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Lyrical I

Alētheiosis

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~ I

Desire rises— to give an answer, for around are questions only, and the answer is out there, and everything's impossibly simple.

Round is shape of the questions, more precisely — an irregular sphere. They're short in stature, like dwarf bull terriers: arms, legs, eyes, noses long — quite humanlike; wear grey uniforms: overcoat, gloves, hat. Throngclumped, they clamber and clamber and clamber through the doors of a room three by three with no windows, no lighting, and crowd round the bed— there lies my Lyrical I whom I'm unable to feel.In sleep he turned into sand, waking sand he remained. At last, in his dream, he saw what he'd wanted — his twins, his hero and heroine: one body, one being, one essence — and paid the punishment price.

The clamour of questions has thickened the air. Through it, screeching, remarks push their way, slicing the ears of my Lyrical I:

— Tell us, dear Expert, what is the essence of that very thing? *(I'll tell you now)*— Tell us, have you an answer to the greatest of questions?

(Answers aplenty)— Dear Expert, do you desire?

Desire rises— to sort out what is what, who is who.

Look: they seem like a single character who, in a drunken gaze like a peacock's tail, like a fan, multiplies. A hallucination, a thousand-eyed sleep paralysis demon, a meat-pile built from inhuman limbs: microphones, cameras, notebooks. This creature blazes with flashes, scurries, burbles with voices, and breathes, breathes, and breathes its heat straight into his face.

Attacked, cornered, pinned.

Desire rises— oh, he desires again! To begin with, to move just a limb, any limb, and it even seems he succeeds: fingers, tongue, lips, and eyelids — all still seem to move, yet nothing responds, they're just like the body — all sand. The love of body and mind for each other goes unrequited, only their violence mutual remains.

In the throat burbles a voice, starts to form → I feel it, not with my body — with the desire of its release. In the head the inner voice does not burble, does not form → I cannot feel it; in its place burbles my mute monologue, forming, glows faintly, aquiver, desiring its release. He was so given to thoughts and their broadcasting, he would gather them, toss them into a pot, cook them, digest them into words, phrases, and sentences, but now the noggin won't boil. Instead of words — an image of enormous proportions, pure vile abstractionism. As I look at it, all becomes clear, yet there's no strength and no power to speak, even

though—

Desire rises— for agony, pain, suffering, any sensation, even phantom one, yet there's none. My Lyrical I simply lies.

He is sand, a sand installation in human form. Body. Figure. Motionless in a hyperkinetic world. He is an appendage to it, exists unidirectionally. The world can do whatever it likes with the sand: can examine it, blind it with camera flashes, deafen it with interrogative din:

— In a literary sense, in a metaphorical sense, or at least an oneiric sense, did you manage to know? *(I don't know... perhaps?)*— Well then, tell us, dear Expert, what's the most important thing in life? Hee-hee! *(You'd rather not know)*— Tell us already! *(I... I cannot speak!)* Is it love?— Right, enough about you, as if we need your truthology! Crikey! Better tell us, why are you sand? *(I can only hazard a guess)*Here one of the questions leans mewards. I am inward and outward, here and there at the same time — I am everywhere, omnipresent but helpless and meek. Our eyes meet. Between us — an inch. Never have I seen so close what everyone decided to call "human eye."

— Oi, get away from him!

— He can hear us. You can see it in his eyes. There's something there, someone lives in there! Look! Look closely!

Desire rises— to look too, but in response to this desire I can see only eyes. Desire is also unidirectional now.

Here's the first eye, now it's gone, in its place crawls the second, third, fourth, fifth, tenth, fiftieth — a kaleidoscope of black holes framed in irises iridescently coloured. I'm sure, in whole universe, there's no object more terrifying than that which we call "human eye."

