

WEIRD WINTERIZED MEAT LOVER'S LASAGNA

The trash. It took shape. Trash is shaped by dawns always. The skyline looked like a hateful person taking a photograph. The sun, it did not singe the hair but made it straight.

A long lost basketball themed Tervis insulated tumbler BPA-free drying with the film of cucumber water days away from fermentation, the center-unfolded extra warning label text peeled off ibuprofen and flapping around like a lipid, KT tape rat-kinging with eyebrow threads, zippy little plastic sawtooth sink uncloggers that don't work and Sour Power Strawberry Straws... There are to-go fusion sushi plastic grass fences, blue automotive paper towels with the unmistakable aroma of Fabuloso, untouched cantaloupe and honeydew rusting in portion cups, interesting Shiba Inu shit cinnabuns leapfrog equidistant, high-velocity stippling of blackened ranch and ketchup, cask rejections, skintimate tendercrisps, salad oil-stained boxes of Admiration salad oil, wifi passwords written on the backs of junkmail, Binge Eating Disorder pamphlets, a newsletter from the Flat Earth Society, different colored pen ink differentiating a G from a 6, a 1 from an I, grant applications to study the history of wine, NYPD navy blue food dyed rose petals leafblown blocks from the memorial, snappleisms scrawled in chickenfat, cheerlessly in what proves to be chickenfat...

Have you seen the Minions?? Do you know what Minions are? They are the same homunculi previously misdiagnosed as extinct by the self-proclaimed scientific community. They have an insatiable proclivity toward mischief and malaise. Minions are the bringers of bad night air in the evening upon microzymotic chariots. They are the loophole humpers of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The nanomechanical Itchys of *Scratchtasia*. The damacies of the katamari. Only Minions and Twinkies can survive nuclear fallout, and I am almost done sequencing the Minion genome.

It is autumn and outside-cats are yawning. Across the street a box slumps left of the storm drains, the word FREE sharpied on one of its flaps. The box is mildewed, the corrugation is separating. It's been, like, raining. Among its contents are Tuesdays with Morrie, The Five People You Meet in Heaven, Who Moved My Cheese? (abridged, on tape), assorted Sue Grafton ("N" Is for Noose, "Y" Is for Yeerks, "F" Is for Fugitive, "A" Is for Alibi), two halves a copy of the Oprah Book Club's own Infinite Jest ripped in half like a phone book by a strongman, Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging, The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Dating & Sex, *Housefucker* Magazine.

One of the cats, Russell, named after the sound of one fall leaf, is enamored with the box, having mistaken its contents for chicken salad with craisens. He leaps. The cardboard splits. The cat spills its ass and the books into the street. Tumbling into view is a slender volume in a faded red and white dustjacket—The Tao of Pooh. Russell leaves and makes for a tree. The book comes to a stop, falling open to page 158. The Epilogue. It reads: *[Spoiler Alert/Trigger Warning]*

...Upon moving to NYC a handful of people, I don't know who, have taken out various life insurance policies on me. Each one of these somewhere in the tens or hundreds of thousands though I have no idea of the exact running sum. I can offer no descriptions as to what they look

like, or how many they are, nor say for certain whether or not I have ever actually met any of them before in my life.

I can feel their presence. In whatever barometric capacity. I am being monitored—not every day—but I know when it is happening. They're commiserating on a conference call just out of earshot, hesitating markings, crunching numbers at one another, irritable in the throes of Restless Leg Syndrome, goading each other, placing peripheral bets... The beneficiaries are scheming.

Things have become—difficult, to say the least. There are more shadows than I remember. Objects are sharper, heavier, harder. Sounds are louder. There are less announcements. Machines are more prone to malfunction. The instrumentation for sudden death seems almost limitless. I avoid the more obvious arenas—subway platforms, bridges, elevators—mostly now out of my own resentment for the menial obvious rather than an actual belief that This Will Be The Scene.

