

He used to scare himself as a kid by asking, "Where would I be, no, what would I be, if I weren't here?" The question was always initiated by sitting on the end of the sectional sofa where his mother kept the monstrous Webster's and all the old crossword puzzles from the newspaper, neatly stacked for future reference.

There was some mystical combination in the smell of newsprint and the feel of the battered, well-thumbed book that inspired him to think on these things. Maybe articles so closely associated with his mother engendered thoughts about what he would be if he had never had this mother. Where would he be? In what form? Metaphysics at age ten is nothing short of overwhelming.

Thus began the constant feelings in him that there was something in him that was not "body". And this, in turn, would make him feel that this genetic accident of a form was not his. He was fat. Not what he ordered at all. Given in error. Fat didn't fit with his inner picture of who he was. This dichotomy made him withdraw even more into the written word; into music; and into his recurrent and powerful dreams of levitation and skimming over all obstacles by force of will.

At age eighteen, when someone at school commented on what a set of tits that guy (he, himself) had, he decided that his outer form must be brought more into line with his inner concept of form. He didn't express it in anything close to this wording. The vocabulary or philosophy was still awaiting planting.

He was humiliated into a crash diet that would encase him in a cocoon of lethargy all summer vacation, but from which he would emerge in fall as if after hibernation, stripped of fat and ready for a new wardrobe.

However, the new, thinner model wasn't exactly what he had in mind, but it was an improvement. He no longer had visions of taking a handful of fleshy adipose and slicing it off deftly with a carving knife and presenting it to his personal Shylock. But his fascination for knives never died. He turned to the miniscule, as is often the case when someone has the blatant flaw removed from his scrutiny and criticism. When you're fifty pounds overweight, five plus or minus is negligible. Now, five pounds was enough to make him feel the jiggly, jolly, fatty mess all over again. If it is true that within every fat person there is a thin one trying to break out, then it is equally true that within the ex-fatso there is a gross slug-like obesity lurking to make it's reappearance. Both statements were true for him.

The other side-effect was that he happened now not to eat his problems into submission. He had to deal with them in non-caloric fashion and let them wear on the nerves.

His major and most noticable excuse for not engaging life and new situations on their own terms was gone. Like the man who shaves off a beard, he had one less thing to hide behind. Principally, he was now seen as a sexual entity. A substantial layer of fat conferred on the carrier the credentials to be confessor to those who feel (as most seem to) that a sexual being cannot be trusted. Life, after all, doesn't impinge upon the fat. It

deflects off their surface like hands clutching at a greased pig. So, like a recent widow, the ex-fatty was suspect of vested interest in issues he could formerly be relied upon to be removed from by the wise himalayan heights of his very bulk. Who better to nurture the disaffected than the over-nourished earth father-mother fat-cushioned soul?

His former obesity should have made him more tolerant and sympathetic in his dealings with other now fatter than himself. Not so. In years to come, potential sex partners, in particular, were ruled out very quickly if the line of the torso even hinted at a love handle or an excessive curvature of the belly. He was strict with himself and applied the same criteria to others.

The setting up of strictures and provisos is a very delicate operation. The more rigid, the more stringent the structure of judgement and discrimination the more apt it is to snap back at its fabricator. It struck Robert often that karma has a somewhat spring-loaded quality. Judgemental energy is stored as in a capacitor. The energy is incapable of gradual release and escapes explosively when triggered. The capacitance of the backlash is proportional to a few things, the most important of which is the depth of perception and incisiveness of the viewer. These qualities are very rare. Robert, however, rated very high with respect to these variables making his karmic capacitance very large. One might say that people in glass houses must remember to open the windows before throwing stones. The glass can appear so clear as to make the resident feel unrestricted.

Robert was fat. All facets of the person can be measured in degrees. If one plots the binomial distribution of weight for Robert's age group at the time, one sees that he falls in the P 0.5 tails of the distribution. This means that only 2.5 % of the normal population his age can be expected to be quite so fat as he.

If one does similar distributions of IQ and the ability to see the world very clearly (an intangible and subjective quantity admittedly) one sees him fall in the P 0.5 tails of each of these distributions as well. Taking all three variables into account, one finds that Robert's peer group sharing his properties is a vanishingly small 0.015625 % of the normal population. One may infer correctly from this analysis that Robert was indeed something of an outcast.

When one focuses in on Robert's formative years one discovers what one already knew (one thinks). Discovery of one's sexuality is a peculiar process with a genesis point that vanishes in retrospect. The first sexual experience is always easy to pinpoint. The point at which sexuality blossoms is difficult to assess.

Robert had his first experience at age thirteen with the boy next door (How prosaic). The details of the event shine in his memory not like a star, but like those rare events in life than seem greater than themselves; that are more real than reality; meta-physical in that the physical takes on some super-substantiality in the mind as the moment is engraved in the memory.