I no longer possess myself. I possess nothing. My mind recedes somewhere to a background plane. Around, the world transforms into an eye of gigantic proportions, narrows only to the iris + pupil. My Lyrical I lacks even the luxury of closing his eyes made of sand. He has no tears that could flood his vision, no eyelids, no lashes — there is only the vision and its betrayal, defection to the enemy's side.

A question rises (internal): does my sight now have eyes? To understand, I seek a reflection, find it only in front, in the eye, the reflection of eye of my own.

So strange... never seen it so close... So strange and so wrong to see each other without much distance, so wrong, as if I'd entered a forbidden zone, crossed a boundary sacred.

— It's dilating! His eye, it's dilating!

— Alive, definitely alive! Are you alive, dear Expert? *(Yes, it would seem so, I regret to report)*— Look!

The questions jostle, shove the watcher away, want to take his place. A camera falls to the floor, shatters to smithereens — glass shards everywhere. An explosion of chaos: arms flailing, feet trampling,

tongues wagging like snakes, shouting at one another in their gibberish tongue.

From nowhere, emerges a lamp—

*** ** *click!** and everything's monotone, objectless, incandescently white — absence reigns, no coordinate axes. Crackling, melts my brain in my head. In my sight, spots of various colours grow from the centre.

Desire rises— to unbecome sand, to exit this aggregate state, even to melt altogether, turn glass, such as a vase or a bottle for water or something stronger, maybe a spectacle lens or a telescope one, or even a mirror.

— What have you done?!

— Capture it, I only wanted to capture it! Ow! What a picture! Ah! Capture the pupil! Ow! Stop it! Don't hit me! Incurious lot! Ow!

— You idiot! You've blinded him! Maybe forever!

— Sod off, will you!

— He's sand! Hardly he cares a lot! Ow! Stop!

— Fuck off!

— You're not worth a grain of his sand! Fuck you off, shall you?

— You won't push me away! You won't pu—

Screams, shoves, blows, silhouettes dancing, theatrical shadows, pulsations.

— Look! Look! Dilating! The pupil! Again!

— We could cut his lil'eyes out and away, leave the rest! Just think, to keep lil'eyes for yourself, sentient jewels, put them in a bottle or jar and fill it with epoxy resin. Imagine! Ow!

— Don't you dare touch him! Do you even know who he is? Do you even know who needs him?

— I know you're an idiot. Why should I care? Sand with eyes! Here, right here!

— You're all just a bunch of nutters, incompetent, stupid children. What if we cut out your lil'eyes, eh?

— Go on then, "nutter"! Come on, yeah, go ahead! Let's see if you can even raise a hand! Go on! Ow!

Crash, crack, swear words fly, flash-glass shatters, the air vibrates, everything shakes, walls ripple.

Vision burns, and I—

Desire rises— for the questions to cut out my lil'eyes after all and preserve them in epoxy resin, do with them whatever they want, if only all this would end, if only I could die, or something even worse —

become a senseless thoughtslop, consciousness without body or sensors, without signals, turn my meekness into mutual indifference to the world, to the body, to the brain, which will simply be stuck in a hopeless, timeless thinkdream, a broken record's eternal loop. This must still be a dream, a dream within a dream, a dream's residue — a hallucinoid, hypnopompic delirium.

The hubbub falls silent; the hum, however, remains.

In the doorway appears a figure ever so fearsome: hat, overcoat, gloves, and sunglasses — just like the questions, but stretched to an oval, double the size, barely fitting the doorway.

The questions break into a cold sweat and silently, lips trembling, stare at the figure.

— Hello, Mr Figure.

— Good morning, we've been expecting your brilliance. Haven't touched him without you. Promise.

— All as you requested, I made sure.

— No, I made sure!

— No, I did!

— Tried our best, didn't we? Some a bit less, and I — most of all; I did the best. Do come in, don't stand in the doorway.

At once, the questions huddle together, clearing a path to my Lyrical I.

Mr Figure is silent, grunts with menace, works his eyebrows, and steps inside.

— Do come in, Mr Figure.

— Welcome. All for you. Please come in.

