a week. And I felt it. I really missed him. Three weeks for an embed sounds like too much.

What am I afraid of? That he won’t be cared for as well as I can? That he will be angry with me or feel abandoned? That no one will be able to bathe him before bed? All of those things, irrational or not. That something will happen to me, that I will be killed. Jonny and I were driving through the ghetto near Bedford Avenue this weekend and he suddenly got an angry voice and said, *Jill, if you die there I won’t miss you. Missing you is not what I will feel. I will be angry with you. I will just be angry.*

The whole thing is too abstract. I don’t believe it. Any of it. I don’t believe in the images I see of Iraq or Afghanistan. Those war zones seem like fiction, even though I read about them in the papers. I don’t believe in the military or the Army or people planting roadside bombs. I see them in movies and I can’t fathom what I have seen; I cannot feel it. The only times I feel it is when I read in the papers that a mother loses a child or a child loses a parent. Then I believe it and I feel it and I cannot forget it and I feel like I will cry right on the subway. Sometimes I do. And I am glad when I do. Because it should feel real, it’s supposed to feel real.

I can tell you the stories from the news that live with me: the mother of three children whose kids were playing outside near the dumpster and an explosive device went off and all three children died. I remember that one. I remember the pregnant woman, crying over her husband's body in a coffin at his wake, and me crying for that unborn child and for that woman who will bear it alone. I can't recall in what country that one happened, but I think it had to do with Israel or Yemen; it was an invasion that happened or seemed to happen out of the blue. That war disappeared as quickly as it came, or it fell to the back of the paper, or I was absorbed in my studio work and lost track of it. Current events, I hate to admit, happen when I remember to look at them.

Ana said I need an exit strategy. I need to not be going anywhere on CT's ticket alone. Right now that's not what is happening. I am following CT or he is leading me to follow him, which perhaps is the same thing. I want to follow CT—I want him to be perverse enough to lead me, but I don't want to go to Afghanistan. I don't care about being with 18-year-old soldiers in battle. I don't need to see it. What do I need to see? What am I looking for? I forgot.

I know what I used to feel. I used to feel that I was on a path but it was blocked, that I was almost a spy or a rogue spy and was forced to give it up. But the part of me that desire sparked had no one to left to guide it. I roamed the lobbies of hotels in the city, looking for a man in an expensive vintage suit—a discreet, older, subtle man who knew things, who was looking for me too.

And then I went to Austin and found him. But he's neither old nor subtle. Now I feel tired and lazy and I don't care about being a journalist in Afghanistan. My passion is the world of secrets. Afghanistan has just become a means to that end.

CT senses that I'm not fully committed. He writes that we should keep an open mind, that we can go anywhere—Somalia or the Horn of Africa, that during training we should talk about where we want to go and what we want to accomplish. But he always comes back to Afghanistan. I feel myself perk up about the whole thing when I talk about going, but I also worry that I am playing a part I have already written for myself. I'm looking for the sensation of desire in this story—a thrill I've felt before as an artist embedded in a

system. But I didn't have Linus then.

In the taxi, Ana brought up the idea of patriotism. I'd never really thought about it before. She said patriotism is the reason men and women go to war, why they place themselves in danger.

Patriotism, she defined, is the higher goal that connects a person to his country and community.

You know how when kids' parents die in battle and they like to have a reason for it? They tell themselves that their parents were doing it for patriotism. Patriotism was the reason they didn't die in vain. The love of one's country is bigger than one's own life, bigger than the kids.

I am not patriotic, or at least nothing has confronted me on that level to make me want to take a stand. I don't want to die for America or its ideals. The thing I believe in on that level is art. Isn't that ridiculous?

The pieces just match up so well and my gut tells me, or told me, to trust CT.



I land in Austin before midnight. I am waiting outside the airport doors just past baggage claim, watching people smoke, knowing I won't smoke for the days I am here and that feels good. We never planned how the pickup or arrival would go. I am just standing here calmly in the late spring heat, fine that he is not yet here. I text him 10 minutes later; I never like calling. His voice always sounds too close. I turn behind me and glance inside the sliding glass doors. In the waiting area I can see a sculpture, larger than life, of a female bureaucrat who looks like a man in a suit. She is made of red clay, sitting in a cube-like chair of the same material. The name on the plaque says "Barbara Jordan."

He texts me back. *I am inside.*

I respond that I am outside, near the sculpture of the woman.

He comes outside to meet me.

We retrieve his car from the lot and drive out of the airport and onto a highway. I notice nothing of the landscape along the way. He tells me that unfortunately his wife will be away on business the entire time I am here. She is on a job to bring wind power to a large stretch of farmland. I am relieved, even though it sounds planned.

We arrive at his place and enter the house from the driveway through a side door that leads to the kitchen. I leave my stuff there. We pass through the kitchen toward the back of the house and sit down in a green room with large windows that look out onto a small wooded yard. This part of the house was added on just before he moved in. It has a spiral staircase in the corner, leading somewhere else above. There are two couches placed perpendicularly and a large coffee table. We are each sitting on a different couch, each with our own glass of water on the coffee table. I am wearing my short denim jumper, like one of Linus's onesies.

I look directly at CT sitting across from me for the first time since arriving. I am reminded once again that he does not look like my neighbor of the same name from downstairs, despite my persistent attempts to insert the one for the other. I ask him about the camping trip he mentioned we were going to take, and that leads us into a discussion of the project. He's good at calling it my project and not our project or his project.

On the table is a thick coffee table book with a seductive cover

titled *The War in Iraq*. I pick it up and he smiles.

I thought you'd want to look at that.

I wonder if the books have been laid out like this especially for me.

He knows the photographs in the book very well. He knows the photographers who took them. *I was standing next to them in many of the shots.* They were his friends. It sounds like the whole war was his friend.

I flip through the images but don't really see them. I am taking in his voice and this room and our two glasses of water from the Brita pitcher without a filter and enjoying feeling tired and being somewhere else. He is explaining military life as a Borg—a word you'd know if you were into science fiction, which I am not.

A Borg is a kind of collective mind, controlled from a central hub. All of military training is about learning camaraderie and the age-old saying of, "You don't die for your country, you die for the man in the foxhole next to you."

We talk about Information Operations—one of the official Military Handbook chapters he sent me—as an umbrella term for Public Relations. Public Affairs and PsyOps are their own separate things. I tell him that of all the military documents he sent me, I liked the one called Military Deception best. He nods but I don't know at what. I like the ideas of feints and the government as storyteller.

He was in a feint in the invasion of Baghdad. There are four bridges over the Tigris River. He was stationed at one of them. There was major fighting going on where he was, but they only had half a dozen casualties—not deaths but injuries.

What about Iraqis? I ask.

I counted a couple dozen. This was not a suicide mission by the U.S. military, he insists. A day and a half later, at the end of the evening: *It was a long day, a day of heavy fighting. I got a face full of shrapnel. Just surface, no real damage, all pulled out with a pair of tweezers.*

I wince but he keeps going.

And the troops get a call to pull out. We were like, "What?"

He acts as if they were really surprised, but then when I question him further he says, *No, we were not that surprised after all,* so I don't know what he or they felt, what was a memory or what actually happened. They were supposed to take the bridge but it was a feint all along. It seems now that he also knew this then, because Iraqi

troops pulled out at one of the other bridges and the U.S. Air Force was waiting for them. The plan worked. They were decoys but it was not a suicide mission.

I say I am surprised the troops did not get angry at being decoys just to get the Iraqis to move to where CT's troops were and create a gap. This is where he goes back to the metaphor of the Borg as a group functioning as a single mass—and also the argument that as a soldier you cannot think too much about what is asked of you.

I like the way he talks. He flips between being a soldier and a journalist. I think he sees himself as both—if anything, a soldier first, although I am sure he'd disagree with me. I have to keep reminding myself that although he trained with the military, he never fought with it. He was in all those wars as an observer. I think I forgot that and imagined him as a soldier, which is how he appears to picture himself.

I wish I were attracted to him.

To get information, he'd talk to a major in Public Affairs, for instance, and the major would say, *Yeah, we are pulling ahead, doing great.* But when the major walked away, CT would lean against a humvee and ask the same question to a sergeant, who'd spit and puff at what the major just said. He uses the soda straw analogy again—I just saw it used in *The New Yorker* on the plane about Wikileaks. This must be a secrets metaphor that everyone in the business of secrets uses. He says, *As a journalist, you just keep on asking the same question to everyone you meet and then you consider the source and then you consider what you see yourself, and then you write the story.*

I am more interested in this process of the asking, consensus and weighing than I am in how to capture a bridge.

We return to background checks, which I am concerned about. The CIA will Google me and I'll show up.

Yeah, he says, but not as a terrorist. Your background isn't any more dangerous in their eyes than mine or any other journalist.

This both calms and belittles me, but he doesn't realize the latter. As much as I worry that I will not be able to continue my work, I also fear that I will remain insignificant to the powers I explore. At the same time, it's always bothered me that the CIA never contacted me on its own behalf.

You don't fit the profile for the CIA, CT says. Jonny said the same. They want people who draw the box and color inside of it. It's all hypocrisy: helmet laws, the pill, abortion. The Tea Party, he says, is not a spontaneous movement as it is described, but orchestrated by the government.

I wonder if anything's real.

I tell him about Wikileaks and the article I read in *The New Yorker* during my flight here, and ask if he's heard of it.

He nods. *Wikileaks is legitimate. They are legitimate, but B level; the only two leaks in their whole history are the two mentioned in that article. All leaks today are planned, orchestrated.*

How am I supposed to believe there is no master plan after hearing a claim like that?

Most leaks, he continues, are not discovered in the traditional sense; they are simply handed out or e-mailed, usually by a disgruntled employee. My favorite spy in the Dutch intelligence service told me the same. It's an informer trying to prove something, or he or she has a genuine reason, maybe even a good reason. But leaks are usually orchestrated by the administration. It's a way of disseminating information that the government wants the public to know but cannot simply announce.

He compares this to media scandals associated with sex tapes, like those of Kendra and Paris Hilton. *Those sex tapes were never leaked; they were released for publicity.*

I tell him I am scared of being too naïve to embed. I am not politically driven. I fit the American stereotype of being unable to get straight who is fighting and why, all the different factions and all the histories that construct these wars and keep them going.

He says I shouldn't worry about that. *For instance, take Somali politics, the ins and outs of Somali politics. A Somali expert—which, in fact, CT is—will look at an article on what is happening in Somalia that I write and will call it an oversimplification. But that is my job: to simplify things.* If you want to talk specifics and details, CT is all for it, he loves to talk like that, especially about Somalia. He'll meet you in a bar over drinks for that. *But once you know the depth and the complexity of a place, you are stifled. You won't be able to write at all.*

It's been two hours since I got to his place, and it's an hour later in New York. I am tired. He's surprised I've been up for talking this long. We break for the night.

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I wake up in a room that feels nowhere. My bedroom is at the front of the house. Above the headboard is a window that looks out over the driveway. I get out of the bed—it has an iron frame and is raised up so high that I have to almost jump down to get off—and go through the door into the linen closet that leads to the bathroom. The bathroom is close to the kitchen. I can hear CT puttering around in there. I turn on the faucet so he won't hear the toilet flush. When I come out, the coffee is already made. I take a mug and he says, as if embarrassed, that he does not have milk but vanilla-flavored creamer that he likes—*it's fat free*—but his friends ride him for using. Apparently, vanilla-flavored creamer is emasculating.

I eat my toast standing up as he begins to make his own. Then we move to the table in the dining room right outside my bedroom door, to the side of the kitchen. I take out my notebook and he begins.

We start off with trip preparations. Afghanistan. Again it seems a given that this is where we are going. I feel like a liar.

Twenty percent of the AP is locally staffed. Writers are on different levels. Stringers get 10 cents a word. Superstringers are on a retainer. They get about \$200 a month. I think CT was one of those. He got four stories a week plus photos when he was in Rwanda. There are also staff reporters and desk editors who rewrite the copy to AP standards. He once was a desk editor in New York. Then there is the bureau chief, and in big places you have the news editor.

One of the first things you have to think about when going somewhere like Afghanistan or any war zone is the criminal element. It's chaos. The diversion of government resources to fight the war makes policing a mess. No officers are watching for crime. There are Iraqi kidnappers out for money. There is always an increase in bank robberies in a war zone. Bank robberies pose a huge problem during war.

Risk assessment comes first. You look at crime and the types of crime. Retired SAS commanders get \$900 a day to watch you, to protect the journalists in Iraq. He says he used to feel like a VIP with four SAS guys all equipped with assault rifles. When you get off the plane they are waiting. They dress you in company-issued protective gear. They've got two cars: a main car and a chase car. If you are with the military, though, you don't need

them. This is only if you are unilateral. If you are with the military you don't need to leave the secure compound, and you shouldn't ever leave alone. You can't go take a walk along the Euphrates to think. He laughs at the idea.

He draws me a picture of the press compound. The AP is just one of the press operations in it. *The AP runs a \$7 million operation in Baghdad. All the papers are there. They hire Iraqi mercenaries to watch the press office and they hire British mercenaries to watch the Iraqis. Mercenaries are part of risk management services.*

The intelligence side of reporting requires that you get to know your neighbors, you get to know the community around your compound. The community will protect you from insurgents. With all the walls, the guns and the physical protection, none of them is as good as community relationships. What that essentially means is that you drink tea in shacks and call it Civil Affairs.

I say I thought it might be smarter to just try to mix in with the local population, like Matt Damon's character did in the movie I saw part of on the couch with Jonny, who fell asleep, so I turned it off.

Well, CT says, that is what Jill Carroll thought and look what happened to her.

I look at him blankly.

If you are a professional kidnapper, you take a safe target. Jill Carroll was a reporter from the Christian Scientist Monitor in Baghdad. She stayed in a hotel with a blast wall. There were car bombs and kidnappers. They abducted her; killed her interpreter. She did not have bodyguards and regularly took taxis.

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I just got off the phone with Jonny; he called as I am typing this. I was shooting guns at a range today, I tell him. *Why are you shooting guns?* I feel like I am doing something secretive. I come up with answers that feel inaccurate. *Why am I shooting guns?* I feel all over the place here.

I'm shooting a Glock 19, like the one the cop I'd trained with let me hold, but this time I had it out of the holster. With the ear protection the sound is like the inside of a seashell, like I am under the ocean, crackling at the burst of a gun like an enormous wave

breaking. Just the intermediary space before the actual range and after you get your ammo is so loud that I cannot believe it could get louder. There are girls there, blondes, all of them wearing the same kind of outfit: tight-fitting T-shirts or tailored button-down dress shirts and jeans with flip-flops covered in rhinestones. Their nails are *nails*. They are young, in their early 20s, and comfortable with the guns. It's Ladies Day at Red's Indoor Range. Gun rental is free.

Who are they? I ask CT.

They are daddy's girls from the ranch. See, it costs \$86 to shoot three boxes of brass bullets. This is not a poor peoples' sport.

I cannot stop staring at the girls and wondering why they come here to do this. One of them looks half Asian. They are attractive. Another girl looks like a sorority type—not my sorority at Cornell, full of Jews and Asians, but like the Delta Gammas who were all Catholic or Christian. I never remember the distinction between all the versions of the Jesus followers. She is petite with natural blond hair and light freckles across her face, with a button-down pink shirt and jeans. She looks like a Disney character, the epitome of Girl. She trades in one small gun for another, complaining that the first one didn't fit her wrist correctly. I want to follow her home.

I am scared of the empty shells jumping out from the gun and back onto my body, hot brass shells. One goes down the front of my dress and burns my cleavage. I pull a loose cotton sweatshirt out of my bag and over my dress to stop the shells from continuing to fall down the front of it. The sweat is running down my back in streams.

Lean forward, relax, half breath out and softly (I love the word “softly” in relation to a trigger) *pull the trigger. The bullet should be a surprise when it comes out.*

As we are leaving, an older woman in a business suit with perfectly coiffured, static blond hair comes in with her fat Latino secretary. They share a lane, like CT and I did. The businesswoman has delicate, manicured, wrinkled fingers and wears a starched white suit.

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At the range, I kept getting the gun stuck or blocked. I didn't dare to unblock it myself, although after the fifth time CT said, *You are going*

to have to learn how to unblock it yourself. Now, he shows me the parts of the gun in the room of his house that looks out onto the front porch of his robin's egg-colored house with pea soup interior walls. The gun is long and incredibly, surprisingly, heavy, inside a black gun case next to a briefcase filled with bullets "for educational purposes."

I don't care about guns. I find it very hard to see the use of them, the use of war. It seems utterly stupid to me to put people out to die, to pit two teams against each other to die. *Only two of the nine wars I have been in to cover were worth fighting: Rwanda and the war to end apartheid in South Africa, and maybe, he concedes, Afghanistan in the early days.*

Afghanistan has nothing to do with Iraq, he tells me.

I thought it did.

That's because Cheney and the Right lumped them together so you would think that.

It worked.

CT wants to teach a class about recognizing a failed state. He refers back to the history lesson on Afghanistan he gave me in New York, when we were walking around south Williamsburg, but that information has melted out of my brain. I am never able to retain those kinds of lessons or place them into the larger context. I once heard that is a female thing, which I think is offensive but possible.

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It's a few hours later. We've finished dinner. I'm supposed to sleep well tonight because tomorrow night is going to suck. It's the "camping trip" part of my Hostile Environment training. We're going to be alone on a ranch fighting mosquitoes and sweating.

Get as much sleep as you can now.

I realize as I say goodnight that he is short, close to the same size I am. I can look into his eyes as if we are on the same level. I don't like that.

I love the sound of my fingers on the computer keys right now. It's like a lullaby, a comfort to stave off the bad dreams I think might come, if not tonight then back at home in Brooklyn. I have no idea how I got from where I was trying to place myself in the intelligence

world to training for an embed with the military. I still feel protective about admitting how I feel, especially to myself. I am not ready to listen fully to what Jonny and Ana both said: *You have to know exactly what you are doing this time*. Even CT says we have to be clear what the objective is. I have operated up to this point in somewhat dangerous situations—emotionally, psychologically and legally precarious—but in no way mortally dangerous or with the threat of physical injury. I have to know why I'd do it now, when I have a little boy depending on me.

CT has avoided this by choosing not to have kids. He doesn't want them digging into his history. He has never seen a reason to have children of his own. His grandfather was an asshole. He joined the Klan when he moved to Texas in 1920. *Joining was the only way to make it successfully in Texas. The mayor was Klan. The chief of police, Klan*. CT laughs. *He wasn't gauche enough to wear the white sheet and do out the ritual, but you didn't need to do that to be part of it*. He sexually abused his daughter, CT's mom, and also her sister, his aunt—a butch dyke that at 80 years old is still dressing up in men's clothing and slicking her hair back. CT threatened their father that if he ever touched Jen or Betsy again, he'd shoot him in the head. He danced on his grandfather's grave when he died.