They not only refuse to fade like most do with lack of detail and significance, but insist on replaying themselves in a way that reinforces the happening.

But the strangest aspect of the whole thing was Robert's motivation in initiating contact, as much due to curiosity as the fanning of the fires of sexuality. Robert did not have the vaguest notion of what sex (in any form) was about, but he sensed in Brad someone who was sure to know and could elucidate the vagueness into clarity. Robert had had erections before but hadn't done anything, not knowing that there was anything to be done. So when he cajoled, pushed and nearly insisted to Brad that they suck on each other's cocks, he had no real notion of what was supposed to happen. Brad seemed to know quite well what he was doing as he led the way to Robert's bedroom, undid his fly and produced the first uncircumsized penis Robert had ever seen. Brad showed him how to manipulate himself to produce an erection. They then sucked each other for a time, and as naive as Robert was, he felt that something ought to be produced from this activity. He said as much to Brad.

Brad smirked a little at this and asked Robert if he wanted him to "come or something". Robert wasn't sure what "coming" was but refused to appear ignorant on the matter. He said yes.

Brad made him back off while he worked on his penis with his hand. He told Robert to be ready to put his mouth on his cock when he gave the signal.

Before long Brad signalled; Robert covered, tasted, swal-

lowed and suddenly felt something scary and wrong had happening. He felt specifically that this was an activity he had no business enjoying or engaging in at all. It wasn't guilt, or even shame but a feeling that he was somehow beyond his depth. Loss of face, control and knowledge were abhorrent to Robert.

For these three reasons Robert ran to the kitchen, drank about a quart of milk and made a great show of how nasty Brad's 'stuff' tasted. The nastiness wasn't in the come. The nastiness lay in a vague, hovering sense of moral lapse, censure, and further lack of normalcy. *Robert had asked to be normal all his life.*

Brad showed his amusement in a very superior way sitting at the kitchen table. He asked Robert what he had expected to happen and that if he didn't want to eat it why he wanted him to come in the first place. Robert felt humiliated by this loss of power over something he thought was going to expand his horizons like one of the thousands of other things he had done in his life with the spirit of scientific investigation. He wanted Brad to leave. He needed to think, to re-evaluate. Any failed project requires immediate reassessment of the experimental design while the details of all the variables involved are still fresh in the mind. Brad sensed Robert's discomfort and complied in the way people do when they know they have total control over a situation. Brad left for home.

One thing stuck in Robert's mind. He wanted to duplicate what Brad had done to his cock. He couldn't imagine what this fluid discharge was all about or what it felt like.

After dinner that evening, while his mother and aunt were still talking at the kitchen table, Robert sat down in the chair in his bedroom and began to play with his cock the way Brad had. He didn't feel anything at first but he remembered Brad and persevered. When it happened and the blood rushed to his head, the come gushed out of his cock onto the floor, the chair and his clothes. His heart nearly stopped. Nothing else could have such frightening intensity. Robert thought, "This is what dying is like".

As he slowly recovered he immediately realized how stupid he had been. He hadn't even closed the bedroom door. He cleaned up the copious amount of virgin come with toilet paper from the bathroom next door and stuffed himself back together. He tried to look normal. He felt decidedly abnormal.

The introduction of this newest variable gave Robert pause for many days. He couldn't ask his mother, and had no father. This left him to his own imagination. Obviously, his speculations on sex, masturbation and homosexuality were: 1) grandiose 2) tinged with guilt; 3) largely incorrect. He was still unsure what he was guilty of, or felt shame for, but was soon to find out.

He felt again the need for his father. His death a year before this had left a strange emptiness in him. He also had the feeling that his father might not be the most understanding and receptive person to talk to with regard to sex and, in particular, homosexuality. Robert still recalled the vague

treatment his father had given the birds and the bees a few years ago. Thus Robert felt that he would probably have been alone in any event even if his father were still alive.

This being summer vacation, and his mother at work, Robert had a great deal of time to himself during the day. He would read, watch TV, and investigate parts of the house he was not normally allowed to look through. One such a place was his mother's dresser. Looking through the top drawer of the blonde oak monstrosity, he found among other things, two falsies, the cast from his broken arm at age five, and a sex manual for newlyweds. Robert had always been accustomed to finding everything he wanted to know from books but had not yet developed the discrimination to know the difference between accurate books and those that professed accuracy.

The manual had a clinical, serious and authoritative look about it. It was a soft covered book but of regular 8 1/2 by 11 size. The authors each had several letters after their names contributing to the validity of the contents in Robert's view. He riffled past pictures of genitalia and came to a page that filled in one gap in his knowledge. Men did not, repeat, did not place their penises in women's anuses to have sex. It was that other place into which he had seen his mother stuff paper. She had told Robert about a little ball that rolled through every women's body each month cleansing her and in the process making her bleed. This 'explanation' happened when Robert had asked what the soiled pads with blood on them were all about. He had



feared for his mother's health. It now became clear that this was related to sex and babies and was a normal part of every woman's life.