Mr Figure is at the bedside, looms over my Lyrical I. I see his sandheap reflection in Mr Figure's sunglasses, still quite humanlike.

Tighter tugs his gloves Mr Figure, pinches off a bit of sand, easily, painlessly, as if there'd been nothing, as if this weren't that very Lyrical I. He sniffs, nearly sneezes. The questions proffer a handkerchief. Refuses in silence, palm to palm, plays with the sand.

I don't feel it — I see how I'm being pour to and fro, top to bottom, mixing/remixing. Mr Figure grabs a bag from his pocket, pours the sand in.

Well well well... dread to think.

— Carry him out, — Mr Figure declares.

The questions began to bustle.

— But how?

— Properly, — cuts off Mr Figure.

Confused are the questions, but understand, surround the bed, strain, groan, and lift it, and my Lyrical I floats slowly out of the room.

Others stand, smirk, photograph. My world's again moving, and I'm not even glad, though I've desired it so much, dreamed of it a moment ago.

Desire rises— to desire something else, something besides the desire, for desires can no longer be trusted; they've betrayed me, desires, I hate them, I hate them, fuck desires, fuck everything, even myself ← Desired to sink into nothing; now, look at me — glad of events ← Desired to become glass — now, carry me somewhere, faster, in any direction, even an inch.

Desire rises— for everything. I don't understand it.

Desire rises— too much. Whose? Mine? Lyrical?

Desire rises— still does. How much longer? I'm sand, after all. Stop it! Stop! Please, make it stop, someone, listen to me, make it stop! Please, make it stop!

Underneath, the bed shakes, dried sand of mine trickles, unclear if I'll fit through the door, unclear if they'll have enough strength (fuck knows where they're carrying me), unclear what will happen if all grains of mine scatter along the way.

— Careful! — growls Mr Figure.

The questions duck, contract to even more irregular spheres, as if they've pumpkined. Hurriedly they drag on. But then — stop.

They freeze, Mr Figure too freezes. Everyone looks at the door.

In the doorway they stand — my heroine. Hand in hand with her — he, my hero: golden eyes brimming with tears, faces pale, muscles relaxed, not an eyelid stirs, only lips tremble slightly.

They are still two.

Their whole gaze is now mine, if only I knew they realise that my own gaze also exists and is theirs. But... again I don't know where to look, into whose eyes? Hero, heroine? Heroine, hero? Left, right? At last I feel pain again, pain without body, pain that rolls down upon me from the void and squeezes me, squeezes me, squeezes tight in its grip.

— What... what are you doing? — utters my heroine.

— Get out of here! — my hero trumps.

— Leave him alone! Monsters!

— Out!

The questions froze, sank into frustration, look up questioningly — Mr Figure, enlighten us, what next, what to do with the obstacle?

Mr Figure nods twinwards, indicatively, sharply, commandingly, angrily.

Before my heroine and my hero could step inside, reach me, the questions begin to flow doorwards, pushing them out. My twins swear in frenzy, begin to step right over the crowd. The questions won't let them, grab their legs, drag them out, push, shout nonsense.

Behind the twins rise four figures of oval forms, tall like the boss, only thinner: black uniform, faces covered. The twins fight them off. Vainly — the figures are stronger. They grab them by the arms, hold them, while the hero and heroine scream:

— Let go!

— Let us go! Monsters! What are you doing!

And so my Lyrical I find himself in the corridor, floating somewhere abed, instead of waves — the angry irregular spheres, around — camera flashes, silhouettes, and Mr Figure, while my hero and heroine are stuck, snared by the shadows. Together they kick, curse, lash out, shout after me.

And what can I do? I lie, I'm carried. I again— desire, desire, desire— again I desire nothing but *them*.

~ II

— You say you know everything, but is that even possible? — asks my heroine.

— I know everything, — I respond. — In potential, not at this moment, of course. And not I, but my Inner I. The one opposite to the Lyrical, or perpendicular. If they enter into dialogue, merge in monologue — that's when the absolute knowledge is born.