CT's father was a drug dealer. His mother was a secretary. *I was white trash*. He repeats that, laughing, many times in the night. He tells me about the British white trash men with their "black pudding relationships" in Kenya, flying out to Africa to rendezvous with their youthful black escorts. *They are my people*. I've never met someone who is so hyperaware of his negatives—or his positives for that matter—and yet still lives life in relationship to them. He is transparent in the most unerotic sense. They say the most important step in therapy is recognizing your problems, but he is so beyond that. His problems are already fully incorporated into a three-chapter book he is writing that is probably mapped out in its entirety.

I know all of what I have learned about him so far is public knowledge, the story he projects to others about himself. Except when he says he is aware of the courage it takes to have a child. He does not have it, he says. That is a quick but fresh moment, one that did not seem to be repeated enough yet to have a sense of public

information, of a story that has lost its weight because it is now a story that can come with an easy, mildly uncomfortable laugh but a conscious one.

He says he doesn't think his wife has come to terms with her childhood or how uncomfortable and upsetting it was. *She does not have a maternal bone in her body.* Do I because I had loving, giving parents? I did not want a kid for a long time. *Collecting folk art is our baby,* he says. That is what they decided to do as a baby, instead of a baby. He is tired of their friends giving them shit for not having a kid. I say I am the exact opposite. I was the surprise among my peers when I had a child. All the flack I got for getting pregnant was mostly from women, specifically from other female artists. I can see he is interested in this. He is not used to hearing it that way.

Although, he says with sudden understanding, to tell you the truth, if a war correspondent says they are pregnant, I look at my watch. Everyone knows in six months they are out. No one with kids lasts longer than 12.

Why do you think that is? I ask.

Because they realize their life is not their own and it's not fair. It is irresponsible to mess up a child's future.

Are they giving up? I wonder nervously but dare not ask.

There is an artist that he and his wife are watching to see if she will make that leap in her paintings from pretty pictures *to what you and I*, he says, *would call art.* She is so close, *was* so close, but then at their last visit to her studio she told them that she is pregnant and when they left—he does not fully say this but it's more than implied—they said to each other, *She just traded her possible break for a child.*

She has a show coming up soon. We have not seen her new works since, but . . . I'm hoping I am wrong but. . . I can see he doubts he is—or more than that, he'd be shocked if he were wrong. The woman said she didn't think she could paint while pregnant because of the toxins from the oils and the paraffin.

But that's stupid, I say. She can switch to acrylic.

He takes that and throws it right back at me with a sense of either tender victory or compassion. *You don't have to go to Afghanistan. You can switch to acrylic.*

It does not matter where I go, he says, but the alternative to

Afghanistan seems to be Iraq. He knows a lot of people there now and it would be easier to go there.

The last time he was in Afghanistan was right after 9/11. He was there four months. That is not the four-month embed with mujaheddin; that was another time. I got it confused, and it's been awhile so he wants to see how Afghanistan has changed. But, he says, *It's all fine. I want you to do the story you want to do and it only makes sense for me to get involved if it's something I know and something I can help you with.* It's an out I find annoying. For me, this is about following him, or it was about following him. I'm not that interested in this militarized world. I ask skeptically at the table in the now dark room as the sun is setting, Did you really *enjoy* this life? I see him react as I do when I am defending having a child, knowing at the same time that part of what he fears is also a fear of my own: Is my life no longer mine? And for him I pose a similar threat for a millisecond, because in the end, what power do I have to even suggest something that makes him rethink his life choices that have been so painstakingly made that they seem no longer painstaking but identifiers of his very core?

The military offers a sense of place, of community, of bonding.

I was not looking for those things that he was as an 18-year-old kid and I am not looking for them now and I didn't have my son to fill a void. I don't think I would have been a lesser person without him and I don't need that kind of challenge to stretch myself further. The only time I felt that rush of communal acceptance was the time in the Hasidic grocery store when a woman seemed to suddenly recognize me and say hello, warmly (for them), and comment on Linus's hair, how gorgeous it is, and I felt welcome—until I realized that my hair was too full that day and could be mistaken for a wig and that I was wearing the black Agnes B coat that Ana used to make fun of as a Hasid coat, and then I was embarrassed for this acceptance that in my vain understanding meant I was wearing a wig and a bad coat.

CT keeps saying he doesn't care that he is out of the field and settled down, but if you ask him a second time he does care. Still, he is not hiding anything; it's not like I've revealed a hidden layer. He's figured it all out. *My life keeps getting better and better*, he said climbing over the rocky path to his front door on our return from lunch today—why he uses it instead of the grass must be more habit than

the fact that it's comfortable or useful, as it is neither. He's not the kind of person who can do things again and again—I am also not that type—so he lost the adrenaline rush of being a war correspondent early on. That is not what kept him in it. It was that he was good at it, *really good at it*. Plus he knew the military from the inside. He had the skill set to be self-sufficient. He was the guy with the perfectly dressed medical kit that makes people instinctively know they are safe with him. The kid who never passed a class easily, perhaps ADD undiagnosed, but was now the number one kid graduating sergeant school. Here again is the identity he projects, the kid who was honored and got the swagger stick but at the same time made fun of it and never used it. It's so healthy. A healthy understanding and a healthy degree of emotional distance.

What does he think of the degree of intimacy in my work? For this project, where does he fit into that in his own mind? Is he thinking the intimacy will come between him and me or between us and the place we go to? What is he telling members of the military about us that makes them say our project sounds cool?

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Dinner was at a fancy place. Tapas, outside on a wooden porch with a roof. None of the tables around us are occupied, but the restaurant inside is full. You cannot hear anything happening in there, it's very quiet at our table and there are no artificial lights on the porch—or if there are, they are not turned on. It's like the sun has been turned off but the sky is not dark. It has an absence of color, a dull gray that seems to go deep into forever; it further increases the silence around us and articulates our voices.

During dinner we finish a bottle of wine. The owner of the ranch we are going to is supposed to join us. He never comes. Good, I don't want him to. He would be in the way and would force me to look at CT objectively.

We drive to his friend's place to borrow guns for shooting practice at the ranch tomorrow. We pull up to the small house of a guy in a Texas T-shirt with a weird mouth (some type of birth defect, I think). He lives here with his wife, who is storing her dad's guns.

Once an avid gun collector, her father's now a sad, lonely man who lives in Mexico with the women he pays for because it's cheap. In the car after we leave, CT and I discuss how there's something indescribably sad about a 60-year-old single man pretending to live the life of a playboy. The mouth guy's wife works for the senator whose office was visited by the guy who shot his gun at the Capitol, the incident I was witness to. Because of the shooting, she is taking a concealed handgun course. Everyone in the office was advised to.

She has two guns to lend us, both cop guns with string ties around them so they can't be fired accidentally. Her father prepared them for her—carefully like this—when he left for Mexico, even though she did not want them. They make her nervous; she has a child in the house and doesn't want a gun being “played with” by mistake. CT is impressed by how safely the guns are kept. He casually mentions as we step off their front porch that, at some point tomorrow, he is going to abduct me. He just slips that in.

It will be a three-hour process, he tells me. And even though you know it's going to happen, you will have an emotional reaction.

It seems very late when we get back to his house.

The one thing about being married is that I cannot sleep alone, he tells me as we say goodnight. It should sound like an invitation, but doesn't. CT never says one thing while hinting at another. He is upstairs alone and I am down here awake and alone and Linus feels so far away. Jonny doesn't. I feel Jonny. If Jonny knew exactly what we were up to here—shooting guns, learning how to treat a sucking chest wound, prepping for an abduction—he'd wonder why I am even doing this. I wonder the same. Is this where my favorite spy in the Dutch secret service left me? I preferred to stay off the battlefield. In the field, yes, but behind the front lines.

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Two mornings later, we are at the dining room table.

Another risk assessment is transportation. One of the largest injury and death rates comes from traffic accidents, plane crashes, bad or drunk Ukrainian pilots. You've got to spend a lot of time thinking about how safe, secure and reliable your transportation is. And then there are dangerous taxis and IEDs.

CT is good at managing his personal risk. I ask if by escaping so many close calls, he thinks he is blessed.

I have a high percentage of success, but you never have an absolute. Better to be arrogant about your skills than to believe in the supernatural.

When you are in a convoy, he continues, you have to be aware of your surroundings. There are IEDs, so be prepared for the worst. In Marines you are taught, "If it looks different, kill it," and usually you are right.

After a day in the field, a journalist "empties his notebook."

A term I love. He writes down the details and updates the story.

As you write, the story grows. The World Trade Center story had 68 updates in 12 hours. Each paper coming from a different time zone has a cut-off time, when the newspaper goes to bed. Another term I love.

A newspaper goes to bed every hour in some city in the world.

We take a break for lunch and drive into Austin, the city proper. There are no clouds. The sun beats evenly down, generating an oppressive heat with no wind. Dead, hot air. The pavement is glowing a sharp white light, even through my sunglasses. We go into a salad place and order the same thing at the counter as one another, a sweet salad with dried cranberries and strawberries. Very '80s. The owner knows CT. He's a cool—in a self-conscious way—talkative guy. He looks like a perpetual student 10 years past graduation—everyone looks like a student here. I think that's a quality of Austin; like Boulder, Colorado, but not nearly as bad.

We sit down at a table with our trays.

Abduction and interrogation. Rule one: Try not to get abducted. I laugh. He doesn't.

Unit cohesion and unit integrity. It's a romantic idea. Stay together, don't leave dead bodies on the battleground. Only four people have gone missing in Afghanistan and Iraq combined. That's how seriously this rule is taken. Well-armed, large units; always at least two vehicles in a convoy; always an even number of people.

Sometimes, though, ambushes are complex.

That's when they come at you from more than one place. He arranges the objects on the table to demonstrate: a large fold in the tablecloth is a mountain ridge, a wide book is the road, a smaller book the convoy. The IED detonates with the first vehicle, but then there's a boom on either side and suddenly the convoy is boxed in, people are shooting from the

mountain ridge. You fear this. Am I entering a kill zone? No matter how well you prepare, you just can't rule out the possibility of a complex ambush. There are always possible kill zones. Try to be ready.

IED is an improvised explosive device. My homework is to learn the military phonetic alphabet. Situational awareness, for example, is sometimes referred to as SA or Sierra Alpha.

Do you know what Whisky Tango Foxtrot means? What the fuck. You'll hear that a lot.

So what you do is get everyone together and drive the hell out of the kill zone. Don't stop. Flank: try to maneuver through and push past. Always turn around and fight—never just flee. If one of the vehicles is dead, you have the dangerous job of transferring the stranded soldiers into an active one. That switch is a highly vulnerable move. That's when bad things can happen. The insurgents want to grab you, or capture the vehicle with you inside of it.

I think the first option sounds worse.

They know the power of a U.S. hostage. Danny Pearl was a huge success for Al-Qaeda. Jill Carroll, too. "I don't want to be in a beheading video." "I don't want to be seen in an orange jumpsuit." You'll hear the guys say that a lot.

I imagine Jonny and Linus and feel like I'm going to vomit. And then I remember this really fucked up scene in a movie that was, perversely, extremely sexy. What movie was that? I saw it on TV, on a good cable channel like IFC or something. A woman is being held hostage. The man who brings her food doesn't speak her language but an attraction grows. She's kept tied by her hands to a wooden ceiling rafter, standing on a white bed, a beautiful old one with white sheets and a matching white bedspread. He comes in and puts down her tray of food. I'm not sure how she's supposed to eat, since she's tied up like that, or if he's meant to spoon-feed her or what, but he lifts her skirt—she's naked underneath—and goes down on her until she comes. He leaves the room straight after, no words are spoken. I can't recall if he leaves the tray on the bed or if he puts it on the floor or if it just disappears during a jump cut.

I ask CT if he's ever seen one of those beheading videos. He calls them snuff tapes. He's watched them when he's been required to for a story. He doesn't like to watch violent Hollywood movies. *No*

gore, he says. *Horror movies come off as fiction, but what they are referring to is real.*

I have always known that.

CT's personal wish is never to be a hostage. *Don't bite, kick or fight. They will kill you immediately. Some men want that, just to be killed right there to avoid the orange jumpsuit and the horror their families will endure. So they bite and kick. It's suicide.*

I ask why the snuff tape is created in the first place.

It's a terror tool, he says. The image strikes fear, demoralizes the enemy, sows the seeds of low morale back home.

As a journalist he is obliged to report on other journalists killed by insurgents. *Those are important stories. But the challenge is how to do so without furthering the enemy's goal. Does the video need to be seen by the public or can it be communicated with words alone? Words are powerful but the image is a hundredfold more.*

I feared this. I've always wanted words to be just as powerful. I want my words to be powerful.

You have to get the news across without doing the enemy's propaganda work for them. The U.S. military produces official U.S. Army videos shot from Apache helicopters. The other side releases videos showing U.S. soldiers being killed by Juba snipers. To counter this, the U.S. releases gun camera videos. It's tit for tat.

CT chooses to describe videos rather than redistribute them.

It's not smart to resist if you are taken hostage. The longer you survive, the better your chances of getting out. A hostage scenario is a mental game of wits; 85 percent of survival is mental.

I ask him if he feels invincible after seeing so much and he says, *No, the opposite has happened. I realize my fragility and how human I am.*

I don't believe him.

You have to have a strategy for being abducted. The first stage, the shock of capture, is predictable. Resistance is pointless. Bite and kick and you're pretty much committing suicide. If you're too much work they will simply shoot you. Or you could have the worst of both worlds, where they beat you up and keep you without medical treatment. But you'll be roughed up no matter what. If you're captured in a group, they'll pick out whoever seems to be the leader and make an example of him. Fade in and be colorless. Go

limp, become gray. The other guy they kill is the one who has a complete breakdown, because that guy's annoying.

You are not a leader, you obey and cooperate. They are assessing you. They will take your press card and passport and look you up. Say yes, say no, don't expand. Remember, their adrenaline is pumping. They are scared, too.

Next comes the interrogation phase. You tell them, I am not a combatant. I have no obligation to the military, no obligation to keep secrets. I am a mother.

Your main strategy, if you are kidnapped, is being a mom. Having Linus and Jonny. They will want to know about your family. If you're not a journalist, not a spy, what are you? Why are you here without your husband? You're going to have to lie about your name. They might have the resources to Google you. Be prepared to lie about being Jewish. If they ask about your name, Magid—what type of name is Magid?

It's Jewish.

No. It's Lebanese Christian.

I guess I'd better start researching what it is to be Lebanese.

No no no. He waves away my words. They don't know shit about Lebanese Christianity. What does Magid mean in Arabic? It's probably the same in Hebrew. Look it up.

(I just looked it up as I type. It means "glorious" in Arabic. In Hebrew, which I know, it means "itinerant storyteller." I love that, but glorious isn't bad either).

Look it up because I'm sure it's a common word in both languages. As a journalist you have to make up your story and know it. You don't want a complicated story.

He makes one up for me.

Okay, so your family left Lebanon in the early 1900s. Don't even mention the word Jewish—do not plant ideas! You're not even remotely Jewish so not a thought in your head about it. You're fourth-generation American. Anything factual—volunteer it. And tell as few lies as possible. Physical abuse is most likely if you're impatient or if they know you're lying. Always maintain eye contact when you're lying. If you look down or to the left, they'll know. Whenever you have to tell a lie, take a breath and look straight into their eyes. Don't blink.

Tell them whatever you know about the Army to show them you're not useful. Let everything out because you don't know anything important.

Jesus, if that isn't humbling.

You're not hurting anyone. Your knowledge isn't deep enough.

What, I wonder, if I want it to be?

Physical abuse is most likely when they know you are lying, when they see you lie, and when you are impatient.

You'll have the same interrogator for the long term. He will establish himself as your alpha male.

I think he actually said *your alpha leader*, but I imagine him to be male.

Remember you are powerless—including over your future. This is what they want you to think.

If you were the enemy and this was a U.S. interrogation, you'd be stripped naked. Clothing is emotional armor. It provides psychological protection. Being stripped works on everyone but especially Muslims, for whom it carries added insult. Your captors will control your whole environment: your room temperature, your food, your sleep. The interrogator manipulates everything so that you'll submit. Adding physical pain only damages the process. The interrogator does not want you to emotionally collapse. You don't want people to shut down on you, like a rose folding in on itself, back into a bud—excuse the metaphor.

I think for CT, collapsing roses are equivalent to vanilla-flavored creamer.

It's like this. He folds his arms, locking his elbows across his torso, and hollows his chest, his head dropping forward and his chin hitting his collarbone. *If you reach this point they'll know you've mentally disengaged, that you can't answer any more questions. Take the slaps on the face when they come. They will. Hardly react to them. But don't do this too early; otherwise they'll know you're faking. Wait at least eight hours.*

Eight hours?

A bad interrogator might still try to torture you, even then. Hope for a good one. And foremost in your mind: I will survive. I will walk out of here back to Linus.

There is something dirty about him using Linus's name. It's just a word to him, completely detached from the boy Linus who is also—secondly—my son. To CT he is an anchor, an escape tool for me from a bad situation. Linus is only language in his mouth, coming out as strategy, and somehow it spoils the boy to whom it is attached and I feel gross that I let it happen.

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Back in Brooklyn, a few nights after I'd returned from my training, I asked Jonny if he felt his life was his own. No, he said, he did not, almost before I'd even got the question out.

Did that change when you got together with me or after Linus was born?

Linus—he paused—and maybe a little with you. He thought some more. *I don't express myself so much anymore.* He was thoughtful. *But I do express myself through Linus.*

That's interesting. You interpret the question of whether your life is your own in terms of self-expression?

He looked at me, confused, so I continued. I was thinking about how everyone always warns you when you have a kid that your life won't be your own anymore because you're responsible for another person's. The purpose of your life becomes to serve the needs of your child.

Oh, well yes, that's also part of it. That is also true.

He broke eye contact with me and was quiet for a moment. *That's depressing.* He looked back.

But your life is always your own. Your life is always yours. Whose else could it be?

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CT and I are back at his house after lunch in downtown Austin. *When you are being held, he continues, count the days, write letters—*

You can send letters?

In your head. Write the letters in your head. To loved ones. Play memory games, remember all you can, remember colors of your captor's keyfiches, memorize your interrogators. Mental games help you persist. Surveil them as much as they surveil you. Learn who is a sadist, who likes you and who thinks you are cute. Who is the young one who is still close to his mother—he will think of his mom when he thinks of you. This is a match of wills. Try to get to the point where you know as much about your interrogators as they know about you. All the while stay human and sympathetic. Never . . . try . . . to . . . use . . . sex . . . or . . . sexuality of any kind. He

enunciates each word clearly and pauses between them for effect. *Because you will live up to all the stereotypes they have of Western women, whatever ancient idea they have of Mata Hari, the seductress, the jezebel.*

You are a young and vulnerable mother. You never carried a weapon. All you want is to do your reporting and report the real story. You went out with the military because your family has no money. They will want your money if you have any. When you volunteer truth it makes people sympathetic—a cop or any other authority figure, because they all use the same techniques. This method will help you if you are arrested in the States the same way it will help you there, captured and held by insurgents. So you counter with the same.

