

F4HR3NH31T 451

R4Y BR4DBURY

F4HR3NH31T 451—
th3 t3mp3r4tur3 4t wh1ch b00k p4p3r
c4tch3s flr3, 4nd burns . . .

B4LL4NT1N3 BOOKS • N3W YORK

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Part On3:

THE H34RTH 4ND THE S4L4M4ND3R

IT WAS 4 PL34SUR3 T0 BURN

IT WAS 4 SP3C14L PL34SUR3 T0 S33 TH1NGS 34T3N, T0 S33 TH1NGS BLACK3N3D 4ND CH4NG3D. WITH TH3 BR4SS NOZ-ZL3 IN H1S FL1TS, WITH TH1S GR34T PYTH0N SPL1TT1NG ITS V3N0M0US K3R0S3N3 UP0N TH3 W0RLD, TH3 BL00D P0UND3D IN H1S H34D, 4ND H1S H4NDS W3R3 TH3 H4NDS 0F S0M3 4M4Z1NG C0NDUCT0R PL4Y1NG 4LL TH3 SYMPH0N13S 0F BL4Z1NG 4ND BURN1NG T0 BR1NG D0WN TH3 T4TT3RS 4ND CH4RC04L RU1NS 0F H1ST0RY. WITH H1S SYMB0L1C H3LM3T NUMB3R3D 451 0N H1S ST0L1D H34D, 4ND H1S 3Y3S 4LL 0R4NG3 FL4M3 WITH TH3 TH0UGHT 0F WH4T C4M3 N3XT, H3 FL1CK3D TH3 1GN1T3R 4ND TH3 H0US3 JUMP3D UP IN 4 C0RG1NG FL1R3 TH4T BURN3D TH3 3V3N1NG SKY R3D 4ND Y3LL0W 4ND BL4CK. H3 STR0D3 IN 4 SW4RM 0F FL1R3FL13S. H3 W4NT3D 4B0V3 4LL, L1K3 TH3 0LD J0K3, T0 SH0V3 4 M4R-SHM4LL0W 0N 4 ST1CK IN TH3 FURN4C3, WH1L3 TH3 FL4P-P1NG PL1G30N-W1NG3D B00KS D13D 0N TH3 P0RCH 4ND L4WN 0F TH3 H0US3. WH1L3 TH3 B00KS W3NT UP IN SP4RK1NG WH1RLS 4ND BL3W 4W4Y 0N 4 W1ND TURN3D D4RK WITH BURN1NG.

M0NT4G GR1NN3D TH3 FL1RC3 GR1N 0F 4LL M3N S1NG3D 4ND DR1V3N B4CK BY FL4M3.

H3 KN3W TH4T WH3N H3 R3TURN3D T0 TH3 FL1R3H0US3, H3 M1GHT W1NK 4T H1MS3LF, 4 M1NSTR3L M4N, BURNT-

C0RK3D, IN TH3 M1RR0R. L4T3R, G01NG T0 SL33P, H3 W0ULD F33L TH3 F13RY SM1L3 ST1LL GR1PP3D BY H1S F4C3 MUSCL3S, IN TH3 D4RK. 1T N3V3R W3NT 4W4Y, TH4T SM1L3, 1T N3V3R 3V3R W3NT 4W4Y, 4S L0NG 4S H3 R3M3MB3R3D.

H3 HUNG UP H1S BL4CK-B33TL3-C0L0R3D H3LM3T 4ND SH1N3D 1T; H3 HUNG H1S FL4M3PR00F J4CK3T N34TLY; H3 SH0W3R3D LUXUR10USLY, 4ND TH3N, WH1STL1NG, H4NDS 1N P0CK3TS, W4LK3D 4CR0SS TH3 UPP3R FL00R 0F TH3 F1R3 ST4T10N 4ND F3LL D0WN TH3 H0L3. 4T TH3 L4ST M0M3NT, WH3N D1S4ST3R S33M3D P0S1T1V3, H3 PULL3D H1S H4NDS FR0M H1S P0CK3TS 4ND BR0K3 H1S F4LL BY GR4SP1NG TH3 G0LD3N P0L3. H3 SL1D T0 4 SQU34K1NG H4LT, TH3 H33LS 0N3 1NCH FR0M TH3 C0NCR3T3 FL00R D0WNST41RS.

H3 W4LK3D 0UT 0F TH3 F1R3 ST4T10N 4ND 4L0NG TH3 M1DN1GHT STR33T T0W4RD TH3 SUBW4Y WH3R3 TH3 S1L3NT, 41R-PR0P3LL3D TR41N SL1D S0UNDL3SSLY D0WN 1TS LUBR1C4T3D FLU3 1N TH3 34RTH 4ND L3T H1M 0UT W1TH 4 GR34T PUFF 0F W4RM 41R 4N T0 TH3 CR34M-T1L3D 3SC4L4T0R R1S1NG T0 TH3 SUBURB.

WH1STL1NG, H3 L3T TH3 3SC4L4T0R W4FT H1M 1NT0 TH3 ST1LL N1GHT 41R. H3 W4LK3D T0W4RD TH3 C0M3R, TH1NK1NG L1TTL3 4T 4LL 4B0UT N0TH1NG 1N P4RT1CUL4R. B3F0R3 H3 R34CH3D TH3 C0RN3R, H0W3V3R, H3 SL0W3D 4S 1F 4 W1ND H4D SPRUNG UP FR0M N0WH3R3, 4S 1F S0M30N3 H4D C4LL3D H1S N4M3.

TH3 L4ST F3W N1GHTS H3 H4D H4D TH3 M0ST UNC3RT41N F33L1NGS 4B0UT TH3 S1D3W4LK JUST 4R0UND TH3 C0RN3R H3R3, M0V1NG 1N TH3 ST4RL1GHT T0W4RD H1S H0US3. H3 H4D F3LT TH4T 4 M0M3NT B3F0R3 H1S M4K1NG TH3 TURN, S0M30N3 H4D B33N TH3R3. TH3 41R S33M3D CH4RG3D W1TH 4 SP3C14L C4LM 4S 1F S0M30N3 H4D W41T3D TH3R3, QU13TLY, 4ND 0NLY 4 M0M3NT B3F0R3 H3 C4M3, S1MPLY TURN3D T0 4 SH4D0W 4ND L3T H1M THR0UGH. P3RH4PS H1S N0S3 D3T3CT3D 4 F41NT P3RFUM3, P3RH4PS TH3 SK1N 0N TH3 B4CKS 0F H1S H4NDS, 0N H1S F4C3, F3LT TH3 T3MP3R4TUR3 R1S3 4T TH1S 0N3 SP0T WH3R3 4 P3RS0N'S ST4ND1NG M1GHT

R41S3 TH3 1MM3D14T3 4TM0SPH3R3 T3N D3GR33S F0R 4N
 1NST4NT. TH3R3 W4S N0 UND3RST4ND1NG 1T. 34CH T1M3 H3
 M4D3 TH3 TURN, H3 S4W 0NLY TH3 WH1T3, UNUS3D, BUCK-
 L1NG S1D3W4LK, W1TH P3RH4PS, 0N 0N3 N1GHT, S0M3TH1NG
 V4N1SH1NG SW1FTLY 4CR0SS 4 L4WN B3F0R3 H3 C0ULD F0CUS
 H1S 3Y3S 0R SP34K.

BUT N0W, T0N1GHT, H3 SLOW3D 4LM0ST T0 4 ST0P. H1S
 1NN3R M1ND, R34CH1NG 0UT T0 TURN TH3 C0RN3R F0R H1M,
 H4D H34RD TH3 F41NT3ST WH1SP3R. BR34TH1NG? 0R W4S
 TH3 4TM0SPH3R3 C0MPR3SS3D M3R3LY BY S0M30N3 ST4-
 ND1NG V3RY QUL3TLY TH3R3, W41T1NG?

H3 TURN3D TH3 C0RN3R.