— What rubbish, — she laughs. — Sometimes you amuse me.

On her shoulders and collarbones are constellations of freckles that run far beneath her clothes, and I seem to see them, but only as the starry sky during day.

My Lyrical I is up to become an astronomer, an astrologer even, to read them as in an atlas and achieve that very thing he calls Pure Potential. Everything will become clear to him, perhaps even at once: what is what, who is who, what is truth, and when — the end of the world. He's certain, he already knows that will happen, but so far no date or hour are set.

— For instance, you know nothing about me, things that are crucial.

She works at the bar my Lyrical I likes to frequent. He's slightly drunk because she poured him, and pours she well. He knows not what he's saying and babbles all this with no permission from me.

— Not yet...

— Well there you go, told you.

— But in potential! If one really, really desires it, it'll all work out, one

just has to believe. Believe in the potential.

— What's the use of believing in something, anything if you don't even believe in yourself?

— I believe in myself.

— But not in the Lyrical, right?

— In him too.

— But not always.

"He knows not what he's saying and babbles all this with no permission from me."

— Always. In Pure Potential.

— Ah, I see.

— It doesn't hurt to chill sometimes from such a burden, you know.

— Too right. And again, you know nothing about me. You are a figure, a model, an image. I am the artist who draws you. I do what I want with the figure — a portrait today, a still life tomorrow. And the figure can do only one thing to the artist — annoy her. So sit quietly and don't move.

And so I sit. Rather, he sits, he — my Lyrical I, and I'm on the inside, the Inner I. Now I am fully certain, though sometimes it seems to me, it

happens, that my Inner one crawls out, while my Lyrical one crawls in.

— And so I sit.

— Then sit, you've signed up to do so. A masterpiece is still miles away.

— I'm sure a masterpiece will come of me. After all, this... potential!

— A masterpiece might come of you. For the artist is I. And that is the reason, nothing more, nothing less.

— Now that was hurtful.

— Don't be hurt. You're a model. Plus, I pour for you for free.

— A naked sad man at a bar, not exactly a musclemass, though in potential they do exist, too.

— Not naked — nude. I'm not painting a man at a bar, I'm painting the inside. In a sense, I'm not even looking at you, you're here for background, for the vibe, to give form, fill the space, show how light should fall.

— A still life then, I see.

— "Ha!" But no, something between portrait, landscape, and caricature. A more deeper kind of portrait. I'll call this thing "The Innermost I." Just "Inner" sounds rather flat, isn't it?

— Will you draw freckles all over my body?

— I don't draw, I paint. The answer is: won't.

— May I ask why?

— Because. They shouldn't be on the painting, nor on the figure. Fortunately, your Lyrical I hasn't any, and your Innermost I displays their absence. Complete, even in "Pure Potential."

— Well fancy that.

— Well fancy twice, Mr Figure.

— And where will you put it? My Innermost I.

— To the art gallery. I'm certain, I know absolutely, I am fully aware that this is precisely the work after which I can stop being a barmaid and, possibly, even stop being an artist.

— Why?

— Don't you know everything? I've nearly reached the age. After twenty-seven it's improper and even vulgar for anyone to be an artist of any type, including the art of painting.

— You're joking, of course.

— Of course. But I'm also not joking. One can joke and not joke all at once, one can work as a barmaid and paint in the very same bar, with the very same model (figuratively). One can do absolutely everything all at once.

My Innermost I imagines doing everything all at once. “Everything” in this case appears as an indeterminate sum of probabilities, whose distribution could only be understood by observing all outcomes. “Everything” is not something average, some point estimate, but is a bit of everything, much of something, and nothing at all of other things.

The brightest embodiment of “Everything” is this: my Lyrical I runs his index finger across the collarbones of his heroine, from freckle to freckle, and — a cold electric shiver runs through her.