If you are successful, they will see you as an innocent who got caught up. Listen, you tell them, I am not a combatant, I am a young mother trying to make a living. This was the best job I could get to help my family. Release me and you will be seen as a humanitarian. They want to be seen as humanitarians. You tell them otherwise they are going to be seen as barbarians.

I wonder, who are these people really?

You are a propaganda tool. Make them see this: releasing me unharmed is the best way to use me. But if they find out you are Jewish then you to them are Mossad. You are a spy and they will tell you that the Mossad must release all women hostages because in their conspirinoid world you are just that: an Israeli spy. That being said, Do Not Change Your Strategy.

He tells me about the hostages in Iraq that he knew about when he was there. In Iraq, insurgents sold and traded hostages to other groups.

This is a problem for you if this were to happen. Now the second group has a financial stake in you; they bought you for a reason and they are wanting something. You will be held a lot longer. You have become a commodity that can be bought, sold, traded, and just when you may have made yourself human to the first group you'll have to start all over again.

When I do this to you, when I capture you, he warns me again, *you will be surprised. Even though you know it is going to happen, you will be surprised.*

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We are in the kitchen, that same afternoon, making coffee. He is telling me about his history and his rise in the military. He enlisted when

he was 18 years old for a four-year term. For one of those years he was a platoon sergeant. He had to refresh his skills in order to lead and train the troops assigned to him, so the military sent him to sergeant school.

It's like basic training all over again, but this time on steroids. It's at least 10 times as bad as the first time.

As a sergeant you get more money, more respect.

It's a better job.

It was a six-week training program, with four hours of sleep a night.

They give you more tasks than you can possibly accomplish, so you are forced to learn how to prioritize. The trick to being successful is to recognize you can't do it all. They train you in a subliminal way to figure this out.

By the end of the second week I got it. I graduated first in my class out of 385 students, and got a swagger stick for it. I am aware of my Napoleon complex and that is why I liked it, he laughs, a little bit uncomfortably. *I loved getting it, but it's ridiculous to carry.*

He came from a poor childhood with a drug-dealing father, and was then suddenly doing a great job in the military, and then great in university, and then great as a foreign correspondent. But he is getting ahead of himself. When he was done with his first four years, he reenlisted for another four. That hadn't been the plan. The plan had been to save up during the first four years. But he blew his money partying every weekend, drove his car to Dallas, spent the money on ladies. He paints himself as the bad boy with the model girlfriends on his arms—they must have towered above him. I don't see it. Maybe the bad boy part; being a bad boy can get you far, it's true. He talks about the four hours of sleep, the lack of privacy, the basic training that sounds grueling, and I harshly interrupt him. I cannot help it this time because it just sounds so terrible and therefore incomprehensible to me that anyone would choose this existence, enlist—twice—into this way of life, and so I interrupt him: Why would you do this? Without giving him time to answer. My face gets hot and I don't breathe in before the next question; I feel anger towards him. Why would you do this? Because you know, it sounds horrible to me. It just sounds horrible.

He loses his cool for a fraction of a second. I register that the

question did pierce his near-impenetrable facade but the breach was small, a pinprick with a fleeting sting, and then he is back to perfect, ready with a response.

The military meets the basic human needs of one's sense of importance, responsibility, bonds, challenges, all things adults want. Like being a mom, life is changed. It's very hard but somehow you feel enriched. Like having a place, a home, an obligation, all this the military offers to a young man.

And I wonder, whose life is not his own?

I think about what he said before, about finding out which insurgent holding me captive will identify with me as his mom, and I picture myself differently than I had, as CT sees me or perhaps as everyone sees me: as *this* age. As a woman who, in another culture or even parts of my own, could be a mother to a child who is now a young man, who is capturing soldiers and holding them hostage. And I feel as if I just aged in my skin but as well through the lens of the world's perception, that I am not as I see myself, not a young mother but a mother who had her child later, who does not want to have a second when she is 40, although that number is steadily coming toward me. And more and more I feel the need to make a choice, to either travel to Afghanistan and embed in the military or to put those plans away and have another baby. Somehow this ridiculous dualism is settling into my mind and making itself concrete.

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I go back in my mind to the second night I was here, to our dinner at the fancy restaurant. My moments here feel more spatial than chronological. He tells me about the corruption in the Somali courts and about the class he hopes to teach on failed states. I like the term but don't know its meaning. He explains. There is an annual index that lists the countries in the greatest danger of collapsing. There is no real definition of a failed state, but the main criteria are that the government does not have control over all its borders and that the police or the military are unable to manage a majority of its population. It's a land of chaos, incapable or unwilling to participate as a member of the international community, with tribes and gangs fighting for power and a little patch of government called The Green Zone with a

green—as in grass—well-manicured oasis protected in the center. Somalia, he seems to say proudly, is the number one failed state and has been for years.

I've been to seven of the top 10 of them already.

This idea of a failed state interests me, more than Afghanistan.

A pogue is a pejorative term for a soldier or reporter who stays behind the lines. He is the opposite of a combat arms soldier whose purpose is to fight face to face. The idea is to keep the brains behind the lines.

CT becomes suddenly aware of me and says with false empathy, *There is no greater challenge than to have a child.* I don't believe that he believes this. I do, but in the sense of the challenge as being the amount of sacrifice having a child entails. What he is actually saying is that there is no greater surrender than sacrificing your life, which is what he believes a woman does when giving birth. He does not respect it. Certainly not in the way he respects sacrificing one's life for a story. The question is, do I agree with him?

Alongside the challenge of having a child, he says, the greatest one of all—and now he is getting turned on, I can see it, he leans forward, he is no longer conscious of who is eating more of which tapas—is to focus the mind when someone is trying to kill you. He quotes Hemingway: *Once you have been hunted by a man, no other prey will do.* CT says Hemingway was referring to the Spanish American War, which I know nothing about.

To match wits, to hunt each other toward the kill.

He tells me the story of his time in Tora Bora, running three seconds to cover with Geraldo.

Rivera?

Yes.

He tells me the story with a warm sense of humor and nostalgia, like when I tell stories of high school mischief like outrunning one of three Easton town cops. I don't laugh and share the story with him the way another war correspondent might. I wonder if this is frustrating to him.

He says we—the United States—are like ancient Rome. *We are a warrior culture with a warrior king.*

I can't find his position in this. He says he hates this about our culture but he also seems to love it, to thrive off of it.

We are unsustainable, he admits. But we are not dying yet. As fucked up as it is, I am a white American male, the elite of the elite. I certainly wouldn't give up my U.S. passport to make a point.

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Later that night in bed I can't stop thinking about my skin or Linus's skin. Where his face meets his neck, his jaw line, the fragility of my body, his body, of bullets, of the sound of them whizzing by my head, a sound CT tells me is so specific that he needs me to hear it. He wants to record the bullets we shoot at the ranch so that I can know the sound they make as they pass by my ears. It's a sound he cannot describe. It is an indescribable sound, it is known only by the thing itself, not through comparisons, as there are none.

At the ranch the next day he sets up the recorder on the other side of the creek over which we are shooting at a piece of bark, but he forgets to turn the recorder on. I never get to hear the sound the bullets make. I have to imagine the sound.

I did this in my yoga class after I'd returned home, lying on my back with my feet toward the wall of windows that frame the Williamsburg Bridge. I associate that bridge with peace and escape. It's right there when I need it—my gym shares the building with my studio. I leave my desk, run out the door, up the ramp and onto the bridge. Its arched spine carries me over the East River. I am suspended between Brooklyn and Manhattan but I can't hear either of them. The traffic is so mixed up and loud that it's like it isn't there, just white noise turned on at full volume or Linus's Sleep Sheep tuned to the sound of the ocean or a heart beat—the sheep produces a continuous droning that, sitting on the windowsill of his room, can drown out the noise coming from the sidewalk below on South 3rd Street, the noise of the drug dealers and the bicycle gang and the fat Puerto Ricans who sit on our stoop in particular and leave their beer cans on the bottom step, in front of and blocking our gate, who offer to help me lift the stroller up the stairs and I always smile and pretend to be grateful. I can lift the stroller myself; I'd prefer if you would just leave and get a life, get a job, stop being drunk and stoned on my doorstep, I have a baby for God's sake.

So there I was, lying on the yoga mat trying to let my face relax as the teacher was instructing me to do, but I kept wincing at the imaginary bullets flying past my ears. Whoosh—my body tightened. Everything I do now requires a risk assessment.

I have developed a new fear of bridges around the city since being back from training. Not the Williamsburg Bridge, but certainly the one that leads from Long Island City to the East Side—I'm not sure what it's called. It now seems to go too high, arches its back too sharply, and Linus is sleeping in his car seat in the back and I am just wanting to get over it as fast as I can, it is so impossibly high. I imagine it being bombed and breaking in the middle, my car falling from the sky and into the river, hitting steel beams multiple times along the way.

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I wake up in Austin and try to stretch. Outside my window is a pure white sky that projects no light but seems to hold the light for itself. My room is still dark; only the crack between the molding around the window and the shade is alive, producing a white triangle like an illuminated stained glass window. I look down onto the driveway, made with pebbles and dirt.

I had no nightmares. I slept like a rock, like I was dead. I didn't have any dreams except one. About a car lot and a station wagon, an old classic station wagon with wood panels on the sides, and I was discussing with CT which cars to save in the lot. I wanted to save the wagon, but he said, *No, it's been put out to pasture*—a term I'd never use if I were awake. I slept in my dad's white undershirt that I'd taken from his drawer the last time I visited my parents in Connecticut and a very thin pair of pajama pants with the pockets permanently turned out like a pair of small wings or otter's paws.

I can hear birds whistling outside in the driveway.

I don't have the proclivity for shooting. I asked CT Monday night at our tapas dinner if he thought I did.

If you are a natural?

Yes, I replied shyly.

No, he smiled, shaking his head. *A natural would never have the*

eye confusion you have. It's an odd mistake to lead with the wrong eye. I've never heard of it before.

I liked shooting the smaller gun better than the M16, but I didn't particularly like either of them. The smaller one was just easier for me to handle. He must know this, that I don't like the guns, because he said he doubted I'd ever touch one again.

He said, *There is no military solution to guerilla warfare. The enemy blends with the crowd, it is indistinguishable from the civilians. How do you fight that?*

At Red's Indoor Range when we were shooting targets, CT explained to me how to use the gun. He took the gun first, then hit the button to push the target down the firing lane. We were given glasses and very large ear protectors like suction cups. I could not hear anything but the muffle of waves, which I learned when I was a child is the sound of my own blood circulating through my body. The glasses did not have frames, they were all clear like Wonder Woman's invisible plane that was not really invisible, it was glass. In the old cartoons, you could see a thin black outline—I always felt completely betrayed by it. The glasses were like that.

CT was shifting the gun and I thought I saw a small bubble of blood, a perfectly round sphere, around the cuticle of his thumbnail, and while he was trying to explain to me how to use the gun I could not help noticing the blood sitting so still on his thumb in a small, perfectly bright red ball, and then he brushed the sweat from his brow and got a small streak of blood on his glasses, or it was already there and I only noticed as my gaze followed his gesture and I wondered how the blood got on his glasses. It sort of made me nauseated but also intrigued me, scared me, and it was not until much later that I really looked at the streak on his glasses and realized it wasn't blood at all, it was a small red decal of a rifle. It was Red's logo.

Hours later I told him, I thought you had blood on your glasses, and he laughed. *I thought the same thing about you. I had a small cut on my finger from the gun—I don't know how it happened—and I was trying to figure out how my blood got on your glasses but then I realized it was the logo.*

At the ranch, even with the gauze in my ears, the firing of the gun was unbelievably loud. When we were heading out of Reds, I asked the guy working at the counter about silencers. He laughed and said they only existed in the movies. He looked at the other guys standing near the counter and discussed with them what he called *an exception*, some gun or silencer he spoke about in terms I could not follow, turning the conversation from us to them, and CT and I backed away, out of the store, towards the lot and to the car.

Since we didn't have the bullets for the assault weapons at the ranch (CT forgot them, which frustrated him greatly), we had to use the two revolvers CT had borrowed from his friends, the guy with the harelip and his wife. I was dressed in military gear and he wasn't. We found a ravine that was good for shooting over at the targets. The ravine dipped down at least 20 feet below us and CT ran down the hill and over the creek bed to the other side to put up a target—a piece of bark—and to place the tape recorder next to it so that he could record for me what it sounds like to have bullets flying by my head, whooshing past my ears. We shot rounds across the milk chocolate-colored water into the muddy earth that rose up on the other side.

I was holding the gun in my hand. We'd already fired a few rounds and I saw him go down the hill and over the ravine where the water got shallower and the riverbed got thinner and with enough rocks above the surface that he could dance his way on tip-toe across, and there he was across from me on the other side of the slope near the target and I started thinking, I could just shoot him. I could just lift my gun, align his body with my sight and pull the trigger.

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It's another night of training at CT's house. I just spent the past hour, maybe more, in the bathtub off my guestroom. It's almost 2 a.m. There is a small, perfectly round bruise on the inside of my thigh the size of a nickel, where his thumb had dug into my flesh to show me where the femoral artery runs down my leg. *You press here to stop the flow of the blood.* If he really did it right, my leg would have gone dead, *like when your leg falls asleep*, he said while straddling my thighs

so that if he wanted to he could make the blood stop entirely, enough so that I'd lose the whole limb.

The bathroom has white subway tiles like the kind Jonny wanted for our bathroom. The water in the tub is not deep and the air in the room is too cold to fully lose myself. I lie on my stomach and laugh, my chin submerged partway below the surface. I am blowing bubbles in the bathwater like Linus does. I'm thinking about Linus running in his short-sleeve white onesie and bright red sandals, his hands up like a ballerina, rushing down the slight slope of Havemeyer Street, forcing his little legs to catch up with the force of his body, an activity that is clearly thrilling to him. The boys with their black Goth T-shirts and trucker caps and greasy hair styles sitting on the bench in front of General Store, they can't help themselves but to laugh and smile too. I wonder if they think I'm pretty or if they think I am just a mom, as I laugh and yell after Linus, Be careful, Be careful because I know his knees are exposed and that if he falls he'll scrape them.

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The scariest part of being on the ranch is when CT tells me, *Take the point*. He is walking behind me with a loaded revolver in his hand. I'm wearing a bulletproof vest, a backpack filled with drinking water and a Kevlar helmet that does not feel like it fits but supposedly does. *Take the point* he says, and I have to make myself keep walking and not turn back to look at him, not anticipate him or at least pretend not to anticipate him, because I was doing that a lot, looking behind me over my shoulder at him, and after a few more times of me doing that he shouts forward at me, *That's really annoying!* followed by a fake laugh that I am sure is forced.

I know at some point he is going to abduct me, put a bag over my head and tie my hands back. He told me yesterday he was going to do it and I've been fearfully awaiting it since.

When we were shooting at the bark that looked like an otter's tail—the purple-gray piece stuck into the ground above the river, over the soupy, brown water with jumping catfish, near a recorder not recording the sound of bullets whizzing past it—he said again what a

shame it was that he'd forgotten the bullets for the M16s. *I want you to know what an M16 assault rifle's supersonic bullets sound like flying by your head—it's such a specific sound, only that gun makes that sound, the bullets go so fast—because when we go to Afghanistan, I don't want it to shock you.* Every time he says *when we go to Afghanistan*, I break eye contact with him. Like when he said it to Dennis, the cowboy who runs the ranch. On the way there, CT told me that Dennis is one of the last real cowboys. When we arrived I went to use the bathroom, and when I came back Dennis was standing beside CT with long bow legs like the handles of pliers, telling him, *Please thank the troops when you two are out there for doing what they are doing so I can be here just cowboying* (I don't see the correlation) and CT laughed and said, *Will do*, and I was thinking, He thinks we are going to Afghanistan and I don't think we are.

I don't understand being put out in this situation, using men to fight men to get control of something. I realize what a privileged thing that is to say and feel, as CT continues to remind me with a half smile. I am embarrassed by it, like I am about his comments on my reaction to the photograph on the cover of the *New York Times* of the pelican covered with BP oil in the Gulf of Mexico that attracts my sadness. He's thinking, *Little pussy city girl who cannot imagine war and at the same time does not feel the need or desire to rectify it*, and now he is telling me, *Take the point* and I am trying not to look back at him, trying to keep walking forward through the muddy field and then he shoots his gun, bang bang! Two bullets into the earth somewhere to the side of me. I see the mud, leaves and dust jump up and he yells, *Coming from the left!* and I run to a short bush a few feet away from me that would hardly act as cover and not remembering my left from my right (even in a calm situation I get them confused). And then he says, *My leg just blew off!* and I spin around. He is on the ground holding his upper thigh and shaking his leg, it's vibrating, and I run over to him. I forget to take off my wedding ring; the diamonds are scraping the dirt, chunks of it getting into the tiny gaps between the delicate snowflake design, reaching around in the medical pack for the tourniquet and his leg keeps shaking, his mouth ajar, the yellow Pez teeth opened up to me and I am wrapping his leg and turning the tourniquet around his upper thigh and then feeling for the artery near

his groin. *No, you don't need to do that. The tourniquet turns the blood in your leg off like a faucet.*

I store away the medical pack. Again I am taking point. I know he is going to come up behind me and abduct me, and it's the worst feeling knowing that it's coming and feeling him there some distance behind me. I consider my situation. I am out in a field, on a ranch, far from any form of civilization besides an aging cowboy who is probably acres away, with a loaded revolver tucked against my chest and a man I hardly know behind me, carrying a gun. I hear his quickened steps only when he is very close to me. It is almost a relief when the white bag is pulled over my head and in front of my eyes to the base of my neck and he pulls my hands sharply behind my back and throws my body down, my face in the dirt hearing my own fast breathing inside the bag but feeling like I'm not getting enough oxygen so I turn my head to the side.

Don't move!

As he is over me tying my wrists, I know that if this were real he would have hit me hard for that, for moving, hit my head hard.

Don't move!

I tell myself to go gray. I feel a deep calmness from the heat. He is holding my wrists that are now locked together on the back of my ribs with a zip tie. He has lifted me up with a jerk, I am standing up, he is behind me running me in numerous tight circles, I can't see anything and the hiking boots I borrowed from my mother are stomping and tripping over themselves awkwardly. I am thinking SERE—I remember the name of the training program: Survive, Evade, Resist, Extract. This is like SERE.

And then he takes the bag off and doesn't say anything.

I feel disappointed that I didn't get interrogated after the abduction. He says he decided not to do it. After a little while he asks me if I am okay, if he was too rough. I say no. I think he doesn't believe me. He seems ashamed, but I don't know why.

We walk back in an awkward silence toward the ATV the cowboy let us take from the main house. I say I thought we'd left it in the other direction and this annoys CT.

You have to pay attention more. That is called situational awareness. You always have to know where your vehicle is; you must always know your escape.