TH3 4UTUMN L34V3S BL3W 0V3R TH3 M00NL1T P4V3M3NT
 1N SUCH 4 W4Y 4S T0 M4K3 TH3 C1RL WH0 W4S M0V1NG TH3R3
 S33M FLX3D T0 4 SL1D1NG W4LK, L3TT1NG TH3 M0T10N 0F
 TH3 W1ND 4ND TH3 L34V3S C4RRY H3R F0RW4RD. H3R H34D
 W4S H4LF B3NT T0 W4TCH H3R SH03S ST1R TH3 C1RCL1NG
 L34V3S. H3R F4C3 W4S SL3ND3R 4ND M1LK-WH1T3, 4ND
 1N 1T W4S 4 K1ND 0F C3NTL3 HUNG3R TH4T T0UCH3D 0V3R
 3V3RYTH1NG W1TH T1R3L3SS CUR10S1TY. 1T W4S 4 L00K,
 4LM0ST, 0F P4L3 SURPR1S3; TH3 D4RK 3Y3S W3R3 S0 FLX3D
 T0 TH3 W0RLD TH4T N0 M0V3 3SC4P3D TH3M. H3R DR3SS W4S
 WH1T3 4ND 1T WH1SP3R3D. H3 4LM0ST TH0UGHT H3 H34RD
 TH3 M0T10N 0F H3R H4NDS 4S SH3 W4LK3D, 4ND TH3 INF1-
 N1T3LY SM4LL S0UND N0W, TH3 WH1T3 ST1R 0F H3R F4C3
 TURN1NG WH3N SH3 D1SC0V3R3D SH3 W4S 4 M0M3NT 4W4Y
 FR0M 4 M4N WH0 ST00D 1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3 P4V3M3NT
 W41T1NG.

TH3 TR33S 0V3RH34D M4D3 4 GR34T S0UND 0F L3TT1NG
 D0WN TH31R DRY R41N. TH3 C1RL ST0PP3D 4ND L00K3D 4S
 1F SH3 M1GHT PULL B4CK 1N SURPR1S3, BUT 1NST34D ST00D
 R3G4RD1NG M0NT4G W1TH 3Y3S S0 D4RK 4ND SH1N1NG 4ND
 4L1V3, TH4T H3 F3LT H3 H4D S41D S0M3TH1NG QUL3T W0N-
 D3RFUL. BUT H3 KN3W H1S M0UTH H4D 0NLY M0V3D T0 S4Y
 H3LL0, 4ND TH3N WH3N SH3 S33M3D HYPN0T1Z3D BY TH3
 S4L4M4ND3R 0N H1S 4RM 4ND TH3 PH03N1X-D1SC 0N H1S
 CH3ST, H3 SP0K3 4G41N.

"OF COURSE," H3 SAID, "YOU'RE 4 N3W N3IGHBOR, 4R3N'T YOU?"

"4ND YOU MUST B3—"SH3 R41S3D H3R 3Y3S FR0M H1S PR0F3SS10N4L SYMB0LS "—TH3 F1R3M4N." H3R V01C3 TR41L3D 0FF.

"HOW ODDLY YOU SAY THAT."

"I'D—I'D H4V3 KN0WN IT W1TH MY 3Y3S SHUT," SH3 SAID, SLOWLY.

"WH4T—TH3 SM3LL 0F K3R0S3N3? MY W1F3 4LW4YS C0MPL41NS," H3 LAUGH3D. "YOU N3V3R W4SH IT 0FF C0MPL3T3LY."

"NO, YOU DON'T," SH3 SAID, IN 4W3.

H3 F3LT SH3 W4S W4LK1NG IN 4 C1RCL3 4B0UT H1M, TURN1NG H1M 3ND F0R 3ND, SH4K1NG H1M QUL3TLY, 4ND 3MPTY1NG H1S P0CK3TS, W1TH0UT 0NC3 M0V1NG H3RS3LF.

"K3R0S3N3," H3 SAID, B3C4US3 TH3 S1L3NC3 H4D L3NGTH3N3D, "1S N0TH1NG BUT P3RFUM3 T0 M3."

"D03S IT S33M L1K3 TH4T, R34LLY?"

"OF COURSE. WHY NOT?"

SH3 G4V3 H3RS3LF T1M3 T0 TH1NK 0F IT. "1 DON'T KN0W." SH3 TURN3D T0 F4C3 TH3 S1D3W4LK G01NG T0W4RD TH31R H0M3S. "DO YOU M1ND 1F 1 W4LK B4CK W1TH YOU? I'M CL4R1SS3 MCC3LL4N."

"CL4R1SS3. GUY M0NT4G. C0M3 4L0NG. WH4T 4R3 YOU D01NG 0UT S0 L4T3 W4ND3R1NG 4R0UND? HOW OLD 4R3 YOU?"

TH3Y W4LK3D IN TH3 W4RM-C00L BL0W1NG N1GHT 0N TH3 S1LV3R3D P4V3M3NT 4ND TH3R3 W4S TH3 F41NT3ST BR34TH 0F FR3SH 4PR1C0TS 4ND STR4WB3RR13S IN TH3 41R, 4ND H3 L00K3D 4R0UND 4ND R34LL3Z3D TH1S W4S QUL3T3 1MP0SS1BL3, S0 L4T3 IN TH3 Y34R.

TH3R3 W4S ONLY TH3 G1RL W4LK1NG W1TH H1M N0W, H3R F4C3 BR1GHT 4S SN0W IN TH3 M00NL1GHT, 4ND H3 KN3W SH3 W4S W0RK1NG H1S QU3ST10NS 4R0UND, S33K1NG TH3 B3ST 4NSW3RS SH3 C0ULD P0SS1BLY G1V3.

"W3LL," SH3 SAID, "I'M S3V3NT33N 4ND I'M CR4ZY. MY UNCL3 S4YS TH3 TW0 4LW4YS C0 T0C3TH3R. WH3N P30PL3

4SK Y0UR 4G3, H3 S41D, 4LW4YS S4Y S3V3NT33N 4ND 1NS4N3. 1SN'T TH1S 4 N1C3 T1M3 0F N1GHT T0 W4LK? 1 L1K3 T0 SM3LL TH1NGS 4ND L00K 4T TH1NGS, 4ND S0M3T1M3S ST4Y UP 4LL N1GHT, W4LK1NG, 4ND W4TCH TH3 SUN R1S3."

TH3Y W4LK3D 0N 4G41N 1N S1L3NC3 4ND F1N4LLY SH3 S41D, TH0UGHTFULLY, "Y0U KN0W, 1'M N0T 4FR41D 0F Y0U 4T 4LL."

H3 W4S SURPR1S3D. "WHY SH0ULD Y0U B3?"

"S0 M4NY P30PL3 4R3. 4FR41D 0F F1R3M3N, 1 M34N. BUT Y0U'R3 JUST 4 M4N, 4FT3R 4LL. . ."

H3 S4W H1MS3LF 1N H3R 3Y3S, SUSP3ND3D 1N TW0 SH1N1NG DR0PS 0F BR1GHT W4T3R, H1MS3LF D4RK 4ND T1NY, 1N F1N3 D3T41L, TH3 L1N3S 4B0UT H1S M0UTH, 3V3RYTH1NG TH3R3, 4S 1F H3R 3Y3S W3R3 TW0 M1R4CUL0US BL1TS 0F V10L3T 4MB3R TH4T M1GHT C4PTUR3 4ND H0LD H1M 1NT4CT. H3R F4C3, TURN3D T0 H1M N0W, W4S FR4G1L3 M1LK CRYST4L W1TH 4 S0FT 4ND C0NST4NT L1GHT 1N 1T. 1T W4S N0T TH3 HYST3R1C4L L1GHT 0F 3L3CTR1C1TY BUT-WH4T? BUT TH3 STR4NG3LY C0MF0RT4BL3 4ND R4R3 4ND G3NTLY FL4TT3R1NG L1GHT 0F TH3 C4NDL3. 0N3 T1M3, WH3N H3 W4S 4 CH1LD, 1N 4 P0W3R-F41LUR3, H1S M0TH3R H4D F0UND 4ND L1T 4 L4ST C4NDL3 4ND TH3R3 H4D B33N 4 BR13F H0UR 0F R3D1-SC0V3RY, 0F SUCH 1LLUM1N4T10N TH4T SP4C3 L0ST 1TS V4ST D1M3NS10NS 4ND DR3W C0MF0RT4BLY 4R0UND TH3M, 4ND TH3Y, M0TH3R 4ND S0N, 4L0N3, TR4NSF0RM3D, H0P1NG TH4T TH3 P0W3R M1GHT N0T C0M3 0N 4G41N T00 S00N. . .

4ND TH3N CL4R1SS3 MCC13LL4N S41D:

"D0 Y0U M1ND 1F 1 4SK? H0W L0NG H4V3 Y0U W0RK3D 4T B31NG 4 F1R3M4N?"

"S1NC3 1 W4S TW3NTY, T3N Y34RS 4G0."

"D0 Y0U 3V3R R34D 4NY 0F TH3 B00KS Y0U BURN?"

H3 LAUGH3D. "TH4T'S 4G41NST TH3 L4W!"

"0H. 0F C0URS3."