— Stop fidgeting! Sit still.

— I’ve got this, um... *(my Lyrical I grows; embarrassed)* Something happening down there.

— I can see, but you needn’t worry. I’m not painting whatever is happening there.

— How?

— Not at all. In my painting, your Innermost I hasn’t got one — innermost emptiness.

— How’s that? Show me.

— I won’t. Until it’s finished, I won’t show anyone. Not even myself in a sense.

— He’s completely without it?

— “It” in the being I’m depicting is, as you say, in potential. Art reproduces not the figures themselves, in whatever state they might be, and what happens to them, but only what the artists see in them, which is me, and I don’t see “it”.

When she bends her slender arm to leave a brushstroke on the canvas, her collarbones become sharp as knives, the skin stretches around them, and the freckles spread into a new constellation.

— Why am I here at all, if you’re not drawing me? Not painting, I mean.

— Indeed. I’ve already explained. Besides, you signed up yourself, saw “free drinks” and came running. Your fallen state doesn’t interest me; I need only what came before — unity, absolute primordial unity, again, as you say — potential. A human being deserves the name only by virtue of what they unite within themselves, not the other way round.

— And how does one even achieve unity?

— Aren’t you silly? By painting.

The arousal in “it” only intensifies. “Everything,” it turns out, encompasses far more, if my heroine is to be trusted. I believe her. Probabilities shuffle somewhere, “Everything” loses signs of comprehensibility and evaluation. I thought, mistakenly, that I’d been lucky enough to calculate them.

— I’m not ruining the painting, am I?

— Not an inch.

Here, behind the bar, *he* appears.

Well well... Surely a hallucinoid, surely my vision's doubled, surely I've drunk myself into a stupor? An alcoholic's nightmare — twin bartenders.

He's like my heroine, only a man. Same height, same face, same eyes, same hair, same top. On his shoulders and collarbones are also constellations of freckles, they also run far beneath his clothes, and they too seem visible, like a daytime starry sky, only different.

— Oh, by the way, meet my brother.

It's the dead of night outside.

~ III

I am now an installation, precisely my Lyrical I.

No one sees me, after all behind the glass lies but a sandstatue. Around, within a several-metre radius — an empty circle of museum space. Nearby — darkness of varying density, to the sides in the distance — corridor light, rare small bulbs, multicoloured, green glow of the "EXIT" sign.

I lie as I lay, not abed now, but in a coffin, glassy and lit — sleeping beauty in a mausoleum.

Be it day now or night, stars are up there, be it collarbones or the sky. Their constellations on my mind have been imprinted; one only needs to focus the eye.

Sound of footsteps → From the corridor into the mausoleum floats a figure — a black oval with an aura-like backlight. Heels of boots click, breathing echoes along with the rustle of garments — louder, louder, and louder — until tremble the walls of my dwelling. Close up — the same Mr Figure, in formal attire: jacket, tie, trousers; on his long nose perch neat round pince-nez. He approaches, stoops, stares, the spectacles loupe his eyes to half the size of his face. Sniffingly, he moves his moustache, inspects the perimeter of my coffin's, and tap on the glass with his boniest fist.

- *Knock-knock-knock—* * it tolls like a bell spreads like thunder fills my coffin with ringing low, oppressive.I was kept in a dark box, insulated, non-lit. I was isolated, saved from the invasion of any surroundings: the cackle, the flashes, the cacophony of it all, but only while I was there. I could even forget for a time that my Lyrical I is now sand, that now only my Innermost I remains. I could even get used to it, accept it, find a measure of poetry there, smell freedom (yes, that treacherous thing), feel how exceptional is my situation, for this has never happened to anyone else. Mr Figure must have agreed → thus, what came, came.

The lights begin to turn on in the mausomuseum. Clicking, the lamps ignite, their faintest whine fills the space.

From the corridors flows human mass, flooding the hall around the pedestal where lies my Ensanded I — he's in no mood for lyricism now.