We get back to the ATV and drive to where we are going to camp. We choose the place the cowboy showed us first, down a steep hill, a very beautiful spot cocooned on three sides by a wall of trees and growth, perpetually in shade. The trees bend around the space creating an almost enclosed corner shelter of the woods, right off to the side of a meadow. Through the center of the meadow is a strip of shortly cropped grass and earth that continues as far as the eye can see with silver electricity poles running the length of it, like the shaved line on a dog's belly when he's just had an operation.

We take the gear out of the ATV—it's about 5 p.m. now—and start laying out the drop cloth and pitching the tents. The tents are canoe-shaped and made of netting, as if you could already imagine the body sleeping inside, and it becomes clear to me from what he is saying that the semi-permeable one is for us to sleep in if the weather is good and the black opaque one is where we both move if it rains. I act like I am not thinking this means we are sleeping next to each other in the same canoe-tent. I act like I don't care in the same way I pretend I am not feeling uncomfortable during his lesson on dressing sucking chest wounds while I am straddling his torso and searching for injuries by running my hands along the surface of his body.

When the tents are all set up I say that I'm hungry, even though I know it's too early to be hungry but I have not eaten all day. We didn't do lunch. I'd just been continually sucking the water out of the medical-like tube extending out of my knapsack filled with water—it's a water pack. You have to suck and chew on a tube with a rubbery end so you don't dehydrate. I had to consciously try not to gag on it, just knowing this rubber thing was in my mouth and I was sucking on it and that other people had sucked on it before me—the whole contraption was enough to make me retch, but I just tried to push it out of my head and continue sucking. Whenever CT would notice I wasn't sucking he would tell me to remember to suck.

All my gear is off now and he says he can eat. *It's not too early.* He has these folding chairs, like the kind you bring to a Little League game, and sets them up. I choose a two-seater. It's shady in this cove area. All around the ATV and to the side of our chairs lie bones—big white bones. CT says they are cow bones, probably the cows Dennis the cowboy said he lost. They've been completely

licked clean by the coyotes and then discarded, strewn all over the grass. CT picks up a lower jawbone full of teeth, inspects it, and then drops it back to the ground. Somehow it doesn't feel strange to be camped out among a whole mess of cow bones.

He pulls three MREs—Meals Ready to Eat—out of his bag and asks me which one I want. I pick cheese tortellini with tomato sauce, because the second choice is some kind of beef and I don't eat red meat and the third option, which I can tell he wants, is chicken tetrazzini. Chicken tetrazzini, he tells me, is quite popular. *The soldiers fight over it.* The plastic packaging for these meals is extremely thick and rubbery. The color is clinical, almost not a true color but a default one, like a beige-brown, coffee-with-cream color, the kind of awful filtered coffee you get at gas stations. He shows me how to open the plastic and pull out the magnesium packet inside and asks me if I recall from science class what mixing magnesium and water does. *They heat. So you pour water inside this plastic envelope and the magnesium tea bag inside gets really hot in there. The exterior bag gets too hot to touch, too, so you seal it into the bigger bag and shake it, then lie it on the ground to "cook."*

After awhile we pick it up and open the contents. I look inside. The lining is silver, like tin foil. The food inside is not really cooked; the tomato sauce is still in a glob the way it gets when you leave food on a dirty dish in the sink overnight, but I am hungry enough to eat it and I do. He tells me after I begin eating that the whole meal is 4,000 calories, so I am trying to eat only small pieces of it, which is mostly easy to do since it tastes the way it looks. Each item inside the bag is packaged separately. The apple slices are like low-quality baby food, sliced soft apples in a sort of sugary gelatin. The MRE says it was packaged almost one year ago. Mine comes with crackers and a container of spicy, spreadable cheese sauce. He says he likes that so I pass it over to him and he asks if I want his peanut butter in exchange. I take it but hardly use any.

As we are eating he tells me stories that I am asking him to tell me. I want to know what he's seen. He tells me about Rwanda. He tells me about being on one side of the Congo River, on the side opposite Rwanda, and hearing the sound of a crowd cheering and thinking it is the rebel fighters celebrating a victory. He, his photographer and videographer climb over a ridge to witness the celebration, but what they

see from up there is a group of Hutus surrounding a bunch of Tutsi women and children. The Hutus are cheering because they are cutting the Tutsis up with machetes and then throwing their bodies over the cliff into the river below. As he is telling me my eyes are welling up. I am looking through him and into his story as if he is a lens and I can see the whole scene playing out in front of me. I am standing in that group of women and I am with my child whose name I dare not utter—not even mentally—and try to push this very real image out of my mind because it is simply unbearable: there is a group of people applauding as a woman is witnessing a child being slaughtered, a child who, in this situation, is now her child—they are all her children, dying by the slice, the multiple slices of knives. And CT tells his videographer to turn on the camera. He tells him to start filming! And the Hutus suddenly notice CT's crew and start shooting across the water at them. *They had guns all along but they wanted to torture the women and children with the machete.*

Women and children? I ask. I am still incredulous.

Yes, you don't want a female Tutsi breeding more children to grow up as adults, so you get rid of them all, and he continues the story of his crew's narrow escape and how the whole event began a kind of war—the Hutus against his crew—and how the other reporters who saw them near the end of their escape were so impressed, how hardcore CT and his crew were to make it out alive. But I am still stuck at the part where the women and children are being murdered; every word he speaks after that point is an offense and makes me ill and mad and I interject at the part of his story where he and the photographer are high-fiving each other, How could you be celebrating after you just witnessed what you did?

And he says, *We weren't celebrating, we were relieved. Do you know the difference? This is where Hollywood gets it wrong. In the modern warfare movies when the soldiers are celebrating even after a bunch of their buddies got shot, they are laughing and crying and hugging with relief that they are alive. Hollywood makes it look like machismo and joy; it is neither.*

How did you deal with it?

I didn't—at least not then and not for many years. I don't see movies like that now.

We are finishing the last of our MREs. I eat even less of mine

than I thought I would. The colors around us are evening out, the greens are no longer green and the sun is gone but it's not yet dark, and he leans back in his folding chair, belly full, and then suddenly shudders and grabs at his hair. There's a spider in it and just then we look more closely around us, our eyes focus on one long, almost invisible line of a spider's web. It must be 12 feet at least. He points to it and we look around and realize that an entire curtain of webs has been constructed around us while we were eating, like an invisible shell, and there are spiders everywhere, we are being closed in on every side except the one that was open, and we realize if we don't move now we'll be walled in by morning.

We keep the tents intact and pull the tarp, with the tents on top of it, into the shaved strip of the field so that our campsite is now fully exposed. We are pulling the tarp with the tents back and forth along the clearing to avoid laying it atop one of the giant red anthills, like little natural landmines, all around us. It's just getting worse and worse, this camping idea, and then he says (as if God has suddenly had pity on me), *Oh no, according to my watch* (that somehow also gives a weather report) *there is a storm coming. It's big and violent and it's coming straight for us. What do you want to do?*

I hesitate and then say I want to go.

Why?

Because, I respond cautiously, I don't think I am going to understand any more about being in Afghanistan if we sleep here in the rain with the spiders and the ants, cold and muddy and wet.

And he asks crisply, *How long did you know this?* The question comes out as an accusation and I am scared for a moment that I am a failure and am letting him down. *How long have you been feeling this?*

I lie and say, Just now. I felt it just now. I look into his eyes, take a breath and say it straight to his face, but he still knows I am lying.

That is a rule, he says. *If you feel something is not right, if your gut is telling you it's wrong, you have to say it right away. Your body and your unconscious are telling you something your mind has not yet recognized, and in the military you must trust this. Your feeling is usually right. If something is not right when you are on a mission and you feel like you should leave, then leave because you are probably right.*

We take down the tents. We load the ATV. Maybe he is

relieved too. And then as we are packing up, we see an armadillo—or rather he sees it, I only hear something and see a flash of tall grass separate and bend back like the white wake behind a boat. I have never seen an armadillo in the wild so he brings me around to the other side of the brush and then he rushes into the bushes and proceeds to hit the ground and make booing noises to scare the armadillo out so that I can see him, and as he is trying to spook the animal he is explaining to me its defense mechanism. *When armadillos are trying to escape a predator they jump up into the air. It's a fear tactic. But can you guess where this is not helpful to them?*

I can't.

With cars. They attempt to cross the road and as they do a car starts coming toward them and they jump up into the air. The front of the car smashes into them. They jump right up into their deaths.

We drive the ATV up the hill, across a muddy field to the main house. CT begins the job of transferring our gear out from the ATV and into his Prius. I lamely offer to help, but he shakes his head and stifles a grimace as he lifts one of the heavier packs. Dennis the cowboy is gone, so I wander into the house. The interior is decorated but has an unlived-in feel, as if its rooms have been staged for resale. I open a closet packed full with ammunition. The ranch owners hunt deer. *You are allowed to flat out shoot wild, feral, hairy pigs. You can even win awards for it.* I close the closet door and head back to the garage where CT is almost finished packing. The back wall of the garage opens onto a balcony. Over the railing I look out across the lush fields from which we just came. From here the ranch looks like a jungle. It has a silence and a richness of color that is almost cinematic. The evening has a purple stillness that comes after a storm, or in this case just before one. He slams the trunk shut and asks if I want to take the ATV out again to see the Angus cows.

It's like we are on a joy ride. He drives in the opposite direction from where we were camped, as fast as the ATV can go, making sharp turns that force me to grab at anything that's not moving. I look up at the sky. It is clear. There are no rain clouds in sight. It's been more than 20 minutes; the rain should be pouring down by now. I know he won't comment on this and neither will I. We seem to drive for miles and then, off to our right he points and shouts, *There!* It's the

clearing where he abducted me. I spot the orange tractor we walked past while pretending that mortar shells were falling from the sky and onto my head, forcing me down into the brush that has left my bare arms full of cuts and thorns. I am shocked but silent. I have no sense of this landscape, no situational awareness of my surroundings. We drive farther, over small hills of red grass. Then we see a bull, grazing and fenced in by an almost-invisible wire. His horns have been shaved off. He has incredibly large balls. They hang down heavily, like pink weights in a plastic bag. It is hard not to stare, and I wonder if I'm blushing. We drive on, more slowly now. The cows are in a clearing, huddled in a group with the sun behind them. He stops the ATV. They're beautiful. They have black hair, not like fur or skin; it glistens. They are chewing, standing, lying down, strangely human. CT breaks the silence. *Each one of those animals is worth \$2,000. I don't eat meat often, but theirs is divine.*

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The next night I land at JFK Airport close to midnight. A heavy rain is coming down now. I am in a taxi being driven by a small, young Chinese man. I can't help staring at the TV screen on the back of his seat. The volume is down so low that it's just a murmur. Silent rain is streaming down the window and blocking my view of the city that I forget to look at, forget to reconnect with, which is unusual for me. I feel excited to be home, and even a small amount of disgust for where I have been, for CT and his yellow Pez teeth, for the woods with its spiders and cow bones and tall grass that must now be soaking wet and muddy because the rain did come after all—hard, after we left the ranch. It thunderstormed all night in Austin. Rain beat down against the window of my guest room as I slept in the white bed. The sound of it woke me up for only a moment until I fell back into a deep sleep.

The taxi drops me off and I enter our building. I take the stairs up to the third floor and laugh at the message that has been left for me. Colored alphabet magnets have been arranged to spell CUDDLE SEKS (we don't have any X's left) on the metal door. I remove the S and K so that the boys living upstairs don't read it in

the morning.

It's very late. No one is up. I don't wake Jonny. I rummage my toothbrush out of the suitcase and head for the bathroom. I leave the lamp over the sink on, which gives me just enough light to cross the couch area into Linus's room and watch him in his crib. He is so big. He's sleeping on his side. The window is open from the top. I can hear the rain and feel a cool, wet breeze flowing in. The fan is off and pushed to the side. The cleaning lady has definitely been here today. Smart Jonny, making the house tidy for me. I laugh to myself and wonder what it looked like yesterday before she arrived, and then realize that's a bitchy way to see it.

Linus's hair looks dark; it's not sweaty. I gently rub his back. He shudders and moves his thumb out from, then back into his mouth. Beautiful little boy, red and white striped pajama bottoms and my favorite socks of his that my parents bought with the pumpkin-colored toes and the little trucks in shades of brown and blue. He's in his Rolling Stones T-shirt—black with red sleeves. His body is so long. Such a big boy, not a baby. I drop my clothes along the way from his room into ours and am naked when I go into the bedroom. Jonny pats the mattress. He says nothing as I lean over the bed, but touches my hair. I kiss him and then stand back up and search through his drawers to find a pair of boxers. Then I reach into the T-shirt drawer, locate a soft cotton tank top and slip it on. I crawl into bed and cuddle him. He sits up enough so that I can see his face smiling and then puts his head back down onto the pillow. I stroke his hair and kiss his bare back. He feels thinner than he did before I left. His skin is soft. I feel like a foreigner and myself at the same time and it wakes me up completely. I feel more awake than I have all day.

I hear CT in my head. *Fifteen percent of people who go to a war zone come back worse off than before they left.*

Worse how?

They have nightmares. They're different. Everyone is different, but 15 percent are worse—he smiles—and 15 percent are better, with a more profound love for the people they loved already, more confident and with a greater sense of purpose.

And what, I ask, about the other 70 percent?

They are everywhere in between; they fall along a bell curve that he draws with his hand in the air in a perfectly even arc.

Everything with him is an algorithm, a statistic. He warns me—he is meant to warn me, it's part of the risk assessment—*Going into a war zone changes your worldview. It will change the way you make art. Maybe you won't be able to make art anymore or maybe it will make your art better.*

It's the same conversation I had when I was pregnant. I don't expect or want to have the same position throughout my life or within my work; I don't want to protect my point of view. That would be false. But I don't feel a connection to what I've just trained to do, this story whose plot I have yet to find. If anything, embedding in the military in Afghanistan now seems more familiar than visiting a failed state in Africa, which sounds as far away as Jupiter.

In the morning, Linus wakes up and it's as if I did not go anywhere. Jonny does not ask me any questions about my time away. He'll ask me later. I want him to ask me now so that I can feel he is interested, but I don't really want to answer or to talk about it. I'm not sure what to say. I walk into Linus's room. All the stuffed animals are scattered on the floor; he always throws them off the windowsill before falling asleep. His nappy is soaked through and heavy, his stripped pajama bottoms are wet down one thigh and the bottom of his shirt is wet too. *Mama*, he says. He looks different and immediately calls for Daddy. *Daddy Daddy Daddy!* They've bonded since I've been gone. I lay him on the change table and sing him a song that I'm making up as I go along. It's not very good but he says *more* and so I keep singing the same off-key song while changing him into dry jeans and a T-shirt. I put him down and he runs to Daddy and I go into the kitchen to warm his milk.

A few days later I send an e-mail thanking CT, then stop communicating with him for a while.

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I am in Central Park. It's windy. I am sitting on a bench beside that artificial pond where you can buy little motorized boats to control remotely. I've never sat in this part of the park before but have seen it

a bunch of times in films. Linus will like it here. I am reading *The New York Times* International section, a story on General Stanley McChrystal, his fall from grace and impending dismissal from the U.S. Army, continued from the front page. McChrystal, commander of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan, had let his guard down in front of a reporter from *Rolling Stone* who ended up in an impromptu “embed” with McChrystal because of the Iceland volcano. (Lucky guy!) The general disparaged senior members of the Obama administration and was being summoned back to Washington.

The wind keeps trying to steal the other sections of the paper away from me. It is a Thursday. On the cover of the Home section is a little white gingerbread house built by a woman in the woods. I casually text CT, after nearly three weeks of silence: Pretty crazy about McChrystal.

He responds immediately. *Good to hear from you*, followed by a series of exclamation points. *I'd been worried I was too hard on you*.

No, I lied. Not at all.

The e-mails begin again. CT writes that Kabul seems pretty easy to get around, but I had *better believe that getting a decent embed at the general-officer level is going to be really hard after this Rolling Stone McChrystal episode*.

I assumed as much, but find this new obstacle more intriguing on a political level than disappointing on a personal one. Training has left me feeling flat—about a military embed in Afghanistan or CT. I'm not sure how, but they are linked. They share a field that is potentially lethal and bluntly methodical. I had been seeking someone to lead me out of the system and into rogue territory, but no longer feel certain that person is CT.

I ask him if he knows whatever happened to Fausto Cardenas, the man I witnessed fire a gun into the sky from the Capitol steps. The question must seem to come out of nowhere, but he responds without pause that he thinks he pled guilty but doesn't know how he was punished.

A few days later, he does know.

Fausto is being held in Travis County Jail. He is listed as committing a “terrorist threat against a government service,” he tells me on the phone.

Brilliant, I mutter, which CT ignores.

The case is still pending. Fausto will face a judge next month. It's not a hearing and no witnesses will be called.

I ask CT what it is then. He calls it a docket. Fausto's docket will take place on August 31st at 9 a.m.

I book my ticket to Austin and finally permit myself to act on an irrational instinct that I've been suppressing for some time. I purchase *Faust*, the epic drama by Goethe.



I land in Austin on August 30th. The day is hot and the air is heavy. The drive from the airport is familiar. I remember the highway that you get on, only to get off a minute later. Lamar Boulevard, the rich suburban neighborhood of the guesthouse where I will stay—the same house I stayed in with the Buddhist girl during my first visit here when I first met CT and Fausto shot his gun into the noon-time sky.

The house is different. There is a new fence painted with a light blue trim. I wonder if the Mexican worker I passed in the front yard is the same one who was here last time, painting the garage door. I never looked any of the men working at the house squarely in the face. It's like we were occupying two different worlds in the same location, like the theory of ghosts my friend has of two time periods overlapping each other.

The house sounds like it is turned on. There is a loud, continuous hiss. Something is leaking from somewhere near the kitchen, behind a wall. It's like a kind of domestic orchestra. I think back to a book I once read that described a radio device invented after World War II to find submarines in the ocean. When the Marines first dropped it below the ocean's surface they were shocked to hear the roar of a battlefield. The peaceful silence of the ocean is a myth: at an otherwise undetectable frequency, the fish, the sea mammals, even the coral all make a hell of a lot of noise as they move and grow. It's like that in this house. The silence of the room has been revealed to be full of noise. It hovers over the yoga mats and the New Age paraphernalia in the living room.

I leave the coffee I picked up on the road on the counter in the kitchen, and head for the bedroom I slept in before, but it's totally different. The bed is made up for an overgrown child. There's a new pastel quilt and an explosion of oddly shaped pillows piled at the head. On the top pillow is a black and white screen-printed picture of a baby's face. The bedroom right beside it has been converted to a massage studio. The bed has been replaced by one of those tables with a half-circle notched out on one end for a person's face. I decide to stay in the master bedroom, where the Buddhist girl slept last time.

When I leave the bedrooms and enter the kitchen there is a new sound, a loud buzzing. I first think it is part of the general

cacophony of the house but then realize that the oven timer is going off. There is another Starbucks cup on the counter, placed directly next to mine.