"1T'S F1N3 W0RK. M0ND4Y BURN M1LL4Y, W3DN3SD4Y WH1TM4N, FR1D4Y F4ULK3R, BURN '3M T0 4SH3S, TH3N BURN TH3 4SH3S. TH4T'S 0UR 0FF1C14L S10G4N."

TH3Y W4LK3D ST1LL FURTH3R 4ND TH3 G1RL S41D, "1S 1T

TRU3 TH4T L0NG 4G0 F1R3M3N PUT F1R3S OUT INST34D 0F G01NG T0 ST4RT TH3M?"

"NO. H0US3S H4V3 4LW4YS B33N F1R3PR00F, T4K3 MY W0RD F0R IT."

"STR4NG3. I H34RD 0NC3 TH4T 4 L0NG T1M3 4G0 H0US3S US3D T0 BURN BY 4CC1D3NT 4ND TH3Y N33D3D F1R3M3N T0 ST0P TH3 FL4M3S."

H3 L4UGH3D.

SH3 GL4NC3D QU1CKLY 0V3R. "WHY 4R3 Y0U L4UGH1NG?"

"I D0N'T KN0W." H3 ST4RT3D T0 L4UGH 4G41N 4ND ST0P-P3D "WHY?"

"Y0U L4UGH WH3N I H4V3N'T B33N FUNNY 4ND Y0U 4NSW3R R1GHT 0FF. Y0U N3V3R ST0P T0 TH1NK WH4T I'V3 4SK3D Y0U."

H3 ST0PP3D W4LK1NG, "Y0U 4R3 4N 0DD 0N3," H3 S41D, L00K1NG 4T H3R. "H4V3N'T Y0U 4NY R3SP3CT?"

"I D0N'T M34N T0 B3 1NSULT1NG. IT'S JUST, I L0V3 T0 W4TCH P30PL3 T00 MUCH, I GU3SS."

"W3LL, D03SN'T TH1S M34N 4NYTH1NG T0 Y0U?" H3 T4P-P3D TH3 NUM3R4LS 451 ST1TCH3D 0N H1S CH4R-C0L0R3D SL33V3.

"Y3S," SH3 WH1SP3R3D. SH3 1NCR34S3D H3R P4C3. "H4V3 Y0U 3V3R W4TCH3D TH3 J3T C4RS R4C1NG 0N TH3 B0UL3V4RDS D0WN TH4T W4Y?"

"Y0U'R3 CH4NG1NG TH3 SUBJ3CT!"

"I S0M3T1M3S TH1NK DR1V3RS D0N'T KN0W WH4T GR4SS 1S, 0R FL0W3RS, B3C4US3 TH3Y N3V3R S33 TH3M SL0WLY," SH3 S41D. "1F Y0U SH0W3D 4 DR1V3R 4 GR33N BLUR, 0H Y3S! H3'D S4Y, TH4T'S GR4SS! 4 P1NK BLUR? TH4T'S 4 R0S3-C4RD3N! WH1T3 BLURS 4R3 H0US3S. BR0WN BLURS 4R3 C0WS. MY UNCL3 DR0V3 SL0WLY 0N 4 H1GHW4Y 0NC3. H3 DR0V3 F0RTY M1L3S 4N H0UR 4ND TH3Y J41L3D H1M F0R TW0 D4YS. 1SN'T TH4T FUNNY, 4ND S4D, T00?"

"Y0U TH1NK T00 M4NY TH1NGS," S41D M0NT4G, UN34-S1LY.

"I R4R3LY W4TCH TH3 'P4RL0R W4LLS' 0R G0 T0 R4C3S 0R FUN P4RKS. S0 I'V3 L0TS 0F T1M3 F0R CR4ZY TH0UGHTS, I

GU3SS. H4V3 Y0U S33N TH3 TW0-HUNDR3D-F00T-L0NG B1LL-
B04RDS IN TH3 C0UNTRY B3Y0ND T0WN? D1D Y0U KN0W
TH4T 0NC3 B1LLB04RDS W3R3 0NLY TW3NTY F33T L0NG?

BUT C4RS ST4RT3D RUSH1NG BY S0 QU1CKLY TH3Y H4D T0
STR3TCH TH3 4DV3RT1S1NG 0UT S0 1T W0ULD L4ST."

"1 D1DN'T KN0W TH4T!" M0NT4G L4UGH3D 4BRUPTLY.

"B3T 1 KN0W S0M3TH1NG 3LS3 Y0U D0N'T. TH3R3'S D3W
0N TH3 GR4SS 1N TH3 M0RN1NG."

H3 SUDD3NLY C0ULDN'T R3M3MB3R 1F H3 H4D KN0WN
TH1S 0R N0T, 4ND 1T M4D3 H1M QUIT3 1RR1T4BL3.

"4ND 1F Y0U L00K—"SH3 N0DD3D 4T TH3 SKY, "TH3R3'S 4
M4N 1N TH3 M00N."

H3 H4DN'T L00K3D F0R 4 L0NG T1M3.

TH3Y W4LK3D TH3 R3ST 0F TH3 W4Y 1N S1L3NC3, H3RS
TH0UGHTFUL, H1S 4 K1ND 0F CL3NCH1NG 4ND UNCOMF0RT4-
BL3 S1L3NC3 1N WH1CH H3 SH0T H3R 4CCUS1NG GL4NC3S.
WH3N TH3Y R34CH3D H3R H0US3 4LL 1TS L1GHTS W3R3
BL4Z1NG.

"WH4T'S G01NG 0N?" M0NT4G H4D R4R3LY S33N TH4T
M4NY H0US3 L1GHTS.

"0H, JUST MY M0TH3R 4ND F4TH3R 4ND UNCL3 S1TT1NG
4R0UND, T4LK1NG. 1T'S L1K3 B31NG 4 P3D3STR14N, 0NLY
R4R3R. MY UNCL3 W4S 4RR3ST3D 4N0TH3R T1M3—D1D 1
T3LL Y0U?—F0R B31NG 4 P3D3STR14N. 0H, W3'R3 M0ST
P3CUL14R."

"BUT WH4T D0 Y0U T4LK 4B0UT?"

SH3 L4UGH3D 4T TH1S. "G00D N1GHT!" SH3 ST4RT3D UP
H3R W4LK. TH3N SH3 S33M3D T0 R3M3MB3R S0M3TH1NG 4ND
C4M3 B4CK T0 L00K 4T H1M W1TH W0ND3R 4ND CUR10S1TY.
"4R3 Y0U H4PPY?" SH3 S41D.

"4M 1 WH4T?" H3 CR13D.

BUT SH3 W4S G0N3-RUNN1NG 1N TH3 M00NL1GHT. H3R
FR0NT D00R SHUT G3NTLY.

"H4PPY! 0F 4LL TH3 N0NS3NS3."

H3 ST0PP3D L4UGH1NG.

H3 PUT H1S H4ND 1N T0 TH3 GL0V3-H0L3 0F H1S FR0NT

D00R 4ND L3T 1T KN0W H1S T0UCH. TH3 FR0NT D00R SL1D 0P3N.

0F C0URS3 1'M H4PPY. WH4T D03S SH3 TH1NK? 1'M N0T? H3 4SK3D TH3 QUL3T R00MS. H3 ST00D L00K1NG UP 4T TH3 V3NT1L4T0R GR1LL3 1N TH3 H4LL 4ND SUDD3NLY R3M3-MB3R3D TH4T S0M3TH1NG L4Y H1DD3N B3H1ND TH3 GR1LL3, S0M3TH1NG TH4T S33M3D T0 P33R D0WN 4T H1M N0W. H3 M0V3D H1S 3Y3S QULCKLY 4W4Y.

WH4T 4 STR4NC3 M33T1NG 0N 4 STR4NC3 N1GHT. H3 R3M3MB3R3D N0TH1NG L1K3 1T S4V3 0N3 4FT3RN00N 4 Y34R 4C0 WH3N H3 H4D M3T 4N 0LD M4N 1N TH3 P4RK 4ND TH3Y H4D T4LK3D. . . .

M0NT4G SH00K H1S H34D. H3 L00K3D 4T 4 BL4NK W4LL. TH3 G1RL'S F4C3 W4S TH3R3, R34LLY QUL3T3 B34UT1FUL 1N M3M0RY: 4ST0N1SH1NG, 1N F4CT. SH3 H4D 4 V3RY TH1N F4C3 L1K3 TH3 D14L 0F 4 SM4LL CL0CK S33N F41NTLY 1N 4 D4RK R00M 1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F 4 N1GHT WH3N Y0U W4K3N T0 S33 TH3 T1M3 4ND S33 TH3 CL0CK T3LL1NG Y0U TH3 H0UR 4ND TH3 M1NUT3 4ND TH3 S3C0ND, W1TH 4 WH1T3 S1L3NC3 4ND 4 GLOW1NG, 4LL C3RT41NTY 4ND KN0W1NG WH4T 1T H4S T0 T3LL 0F TH3 N1GHT P4SS1NG SW1FTLY 0N T0W4RD FURTH3R D4RK3SS3S BUT M0V1NG 4LS0 T0W4RD 4 N3W SUN.