Around him are people, various humanoids, bright in colour, height,

build, marvelling, disgorging words of amazement, curiosity, madness, so on and so forth:

— Is he really sand now?

— How did it happen?

— A mystery. Fell asleep, woke up — sand.

— Well fancy that! Well I never... What a case, as they say.

— What irony, don't forget! Irony's important.

— Right, where would we be without it, dear fellow!

— Mummy, Mummy, what's that statue?

— That, children, isn't a statue, it's a man. Though he's a bit sandy now, understand? But by large still a man. Perhaps. Science is silent about the matter.

— Was a lad, lad no more now. Sad, isn't it, and you lot just gawp. Tragedy!

— What else is there to do with him except gawping?

— Look, all of you, it's empty there! Between his legs! Nothing at all.

— A magnificent work! Respect to the master. Attention to detail. Obviously — art. Yes, but how? They don't make them like this nowadays. An exception to the rule, nothing less, for where would we

be without them.

— Without rules?

— Without exceptions.

And I don't listen to them, I hear but ignore, I couldn't give a fuck, yes, exactly so — not a fuck-giving charity, am I? Donors welcome. I had to find strength and persistence, attention, sharp eyes, a wider perspective, to push through lil'humanoids and see my beloved = my twins. I'm now in the pure form of freedom, Pure Potential, so pure it contorts me to spasms.

There's desire, desire, desire, desire! It rises! It rises, desire!

I desire nothing but *them*!

Fury blazes within me such that the sand vitrifies. Oh, if only! All that blazes, blazes innermostly inside, in a sealed pressurised furnace, where smoke and steam have nowhere to hide.

Until it explodes.

Desire rises, rises! Rises desire!

My gaze darts from mug to phiz to face, runs, leaps, hungrily seeks my twins' golden eyes.

Oh, fire, oh, aggression of feeling

Off you fuck hungry monsters, bugger off, clear the way, let my dear ones through!

I'm ready to see them, to transfix my gaze upon their faces and not let go until they reach me, having pushed through the crowds of brainlets gawking with gaping mouths, empty eyes, ears down to their shoulders.

Appear, right here, before me, press against the glass, see what I've become for your sake, my loves. Tears will pour in streams, drops will bomb my glass coffin, echoing-thundering, breaking it into pieces. I shall hear, see, feel, I shall sense everything.

Will redden your golden eyes, your cheeks will burst with colour, your fists you will beat upon the glass, and I shall lie and watch.

Where are you?

Crowds accumulate, masses flow into the mausomuseum. Their words are a mash, voices drone. Their faces have blurred, lost their features, as if these are people no more but an army of mannequins stockpiled into the hall.

Where are you?

Where are you?

I desire to see you, I desire—

~ IV

— Tell me, do you love her? — asks my hero.

Hammer strikes chisel, chisel strikes stone, in the stone — as he puts it, my Lyrical I. "Lyrical I Number Four" — that's what will be the name of the sculpture, by analogy with the previous three. They will stand before my heroine's paintings, the series called "The Innermost I," also four, and they will face one another, stare in pairs — stone at canvas, canvas at stone. Together they know everything, everything down to the last piece of knowledge, everything that can possibly be known or even made up. At the gaze-meeting point, from the tension might occur an explosion, but for now...

— I need to know, she's my sister after all. I see how you look at her.

Hammer strikes chisel again, chisel strikes stone. Dust flies, chips scatter, sticks to the hero's sweaty hands, covers his bulging veins and muscles, his locks and face.

— You can talk, by the way. I'm okay with that, not like her. She's sterner.

I look at my hero, see only my heroine, or the reverse — I look at her, see only him. Sometimes I manage to forget who is who — where is my heroine, where is my hero, and where am I between them. Sometimes I don't look, but still see them both. They look back with equivalent force.

From the dust in my throat there's a lump, bitterness on my tongue; I

want to cough; my eyes water nonstop.