Other pages that stuck him dealt with two topics of paramount importance: masturbation and disease. The book stated quite emphatically that masturbation irritated the mucous membranes of the male urethra causing pain, involuntary discharges, and only fell a few philosophical feet away from madness and hair on the palms that friends would laugh about later on when Robert was older. It seemed, according to the manual, that the intensity of these ailments was directly proportional to the frequency of masturbatory episodes.

This was a blow. They had not lied or misrepresented other aspects of sexuality! Robert had to accept their word on these issues as well. Still, not trusting just one authority (already the seeds of the scientific method in place) he turned to another more trusted authority: the great Webster. Under the entry "masturbation" his eyes fell on the word 'self-abuse'. He was shattered. His guilt over this activity was obviously well-founded.

He returned to the manual and read on to see if there were other cautions and warnings he needed to know. The book did deal in the final chapters in a hazy, circumlocutory way with homosexual interactions but was definitely not hazy in its position that this was aberrant antisocial behaviour to be discouraged at all cost. His soul was lost.

Most things become more picquant and irresistable when one is told specifically how bad they are for one. In true scientific manner, Robert wondered how the second time around would be knowing what he knew now. With the element of surprise removed, what would be the result? Robert arrived at a formula for sexual intensity that went something like:

I varies directly with T,L,E,D and inversely with A,B,E'.

Where I=intensity of coitus

L= length of time since last coitus

E= enjoyment level of second party, positive integers only

D= degree of illicitness of the activities

A= degree of mental fatigue

B= degree of bodily discomfort

E'= ennui

At this point Robert was just beginning to develop his formula. But one thing stood out in this second exercise: science triumphed over any sense of guilt and moral obligation.

All that summer Robert applied himself diligently to the total revelation of the techniques of masturbation. His mother thoughtfully provided him with a pair of pants two sizes too small and a scalp massager (read: vibrator) that were most efficacious in expanding the vistas of his study. The summer passed in a bitter-sweet ecstasy of obsession, eye-crossing pleasure, and guilt.

He began to have wet dreams too, and very innocently asked his mother what it was about. She gave him some vague answer

about it being very natural. It would come out fine in the end. If he had any ideas of pressing her further, they were squelched when she found him one night half-asleep, absently playing with himself. She was adamant about the wrongness of the act. This shut a door between them as far as any conversation about sex was concerned until he was twenty-five.

As is natural, Robert began to wonder what these attractions to certain boys his own age meant and where they fit in the scheme of his libidinal formulary. As yet, they were not represented by any variable in the calculations. He remembered a certain quarterback that he had a crush over who treated him in an undisguisedly disdainful manner. The quarterback, Craig, had moved away to N. Carolina but returned to Robert's school for their senior year. The innuendoes as to Robert's sexuality resumed immediately on Craig's return but began to have a clarity for Robert now. Craig was more friendly to him this year and actually seemed to be inviting something. There was more physical contact between them and a knowing glint in the other boy's eye that wasn't there before.

The most vivid of these physical expression came one night when a group of boys, himself and Craig included, has sneaked into a closed conservation area to play war games. They were divided into two separate groups and as was usual, they picked Robert for his team last as if he were a handicap. As the evening progressed and Robert's team, who had been assigned the task of assaulting the position of the other team, were picked off and

captured one by one, Robert found himself to be the last one still free. Stealth and evasion seemed a natural talent for Robert. Unfairly, the boys on the other team, including Craig, stuck to the home base waiting for Robert to advance to certain capture. Determined to put up a fight they would not forget, Robert advanced, was tackled by four boys at once but still managed to drag them several feet to the bucket where his team was to deposit their "grenade" as the symbol of victory. Robert deposited his piece and found that his strength, both physical and mental, had made him instantly accepted and valued in a way he had never experienced. From that evening forward Craig and the others included Robert in everything they did, even the more illicit activities. Nothing demonstrated acceptance better to Robert than being included in any forray that included danger.

Robert's position in the group solidified even further when we won the boat race later that summer. The race was in the local creek with model boats but to Robert it was a victory on a scale of the America's Cup.

Through all this, Craig seemed to take more and more opportunity to wrestle and joke in a physical way with Robert. Robert could barely stand the pressure not even really knowing fully what it was all about. There was never to be a consumation of this crush for Robert but he never forgot Craig.

What happened to the quarterback was never revealed to Robert. He imagined that the boy became a man, married, and become a fat ex-jock. All very standard.

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Now with high school and forty pounds behind him, one might expect a burgeoning social life in Robert's college years, but he was still fat in his mind and still afraid of consequences. Even Robert could not have told you what consequences he was afraid of but there was always the vague feeling of impending doom from any direction hovering over him. So much of his time was spent considering consequences of actions, that the time to act slipped by, as he contemplated the correct avenue of attack.