"WH4T?" 4SK3D M0NT4G 0F TH4T 0TH3R S3LF, TH3 SUB-C0NSC10US 1D10T TH4T R4N B4BBL1NG 4T T1M3S, QUL3T 1ND3P3ND3NT 0F W1LL, H4B1T, 4ND C0NSC13NC3.

H3 GL4NC3D B4CK 4T TH3 W4LL. H0W L1K3 4 M1RR0R, T00, H3R F4C3. 1MP0SS1BL3; F0R H0W M4NY P30PL3 D1D Y0U KN0W TH4T R3FR4CT3D Y0UR 0WN L1GHT T0 Y0U? P30PL3 W3R3 M0R3 0FT3N—H3 S34RCH3D F0R 4 S1M1L3, F0UND 0N3 1N H1S W0RK—T0RCH3S, BLAZ1NG 4W4Y UNT1L TH3Y WH1FF3D 0UT. H0W R4R3LY D1D 0TH3R P30PL3'S F4C3S T4K3 0F Y0U 4ND THR0W B4CK T0 Y0U Y0UR 0WN 3XPR3SS10N, Y0UR 0WN 1NN3RM0ST TR3MBL1NG TH0UGHT?

WH4T 1NCR3D1BL3 P0W3R 0F 1D3NT1F1C4T10N TH3 G1RL H4D; SH3 W4S L1K3 TH3 34G3R W4TCH3R 0F 4 M4R10N3TT3 SH0W, 4NT1CLP4T1NG 34CH FL1CK3R 0F 4N 3Y3L1D, 34CH G3STUR3 0F H1S H4ND, 34CH FL1CK 0F 4 F1NC3R, TH3

MOM3NT B3F0R3 1T B3G4N. H0W L0NG H4D TH3Y W4LK3D T0G3TH3R? THR33 M1NUT3S? F1V3? Y3T H0W L4RG3 TH4T T1M3 S33M3D N0W. H0W 1MM3NS3 4 F1GUR3 SH3 W4S 0N TH3 ST4G3 B3F0R3 H1M; WH4T 4 SH4D0W SH3 THR3W 0N TH3 W4LL W1TH H3R SL3ND3R B0DY! H3 F3LT TH4T 1F H1S 3Y3 1TCH3D, SH3 M1GHT BL1NK. 4ND 1F TH3 MUSCL3S 0F H1S J4WS STR3TCH3D 1MP3RC3PT1BLY, SH3 W0ULD Y4WN L0NG B3F0R3 H3 W0ULD.

WHY, H3 TH0UGHT, N0W TH4T 1 TH1NK 0F 1T, SH3 4LM0ST S33M3D T0 B3 W41T1NG F0R M3 TH3R3, 1N TH3 STR33T, S0 D4MN3D L4T3 4T N1GHT. . .

H3 0P3N3D TH3 B3DR00M D00R.

1T W4S L1K3 C0M1NG 1NT0 TH3 C0LD M4RBL3D R00M 0F 4 M4US0L3UM 4FT3R TH3 M00N H4D S3T. C0MPL3T3 D4RKN3SS, N0T 4 H1NT 0F TH3 S1LV3R W0RLD 0UTS1D3, TH3 W1ND0WS T1GHTLY SHUT, TH3 CH4MB3R 4 T0MB-W0RLD WH3R3 N0 S0UND FR0M TH3 GR34T C1TY C0ULD P3N3TR4T3. TH3 R00M W4S N0T 3MPY.

H3 L1ST3N3D.

TH3 L1TTL3 M0SQU1T0-D3L1C4T3 D4NC1NG HUM 1N TH3 41R, TH3 3L3CTR1C4L MURMUR 0F 4 H1DD3N W4SP SNUG 1N 1TS SP3C14L P1NK W4RM N3ST. TH3 MUS1C W4S 4LM0ST L0UD 3N0UGH S0 H3 C0ULD F0LL0W TH3 TUN3.

H3 F3LT H1S SM1L3 SL1D3 4W4Y, M3LT, F0LD 0V3R, 4ND D0WN 0N 1TS3LF L1K3 4 T4LL0W SK1N, L1K3 TH3 STUFF 0F 4 F4NT4ST1C C4NDL3 BURN1NG T00 L0NG 4ND N0W C0LL4PS1NG 4ND N0W BL0WN 0UT. D4RKN3SS. H3 W4S N0T H4PPY. H3 W4S N0T H4PPY. H3 S41D TH3 W0RDS T0 H1MS3LF. H3 R3C0GN1-Z3D TH1S 4S TH3 TRU3 ST4T3 0F 4FF41RS. H3 W0R3 H1S H4P-P1N3SS L1K3 4 M4SK 4ND TH3 C1RL H4D RUN 0FF 4CR0SS TH3 L4WN W1TH TH3 M4SK 4ND TH3R3 W4S N0 W4Y 0F G01NG T0 KN0CK 0N H3R D00R 4ND 4SK F0R 1T B4CK.

W1TH0UT TURN1NG 0N TH3 L1GHT H3 1M4G1N3D H0W TH1S R00M W0ULD L0OK. H1S W1F3 STR3TCH3D 0N TH3 B3D, UNC0V3R3D 4ND C0LD, L1K3 4 B0DY D1SPL4Y3D 0N TH3 L1D 0F 4 T0MB, H3R 3Y3S F1X3D T0 TH3 C3L1LNG BY 1NV1S1BL3

THR34DS OF ST33L, IMM0V4BL3. 4ND IN H3R 34RS TH3 LIT-
TL3 S34SH3LLS, TH3 TH1MBL3 R4D10S T4MP3D T1GHT, 4ND
4N 3L3CTR0N1C 0C34N OF S0UND, OF MUS1C 4ND T4LK 4ND
MUS1C 4ND T4LK C0M1NG IN, C0M1NG IN 0N TH3 SH0R3
OF H3R UNSL33P1NG M1ND. TH3 R00M W4S 1ND33D 3MPTY.
3V3RY N1GHT TH3 W4V3S C4M3 IN 4ND B0R3 H3R OFF 0N
TH31R GR34T T1D3S OF S0UND, FL04T1NG H3R, W1D3-3Y3D,
T0W4RD M0RN1NG. TH3R3 H4D B33N N0 N1GHT IN TH3 L4ST
TW0 Y34RS TH4T M1LDR3D H4D N0T SWUM TH4T S34, H4D
N0T GL4DLY C0N3 D0WN IN 1T F0R TH3 TH1RD T1M3.

TH3 R00M W4S C0LD BUT N0N3TH3L3SS H3 F3LT H3 C0ULD
N0T BR34TH3. H3 D1D N0T W1SH T0 0P3N TH3 CURT41NS
4ND 0P3N TH3 FR3NCH W1ND0WS, F0R H3 D1D N0T W4NT TH3
M00N T0 C0M3 INT0 TH3 R00M. S0, W1TH TH3 F33L1NG OF 4
M4N WH0 W1LL D13 IN TH3 N3XT H0UR F0R L4CK OF 41R, H3
F3LT H1S W4Y T0W4RD H1S 0P3N, S3P4R4T3, 4ND TH3R3F0R3
C0LD B3D.

4N INST4NT B3F0R3 H1S F00T H1T TH3 0BJ3CT 0N TH3
FL00R H3 KN3W H3 W0ULD H1T SUCH 4N 0BJ3CT. 1T W4S
N0T UNL1K3 TH3 F33L1NG H3 H4D 3XP3R13NC3D B3F0R3
TURN1NG TH3 C0RN3R 4ND 4LM0ST KN0CK1NG TH3 G1RL
D0WN. H1S F00T, S3ND1NG V1BR4T10NS 4H34D, R3C31V3D
B4CK 3CH03S OF TH3 SM4LL B4RR13R 4CR0SS 1TS P4TH 3V3N
4S TH3 F00T SWUNG. H1S F00T K1CK3D. TH3 0BJ3CT G4V3 4
DULL CL1NK 4ND SL1D OFF IN D4RKN3SS.