— Ahem... That's a personal question, — says I.

— We're all very personal here, family even.

We're no longer at the bar — in an entire studio, the result of success. Our trio: my heroine, my hero, my I, navigates the expanses of art, conquers art-summits in just a few strides, forges the cultural landscape, captures attention, provokes a chaos of questions. Only this "I" of mine is unclear, uncertain *which*; one could say "simply I" — its own to each of the twins. She — with paints on canvas creates it from nothing, he — with chisel strike by strike extracts it from stones. This "I" has to be shared, for canvas and dust don't get along. It happens for nights, days, weeks, months — I'm alone with just one of them. It's both easy and torturous, what a devious paradox!

I'm silent.

His whole body is covered in dust, eyes protected by goggles, freckles hidden, but I still see them, I remember them, hers and his. Their bodies before me are like a map of the sky, nocturnal / diurnal, but not two parts of cosmos — rather just one— only different visible stars, and overlaying them would make everything fit, appear, become clear, dots would meet somewhere, lines line up, gaps fill, each completing the other's lack. Their bodies before me, nude, shine with their figures, beckoning: golden eyes, noses with a slight hump, thin lips, necks, shoulders, collarbones (I desire to bite them), chests, stomachs, what lies

below, and, well, strong legs. Day and night I learn to focus my vision so when I see them together, I could superimpose them onto one image, united into one being, the absolute wholeness.

— You know, we owe you a great deal. Everything, I'd even say.

— That's not true.

— Without you, who are we? Just artists.

— I'm just a figure, a model, nothing more. I just sit.

— You understand everything and know perfectly well that's not true. By that logic, I just strike hammer to chisel.

Love needs knowledge to reach its potential. What is it without it? Desire that rises and fades.

With all his might my hero strikes hammer to chisel, across the studio scattering ringing and splinters. Another blow — metallic, loud, quick, with an amplitude sweeping, as if were a warrior he, not a sculptor, and another — quiet, gentle, merely a raindrop. My Lyrical I emerges from beneath the stone, climbs out of the hard womb, pleads for salvation, yet none is forthcoming — it needs a blow stronger. Swing, ring, splinters, laughter. By habit or by custom, I grow tense again, my body hardens, I lose all control.

— Well then, will you answer? Do you love her?

— I'm sure you know it, the answer.

— I do. But do you?

~ V

Nights are dark in the museum corridors, dreams don't come, I don't seem to sleep even a bit, I don't seem to need to, though I want it now and then. In dreams I would become human again. In dreams I would see, have, and do whatever I wanted, be it freedom of movement, of knowledge, of desire, of self-control, of possession of others = my twins = her and him simultaneously, as then, when I turned to sand. I saw them together, I had not to choose — refuse one, lose the other. One would have been too little for me, with one I couldn't be sated, I would want for eternity to come back and restore it, make the wrong choice again, so the outcomes would be different, reversed, so again I'd live in regret, again want to come back and restore it, make the wrong choice again, live in fear, in the desire to merge them.

Nights are dark in the corridors, I see visions, as that very one. My twins are one creature of unearthly beauty, absolute and complete, a human being before splitting, a being containing all. The creature before me is naked, smiles, moves into the distance and lures me in, stepping soundlessly along a sandy shore of a lil' lake or a pond, around which thorns grow to the horizon, coal-black, as if there'd been a fire a moment ago. The wind rustles in the thorns, murmurs in the reeds. Birds sing. Low, inaudible arrhythmic music plays, bass stretches across

the landscape.

Desire rises— to reach the creature, to run fingers across its body, count the dots, read the stars, draw lines, translate freckles into text in my head, and desires from my head, heart, and loins, conversely — into touches against the smooth texture of skin.

Desire rises— and that's all. The vision ends there.