There is no specific company or lawyer I can legitimately trace back to the policies. All I have are inklings and insinuations to go on. Clients too thrilled or sweating when discussing providers. Insurance commercials that appear as though filmed in a replica of my childhood house. Certain arrangements of last names I find troublesome. Once on a lunchbreak I got into my car and drove nonstop to Altoona, PA just to verify the existence of the law firm of Kuntz, Lescher, Perfecto, & Watercross, PLLC.

Paranoia has eroded my rhythms, my ability to work or rest. Music is either distracting or mocking, never in syncopation. I only ever cum when I am asleep and wake with no memory of the dream. I have been made to be obsessed with my life, and my life has been made to be devoid of meaning. My life is defined only by its death.

Over in the shadows this morning stood a predator, uninvited, weighing reps of tropical skittles in his hands, or a cell phone charger salesman. Or the lady collecting cans. Its blood is too badly decoded for DNA testing. One of them.

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There was only one option available to me if I wanted to possess any shred of control. I needed to keep one step ahead of the trajectory onto which they'd rerouted my life. To calculate the where and when of my fate's descent and beat it to it on my own terms... I located it beneath the city streets, below the remoteness of the subway stations, to where, eventually, all the delicacies of the above world wind up.

Hello from the sewers of NYC.

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I've been here a month now. I stopped noticing the smell after five days. Things have been calmer and I have felt healthier both mentally and physically. Only just slightly but it's apparent.

One week ago China Chalet flushed an entire koi pond down the toilet, and since then I've been piecing it back together here in my pipeline. I've had nothing but time on my hands since waiting for my destiny.

I used plastic orange construction fencing to form a rough perimeter of the basin. It's light and perfect for root nests to cling to. Much of the vegetation was salvageable and has been

flourishing in this pond with such strong fertilization properties. The water hyacinth, very sad looking when first drug up, has made a full 180. The horsetail has easily doubled its spread...

I've become quite good at reanimating these magnificent fish, too. Using this coffee stirrer, I feed each koi a secret ratio of airsoft pellets and ball bearings, floaters and sinkers respectively, fine-tuning the placement within the digestive tracts with ship-in-a-bottle delicacy. If the ratio is off I refer to the discrepancy index and add X amount of airsofts or ball bearings, whatever the case may be, until the koi achieves its lifelike suspension inches below the surface of the sewage. A stasis somewhere between watery grave and offgassing buoy. Where I spent my life...

So far I have located and reanimated 9 adult koi and 4 immature ones. Their names are Amethyst, Arabesque, Caillou, Effie, Fripperies, Grace, Mirrormask, Moonbean, Pisco, Pronto, Remoulade, Sundry, and Tanqueray. With them I await the final impact of my life.

<Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Pooh*. New York: Penguin, 1983. Print.>

And there is an antiquated thing perfect for museums of the future, perfect for future fucking Museums of Jurassic Technology. It is an old Netflix envelope sunbleached pink yes an old Netflix envelope among the mess said to contain *Thumbsucker* or *Chumscrubber* or *SNL: The Best of Tina Fey*, yes, but it is empty, hey.

Hey let's stomp *30 Rock's* Tina Fey's face to the curb like a trebuchet in reverse. One big salsalito turd. Hey let's apply for a grant to study the complete works of Tina Fey. Hey, let's throw Bossypants at the side of a Dunkin Donuts Baskin Robbins at dawn and run away...

Over there's where I found one of those Jacob's ladder Magic Wallets, let's look inside. On the back of a Select-A-Branch ATM receipt is scrawled the number for a lawyer who represents the Mesothelioma class action lawsuit. They abbreviated it Meso but that's what it's gotta be. Let's call the number and sing a song, c'mon, let's sing to a lawyer. I know the perfect song. Let's sing them my favorite song. My favorite song is Empire State Of Mind (Clean) by Jay-Z featuring Alicia Keys.

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