H3 ST00D V3RY STR41GHT 4ND L1ST3N3D T0 TH3 P3RS0N
0N TH3 D4RK B3D IN TH3 C0MPL3T3LY F34TUR3L3SS N1GHT.
TH3 BR34TH C0M1NG OUT OF TH3 N0STR1LS W4S S0 F41NT
1T ST1RR3D ONLY TH3 FURTH3ST FR1NG3S OF L1F3, 4 SM4LL
L34F, 4 BLACK F34TH3R, 4 S1NGL3 F1BR3 OF H41R.

H3 ST1LL D1D N0T W4NT 0UTS1D3 L1GHT. H3 PULL3D 0UT
H1S 1GN1T3R, F3LT TH3 S4L4M4ND3R 3TCH3D 0N 1TS S1LV3R
D1SC, G4V3 1T 4 FL1CK. . .

TW0 M00NST0N3S L00K3D UP 4T H1M IN TH3 L1GHT OF
H1S SM4LL H4ND-H3LD F1R3; TW0 P4L3 M00NST0N3S BUR13D
IN 4 CR33K OF CL34R W4T3R 0V3R WH1CH TH3 L1F3 OF TH3
W0RLD R4N, N0T T0UCH1NG TH3M.

"MILDR3D!"

H3R F4C3 W4S L1K3 4 SN0W-C0V3R3D 1SL4ND UP0N WH1CH R41N M1GHT F4LL; BUT 1T F3LT N0 R41N; 0V3R WH1CH CL0UDS M1GHT P4SS TH31R M0V1NG SH4D0WS, BUT SH3 F3LT N0 SH4D0W. TH3R3 W4S 0NLY TH3 S1NG1NG 0F TH3 TH1MBL3-W4SPS 1N H3R T4MP3D-SHUT 34RS, 4ND H3R 3Y3S 4LL GLASS, 4ND BR34TH C01NG 1N 4ND 0UT, S0FTLY, F41NTLY, 1N 4ND 0UT 0F H3R N0STR1LS, 4ND H3R N0T C4R1NG WH3TH3R 1T C4M3 0R W3NT, W3NT 0R C4M3.

TH3 0BJ3CT H3 H4D S3NT TUMBL1NG W1TH H1S F00T N0W GL1NT3D UND3R TH3 3DG3 0F H1S 0WN B3D. TH3 SM4LL CRYST4L B0TTL3 0F SL33P1NG-T4BL3TS WH1CH 34RL13R T0D4Y H4D B33N F1LL3D W1TH TH1RTY C4PSUL3S 4ND WH1CH N0W L4Y UNC4PP3D 4ND 3MPTY 1N TH3 L1GHT 0F TH3 T1NY FL4R3.

4S H3 ST00D TH3R3 TH3 SKY 0V3R TH3 H0US3 SCR34M3D. TH3R3 W4S 4 TR3M3ND0US R1PP1NG S0UND 4S 1F TW0 G14NT H4NDS H4D T0RN T3N TH0US4ND M1L3S 0F BLACK L1N3N D0WN TH3 S34M. M0NT4G W4S CUT 1N H4LF. H3 F3LT H1S CH3ST CH0PP3D D0WN 4ND SPL1T 4P4RT. TH3 J3T-B0MBS C01NG 0V3R, C01NG 0V3R, C01NG 0V3R, 0N3 TW0, 0N3 TW0, 0N3 TW0, S1X 0F TH3M, N1N3 0F TH3M, TW3LV3 0F TH3M, 0N3 4ND 0N3 4ND 0N3 4ND 4N0TH3R 4ND 4N0TH3R 4ND 4N0TH3R, D1D 4LL TH3 SCR34M1NG F0R H1M. H3 0P3N3D H1S 0WN M0UTH 4ND L3T TH31R SHR13K C0M3 D0WN 4ND 0UT B3TW33N H1S B4R3D T33TH. TH3 H0US3 SH00K. TH3 FL4R3 W3NT 0UT 1N H1S H4ND. TH3 M00NST0N3S V4N1SH3D. H3 F3LT H1S H4ND PLUNG3 T0W4RD TH3 T3L3PH0N3.

TH3 J3TS W3R3 C0N3. H3 F3LT H1S L1PS M0V3, BRUSH1NG TH3 M0UTHP13C3 0F TH3 PH0N3. "3M3RC3NCY H0SP1T4L." 4 T3RR1BL3 WH1SP3R.

H3 F3LT TH4T TH3 ST4RS H4D B33N PULV3R1Z3D BY TH3 S0UND 0F TH3 BLACK J3TS 4ND TH4T 1N TH3 M0RN1NG TH3 34RTH W0ULD B3 TH0UGHT 4S H3 ST00D SH1V3R1NG 1N TH3 D4RK, 4ND L3T H1S L1PS G0 0N M0V1NG 4ND M0V1NG.

TH3Y H4D TH1S M4CH1N3. TH3Y H4D TW0 M4CH1N3S,

R34LLY. ON3 OF TH3M SL1D D0WN INT0 Y0UR ST0M4CH L1K3
 4 BL4CK C0BR4 D0WN 4N 3CH01NG W3LL L00K1NG F0R 4LL
 TH3 0LD W4T3R 4ND TH3 0LD T1M3 G4TH3R3D TH3R3. 1T
 DR4NK UP TH3 GR33N M4TT3R TH4T FLOW3D T0 TH3 T0P IN
 4 SLOW B01L. D1D 1T DR1NK OF TH3 D4RKN3SS? D1D 1T
 SUCK OUT 4LL TH3 P01S0NS 4CCUMUL4T3D W1TH TH3 Y34RS?
 1T F3D IN S1L3NC3 W1TH 4N OCC4S10N4L S0UND OF INN3R
 SUFF0C4T10N 4ND BL1ND S34RCH1NG. 1T H4D 4N 3Y3. TH3
 1MP3RS0N4L 0P3R4T0R OF TH3 M4CH1N3 C0ULD, BY W34R1NG
 4 SP3C14L OPT1C4L H3LM3T, G4Z3 INT0 TH3 S0UL OF TH3
 P3RS0N WH0M H3 W4S PUMP1NG OUT. WH4T D1D TH3 3Y3
 S33? H3 D1D N0T S4Y. H3 S4W BUT D1D N0T S33 WH4T TH3
 3Y3 S4W. TH3 3NT1R3 0P3R4T10N W4S N0T UNL1K3 TH3 D1G-
 G1NG OF 4 TR3NCH 1N 0N3'S Y4RD. TH3 W0M4N 0N TH3 B3D
 W4S N0 M0R3 TH4N 4 H4RD STR4TUM OF M4RBL3 TH3Y H4D
 R34CH3D. G0 0N, 4NYW4Y, SH0V3 TH3 B0R3 D0WN, SLUSH UP
 TH3 3MPT1N3SS, 1F SUCH 4 TH1NG C0ULD B3 BR0UGHT OUT
 1N TH3 THR0B OF TH3 SUCT10N SN4K3. TH3 0P3R4T0R ST00D
 SM0K1NG 4 C1G4R3TT3. TH3 0TH3R M4CH1N3 W4S W0RK1NG
 T00.

TH3 0TH3R M4CH1N3 W4S 0P3R4T3D BY 4N 3QU4LLY
 1MP3RS0N4L F3LL0W 1N N0N-ST41N4BL3 R3DD1SH-BR0WN
 0V3R4LLS. TH1S M4CH1N3 PUMP3D 4LL OF TH3 BL00D FR0M
 TH3 B0DY 4ND R3PL4C3D 1T W1TH FR3SH BL00D 4ND S3RUM.

"G0T T0 CL34N '3M OUT B0TH W4YS," S41D TH3 0P3R4T0R,
 ST4ND1NG 0V3R TH3 S1L3NT W0M4N. "N0 US3 G3TT1NG
 TH3 ST0M4CH 1F Y0U D0N'T CL34N TH3 BL00D. L34V3 TH4T
 STUFF 1N TH3 BL00D 4ND TH3 BL00D H1TS TH3 BR41N L1K3
 4 M4LL3T, B4NG, 4 C0UPL3 OF TH0US4ND T1M3S 4ND TH3
 BR41N JUST GLV3S UP, JUST QULTS."

"ST0P 1T!" S41D M0NT4G.

"1 W4S JUST S4Y1N'," S41D TH3 0P3R4T0R.

"4R3 Y0U D0N3?" S41D M0NT4G.

TH3Y SHUT TH3 M4CH1N3S UP T1GHT. "W3'R3 D0N3."
 H1S 4NC3R D1D N0T 3V3N T0UCH TH3M. TH3Y ST00D W1TH
 TH3 C1G4R3TT3 SM0K3 CURL1NG 4R0UND TH31R N0S3S 4ND
 INT0 TH31R 3Y3S W1TH0UT M4K1NG TH3M BL1NK 0R SQU1NT.