Nights are dark in the corridors, figures don't walk around. Day after day there are people, they wander, look, shout something in their gibberish tongue, honk like birds and beasts — a zoo on an outing. By day Mr Figure stands nearby, with a gloved hand strokes the glass lid, at times slaps it, taps with his fingers, beats out a tedious rhythm, while inside everything shakes, hums, my Ensanded I is about to crumble, from a semblance of human reshape into a sandpit, a generous cat litter box. Mr Figure adores speaking about me, introduces me to the crowds, as if I were his son or a painting he'd painted, a sculpture he'd sculpted, a great thought he'd laboured to think.

But at night in my sarcophagus there is silence and calm, peace and quiet, and in them my Ensanded I revels. Darkness penetrates everywhere, there's nowhere to hide from it (fortunately). Lights glow dimly, framing "EXIT" sign, as if exit existed.

Desire rises— stop— glass shatters in the hall the sonorous echo flies mewards wraps around my coffin.The light of a torch chases away the darkness.

Wariness, fear.Through the window someone appears, and in a second — someone else.

Together they whisper, turn off the torch, freeze and wait for a moment. Breathless, without a sound, on tiptoes, they sneak to the centre of the hall where my Ensanded I lies

Desire rises— to tear their masks off.

The silhouettes are already at the sarcophagus: stygian, thin, nimble, they twist, grope around the pedestal. The thinner one puts picks into the lock, works carefully, until there's a click. The larger one then grabs the lid and with a slight scraping opens my coffin.

Tremble their fingers, flutters their breathing, heads dart, movements lose any direction.

I've frozen, I wait...

I've understood — I'm being stolen. 100%.

The thin silhouette leans toward my face and kisses my sandy lips right through the mask. The larger silhouette repeats it. It seems to try closing my eyes with its fingers, but for sand nothing changes — I'm watching them, I see all.

The silhouettes embrace each other, as tightly as they can (I hear the friction of leather clothing), gather their courage, take out two sacks, two small shovels, and begin to scoop me away from my coffin.

The world layers, then reassembles, then come unglued, then again sticks together. I feel thrown into a carousel, round dance, whirlpool. I feel, I feel how I end up in the sacks, not the touch but the concept, the claustrophobia, how my sandy body scatters, divides into two, how I feel here and there, in two places and nowhere.

Everything happens in atemporal cadence.

The coffin is empty.

The alarm siren screams.

The mausomuseum floods with red light — a bloody dawn.

The silhouettes run and dive through the window they broke— together with me.

Around, something flickers.

I'm held close to a heart — its rhythm goes supersonic, its heat boils their blood, heats my sand, heats the air. Everything's hot, almost scorching yet pleasant.

Sound of an engine, darkness, flashers and flashes.

Roar, sirens, shaking, lots of shaking.

Hormones— fear, excitement, the flame of freedom.

Everything mixes into a heap, into two heaps mixes my Ensanded I. I

feel everything, feel completely, sense how their fingers clutch the sack, firmly yet tenderly, in fear, with love, for safety, for comfort.

Light— on the horizon rises the sun: sanguinary, ireful.

Before me their faces: my heroine and my hero, unmasked.

Their smiles shine, golden eyes reddened, drown in tears salty, some reach me too — drops fall right into the sand, seep through the grains, moisten them, and I feel it again, sense how I'm hardening and losing control.

Around, by the haze and shimmer enveloped — black thorny thickets, a lil'lake or a pond, on the surface float lilies: white, pink, white-pink.

We sit on the sand and embrace. I'm silent, I'm scared to speak, though I now have no body — only two sacks of sand.

— Don't be afraid, dear, don't be afraid, please, we'll put you together, put you together however you want, wish, or desire. Just choose the form.

This story is my submission to the Symposium. The Soaring Twenties Social Club (STSC) is a small, exclusive online speakeasy where a dauntless band of raconteurs, writers, artists, philosophers, flaneurs, musicians, idlers, and bohemians share ideas and companionship. Each month STSC members create something around a set theme. This cycle, we

do our annual special "Fiction" issue.

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