That afternoon, CT and I get a coffee near the *Texas Observer* office. We talk about journalism, the weekly editorial meeting I just joined him at, my story for the magazine and its elusive subject. I confess that the training overwhelmed me. He nods and says it should have. I say that I've since found myself questioning our direction; I'm grabbing onto other subjects he mentioned, like failed states, green zones that contain functioning governments only four blocks wide and the same distance deep. I love the absurdity of these serene but loaded spaces, peaceful islands in the middle of an otherwise violent and ungoverned country, but traveling to them feels like a trajectory I don't want to be on. I'm wondering whether I need to embed in Afghanistan or if there might be another type of conflict in which to embed myself closer to home.

I ask if that triggers any ideas. I think he does not realize that I am trying to solicit his guidance.

But CT is off on his familiar sermon on how journalism is evolving—the new journalism, HTML 5, when the reader will be in the control of the story. I half listen, remaining firmly positioned in favor of what he is against: the control of the writer. But deeper into his exposition, I start to be moved—for the first time—by what he is saying. I can suddenly imagine, as he describes it, a more profound integration of image and text. I feel my fight for words, for the weight of words, slipping. A visual artist with a mistrust of the image hanging onto the power of the words, until he gets to the subject of emotion.

He focuses on the difference between video and photography. *They are very different mediums. Photography can capture human expression in a way we cannot see with the naked eye. A photograph freezes the face in a moment of reflection; the difference between a scream and the frozen moment of a woman in pain. Which one has the greater power? Where does a video tell the narrative best?*

My perception of CT changes, from lower to higher, from the blue-collar editor sitting at the pathetic staff meeting I sat in on—it was like they were planning the school newspaper—to someone with a vision. I wonder what it must feel like to go from writing for the

AP, with stories being taken up by *The New York Times* and *The Nation*, to editing a local leftist paper—albeit a respected one—like the *Observer*.

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It's nighttime. I am back at the guesthouse. I enter the walk-in closet—it's off the bathroom of the master bedroom, hidden by a secret door—looking for something warm to wear. I find two silky Asian robes. I take the red one off the hanger and put it on. It's like the robe my grandmother used to have in her closet. She bought it in China. I took it from her closet when we cleared out her house after she died and had planned to make it into a dress.

I wear the robe out of the closet and into the bathroom, the walls of which are decorated with doll and manikin heads, and step in front of the mirror. There is a vintage sign above it that says *We Do Bobs*. I like this house. I like its yoga studio aesthetic and its strange little objects. In each of them there is a sincere and human intention. Too many of the trinkets look like their makers were overly conscious of Art with a capital A. But they are honest attempts, only foiled at the end by the misunderstanding that a "sculpture" is supposed to be the end result. There are so many Things. Things fill the house, Things piled on top of Things—but carefully. The house is the culmination of a careful and loving desire to add and layer and then add again. Across from my bed there is a collection of zebras on the bookshelf. Two rows of wooden spinning tops are arranged on the small metal desk that might actually be a wardrobe. There is a trove of lava lamps, of pillows that say *Wish* or *Sweet Dreams*. I am sitting at the metal desk. On it is an old, green metal typewriter with an already-typed-on sheet of paper wound inside. This makes it look like a sculpture rather than a tool.

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Fausto's docket begins and ends shortly after 9 a.m. I leave the courthouse and walk toward my rental car. I can see the Capitol building, only a few blocks north. There is thick heat outside. Breathing in the air is like breathing in a body. I don't mind it. I thought I would.

I feel safe around this area, close to the Capitol. Not because the Capitol has added security, but because it is familiar. I visited it yesterday. I stood on the steps where Fausto stood, looking up into the sky that he shot into, before I entered the building. The once-open and quiet entrance area is now cluttered with Department of Public Safety officers and a maze of black, stretchy belts on poles that order visitors into line for security checks. Installed among the white classical columns are three beige metal detectors, like doorways or phone booths—why is security always beige?—and an X-ray belt. The security upgrades came with a price tag of \$3 million. Concealed handgun license holders walk through a special lane marked “CHL Access”—around, not through, the metal detectors. I’ve read that Capitol insiders are signing up in droves for the course that will get them a license now known as “the express pass.”

I called Jemma, Linus’s nanny, from the courthouse before the docket started to check in on him. She told me there has been a tragedy. Last night her brother was shot in the head, twice. She told me this as I was standing outside courtroom number 427, waiting for Fausto, who is being referred to as “innocent” despite the five or six bullets he shot into the sky—where and when did they land? I hung up the phone and called Jonny, who was also away on business. He told me to call my father and ask him to drive into the city to take care of Linus and let Jemma go home. But, Jonny said, I can’t allow my dad to take Linus outside the house. We get scared for Linus’s safety. My dad can be too lax with him; he might fall asleep or not pay attention. He might let Linus wander. I cannot handle another tragedy. Why would someone shoot a man in the head twice? Executioner style. No, that is one bullet to the head. I didn’t ask if this happened in New York or on the island Jemma comes from. I was being pulled into another discussion of guns. Should I now go to Jemma’s brother’s house and think about that gun too?

In the courtroom, all the cameramen and the newscasters work together, whether or not they work for the same station. They pool their information. I am not sure what the competition is for news on Fausto, “the Capitol shooter.” I am sitting on a bench inside the courtroom audience area taking notes. One of the female reporters, Jessica from KVUE, sees me and comes over.

Do you know Fausto?

Yes, sort of.

Can we interview you in the hallway?

I wonder if I look older than I did when I was interviewed on TV in January, as a witness when the incident happened. I hear Ryan, a radio announcer, saying no family members are in the courtroom. Strange. I thought the man one bench away from me looks like a more manicured, darker version of Fausto, but I also never recall Fausto being so white. In the interviews with Mr. Orr, Fausto's lawyer, Jessica mentions a proposal by the Department of Public Safety to arm the security forces at the Capitol with M4 semi-automatic rifles, the idea being that the open display of this particular firearm could work as a deterrent measure against prospective "terrorist" attacks, like the one Fausto is charged with. Jessica asks him if he thinks it's a good idea. Mr. Orr appears surprised.

I love the Capital just like we all do, but that seems a bit extreme.

And then Jessica asks me to respond, me who had the terrifying experience of being at the shooting. Do I think it is a good idea? I don't think so. They are just bigger guns. What are they going to do, shoot him harder?

Jessica is surprised. *But you were there! Wouldn't you feel safer?*

It seems to me the stupidest solution. Just adding more guns is like adding more security cameras: it never preempts the problem. The problems are random. You cannot catch randomness or stop it from happening. What would a bigger gun solve?

Jemma's brother shot in the head. Twice. Bigger guns. Fausto is innocent. I ask Ryan how Fausto can be innocent when Capitol security caught him in the act. Jessica, who thinks I am crazy, and Ryan, who is pretending not to think I am crazy, say that he is not guilty—or at least pleading that way—of the specific charges against him.

Mr. Orr says Fausto is a nice young man who has never been in trouble with the law. *\$100,000 bail, his family cannot afford that. That's a lot of money to ask a family to give.*

I get in my rental car and find CT. We are driving to the border. CT thinks if I don't embed in a war zone, maybe I will find my story in southern Texas, closer to Mexico. *The border there is like a combat zone anyway*, he tells me. *We've got people with guns and troops deployed*

along the Mexican border; Border Patrol is flying drones along the border, and politicians are using military terms like “force multiplier” to talk about law enforcement.

He thinks there may be a story to write about the militarization of Texas.

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It is close to midnight. We decided to stop not far from the border, in a town called McAllen, at a Holiday Inn. I am in a new room in the main part of the hotel. My previous room, 355, was in the other building. The door to that room was kicked in at the same moment the room phone rang. I had double locked the door with the chain and was conscious I had done that because in Brooklyn I usually don't. I do it only when Jonny is away. The door banged open and the metal chain caught it and I screamed, Hey! I ran over to the door and slammed it shut. At the moment of the slam the phone rang, four times, and then I picked it up. No answer. I was terrified. I called security, then Jonny. I texted CT: Did you just call me? He texted back, *Nope*. I never saw who kicked in the door.

I had them switch me to another room. I like this room better, but they're both awful. The smell of this one is like toxic cleaning supplies mixed with stale paint and the people who were here before me, but the walls are closer together, which I like. There is not as much space to feel lost or exposed within. I realize CT must be wondering why I am texting him so late at night. *Does she want me to be calling her now?* Or are we past that sexual ambiguity? Jonny says, *It's CT who is calling you, who is opening the door*, but I know it's not and tell him so, and he asks me, *Why does his wife let him go to a hotel with you?*

My shoulders ache from driving all day. *You've been a trooper*, CT said as we pulled into the hotel parking lot. I have been.

Hours before, I am driving in the dark blue night. The unlit highway is very hard to see. I stare at the yellow lines marking the lanes and try to hug them. We were on South 35 but then switch to another route. (Why does the toilet in this damn hotel room continually flush? The water keeps refilling into the bowl. Every room in Texas is so loud.) Driving along the dark blue highway, CT remarks

on the stars. It is hard for me to see them, they are over the roof of the car. I crane my neck forward and can see the night sky beginning; they begin not in front of me but above me. I say, I bet they will be amazing at the border, and he says, *No, the light pollution gets in the way.*

The open plains calm me. The sky is pink with a swirl of clouds. CT is telling me about immigration and the Arizona law and the jobs that Mexicans take once they get over to this side. I interject about the sky and the plains. Earlier on I saw two dead dogs on the side of the road, a black, thick Lab and a Rottweiler. CT says they must have fallen out of a pickup truck.

We stop in a town called Alice to eat. We go to a “four star”—according to CT’s phone—Mexican restaurant with the same color scheme as my Austin guesthouse. CT asks for vegetarian beans, *My friend here is vegetarian.* The waitress goes to check in the kitchen, comes back and says the beans are made with bacon lard. With *lard.* I look at CT. He says, *Best to order the cheese enchiladas, no beans, no meat.* Okay. It comes as a soupy cheese sauce like Velveeta poured over three enchiladas filled with more cheese. I am so hungry that I start into them as CT says, *See, the veggies—a few pieces of greens—are like a garnish.* I eat the greens first and then try to eat as little of the enchiladas as I can to feel full, but they do taste good in a sinful, indulgent way that is fake and disgusting but almost sexy in its grossness.

The waitress is older. She has big brown eyes that look like holes in her head, the corners of which dip down on the outside edges. She makes it worse by outlining them in black like a child’s drawing and caking on mascara. I say *Weird eyes* and CT says *Mexican eyes.*

I did not know Mexican eyes looked like that. I thought she was almost blind.

He sort of laughs, perhaps unsure of how to respond.

The restaurant looks like a hotel lobby. Actually like the lobby of this Holiday Inn, with bright florescent lights on even at 10 p.m. when we entered the building to go up to our separate rooms. Before my room got busted into and I moved to the main building overlooking the pool, which is glowing a turquoise blue through my window, uncannily inviting, but I don’t have a suit and I am supposed to be asleep as we have to get up early and drive to the border.

Why are you going to the border? Jonny asks, when I call him back from the bed of the new room. I don't know. I don't know why I am doing any of this. CT says he is taking me away from Austin because *You don't want to be somewhere where there are people like you.* He is right. I want to be out here. From the car, I look out at the empty fields and the lonely trucks defined only by their red taillights passing me in the dark night and I don't like that much, I don't like thinking I could be alone and my car might die. I remember my mom warning me that if it does, *You must leave the car and hide in the woods so no one rapes you.* But I love the daytime and the even light just before dusk and how the sage bushes look pale green and soft as if the landscape has been painted with a wide and thin fanned-shape brush—a gentle landscape to lie across, to enter and disappear into like a fuzzy gauze-covered dream, and I wonder what it would be like to drive alone out here, but only during the day. My driving fantasy is a day-time fantasy.

The few towns we pass are not really towns but a series of seemingly empty silos and refineries for gasoline that look like futurist paintings, with gray and white pipes outlined like the Mexican waitress' eyes. The harsh outlines mix into the whites of the pipes so the edges are not hard and linear but blended in a painterly manner, bending and curving into one another like that Mac screensaver where the tubes keep filling and overlapping until the screen is so crammed that the pattern has to clear and start again. We pass the refineries into another open landscape and CT talks about the barbed wire that surrounds a large and isolated ranch until the wire becomes a 40-foot curly, extravagant gate.

The towns suck themselves onto the highway and slow the highway down. The highway becomes Main Street for a mile and other trucks—long, multiwheeled trucks—traverse the highway at the blinking yellow light and you can go into one or two restaurants or a bar or get gas and then keep going and the highway picks itself up again. I only see one little girl in the distance in front of one of the empty façades. Here and there is a Days Inn or a Comfort Inn and a Whataburger, but it does not seem like there is life here really, and yet it does not seem a ghost town either; like there are people here but they are hiding and they don't use lights and the windows are

black but it's not scary, it's otherworldly. It's open and it's way better than Austin and nothing looks fake or designed. It just looks like it is, it is this, it is this town at that yellow blinking light with one road that intersects it or smaller roads you don't see because you would not turn down them so they disappear to the side as you disappear forward. If you need a town then there it is. I only see a few cows.

As we get closer to McAllen the highway opens up. There is no longer a town alongside the road, it is beyond the road, it is passable, you have to get off the road to be there. The highway starts to look like runways of an airport with runway lights off the tarmac, too many feet away so we are only getting ambient light, but it's enough and I can turn off my brights and all the while I am talking to CT but the moment he is quiet he is gone. It's like the towns at the yellow blinking lights, it's like the radio I forgot to put on, it's like when he talks and I suddenly remember something and lose his voice and forget where we are.

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CT believes that writing is a craft, a technique, he tells me as we are driving away from the Alamo—the Alamo he brought me to that I pretend has meaning for me but actually does not. He says, *Texas history begins here*. I don't care about it. I get my photo standing in front of the Alamo. I think of the painting of the Alamo inside the Capitol building in Austin.

Writing is a craft.

What about Nabokov? I counter. He tells me about certain English professors who can go into Nabokov's texts and look at his writing and discover the system he uses for every piece he writes.

But what does that reveal? I ask him. If he does in fact have a system, what would that prove? That Nabokov is formulaic? That he just filled in the blanks?

He says he is not doubting that the writing is beautiful but that it is learned and that writing does not have the spookiness of abstract painting because what abstract painting conveys is open-ended—the viewer can bring any meaning to it—but a book is intentional; the writer is trying to communicate something specific.

I don't feel it. I want to interject and keep arguing against him, but both of us know neither of us is going to convince the other, so we finally let it go.

At the Mexican restaurant he picks up a different thread of the same idea. He says that a journalist is someone who gets paid. *If you do not get paid you are a hobbyist. That is what "professional" means. The Huffington Post is not good for real journalists.*

He claims that if *The New York Times* approached him, he would not go there. He's made the decision to settle down in Texas. I know he is lying to himself. He would. He wants to be accepted by that world and I cannot help looking down on him for how he is looking down on himself. And when he talks about the writer Richard Price, who we both met separately, being arrogant and pretentious. I am more attracted to Richard Price. I can forgive almost anything for the result of good work.

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I'd been driving the entire day. We only stopped for food and the Alamo. In the Holiday Inn now, I am tired, getting more tired, writing in my sleep now, bright green wall behind the bed, a lighting design that does not know how to be soft even with one bulb on, full from that god-awful cheese enchilada I ate almost nine hours ago.

When I called Jonny, he said I was on TV. He saw me in the courtroom in Austin and being interviewed outside of it. He saw Fausto approach the bench in that ridiculous black and white jail suit. *It's so weird*, he said.

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The border is marked by a big red steel fence that doesn't seem so hard to get over. You can put your foot on that metal bar—I point it out to CT—close to the top and ring the fence with a lasso. CT says, *No, but you couldn't get over that last bit.* Yeah, he is right, but it still does not seem difficult to cross.

The Alamo looked smaller than I thought it would, but I never really thought of the Alamo before. I don't think I think much about

Mexicans; I think I do often see them as manual laborers, abstractly. But then I think of curators I know from Mexico City and they are different in my mind, different from when I think of Mexico in general, like there are two Mexicos.

We are driving along the border—it is midafternoon—and suddenly he says, *Stop. Okay, turn around and pull over there. I want to show you this*, and I am excited for a moment at what he is going to show me. We get out of the car and walk over to it. There's a cross leaning on a fence, like a white bicycle left behind in New York, marking someone's death. *Tell me to take a picture when you want one*. I tell him I want it and he shoots. There is a faded photograph pinned to the cross. It's decorated with a sparkly ribbon. *Someone tried to cross here*.

I like the graveyard in the middle of the swamp that we visit, the Jackson Cemetery, and the empty house right across from it that has been almost completely washed away in the storm, a hornets' nest hanging from the rooftop, only a small piece left with just a few hornet stragglers hanging on, the bird watchers on the border—*the old man has an amazing eye*—while the Border Patrol sits between an opening in the gate and waves to us. The mud keeps us from getting very far. We get back in the car.

I have been driving the car for too long and my shoulders hurt. Empty landscapes, beautiful skies, passing trailer parks and fantasizing about getting a trailer and bringing Linus and living there together in a trailer with him for a few months. I keep positive but I am constantly tired, continually stopping for coffee. He is loading me with so much information from the passenger seat, he says he is very impressed with how much information I can retain. I keep thinking of questions but it's just talk and I am not getting closer to anything except a stronger sense of unease and fear, not coming from CT but from somewhere else outside of us. He says I have a trust issue and laughs because I think the road is not going to continue and I keep stepping on the brakes. *Have faith in the highway, that it will keep going and that the cars on the other side will not suddenly be in your lane coming toward you*. We go over a small hill and I step on the brakes again. *Why are you slowing down?* He says, annoyed, *Okay, turn off here. Yes, this is the turning lane*. I know what the fucking turning lane is, but it's true I have stopped checking the rear view mirror, past the Staples

and Office Depot huge signs that if you took them down would be bigger than houses, Stripes and Arby's and big cars and everything looks like a suburban strip mall but larger in scale, and you can take it in all at once because the land is flat but you cannot find a taco when you want it.

We don't hear any bullets near the border, like I saw on the news. We are outside the car now, walking next to the big red metal fence. It's really hot. CT's shirt is wet and spotted around his belly from sweat. We walk over the caked-up, dried dirt that is what the ground is like after the river overflows. Everything smells like the bottom of the river. We walk down to the river's edge at the pump station and there it looks idyllic, there it is a lake or a swamp. Maybe it would be okay to live here, in one of those abandoned shacks, definitely better than near the built-up strip malls, but it would terrify me at night. It's only romantic in daylight.

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Town center, Laredo. The border! Two bridges, people walking back and forth across one and driving across the other, into Mexico. I would have crossed too, had I remembered my passport. Why did the border seem taboo? I am allowed to cross the border, and yet we get excited when we see it. It feels like we are literally stealing a look by seeing beyond the fence. There is Mexico. There it is, the border!

Laredo looks like a border town. It's what CT recalls all the towns down here around the fence looking like when he was here last, nearly 20 years ago. Not like the strip malls most of those towns have become. Most likely, the strip malls weren't even there back then.