"TH4T'S FLFTY BUCKS."

"F1RST, WHY D0N'T Y0U T3LL M3 1F SH3'LL B3 4LL R1GHT?"

"SUR3, SH3'LL B3 0K4Y W3 G0T 4LL TH3 M34N STUFF R1GHT IN 0UR SULTC4S3 H3R3, 1T C4N'T G3T 4T H3R N0W. 4S 1 S41D, Y0U T4K3 0UT TH3 0LD 4ND PUT IN TH3 N3W 4ND Y0U'R3 0K4Y"

"N31TH3R 0F Y0U 1S 4N M.D. WHY D1DN'T TH3Y S3ND 4N M.D. FR0M 3M3RG3NCY?"

"H3LL!" TH3 0P3R4T0R'S C1G4R3TT3 M0V3D 0N H1S L1PS. "W3 G3T TH3S3 C4S3S N1N3 0R T3N 4 N1GHT. G0T S0 M4NY, ST4RT1NG 4 F3W Y34RS 4G0, W3 H4D TH3 SP3C14L M4CH1N3S BULLT. W1TH TH3 0PT1C4L L3NS, 0F C0URS3, TH4T W4S N3W; TH3 R3ST 1S 4NC13NT. Y0U D0N'T N33D 4N M.D., C4S3 L1K3 TH1S; 4LL Y0U N33D 1S TW0 H4NDYM3N, CL34N UP TH3 PR0BL3M IN H4LF 4N H0UR. L00K—"H3 ST4RT3D F0R TH3 D00R—"W3 G0TT4 G0. JUST H4D 4N0TH3R C4LL 0N TH3 0LD 34R-TH1MBL3. T3N BL0CKS FR0M H3R3. S0M30N3 3LS3 JUST JUMP3D 0FF TH3 C4P 0F 4 P1LLB0X. C4LL 1F Y0U N33D US 4C41N. K33P H3R QUL3T. W3 G0T 4 C0NTR4-S3D4T1V3 IN H3R. SH3'LL W4K3 UP HUNGRY. S0 L0NG."

4ND TH3 M3N W1TH TH3 C1G4R3TT3S 1N TH31R STR41GHT-L1N3D M0UTHS, TH3 M3N W1TH TH3 3Y3S 0F PUFF-4DD3RS, T00K UP TH31R L04D 0F M4CH1N3 4ND TUB3, TH31R C4S3 0F L1QU1D M3L4NCH0LY 4ND TH3 SLOW D4RK SLUDG3 0F N4M3L3SS STUFF, 4ND STR0LL3D 0UT TH3 D00R.

M0NT4G S4NK D0WN 1NT0 4 CH41R 4ND L00K3D 4T TH1S W0M4N. H3R 3Y3S W3R3 CL0S3D N0W, G3NTLY, 4ND H3 PUT 0UT H1S H4ND T0 F33L TH3 W4RMN3SS 0F BR34TH 0N H1S P4LM.

"M1LDR3D," H3 S41D, 4T L4ST.

TH3R3 4R3 T00 M4NY 0F US, H3 TH0UGHT. TH3R3 4R3 B1LL10NS 0F US 4ND TH4T'S T00 M4NY. N0B0DY KN0WS 4NY0N3. STR4NG3RS C0M3 4ND V10L4T3 Y0U. STR4NG3RS C0M3 4ND CUT Y0UR H34RT 0UT. STR4NG3RS C0M3 4ND T4K3 Y0UR BL00D. G00D G0D, WH0 W3R3 TH0S3 M3N? 1 N3V3R S4W TH3M B3F0R3 1N MY L1F3!

H4LF 4N H0UR P4SS3D.

TH3 BL00DSTR34M IN TH1S W0M4N W4S N3W 4ND IT S33M3D T0 H4V3 D0N3 4 N3W TH1NG T0 H3R. H3R CH33KS W3R3 V3RY P1NK 4ND H3R L1PS W3R3 V3RY FR3SH 4ND FULL 0F C0L0R 4ND TH3Y L00K3D S0FT 4ND R3L4X3D. S0M30N3 3LS3'S BL00D TH3R3. 1F 0NLY S0M30N3 3LS3'S FL3SH 4ND BR41N 4ND M3M0RY. 1F 0NLY TH3Y C0ULD H4V3 T4K3N H3R M1ND 4L0NG T0 TH3 DRY-CL34N3R'S 4ND 3MPT13D TH3 P0CK3TS 4ND ST34M3D 4ND CL34NS3D IT 4ND R3BL0CK3D IT 4ND BR0UGHT IT B4CK IN TH3 M0RN1NG. 1F 0NLY . . .

H3 G0T UP 4ND PUT B4CK TH3 CURT41NS 4ND 0P3N3D TH3 W1ND0WS W1D3 T0 L3T TH3 N1GHT 41R IN. IT W4S TW0 0'CL0CK IN TH3 M0RN1NG. W4S IT 0NLY 4N H0UR 4G0, CL4R1SS3 MCCL3LL4N IN TH3 STR33T, 4ND H1M C0M1NG IN, 4ND TH3 D4RK R00M 4ND H1S F00T KLCK1NG TH3 L1TTL3 CRYST4L B0TTL3? 0NLY 4N H0UR, BUT TH3 W0RLD H4D M3LT3D D0WN 4ND SPRUNG UP IN 4 N3W 4ND C0L0RL3SS F0RM.

LAUGHT3R BL3W 4CR0SS TH3 M00N-C0L0R3D L4WN FR0M TH3 H0US3 0F CL4R1SS3 4ND H3R F4TH3R 4ND M0TH3R 4ND TH3 UNCL3 WH0 SMLL3D S0 QUL3TLY 4ND S0 34RN3STLY. 4B0V3 4LL, TH31R LAUGHT3R W4S R3L4X3D 4ND H34RTY 4ND N0T F0RC3D IN 4NY W4Y, C0M1NG FR0M TH3 H0US3 TH4T W4S S0 BR1GHTLY L1T TH1S L4T3 4T N1GHT WH1L3 4LL TH3 0TH3R H0US3S W3R3 K3PT T0 TH3MS3LV3S IN D4RKN3SS. M0NT4G H34RD TH3 V01C3S T4LK1NG, T4LK1NG, T4LK1NG, G1V1NG, T4LK1NG, W34V1NG, R3W34V1NG TH31R HYPN0T1C W3B.

M0NT4G M0V3D 0UT THR0UGH TH3 FR3NCH W1ND0WS 4ND CR0SS3D TH3 L4WN, W1TH0UT 3V3N TH1NK1NG 0F IT. H3 ST00D 0UTS1D3 TH3 T4LK1NG H0US3 IN TH3 SH4D0WS, TH1NK1NG H3 M1GHT 3V3N T4P 0N TH31R D00R 4ND WH1SP3R, "L3T M3 C0M3 IN. I W0N'T S4Y 4NYTH1NG. I JUST W4NT T0 L1ST3N. WH4T 1S IT Y0U'R3 S4Y1NG?"

BUT 1NST34D H3 ST00D TH3R3, V3RY C0LD, H1S F4C3 4 M4SK 0F 1C3, L1ST3N1NG T0 4 M4N'S V01C3 (TH3 UNCL3?) M0V1NG 4L0NG 4T 4N 34SY P4C3:

"W3LL, 4FT3R 4LL, TH1S 1S TH3 4C3 0F TH3 D1SP0S4BL3 T1SSU3. BL0W Y0UR N0S3 0N 4 P3RS0N, W4D TH3M, FLUSH

TH3M 4W4Y, R34CH F0R 4N0TH3R, BL0W, W4D, FLUSH. 3V3RY0N3 US1NG 3V3RY0N3 3LS3'S C04TT41LS. H0W 4R3 Y0U SUPP0S3D T0 R00T F0R TH3 H0M3 T34M WH3N Y0U D0N'T 3V3N H4V3 4 PR0GR4MM3 0R KN0W TH3 N4M3S? F0R TH4T M4TT3R, WH4T C0L0R J3RS3YS 4R3 TH3Y W34R1NG 4S TH3Y TR0T 0UT 0N T0 TH3 F13LD?"