A lot of people are moving down around the border now; commerce is really expanding.

He doesn't like the look of all the strip malls and neither do I. But if he lived down here he would want it this way, with all the mainstream stores and discount houses, he would prefer the choices. *I wouldn't want to take away people's choices*, he says. *More stores, more places to shop, greater diversity.*

Arby's, Stripes, McDonald's, Whataburger—doesn't seem like much diversity to me.

We walk down toward the very thin, stagnant river underneath the bridge where all the cars are passing through security checkpoints. I am scared of everyone: the older men looking at me, the bathers and the fisherman across and in the water, still and old, and the patrolmen scattered around, searching for illegal crossers. We are invisible to them. We walk through the dusk and people eye me. We head up from the riverbank to the commercial streets. They are all closed up and gated and no one is around except for a few shady people in the corners and in the alleyways. It feels oppressive and I don't trust anyone and no one is in the same reality as I am, as if we are all in different films shot on the same location.

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I liked Rio Grande City, if that's what it was called, a very small border town with short houses made of brick. I think that is where or near to where we stopped for coffee and pastries on the way to Laredo, when CT first asked me about Fausto. There were blue and yellow booths inside the pastry shop and tables pushed so close together that to go to the bathroom I had to walk down an entire row of them, swing around the last table and come back around. Next to the bathrooms of these places is always a cluster of gumball machines with Redhots or little plastic toys, all of which look old and chipped, as if they are more for show than purchase.

I like the color palette of these old towns. It's the same as the guesthouse. I like what Davy Crockett's vest looked like in the Alamo, beaded on leather. Just before we stopped, I felt as if I was following the road, trusting where CT is bringing me—where I am asking him to bring me—and not putting on the brakes like I do later on the freeway. Following him to the border, following him along the border, following the birds that he will follow in 20 years when he retires and comes down to the border to photograph them.

In the pastry shop, I am playing out the narrative about him in my head that his wife plays out for him, that he dissuades.

I am not anymore the man following the story. I am 45 years old.

You are not old. You think you are older than you are.

What I am saying is I am not old. But over 35 is too old to be an

embedded reporter. On the field with 20-year-old guys running into a ditch is too old. You are the old man. No Country for Old Men. War is a young man's game.

We are sitting in a booth, the closest together we have ever sat. I know that I am looking at him in the most engaged way I have, but that I am otherwise disembedded, disenchanted and taking in what I can, trying to feel something or not feeling anything.

It's a young man's game—and that is what it is: a game. Once you play with your life, once you have been hunted, men hunting men, nothing else will do.

So do you get bored?

Sometimes. When people heard what I'd done with you at the ranch, I was surprised at how many of them asked me if I would do it for them. They saw what we did as an adventure, something they'd never done and wanted to do. I doubt five hours in, when they were hot and sticky, their hands covered in thorns and couldn't hear out of their left ear, he laughs, Pez teeth fully out, they would still be enjoying it. Everyone wants to be Jack Bauer.

I feel stupid as I recognize myself. I resent him but do my best to push the feeling away.

Why do you want Fausto to be protesting something? He shoots me the question over his empanada and bread pudding. *Why do you want Fausto not to be a paranoid schizophrenic?*

The questions continue into the car, the sky sunny and perfect with clouds that have a flat bottom as if the sky is a glass tabletop and all the clouds are sitting on it like challah rolls.

If he is crazy, I say, then it's not an interesting story. It's just sad.

He disagrees and traces out the social problem in Texas of the lack of mental health support. He tells me the story of a woman with psychiatric problems who checks herself into a mental institution and meets the man she marries there. They have a child and when the baby is very young she starts hearing voices loudly in her head telling her to kill the baby. She goes to the mental hospital and says, *Check me in and this is why* and they turn her away. Two days later she kills the baby and eats its brain. He amplifies the story with specific details about the woman in her kitchen with the knife, the husband in the next room, what she did to the baby's skull, how she was covered in blood. I am going to throw up. I refuse to let my own reality enter

into this story but it's creeping in despite my efforts, becoming a kitchen I design and store in my head along with the actions inside of it. I feel angry at him for telling it to me, knowing the story makes it my responsibility.

Tell the story of Fausto as a young man in need of mental help. Report that story. Analyze how that happened.

I am not a reporter, I protest flatly. I am not even sure I want to be a witness. That is the difference, I tell him. I want to be a participant. Fausto acted. He walked out onto the Capitol steps and fired a gun into the sky six times, or four or five.

CT says, *Yes. A normal, sane man does not decide that is the way to call attention to himself.*

He did not shoot at anyone.

It was a call for attention. The ramifications were the militarization of the Capitol. He was the tipping point, but at the forefront of that action was a man, possibly crazy and sexually obsessed with a woman in a white shirt, who wanted to say, "Here I am."

He's missing it. Fausto's gesture can't be parsed. He is the unspoken man in the white and black striped prisoner outfit over the long underwear shirt that is the type I find most sexy on a man. His brother on the courtroom bench next to me looked like a tanner, healthier version of him. He was nervous and rubbing his hands together.

The news in Austin is using me, adding to their story the girl in the courtroom who has flown all the way from New York to see the Capitol Shooter. Crazy little girl.

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Driving back to Austin late at night, I feel like a bullet shot from a gun at 80 miles per hour. My voice is flat, my enthusiasm drained. I don't sound like myself going down the freeway toward San Antonio to Austin. CT keeps saying, *Two hours more, 20 minutes more*, every hour.

We stop at Denny's for coffee. I can hear the bitterness in my voice as I talk to him for the sake of talking, and yet I know I cannot be angry. I am leading this whole thing. I want him to tell

me what to do and he is not telling me and I am losing faith. He is saying Lajita is ruining his life because he works at a shitty paper and has to teach snot-nose kids and makes a third of the money he did when he worked at the AP because he wanted to live a life with her. And all I hear is *the shit paper* and I wonder, Why *this* man? Why am I following this man, where am I going to and why am I not alone, driving silently along the highway through the desert, which is what I always crave? But I also know that without him I would never have come here.

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What makes your pulse go? he asks me in the car, 50 miles outside Austin.

I think of the term “disembedding,” a process of stepping outside of the bed. A disengagement. I think of the fear I felt of the men in the corners of Laredo, of driving the car but not being in it and yet wanting to finally get out of it, wanting to be alone but being scared of being alone.

CT says, *Choose your narrative.*

I tell him I want to armor my Mercedes station wagon. That I cannot stop thinking about Fausto and the ambiguity of his act.

He asks, *What is it with Fausto? Is he a metaphor, a trigger?*

CT is playing the role of an editor.

Did Fausto open a door or is he the subject? I haven't heard you talk at all about what it felt like to be at the shooting. Is this about Fausto or is this about you?

It's because I was there, or I was almost there.

So it's about you.

Yes. I take a sip of my my now cold Denny's coffee and glance over at him. I think it's about me.

His teeth disturb me. They seem to get more yellow and more crooked.

I hope this whole crazy loop was worth it to you, he said when I dropped him off at his house a little past midnight. I didn't say anything. *What does Texas mean to you now?* I can't imagine his yellow mouth on Lajita's mouth.

When we passed the building in Laredo with the murals on the

façade, the tallest one in the old city, he told me, *Lajita and I stayed there 20 years ago and now it's an old age home.*

You knew Lajita 20 years ago?

Not really, but we hooked up back then. We stayed there with four other people. It used to be a hotel.

Yes, I know this story from the time we drove back from the ranch, in the dark before the rain started. We went to an all night diner packed with college kids on dates and talked about his past, Lajita and his old lovers.

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It is 12:51 a.m. I am once again at the guesthouse in Austin, in the master bedroom. The car in the driveway was not here before I left for the border with CT. I don't know whose car it is. I am the only person staying here. I lock the front door from the inside but I know that all the other doors in the house are open. They keep the house unlocked. I find myself having a greater and more profound sense of insecurity. I get up from the desk and lock the bedroom door.

Now in the master bed I just feel like crying. I have to wake up in a few hours to go to the airport. Why can't I see CT as my embed? What do I want to climb into here? And what did we just do?

A two-day trip of constant driving, of *me* constantly driving, from Austin to the border, along the border fence, and then back to Austin, the whole time looking for a story, a protagonist, an embed, but basically going on a tourist ride.

We are moving farther away from Afghanistan and closer to Fausto.



I return to Austin for Fausto's next docket, three weeks after my road trip to the border. I'm staying in a hip hotel in the hip area of town. It looks like a series of freestanding cabanas. The guesthouse was occupied and I didn't want to stay with CT, even though he offered.

I enter the courthouse. On my way to the fourth floor, I pass through a cold concrete interstice with perforations in the wall that look like bullet holes. Outside the courtroom, I walk up and down the corridor looking for Fausto's family. They are not here.

At nine o'clock the courtroom door is opened and I go in. Mr. Orr enters the court 10 minutes after I do. He is unmistakable and old. I think he has dentures. The whole upper part of his jaw protrudes when he smiles. He is like a turtle. His head extends out from his body as if attached by a mechanical joint at the top of his collarbone. He wears a cheap, dark navy suit with very thin white pin-stripes and a pink paisley tie with a hot pink underlining that is facing out at the thinner part of the knot. Later I see this same pattern on a woman's purse and take it as some sort of sign.

Mr. Orr approaches the judge. They speak low—I cannot hear anything—and then he turns to leave. I stop him as he is exiting the stage area and ask, Aren't you representing Fausto Cardenas, the man who shot from the Capitol steps? He smiles and says, *Yes, that was what that just was*, pointing toward the judge. I must have looked confused.

Who are you?

I tell him my name.

Are you a friend of Fausto's?

I say, Well, no, um, sort of yes, but he does not know me.

His already quite wrinkled brow furrows more deeply and he says, *Come outside with me so we are not talking here.*

In the hallway Mr. Orr asks for my name and writes it in his notes. I tell him I was there.

At the Capitol?

Yes, I saw security tackle Fausto. I was interviewed. I did not say by whom, so perhaps he thinks by the Department of Public Safety or the DA, I don't know, but his assumption would be fine. Again he asks about the nature of my relationship to Fausto and I say I want him to get off. He looks surprised and touches his chin. We are

standing very close to each other; it's as if we are whispering but we are not. There is a man in a suit—I am sure another lawyer—who appears to be closely circling us. I feel as if we are completely surrounded, I am so close to Mr. Orr's hot pink tie and he says, *Why do you want him to get off?* I say, Because I don't think he was going to hurt anybody. I think something else was happening. I don't know if I said that second part. I cannot remember what I said exactly, but I recall his expression changing. *Why do you think he should get off?* He is smiling now. There is something either condescending or enchanted in how he is looking down at me, this romantic girl in front of him who flew *all the way from New York for this?*

He tells me to come to his office later and gives me his card. As he steps into the elevator he nods. *You are a witness. Of course I want to talk to you.*

Mr. Orr's office is in a little white house on Rio Grande Street, only a few blocks from the courthouse. I enter the front door. Mr. Orr's blond secretary has hot pink streaks in her bangs. She is in her mid-40s, too old to be dying her hair hot pink. Terrible art lines the walls of the waiting room (which is essentially an armchair in front of the secretary's desk), nearly blank canvases with ink marks like tufts of grass. He comes out of a door at the end of the hall and calls me into his office. There is a painting he points out to me in the room, done by the same guy who did those terrible murals in the Austin airport. They look like flat dioramas with human figures awkwardly arranged in sports positions, like those skinned people in the Bodies show, as if the figures in the paintings exist only to demonstrate an action but appear instead to be caught dead, literally, in the middle of it.

I sit down on a darkly polished leather couch. It's comfortable. He sits on a swivel chair behind his desk, leaning forward with a frown on his face, his fist beneath his chin, his elbow on the desk. I am nervous. He asks me to tell him what I am doing. I am vague but look him in the eye like CT taught me to do at the ranch. I tell him I am not a journalist and it turns out that that goes against me.

I talk to journalists all the time. I know how to talk to a journalist.

So if I had told you I was a journalist you would have talked to me more openly?

He smiles. *Not necessarily. Can you tell me what you are going to do with this information?*

I say I don't know yet and he says, *Well then I cannot tell you anything. I ignore this and ask a question.*

He says, *How do I know you are not a spy from the DPS coming in here to talk to me?*

I smile at this.

I'm a defense lawyer, he says. *I am trained to be sneaky. I will get more information out of you then you will get out of me.*

I say, Well that's okay because I have nothing to hide. I feel I am lying, although I am not sure what it is I am lying about.

I tell him I think Fausto is an interesting character.

All my clients are interesting, he says, almost sounding bored.

He admits that he does not think Fausto did what he is accused of doing.

It's a strange case, what he is charged with is vague. He bobs his head from side to side. His eyes roam around the room then continue, the pupils sliding past the corners, looking behind his skin and into his brain and the back of his skull, like a person having an epileptic fit without the convulsions. It's a mechanical spin of the eyes, 360 degrees. It happens multiple times at the beginning of our conversation and then it stops, or I get used to it, or when I look into his eyes and he looks into mine I can stop them from spinning into his head.

If you find a guy with 10 kilos of cocaine there is no doubt he is selling it. If you catch a guy with one ounce of cocaine you have a question. Maybe this guy is going to sell it or maybe he just likes cocaine. It's hard to know.

We talk about getting caught, about doing something you know you'll get caught for doing. He thinks Fausto committed an act for which he either knew he was going to get caught or did not care. But it is clear he was not doing something he was trying to get away with. Then Mr. Orr repeats some great line or proverb about the subject of getting caught. Something like, *It's easy to assassinate someone or blow something up, it's not easy to get away*, but far more witty and eloquent.

We stumble by subjects, he tells me nothing. He won't answer my questions about the law and how Fausto's case will play out, if he will get off, if the security footage of the shooting will ever be released

so I can see it. He says he does not have permission to speak to me. I ask how I can get permission and he says if I write him—Mr. Orr that is—an e-mail addressed to Fausto, that he will show it to Fausto and Fausto can decide if he or Mr. Orr can talk to me.

Mr. Orr admits that he has not yet decided how he is going to proceed in the case.

He tells me he had a murder trial last week, and then he does that kind of wipe of the face that only men can do where his whole hand wipes from above his forehead, over his whole face so you see only his hand, and then pulls his face down as if his face was a screen and he was wiping it clean, changing and refreshing his expression. At moments like these or right after them his voice sounds more inflected with a Texas drawl. His client, he says, was an idiot. He should have taken the plea bargain but he didn't.

I have to do what my clients want even if what they want is astonishingly stupid.

Again he wants to know what I do. I am wary of saying I am an artist so I don't. He asks where I am from, *the East Coast, the Northeast?* Yes, I say, a small town in Connecticut. Somehow I think that will protect me more than saying New York. But then I say I now live in Brooklyn and he points to one of the many certificates on the wall; he has a certificate from NYU. You went to NYU? For the summer for film school? Really, I smile, and how'd you end up being a lawyer?

He says he has a deal for a TV show in L.A. He has an agent there.

Law stuff of course.

Like discussing law?

No, fiction.

So, I say, you are closer to me than you have let on, and he smiles and says, *Yes, well maybe, but I am a defense lawyer. I don't let anything on.*

We talk about sniping and he asks me what I know about Charles Whitman, the gunman from the university clock tower in 1966. I say I would not compare Fausto with Whitman. He agrees. I don't even think their craziness is comparable. We search our memories about Whitman. I say he had some medical issue, a disease, right? And he says, *Yes, a tumor?* And I say, Yes, a tumor, some people think the tumor could have gotten in the way of Whitman's reason-

ing. Mr. Orr nods largely, *Rightly so.*

He wants to know how I feel about Whitman. I feel nothing for him, I tell him, nothing like the way I feel about Fausto. With Whitman it's interesting on a medical level but all I can think of is the pregnant woman, Claire Wilson, who got shot by him. He winces as he remembers the victim and reminds me that Whitman, too, did not care that he was going to get caught. I tell him I don't think Fausto was trying to hurt anyone, and you know, if he was, I could have been hurt myself.

And he says, *Well, one of those bullets could have also come down from the air and killed you.*

And for a moment I wonder why I am so enamored of Fausto, when one of his bullets could have come down from the sky and killed me.

Our meeting comes to a natural end. I tell him I am not crazy and he says, *The first sign of a crazy person is that he will tell you he is not crazy*, and I say, Okay, so now you think I am crazy, and he says, *Well, if you are not crazy you will also tell me you aren't.* He walks me to the door and fidgets with the knob. *One day I will need to fix this.*

I drive to CT's office to pick up the CD of images he took during our trip to the border. His Vespa is still in the shop, so he asks for a ride home. On the way, we stop at the Capitol. I want to see the security cameras that would have captured Fausto's shooting. There is only one camera readily visible, right over the main door. *It's the one they want you to see*, CT says. But he knows that every inch of the building and its grounds are under surveillance. They just hide it well.

The question with Fausto, CT says to me as we walk back to the car, *is this: did he shoot up into the air because he was mentally disturbed, because had a qualm with the government or a government agency, or did he just want to get the attention of a hot girl?*

CT's house is only a short drive away. I pull into the driveway and say goodbye; I'm flying out tomorrow. As he opens the car door, he turns to me and asks, *So, is this about Fausto now?*

I'm winded. I don't know what to say so I say something else. I fumble until he interrupts me.

Don't worry. He smiles. *The question was rhetorical.*



One month later I return to Austin for Fausto's next docket. In the lobby of the courthouse I search for Fausto's name on the docket schedule. The defendants' names, call time and courtroom number are listed alphabetically on a series of blue LCD screens suspended from the ceiling. I watch for Cardenas on the screen listing surnames Ca through Dixon. It isn't there. I wait through another round of names in case I missed him. Are you fucking kidding me? His name is not there. I walk to the information desk not far from the screen. There is a black man behind the desk with obvious dentures, one long line of teeth wrapping through his mouth without gaps or grooves. Where is Fausto?

If you don't see his name there, he is not going to court.

But I am sure he is. I called beforehand. He shakes his head and directs me to the DA's office, over to the right. I go around the big curved desk where he sits alone and over to the door that says DA. A pretty Mexican-looking woman with long brown hair and delicate features, her only makeup being mascara, is stationed behind a counter, protected by glass. There is only a paper-thin opening in the glass, which I am sure is bullet resistant, just enough to stick a Post-it note through, which is what she does. I ask her to search for Fausto. She does. *The docket will be on October 29th. It's been reset.*

I feel as if I am going to cry. I must look this way, because she asks if I am a victim. I notice the sign behind her that reads *Witness Victim Services* and I say no. I don't really want to explain what I am, nor do I think there is an appropriate term for it. She says I should call ahead next time.

I ask when it was reset.

She says, *Five minutes ago.*

I am chasing a ghost.

CT texts me when I am back in my rental car. *You can come to my office if you want.* I am already on my way. When I get there—his workplace reminds me of a film set for a sheriff's office in an old Western movie, with old-style window blinds and thick wooden doors and furniture—we sit down on a brown leather couch. A young reporter typing at his desk is the only other person there.

CT says there could be any reason whatsoever that Fausto's docket date was moved.

The courts, the DA, whoever's hands Fausto's fate are in may very well eventually drop this case with a fine for illegally discharging a weapon within the city limits. If they cannot prove that he was trying to disrupt or disable the government, then there is no threat of terrorism and he's going to get off.

I say it's all about the site. It's all about where Fausto was standing when he shot off the gun.

And he says, *Yes, in the end he might just be let go with a fine.*

Like they all got tired of the story? It just gets written off as another bullet fired into the air, something that happens all the time, just the good ol' boys celebrating in their backyards and letting go a round?

And he says, *Yes, enough emotional distance has happened that what Fausto did no longer has meaning.*

We leave the office and walk down the slope to Halcyon coffee house. We sit outside on the balcony, CT with a muffin and coffee and me with oatmeal. I say I'm not sure what to do now that Fausto is off the docket. I have the whole day before my plane takes off, if I should see Mr. Orr—

He nods. *Yes. You are trying to make a relationship with him.*

Should I call him?

No, it's Austin, it's pretty casual here. And if you call he can say no. Just show up. He says, *You are good at this right, with people?* And I say, Yes, but look, Manhattan Armor background checked me when I went in to get my car armored—

He says, *Yeah, I checked you too.* We laugh. He says, *Just be honest with Orr, let him know you are going to do something with this anyway, so he might as well cooperate. Tell him you are an artist, and that you are interested in the case, a kind of sympathizer with Fausto and think it's ridiculous how the Capitol is now being overly secured.*

Should I tell him I think what Fausto did is kind of poetic and spiritual?

No, then he'll just think you are weird. Look, Manhattan Armor checked you because it is a security company. Orr is a criminal lawyer. He is fighting The Man. The security company is The Man. If Orr screens you, he will be interested that you are undermining large institutions. He will see you as an ally.

off the balcony and into the café when a large woman approaches me, probably not much older than I am, although she looks older. She has brown, shoulder-length frizzy hair, a long Bulldog face without makeup and a totally earnest expression. She's wearing a comically oversized suit jacket and dark blue pinstripe trousers that produce two thick sets of love handles, one above the trouser pant line and another directly below it. The pants waist is not at her waist but hitting her far below it. She wears ladylike patent leather black shoes with short, fat heels that are the only feminine thing about the lower part of her body and strongly clash with the wide legs of her suit pants. On top she wears an electric blue blouse, almost the epitome of what you would call a blouse, an off-the-rack blouse from a place like T.J. Maxx, and she asks nervously and rushed, *Please can I have your advice? Should I wear this jacket*, she points to the incredibly large suit jacket she has on over the blouse—she looks like the Talking Heads in their “Burning Down the House” video but not as starched; there is no starch in the jacket, it's just loose and falls as if it were made for a football running back. *Or this jacket*, and she throws off the suit jacket and puts on a more feminine blazer, softer, no starch either, black with electric blue patches all over it like tightly scribbled lightning bolts. She looks at me and says, *It's kind of big*. And I say, They are both big, and she mutters, *I lost a lot of weight*. I wonder what she looked like before and feel a deep sadness for her. There is a small, impish man, like a Christmas troll, standing next to her. I cannot tell if he knows her or if he is just listening to her dilemma. He intermittently adds his commentary. He thinks the suit jacket would look better on him than on her. He'd swim in it. *The gray suit I was supposed to wear got ruined this morning*, she says apologetically to her feet. *I'm running for office*, she adds, and my sadness for her is now laced with hope—a kind of dirty, stained hope, the kind of hope that comes after everything is lost but you still feel a sense of beauty that the person has not given up. I tell her to try them both on again for me and then I choose the feminine one.

I am finished with my oatmeal and start to pack up my bag and she says, *What about the pants? I have a pair of black Dockers in the car*. And I say Dockers? That does not sound dressy enough, and she says, *No, they are sort of silky* and runs to get them. She turns around and I forget about her.

I go inside the café and sit down to write when she suddenly comes out of the bathroom—I am not sure how she got around me to get in there—wearing black pants without pinstripes. They have the iridescence of her blazer but they are not part of a set. The vest that matches the pinstripe suit (which was absent in the last combination) is sucking her body in; it is fitted. Beneath the vest is the electric blue blouse and over all of this is the black blazer. It's still awkward but it looks much better, as if she is now wearing clothes meant for her rather than a giant man. I say, *Much better*, and she relaxes. She does not smile but she appears to be happier and somewhat relieved. *Scarf or no scarf?* Scarf, I say, unsure if I really think so but it comes out of my mouth and she begins to wrap it about her. *Inside the jacket or out?* I don't need to answer, she is already adjusting it inside the jacket, and I say, *Inside*. Better. She says, *Thank you Thank you thank you* as she begins to run out. *Thank you* she calls back to me, *I hope all goes the way you hope today*. It seems like an out-of-context thing for her to say, and I immediately attach meaning to her, as if she appeared for me specifically.

I hope so too, I call after her.

I leave Halcyon and head to Mr. Orr's office. It's down the hill from the courthouse. I go in and see the secretary who is too old to have the now magenta and blue streaks in her hair that she does. Her lip liner is dark pink and her lips are light pink, like cupcake frosting. I tell her I am here to see Mr. Orr. She asks if I have an appointment. I don't, but I have seen Mr. Orr here before. I was expecting to see him at the courthouse this morning but I didn't.

At whose trial?

At Fausto's hearing, but it was rescheduled.

She says, *Yes, Fernando already called*.

Who is Fernando?

She looks at me with fresh skepticism. *Fausto's brother*, she answers flatly.

Oh yes, I say, and there is a pause.

Well, Mr. Orr isn't in the office now. He won't be back until the afternoon—I worry she is going to say a time after my flight leaves—*until around 12:30*.

I jump to say, That's fine, I will come back at 12:30.

With time to kill, I visit Arthouse. I'd been there before when it was under construction, on my first trip to Austin. It is a new, modern building on Congress Avenue, south of the Capitol. Elizabeth isn't there. I go inside to the second floor gallery where I will exhibit this project in some form at the end of the year and study the small windows that punctuate the façade. They are long, thin glass bricks, vertically placed. I think about urban sniper hides. If I removed the glass from those slits, they would make perfect sniper posts. I imagine a gun pointed out of an empty window, with the barrel just slightly inside to be invisible from the street. I would have to remove multiple glass bricks to throw off the enemy as to which window was mine.

I get a call from Mr. Orr's secretary. He has cancelled our meeting.

I leave the gallery to drive to a teahouse near Mr. Orr's office where I will meet Philip Broadbent, a professor of comparative literature in the German Department at UT who is directing a version of Goethe's *Faust* this spring. I park my rental car outside the teahouse and open the trunk to get some blush out of the makeup case in my suitcase and an elastic to put up my hair, which I do behind the trunk door. When I close the trunk I see Philip, who I recognize from his photo online, through my back windshield across the street, looking in my direction but not seeing me, heading up the porch steps to the Tea Embassy entrance.

He is in the tea selection area when I enter. We shake hands and I readjust my image of him in light of his strong German accent. He is attractive, kind of nerdy in a sportsmanlike way. He is in shape—he told me he was out running when I missed him on the phone earlier in the day. I think he is my age. He is golden. His hair is blond, yellow at the top like a baby chick's but coarse and curly at the roots with a slightly receding hairline or simply a large forehead. He is somehow inaccessible, safely removed from my inspection behind in a pair of dark-rimmed glasses. We order tea at the counter—he pays for mine—and then we move through two small sitting rooms to find the right table. As we sit, I take out the first of the many translations of *Faust* I find in my bag. It's *Faust II*. Philip sneers as he picks it up.

I have to admit I've never read the second one, he tells me. *I've heard it's boring.*

The young man at the counter brings us two Dixie-size paper cups of tea that leave me disappointed. They are finished quickly. An hour later when we are sitting across from each other with empty paper teacups he stretches, revealing the skin above his trousers, below the bottom edge of his gray short-sleeve shirt with an insignia of a small hand and a victory sign. I do not look at the window of skin directly but I take it in and will consider it later. It is also golden.

He speaks like a scholar. I like him. He tells me he looked up Fausto after I contacted him. He has been, of course, thinking about the incident of the Capitol shooting, which before I wrote him he had heard nothing about. He says he could not find much on the web, but he still did not see what Fausto's motive was. He asks me what it is. I don't know, I say, no one does. I tell him as much as I know, I tell him what I experienced that day. He is surprised at how mysterious Fausto is, how so little is known about him. I tell him I am scared to meet him, I am not sure I want to hear what he has to tell me.

Philip thinks this is wise. *He is a myth, a projection. It is the act that concerns you.*

At first he seems wary of comparing Faust with Fausto, as I had been initially. He calls Fausto Faustus. I do not correct him. We start with his comment to me in an e-mail about how Faust was fighting against the mortal coil. I had thought he meant Faust was looking for immortality in the sense of not dying, but I see now that he means something else. He means and says that Faust is looking to go past human possibility. His immortality would be in his godlike understanding of everything. He wants this so badly and cannot find it in books, as he has studied everything there is to study and feels no smarter for it. He is ready to step into the world of spirits and black magic, to make a pact with the Devil toward action and experience, and go beyond the mortal coil. This Philip thinks is very different from Fausto, who as I said seems to have nothing, is a zero on the government record.

Well then how does he live?

I don't know.

Is he illegal?

I don't think so, no. He is indigent. According to the government, or at least the tax department, he does not exist.

Faust, Philip says, was a cantankerous old man, wanting to reclaim his youth. He would be jealous of Fausto's innocence and age.

Maybe, I admit. But they both chose action over words.

I later wonder aloud if I am like Faust but Philip says, *No, if you are using Fausto as a symbol or an object you are more like Mephistopheles*, and he raises his tanned, golden hands and gestures as if he is playing a game of chess, suggesting I'm moving the Fausto pieces around as little pawns.

So I am the Devil?

We talk about God and whether Faust or Goethe believed in him. Neither of us thinks that either of them did, or at least they each had a great deal of doubt. Yet the story of Faust begins with God and Mephistopheles talking in heaven.

Remember, Philip reminds me, the search for God—I suppose he means a godly or omnipotent position—was a personal quest for Faust. Goethe was writing in the time of a binary world, and I wonder if we are currently anywhere else. Goethe, he tells me, was a statesman. He might have wanted to take down or question God, but not the state.

Yes, but if Goethe believed in God, why would he not have God know the answer to whether Faust will choose to go the good way or the evil way?

This question is easy for Philip. *Goethe believes in agency, in Faust's agency. So even if Goethe believed in God he still believed that Faust had a choice. God could not know which path Faust would choose. Goethe became a minister of state for the duke of something or other—he cannot recall—by then he was such a famous poet that he was made a statesman.*

Can you imagine, I ask Philip, a poet being made a statesman today?

He shakes his head and laughs.

I talk about the theatricality of Fausto's act, the fact of where he was standing, as if it were a stage, in such a public place, in such a central spot, and yet it seemed that almost no one was there.

But it was a little after noon, Philip observes, this is a prime time, and I have to wonder if in my memory I have not erased the other spectators, if it was, as I recall it, only Fausto who I did not see, never really saw, although I was so close, blocked only by a set of doors when he shot this gun. And then a moment later when I did see him

he was fragmented, covered by a mass of men, I only saw his dark arms that are not dark and only heard him repeating without an accent, *My hands are up My hands are up*. The man I saw under that huddle was not the man in the mug shot printed later in the papers, who I have since seen in court and, as I read from reports, speaks only broken English. That was not my experience.

Philip says he read online somewhere that Fausto is a member of the Tea Bags. I say Tea Party and he laughs quickly, *Yes, of course*, and mocks himself saying Tea Bags. It's funnier still that we are in Tea Embassy, as Philip says sarcastically under his breath, *It is like we are in a Chinese Laura Ashley shop with bright blue walls and Victorian chairs*.

I know which site he is referring to. It was a blog. The blogger was making a connection to the fact that Fausto walked into Dan Patrick's office, a senator from Houston, where Fausto is from.

So was it a political act?

I don't know, I say, but I really doubt it from what I know and have seen of Fausto.

Philip asks if Patrick is a Republican, because if he is, he smiles sardonically, *Fausto should've just shot him*.

I tell Philip about the senator's aid—the woman in the white shirt (Philip's eyebrows raise) that Fausto was supposedly following into Patrick's office. Kate Pigg. I hate to use her real name, so I keep it from Philip. Her real name is so vulgar that it takes away from the angelic image of the woman in the white shirt as a kind of Helen or Gretchen, a beautiful, innocent, straightforward working woman—the name Pigg just kills it.

Like me, Philip hears certain parts of the Fausto story and does not want them to be the answer. He dismisses them, which excites me. *If it is the woman he is following*, Philip says, *then it is quite weak of him to leave simply when she says she will not speak to him*. Philip shrugs. *If it was about the woman in the white shirt, it spoils it. He gives up so easily: she won't talk to him and he says, "Okay, I'll see you later then."* That is not the path of righteousness or bravery. But perhaps, his voice raises more positively, *if Gretchen is a symbol of Faust's youthfulness, manliness, a trigger for good, then the woman in the white shirt could have been a lure for Fausto*—he is thinking aloud and I cannot follow him. I am

getting confused now between the book and the real story and our construction or reconstruction of each of them and where the two overlap or what the motives in each case are or might be, but I let him thread the story, hoping to meet him where he lands. . . . *But then again, he came from Houston with a gun*, he continues. *Does he follow her and stalk her all this way?* No, we both shake our heads, it's not likely. It's also not the story we want to believe. *He must have just seen her after he was already there. Is she a distraction?* he asks rhetorically. *Was it coincidence that she walked into Senator Dan Patrick's office? That is quite a coincidence*, he answers his own question. *Does he leave the office out of a feeling of disappointment? Does he go outside and unload his weapon out of frustration? And what is the source of that frustration? Unrequited love? Aggravation with the government? Was his act a protest?*

This is when Philip stretches. His tanned, toned arms reach up, lifting his chest toward the ceiling, revealing a smooth, flat expanse of skin above his trousers. His skin is tanned all over, as if he studies outdoors naked. A soft, almost translucent patch of curly pubic hair is climbing its way out from his trousers and up to his belly. I do not look at it directly but take it in discreetly and conjure it back up later, on the plane, and realize that if I was not in love and married, if this was a different time of my life, I would want to place my lips on that almond-shaped window opening up like an eyelid between those trousers and the short-sleeve jersey and I would want to be lying next to Philip, listening to him read *Faust* to me in German, because it would be so much more appropriate to read a closet drama to each other in bed. I can picture his room. Worn-out jeans and underwear on the floor, the bedroom of an academic, like a domesticated library, dirty clothes and opened books with coffee stains on the pages, two people searching for the connection of a single event to the entire heart of German literature, the dramatic poem.

Loosening his stretch, he lets go of the air from his lungs. His body settles into his chair at a shrugged rest, his forearms dropping onto the tabletop and he says at the end of his exhale, almost like a resolve of what I have felt all along:

And you could also see it as quite brave.

Yes, I agree. Yes you can. You can see Fausto as a hero, or an antihero.

Philip nods. *Yes, because as you say, he must have known that he would not walk away from this. Like Faust's pact with the Devil. It was an irrevocable act.*

Even though it might be dismissed just because it's been forgotten—I refer back to CT's prediction—and at some point not too far from now Fausto will simply walk away from that courthouse with a ticket in his hand, a paid-off violation that leaves no trace of him or his gesture in public memory. People will forget that the militarization of the Capitol came as a result of him and he will seamlessly blend back into everyone else who remains invisible. All that will be left are three metal detectors at the Capitol's southern entrance and Capitol guards carrying M4s that save us, save him, protect us from nothing.

Philip brings in a new character he thinks is more like Faust than Fausto: Colton Tooley, the student who shot himself at UT's campus a few weeks ago. I'd heard about him on the news. Disguised in a ski mask and armed with an AK47, he walked through campus brandishing the rifle and firing off a few shots before shooting himself inside a library.

You have a knack for these things, he says, don't you? I think you first contacted me the day of his shooting.

I laugh and cover my mouth. I did, I say. And then I thought you were offended by me because I asked you to put him—the suicide victim—aside.

We laugh, and he admits that he did, actually.

But his story is an interesting one and also confounding. The same day, actually, there was some speaker, Lock or Lott—do you know whom I mean? (I shake my head no)—who is a gun advocate—"More Guns Less Crime"—scheduled to speak at UT. But once the shooting happened they moved him to a bookstore off campus.

A bookstore, I emphasize.

He was a math major, the kid who shot himself in the library—in my department! It happened in the Castañeda Library on the sixth floor, the floor for Modern Languages and History; it's not even a library a math major would ever visit and he seemed to be heading there directly. I heard something about him leaving the Catholic Church (I furrow my brow) to get there, carrying an AK47. I mean, the kid was carrying a Kalashnikov! And

oddly, none of my students seemed alarmed that he had that kind of gun, they never even asked where he got it from. But he was not trying to hurt anyone, he was just shooting at nothing or into the ground. I mean, Philip says, you'd have to be a complete idiot to not hit anyone with that kind of gun if you were intending to do so. Both Fausto and this kid seem to have had no intention of hurting anyone beyond themselves, and that is what sets them apart from the Columbine kids or any of those stories.

I say, Yes, those stories have no poetry in them.

And he shot himself in the library! Philip reiterates, as his arms shoot up and then slam down with a thud on the tabletop. *On the sixth floor with the books on literature. Maybe it was just a coincidence. Maybe it was because it was the top button on the elevator (closer to the sky, I think), but for days afterwards there was a bloodstain on the carpet. The sixth floor was open, we could go in there—maybe they removed the carpet by now, but it was there. I saw it.*

He looks at his watch and says he has to make a move. He is already standing. I tell him I hope to see him when I return for the next docket.

Yes, he nods, we will keep talking, and he shakes my hand. I tell him I will probably keep showing up in Austin and Fausto and his lawyer will keep evading me, and he turns back excitedly and says, *Well, that is like Faust! Faust chased knowledge and understanding and both continually evaded him. You are trying to understand Fausto and his reasons for doing what he did. There is something there,* he shakes his finger at me.

I go with this and tell Philip how frustrating it is that I keep coming back here to see Fausto and he never appears and Mr. Orr avoids seeing me and Gerry the lawyer CT hooked me up with who had at first seemed so gung ho to speak to me and offer me advice now promises to call me back but never does. I know his secretary on a first-name basis and she knows my voice and is so pleasant and still he never calls. And Philip says, *Well, now you are Faust, chasing knowledge you cannot find, clarity that continually avoids your grasp, trying to find the story, your exasperated chase. . . . That is Faust.*

Right, I say, not really believing him, feeling only my frustration. Yeah, maybe I should recognize that as a part of this.