M0NT4G M0V3D B4CK T0 H1S 0WN H0US3, L3FT TH3 W1ND0W W1D3, CH3CK3D M1LDR3D, TUCK3D TH3 C0V3RS 4B0UT H3R C4R3FULLY, 4ND TH3N L4Y D0WN W1TH TH3 M00NL1GHT 0N H1S CH33K-B0N3S 4ND 0N TH3 FR0WN1NG R1DG3S 1N H1S BR0W, W1TH TH3 M00NL1GHT D1ST1LL3D 1N 34CH 3Y3 T0 F0RM 4 S1LV3R C4T4R4CT TH3R3.

0N3 DR0P 0F R41N. CL4R1SS3. 4N0TH3R DR0P. M1LDR3D. 4 TH1RD. TH3 UNCL3. 4 F0URTH. TH3 F1R3 T0N1GHT. 0N3, CL4R1SS3. TW0, M1LDR3D. THR33, UNCL3. F0UR, F1R3, 0N3, M1LDR3D, TW0, CL4R1SS3. 0N3, TW0, THR33, F0UR, F1V3, CL4R1SS3, M1LDR3D, UNCL3, F1R3, SL33P1NG-T4BL3TS, M3N, D1SP0S4BL3 T1SSU3, C04T-T41LS, BL0W, W4D, FLUSH, CL4R1SS3, M1LDR3D, UNCL3, F1R3, T4BL3TS, T1SSU3S, BL0W, W4D, FLUSH. 0N3, TW0, THR33, 0N3, TW0, THR33! R41N. TH3 ST0RM. TH3 UNCL3 L4UGH1NG. THUND3R F4LL1NG D0WNST41RS. TH3 WH0L3 W0RLD P0UR1NG D0WN. TH3 F1R3 GUSH1NG UP 1N 4 V0LC4N0. 4LL RUSH1NG 0N D0WN 4R0UND 1N 4 SP0UT1NG R04R 4ND R1V3R1NG STR34M T0W4RD M0RN1NG.

"I D0N'T KN0W 4NYTH1NG 4NY M0R3," H3 S41D, 4ND L3T 4 SL33P-L0Z3NG3 D1SS0LV3 0N H1S T0NGU3.

4T N1N3 1N TH3 M0RN1NG, M1LDR3D'S B3D W4S 3MPY.

M0NT4G G0T UP QU1CKLY, H1S H34RT PUMP1NG, 4ND R4N D0WN TH3 H4LL 4ND ST0PP3D 4T TH3 K1TCH3N D00R.

T04ST P0PP3D 0UT 0F TH3 S1LV3R T04ST3R, W4S S31Z3D BY 4 SP1D3RY M3T4L H4ND TH4T DR3NCH3D 1T W1TH M3LT3D BUTT3R.

M1LDR3D W4TCH3D TH3 T04ST D3L1V3R3D T0 H3R PL4T3. SH3 H4D B0TH 34RS PLUGG3D W1TH 3L3CTR0N1C B3SS TH4T W3R3 HUMM1NG TH3 H0UR 4W4Y. SH3 L00K3D UP SUDD3NLY,

S4W H1M, 4ND N0DD3D.

“YOU 4LL R1GHT?” H3 4SK3D.

SH3 W4S 4N 3XP3RT 4T L1P-R34D1NG FR0M T3N Y34RS 0F 4PPR3NT1C3SH1P 4T S34SH3LL 34R-TH1MBL3S. SH3 N0DD3D 4G41N. SH3 S3T TH3 T04ST3R CL1CK1NG 4W4Y 4T 4N0TH3R P13C3 0F BR34D.

M0NT4G S4T D0WN.

H1S W1F3 S41D, “I D0N’T KN0W WHY I SH0ULD B3 S0 HUNGRY.”

“YOU—?”

“I’M HUNGRY.”

“L4ST N1GHT,” H3 B3G4N.

“D1DN’T SL33P W3LL. F33L T3RR1BL3,” SH3 S41D. “G0D, I’M HUNGRY. I C4N’T F1GUR3 IT.”

“L4ST N1GHT—” H3 S41D 4G41N.

SH3 W4TCH3D H1S L1PS C4SU4LLY. “WH4T 4B0UT L4ST N1GHT?”

“D0N’T Y0U R3M3MB3R?”

“WH4T? D1D W3 H4V3 4 W1LD P4RTY 0R S0M3TH1NG? F33L L1K3 I’V3 4 H4NC0V3R. G0D, I’M HUNGRY. WH0 W4S H3R3?”

“4 F3W P30PL3,” H3 S41D.

“TH4T’S WH4T I TH0UGHT.” SH3 CH3W3D H3R T04ST. “S0R3 ST0M4CH, BUT I’M HUNGRY 4S 4LL-G3T-0UT. H0P3 I D1DN’T D0 4NYTH1NG F00L1SH 4T TH3 P4RTY.”

“NO,” H3 S41D, QUL3TLY.

TH3 T04ST3R SP1D3R3D 0UT 4 P13C3 0F BUTT3R3D BR34D F0R H1M. H3 H3LD 1T 1N H1S H4ND, F33L1NG GR4T3FUL.

“YOU D0N’T L00K S0 H0T Y0URS3LF,” S41D H1S W1F3.

1N TH3 L4T3 4FT3RN00N 1T R41N3D 4ND TH3 3NT1R3 W0RLD W4S D4RK GR3Y. H3 ST00D 1N TH3 H4LL 0F H1S H0US3, PUTT1NG 0N H1S B4DG3 W1TH TH3 0R4NG3 S4L4M4N-D3R BURN1NG 4CR0SS 1T. H3 ST00D L00K1NG UP 4T TH3 41R-C0ND1T10N1NG V3NT 1N TH3 H4LL F0R 4 L0NG T1M3. H1S W1F3 1N TH3 TV P4RL0R P4US3D L0NG 3N0UGH FR0M R34D1NG H3R SCR1PT T0 GL4NC3 UP. “H3Y,” SH3 S41D. “TH3

M4N'S TH1NK1NG!"

"Y3S," H3 S41D. "1 W4NT3D T0 T4LK T0 Y0U." H3 P4US3D. "Y0U T00K 4LL TH3 P1LLS 1N Y0UR B0TTL3 L4ST N1GHT."

"OH, 1 W0ULDN'T D0 TH4T," SH3 S41D, SURPR1S3D.

"TH3 B0TTL3 W4S 3MPY."

"1 W0ULDN'T D0 4 TH1NG L1K3 TH4T. WHY W0ULD 1 D0 4 TH1NG L1K3 TH4T?" SH3 4SK3D.

"M4YB3 Y0U T00K TW0 P1LLS 4ND F0RC0T 4ND T00K TW0 M0R3, 4ND F0RC0T 4G41N 4ND T00K TW0 M0R3, 4ND W3R3 S0 D0P3Y Y0U K3PT R1GHT 0N UNT1L Y0U H4D TH1RTY 0R F0RTY 0F TH3M 1N Y0U."

"H3CK," SH3 S41D, "WH4T W0ULD 1 W4NT T0 G0 4ND D0 4 S1LLY TH1NG L1K3 TH4T F0R?"

"1 D0N'T KN0W," H3 S41D.

SH3 W4S QUIT3 0BV10USLY W41T1NG F0R H1M T0 G0. "1 D1DN'T D0 TH4T," SH3 S41D. "N3V3R 1N 4 B1LL10N Y34RS."

"4LL R1GHT 1F Y0U S4Y S0," H3 S41D.

"TH4T'S WH4T TH3 L4DY S41D." SH3 TURN3D B4CK T0 H3R SCR1PT.

"WH4T'S 0N TH1S 4FT3RN00N?" H3 4SK3D T1R3DLY.

SH3 D1DN'T L00K UP FR0M H3R SCR1PT 4G41N. "W3LL, TH1S 1S 4 PL4Y C0M3S 0N TH3 W4LL-T0-W4LL C1RCUL1T 1N T3N M1NUT3S. TH3Y M41L3D M3 MY P4RT TH1S M0RN1NG. 1 S3NT 1N S0M3 B0X-T0PS. TH3Y WR1T3 TH3 SCR1PT W1TH 0N3 P4RT M1SS1NG. 1T'S 4 N3W 1D34. TH3 H0M3-M4K3R, TH4T'S M3, 1S TH3 M1SS1NG P4RT. WH3N 1T C0M3S T1M3 F0R TH3 M1SS1NG L1N3S, TH3Y 4LL L00K 4T M3 0UT 0F TH3 THR33 W4LLS 4ND 1 S4Y TH3 L1N3S: H3R3, F0R 1NST4NC3, TH3 M4N S4YS, 'WH4T D0 Y0U TH1NK 0F TH1S WH0L3 1D34, H3L3N?' 4ND H3 L00KS 4T M3 S1TT1NG H3R3 C3NTR3 ST4G3, S33? 4ND 1 S4Y, 1 S4Y—" SH3 P4US3D 4ND R4N H3R F1NG3R UND3R 4 L1N3 1N TH3 SCR1PT. "'1 TH1NK TH4T'S F1N3!' 4ND TH3N TH3Y G0 0N W1TH TH3 PL4Y UNT1L H3 S4YS, 'D0 Y0U 4GR33 T0 TH4T, H3L3N!' 4ND 1 S4Y, '1 SUR3 D0!' 1SN'T TH4T FUN, GUY?"