He says, *Yes. I think you must.*

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Before I leave for the airport and after Philip leaves me at the tea-house, I drive my rental car to the Perry-Castañeda Library on UT's campus. I am not going there to find the bloodstain per se. I want to see which books Colton Tooley shot himself next to. I suddenly feel a great desire to be where he was, this young math student who was "nice" Philip says—*The worst thing you can say about someone*, he admits, *the default word you use when there is nothing else to say*. He repeats to me what the other professors say, that he was a good, smart, nice student who got lost in the loop. *UT is a big place and you can get lost. He slipped through the cracks.*

I go up to the sixth floor. It's an awful library beyond the lobby. The sixth level has a yellow-green decor and an even light that makes all the colors drab and low contrast. Everything appears frozen. The floors are wide and the ceiling low. I would never study on that floor. I would fall asleep and have claustrophobic dreams, cold dreams without love, which is the last thing a library should breed.

I think of Cornell University's libraries, the E.B. White Room in which I used to study where you can fully empathize with the Faustian desire for ultimate knowledge. In a place like that you believe the books might really give it to you. Books and God were the same thing in that library. The rich, red wood of the furniture and walls, the soft, warm glow of the green glass lamps on the worktables, the silence of the scattered students, the security of the books—the volumes that possess the mysteries of the world, willing to give up their secrets if you will only take the slow and necessary time to open them and handle their pages lovingly between your fingers.

This library is nothing like that. There is nothing beautiful in dying here, where the blood would so quickly go from a vibrant red puddle to a dull brown stain like all the other stains in the carpet I saw, from spilled soda to rain-soaked boots to gum spots. I shamelessly ask the students spread about and studying alone, Excuse me, do you knew where the shooting took place? I ask more than eight kids, they all shake their heads no, and each time I feel embarrassed and dirty for asking these innocents—God they look so young!—but

There's one tall Asian girl with very long hair sitting on a padded chair with her feet (shoes off) stretched out onto the next chair, listening to her iPod as she reads, and I ask her, Excuse me, as she smiles with very large white teeth, pulling out one of her white earbuds, But do you by chance know where that student shooting happened? (I never once describe it directly, as in "where he shot himself"; that would be too violent.) And she says, *I think it happened by the windows, where the cubbies are, but I'm not sure.* I say, Don't worry, that is already helpful, but I don't know which windows you mean or which cubbies you are referring to, so she directs me with her hands and I go there. Past her around the elevators and the book return to the windows that fill the wall that looks out over the concrete staircase I used when I came up here. By cubbies she means the cubicles, which are empty except for one kid with a laptop and the same white earbuds as the tall Asian girl.

I catch myself looking at the carpet, searching for a sign. I feel an intensity. I feel as if whenever a kid notices me, he or she knows exactly why I am there, that I am an intruder even though I am allowed to be there, although I cannot take out a book. I can be on that floor and I can look around freely, but I am not looking for *a* book but for *the* books, for the section where he killed himself, aware that I am making a mystery rather than solving one but wondering at the same time if I am not, in fact, unraveling something deeper, that there might be a map or plan to uncover, working against the clock and my need to depart to catch my plane on time.

I do not find the stain or a newly replaced section of carpet, so the whole cubby area becomes suspect and all the book stacks that line it are potential witnesses, and it is to them that I turn and them that seem to have absorbed the memory of the boy, ignorant of the students who have already forgotten that a life has been taken here. Here where they search the shelves for books that all feel to me of lesser relevance.

And I think with self-loathing, I hope it was in the poetry section.



STATESMAN.COM

TRIAL OF MAN CONNECTED TO CAPITOL SHOOTING BEGINS MONDAY

10:53 AM Thursday, August 4, 2011

The trial of a man charged in a January 2010 shooting incident that preceded a rash of new security measures at the Texas Capitol is set to begin Monday. The date was set today during a final pre-trial hearing for 26-year-old Fausto Cardenas, who was charged with terrorist threat after officials say he fired several shots into the air outside the Capitol. . . .

“I hope to see my client is not guilty of a terrorist threat,” Orr said. “He had no intent of terrorizing anyone. He had his own personal fears. . . .”

Cardenas could be sentenced to up to 10 years if convicted. He has been held in a Travis County jail since he was booked following the Jan. 21 incident. . . .

Cardenas is originally a South Texas native, but spent extensive time in Mexico and had a translator present at Thursday’s hearing. So far, no plea deal has been reached in the case, although Orr didn’t rule that possibility out Thursday. He said an offer had been made, but Orr was hoping to avert prison time for Cardenas.



I call CT, who was present on Friday for the pre-trial docket. He spoke to Mr. Orr in the courtroom. Mr. Orr believes the prosecutor has been ordered not to deal and that Fausto's case will go to trial. Mr. Orr also told him, off the record, that he has the surveillance footage from the Capitol. It is not releasable at this point because it has not yet been introduced as evidence, but he said it likely would be.

Mr. Orr described the footage to CT, who in turn describes it to me. *You see Fausto walking around but you do not see him shoot into the air.*

You mean to say, I ask incredulously, that no video exists of Fausto shooting?

That is correct.

For some reason this pleases me.

Three days later, I am back in Austin outside the courthouse. CT texts me. *I am in court. Tell them you are a journalist and they will let you in.*

I enter the courtroom, not yet open to the public. CT is in the press box. He nods to me without smiling. I join him, feeling out of place. As I sit down he whispers what I've feared. *There is almost certainly a deal.*

I am hoping he is wrong. Mr. Orr looks in my direction but doesn't notice me. I ask CT who the younger man is with the gray hair.

That's Bishop, the DA and prosecutor.

Jessica from KVUE is also in the press box. She grins at me. Her bob is shorter than when she interviewed me. Her nose seems pointier and more sloped, like the car jump on Linus's toy racetrack. The only members of the audience now are Fausto's family. They are packed tightly together on one end of a bench in the last row. All five members look alike. Fernando, Fausto's brother, is on the aisle. Next to him sits a younger sister with a round, plump face and a ponytail. To the side of her is an older brother. He looks solid—intelligent and clean, sharply but casually dressed. Next to him is a very pretty sister or cousin—I'm guessing at the identity of all of them. She is slim with long, straight, dark hair, high cheekbones and black, thick-rimmed glasses. She and Fernando are leaning forward. The mother bookends the group with Fernando. Their eyes are trained on the same target, as if they as a family constitute one concerned body, waiting for their brother-cousin-son to emerge.

Mr. Orr is telling Bishop in an off-handed way about his dog. *She's a tough one, that girl.* He laughs. Bishop, who seems uncomfortable in his thick, stocky body, chuckles with him, it seems as a courtesy. They continue to banter back and forth about the dog and how the stock market is falling—*Yup. Fell this morning. That is what I read*—as Fausto's family presses in on one another.

At 9 a.m. Bishop and Mr. Orr approach the bench. There is a deal. I lean forward, sobered, resolved, but my heart is racing. Mr. Orr is proposing a five-year probation period and a bond release. Fausto will be monitored. He will be sentenced to 180 days in jail with credit for time already served—18 months, which is three times his sentence.

Fausto is brought into the room. He is small and quiet and light—he has less in mass than in presence, although he does look thin. He has a demure and modest air. He makes no grand entrance, but the reaction in the room is large and incongruous. Those of us in the press box shift and mumble; the cameras adjust their focus. It reminds me of that moment in the theater when the principal dancer finally emerges onto the stage from behind the curtain, except that a principal dancer carries a force and strength so the shifting, anticipation and adjustment of the audience makes sense. It doesn't now, and because of this Fausto seems even smaller, lighter, quieter, as if he is collecting our energy and promptly diffusing it. He seems separate from this world or protected from it, as if covered by a thin layer of snow.

He has a Spanish translator with him. I recall her looking similar to the very pretty sister, but when I see the TV coverage of the trial later I am corrected. She is much older, and while I remember her having dark, straight hair, it is actually short like a man's and she is not attractive at all. She is wearing a tailored white suit—it fits her body like a glove. She speaks quickly and clearly. I can hear her more easily than I can anyone else. She sounds like a telephone operator at a call center, as if no matter the content of her words they will always have the same cadence. She leans into Fausto's ear in the gesture of a whisper but I can hear her as if she is leaning into mine. She sounds the most sure of what she is saying, as if she knows her lines already and is

repeating them now, as if they were scripted. Like all translations, the number of words she relays to Fausto seems inconsistent with the number of words originally spoken, as if she is amending by expansion the original statements.

There is a system: the judge addresses Fausto; the translator interprets what he says; Mr. Orr listens while looking at Fausto and then nods; Fausto waits for the nod to speak yes, as if he is a puppet and Mr. Orr is the ventriloquist. The judge speaks, the woman translates, Mr. Orr nods and Fausto affirms. He only repeats yes or his name, and only on demand. The judge addresses him sternly with a false anger. I know it's false. None of this feels personal.

Fausto's back is to me. His hair is thin and cut short. I can see his scalp through it. His hair seems to hover about his head like cotton candy, as if it envelops his scalp but does not grow from it. It is the color of wheat. He is not dressed in jail attire like he was the last time. He is wearing bright white pants, bleached to almost glow. They are like nurse's pants, clumsy and untailored. He could fit another pair beneath them. On top he wears an untucked, vibrant blue button-down shirt, sky blue with a touch of green, making it more of a nauseous blue. His hands are behind his back. One hand holds his other hand at the wrist. The held hand continually opens and closes. Otherwise he is still. He is resting on the footprints pressed upon the courtroom rug that indicate where the accused is meant to stand, below the judge's bench. I cannot see his feet but I know he is standing on them.

Yes sir, he says. *Yes sir*. The judge repeats everything multiple times. It's a ritual, a theater, with Fausto as the only non-player. It makes me feel like an actor or an imposter myself.

Have you been sworn in? The judge asks, the translator translates, Mr. Orr nods and Fausto says *yes* like a well-oiled machine. *Yes sir*, so softly, like the consistency and flow of his hair, his smooth voice winding around the bench without touching anything or anyone. I wish I could see his face. I wish I were close to him, holding his hand. I wish I could make everyone around the bench be quiet and turn away and let him fade out from this production. And yet, he already has. This is not about Fausto anymore. I am not sure if it ever was. Maybe the day the shooting happened, maybe for just that

moment when the media asked repeatedly (rhetorically?), *Who is Fausto Cardenas?* But they don't really want or need to know. He was the catalyst for the militarization of the Capitol. The system no longer needs him. His appearance today is a formality.

The judge asks Fausto, *Do you understand that by taking this deal you waive your right to a jury trial?*

Mr. Orr nods vigorously, his old mouth dropped open and his fake teeth visible. I hear the small voice respond as if it is emerging from far away or beneath the soft pedal of a piano.

Yes sir.

Do you understand that by taking this deal you waive your right to call witnesses?

Translate. Nod. *Yes sir.*

Do you understand that by taking this deal you waive your right to remain silent?

Did he really ask him that or did I make that up?

Yes sir.

Do you understand that you are pleading guilty to a charge that faces two to 10 years in prison?

Yes sir.

And so on.

Mr. Orr asks the court to amend the language of the indictment. The judge, in real time, is doing so, making a patchwork of words out of Fausto's crime. But there is no reference to the shooting. In the entire hearing no one ever mentions it. It's as if the gun was never fired. Maybe it wasn't.

The judge reads aloud the new charge. Fausto is no longer indicted on a terrorist threat against a government institution. He is now accused of carrying a weapon in a prohibited area. It is legal to carry a loaded gun into the Texas State Capitol Building if you have a carry license, which Fausto didn't.

There is no inquiry as to Fausto's intention, and legally, Fausto never has to tell us why he shot the gun, the deed that is not even spoken of here. That act is already separate, already gone, erased from the record, never caught on camera, never submitted as evidence. I will never know what kind of small-caliber gun Fausto raised. I will never see the empty shells or the surveillance footage

that registered nothing.

After hearing that you waive all of your constitutional rights, the judge repeats, do you still wish to proceed to plead guilty?

Yes sir, softer, fading out. His part is over. As he turns to leave, I see his face. His eyes are dark in a shadow that is almost purple, as if they are so deeply set into his face that his brow, like an awning, shields the light. His gaze is slightly down and unfocused, as if his vision, too, is clouded by that same light blanket of snow that seems to envelop his whole being, including his voice.

Mr. Orr speaks to the judge about Fausto, literally and figuratively, behind his back. He goes over the psychological report. He says his client is competent and was only troubled that day. *He was having a hard time. Anybody who would do something like that has some mental problem, I think it's a disorder of thinking*, Mr. Orr says. *I don't think he's insane or incompetent. I don't think he is a crazy man. I think he wasn't thinking clearly.* It was an aberration, an abnormality in an otherwise harmless man. *This was a strange episode in his life. He has not done this before. Something strange happened to him on January 21st.*

And this is enough? I wonder.

The judge asks, *What is the bail?* and Mr. Orr says with a laugh and a wave of his arm, *It's so high, your honor, that I cannot even recall it. Some number unthinkable to my client and his family.* The judge smirks and says, *I see it here, \$150,000.* It was 250, I think to myself, and then the judge corrects himself. *It was 250 and they brought it down to 150.*

Yes, Mr. Orr sings, continuing his performance. *Far too high, your honor.*

I see Fausto's eyes like raccoon eyes, dark and purple and removed in shadow. I comment about them to CT, who nods. *It's hard to be incarcerated for 18 months. It's not easy to sleep in jail.*

Fausto is led out of the room. Even before the door has fully closed behind him the lawyers have broken form. They're back to their easy calmness. Mr. Orr is telling a colleague about his plans in Dallas this week. A court administrator is in the back of the room asking Fausto's family for their address and who will sign the forms for his release and everything is back to usual and forgetfulness.

CT and I head out into the hallway. The TV cameras from inside are already set up in a half moon, six of them in an arc in front of a fake

tree. They ask to speak to me, do I have time to be interviewed? I do. But I am not ready. I too feel dampened, as if muffled by the soft pedal of the piano, not sure of what I wanted anymore.

They ask Mr. Orr after me. He tells them, *Fausto counted every cinderblock in every wall in county jail. It's time for him to go home and be with his family.*

The Capitol has made a lot of steps to secure itself since Fausto, a reporter states. Do you think this is an overreaction?

Mr. Orr walks around the question and takes it from behind. *There are a lot of dangerous people who want to do dangerous things to America. We have had metal detectors in the courthouse for years and at the Austin airport as well. It makes sense to have them at the Capitol,* he responds, as the fake tree behind him swallows him up.

Outside, CT explains to me the details I missed. Fausto is charged with carrying a weapon in a prohibited area wherein the prohibited area is the Supreme Court. *We don't even know if he went into the Supreme Court, but this is the only way to get a felony charge and the prosecution, Bishop, clearly wanted a felony charge. This charge has nothing to do with the shooting of the weapon, which was never mentioned.*

Did he even go into the Supreme Court? I ask.

Yeah, well, CT laughs and shrugs. *Orr is saying he walked all over the Capitol grounds.*

But he didn't, I say, not from what I read. The story I read is that he parks the car, enters the building, goes to the third floor, sees the woman in the white shirt, follows her into Patrick's office, she refuses to speak to him and then he goes outside and shoots the gun. Pretty direct route. I look at CT. He looks back. He knows the same story I do and that it's pointless to question it now.

Trials are always like this. Fausto served three times his sentence for his crime. He got 180 days but served 18 months. That's why I asked Orr in front of the cameras outside the courtroom how come it took so long? I was trying to throw him off, see if he'd be caught off guard and how he'd respond.

But he wasn't caught off guard; he simply ignored the question.

• • • • •

It's the day after the trial, late afternoon. Tomorrow I'll return to New York. Fausto has probably left the jail for Houston. I try to picture his family in a car, pushed together like they were on the court bench. I see Fausto looking out the window from the passenger seat and the clean, put-together brother driving confidently without sweating, despite the 104-degree heat. The mother and the girls are in the back seat. I am not sure where Fernando is. Maybe he's up front and Fausto is in back, pressed against the tall, pretty sister with the thick-rimmed glasses. She has her hand on his arm. That last detail feels authentic, but the rest is a lie. The truth is that I cannot picture him anywhere other than inside the story I know from the newspapers, off the record and from witnessing "that day in January 2010" when something "strange" occurred.

CT is picking me up for dinner. He asks if I want a ride.

On your Vespa?

No. I have a car now.

Okay.

He comes to the door at 7:15, like it's a date. We walk out to the street. I point to a Porsche parked along the curb and joke, Shall we go in your Porsche?

And he says, *Yeah, that is my Porsche.*

Well, well.

I'm not into cars, not really, not like Jonny and Linus are. Linus has known every car by its logo or grill since he could speak. *Mercedes* was his third word, after only *light* and *ball*. He recently told me he wanted a blue Porsche. This is what CT has. An old one with voluptuous curves, tan leather seats, in great condition. It's gorgeous. I'm impressed. CT seems embarrassed by my reaction so he tells me what it's worth verses what he paid for it.

We drive it to the Black Dahlia to meet up with Lajita and her friend. Lajita is even more petite than I recall and wearing a sexy dress. It's clear CT and I crashed their dinner, and it's loud in the restaurant so it becomes their dinner and our dinner, which is fine.

After we finish eating, we leave them to drink their coffees at the table without us. CT and I walk out together. He kisses Lajita on the top of her head, like she is his daughter.

Once we are outside, I say in half-seriousness, Let's go on a joy ride.

He says *yeah*, he has already planned to and is now calculating which way to go.

We duck into the low-riding seats and drive out of the city into the hills, to the fancy suburban area with massive houses near the guesthouse where I first stayed with the Buddhist yoga girl 18 months ago. The road overlooks and curls along the river. It's like Italy, like the Amalfi Coast, not like the flat desert I once associated with Texas. The yellow lines in the middle of the lanes have golden reflectors every few feet that make the roadway feel like a 3D film rushing at me. There's a full moon, dark purple-green trees, a cloudless sky. I'm nauseous from the speed and the sharp turns and the not irrational fear of a kid on a bike or a Golden Retriever bolting into the road, starting to get into it and then getting lost and breaking up the conversation with long bouts of silence to feel the car thrusting me forward through the back of my ribs. We could die here, in this Porsche, driving 70 miles an hour on a 20-mile-per-hour suburban roadway.

He keeps moving the stick shift even though it's automatic—*but you can put it in manual, there is no clutch*—and my knee keeps hitting his hand and his hand keeps hitting my knee, and we take the curves like we take the straightaways—*look how closely it hugs the corners*—and make a U-turn to do it again because the SUV in front of us slowed us down. My mouth is open in a kind of overly self-conscious smile. I say, It's like we should have Colt 45s, and he spins his head to look at me and laughs the hardest I have heard him laugh.

I say, We should've taken this car to Mexico, except then I couldn't have driven.

Well, it's automatic. You could've. I just wouldn't have let you drive the whole way.

Unilateral is the opposite of embedding. You provide your own logistics and don't depend on anyone else. Of course, you always have to negotiate access with someone to get a story, but when you are unilateral, you are master of your fate. When you are embedded, you are along for the ride.

—CT



Jill Magid, in training. Photo credit: C.T. © 2010

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