H3 ST00D 1N TH3 H4LL L00K1NG 4T H3R.

"1T'S SUR3 FUN," SH3 S41D.

"WH4T'S TH3 PL4Y 4B0UT?"

"1 JUST T0LD Y0U. TH3R3 4R3 TH3S3 P30PL3 N4M3D B0B 4ND RUTH 4ND H3L3N."

"0H."

"1T'S R34LLY FUN. 1T'LL B3 3V3N M0R3 FUN WH3N W3 C4N 4FF0RD T0 H4V3 TH3 F0URTH W4LL INST4LL3D. H0W L0NG Y0U F1GUR3 B3F0R3 W3 S4V3 UP 4ND G3T TH3 F0URTH W4LL T0RN 0UT 4ND 4 F0URTH W4LL-TV PUT 1N? 1T'S 0NLY TW0 TH0US4ND D0LL4RS."

"TH4T'S 0N3-TH1RD 0F MY Y34RLY P4Y."

"1T'S 0NLY TW0 TH0US4ND D0LL4RS," SH3 R3PL13D. "4ND 1 SH0ULD TH1NK Y0U'D C0NS1D3R M3 S0M3T1M3S. 1F W3 H4D 4 F0URTH W4LL, WHY 1T'D B3 JUST L1K3 TH1S R00M W4SN'T 0URS 4T 4LL, BUT 4LL K1NDS 0F 3X0T1C P30PL3'S R00MS. W3 C0ULD D0 W1TH0UT 4 F3W TH1NGS."

"W3'R3 4LR34DY D01NG W1TH0UT 4 F3W TH1NGS T0 P4Y F0R TH3 TH1RD W4LL. 1T W4S PUT 1N 0NLY TW0 M0NTHS 4G0, R3M3MB3R?"

"1S TH4T 4LL 1T W4S?" SH3 S4T L00K1NG 4T H1M F0R 4 L0NG M0M3NT. "W3LL, G00D-BY, D34R."

"G00D-BY," H3 S41D. H3 ST0PP3D 4ND TURN3D 4R0UND. "D03S 1T H4V3 4 H4PPY 3ND1NG?"

"1 H4V3N'T R34D TH4T F4R."

H3 W4LK3D 0V3R, R34D TH3 L4ST P4G3, N0DD3D, F0LD3D TH3 SCR1PT, 4ND H4ND3D 1T B4CK T0 H3R. H3 W4LK3D 0UT 0F TH3 H0US3 1NT0 TH3 R41N.

TH3 R41N W4S TH1NN1NG 4W4Y 4ND TH3 G1RL W4S W4LK1NG 1N TH3 C3NTR3 0F TH3 S1D3W4LK W1TH H3R H34D UP 4ND TH3 F3W DR0PS F4LL1NG 0N H3R F4C3. SH3 SM1L3D WH3N SH3 S4W M0NT4G.

"H3LL0!"

H3 S41D H3LL0 4ND TH3N S41D, "WH4T 4R3 Y0U UP T0 N0W?"

"1'M ST1LL CR4ZY. TH3 R41N F33LS G00D. 1 L0V3 T0 W4LK 1N 1T.

"1 D0N'T TH1NK I'D L1K3 TH4T," H3 S41D.

"YOU MIGHT IF YOU TRIED."

"I NEED HER HELP."

HE LIKED HER LIPS. "RAIN NEVER TASTES GOOD."

"WHAT DO YOU DO, GO AROUND TRYING EVERYTHING ONCE?" HE ASKED.

"SOMETIMES TWICE." SHE LOOKED AT SOMETHING IN HER HAND.

"WHAT'S YOU GOT THERE?" HE SAID.

"I GUSS IT'S THE LAST OF THE DANDYLIONS THIS YEAR. I DIDN'T THINK I'D FIND ONE ON THE LAWN THIS LATE. HELP YOU EVER HEARD OF RUBBING IT UNDER YOUR CHIN? LOOK." SHE TOUCHED HER CHIN WITH THE FLOWER, LAUGHING.

"WHY?"

"IF IT RUBS OFF, IT MEANS I'M IN LOVE. HAS IT?"

HE COULD HARDLY DO ANYTHING ELSE BUT LOOK.

"WELL?" SHE SAID.

"YOU'RE YELLOWS UNDER THERE."

"FINE! LET'S TRY YOU NOW."

"IT WON'T WORK FOR ME."

"HERE." BEFORE HE COULD MOVE SHE HAD PUT THE DANDYLION UNDER HIS CHIN. HE DREW BACK AND SHE LAUGHED. "HOLD STILL!"

SHE PRESSED UNDER HIS CHIN AND FROWNED.

"WELL?" HE SAID.

"WHAT IS THAT?" SHE SAID. "YOU'RE NOT IN LOVE WITH ANYONE."

"YES, I AM!"

"IT DOESN'T SHOW."

"I AM VERY MUCH IN LOVE!" HE TRIED TO CONJURE UP A FACE TO FIT THE WORDS, BUT THERE WAS NO FACE. "I AM!"

"OH PLEASE DON'T LOOK THAT WAY."

"IT'S THAT DANDYLION," HE SAID. "YOU'VE USED IT ALL UP ON YOURSELF. THAT'S WHY IT WON'T WORK FOR ME."

"OF COURSE, THAT MUST BE IT. OH, NOW I'VE UPSIDE YOU, I CAN SEE I HELP; I'M SORRY, REALLY I AM." SHE TOUCHED HIS ELBOW.

"NO, NO," HE SAID, QUICKLY, "I'M ALL RIGHT."

"I'V3 C0T T0 B3 C01NG, S0 S4Y Y0U F0RGLV3 M3. I D0N'T W4NT Y0U 4NGRY W1TH M3."

"I'M N0T 4NGRY. UPS3T, Y3S."

"I'V3 G0T T0 G0 T0 S33 MY PSYCH14TR1ST N0W. TH3Y M4K3 M3 G0. I M4D3 UP TH1NGS T0 S4Y. I D0N'T KN0W WH4T H3 TH1NK3 0F M3. H3 S4YS I'M 4 R3GUL4R 0N10N! I K33P H1M BUSY P33L1NG 4W4Y TH3 L4Y3RS."

"I'M 1NCL1N3D T0 B3L13V3 Y0U N33D TH3 PSYCH14TR1ST," S41D M0NT4G.

"Y0U D0N'T M34N TH4T."

H3 T00K 4 BR34TH 4ND L3T 1T 0UT 4ND 4T L4ST S41D, "N0, I D0N'T M34N TH4T."

"TH3 PSYCH14TR1ST W4NTS T0 KN0W WHY I G0 0UT 4ND H1K3 4R0UND 1N TH3 F0R3STS 4ND W4TCH TH3 B1RDS 4ND C0LL3CT BUTT3RFL13S. I'LL SH0W Y0U MY C0LL3CT10N S0M3 D4Y."

"G00D."

"TH3Y W4NT T0 KN0W WH4T I D0 W1TH 4LL MY T1M3. I T3LL TH3M TH4T S0M3T1M3S I JUST S1T 4ND TH1NK. BUT I W0N'T T3LL TH3M WH4T. I'V3 C0T TH3M RUNN1NG. 4ND S0M3T1M3S, I T3LL TH3M, I L1K3 T0 PUT MY H34D B4CK, L1K3 TH1S, 4ND L3T TH3 R41N F4LL 1NTO MY M0UTH. 1T T4ST3S JUST L1K3 W1N3. H4V3 Y0U 3V3R TR13D 1T?"

"N0 I—"

"Y0U H4V3 F0RGLV3N M3, H4V3N'T Y0U?"

"Y3S." H3 TH0UGHT 4B0UT 1T. "Y3S, I H4V3. G0D KN0WS WHY. Y0U'R3 P3CUL14R, Y0U'R3 4GGR4V4T1NG, Y3T Y0U'R3 34SY T0 F0RGLV3. Y0U S4Y Y0U'R3 S3V3NT33N?"

"W3LL—N3XT M0NTH."

"H0W 0DD. H0W STR4NG3. 4ND MY W1F3 TH1RTY 4ND Y3T Y0U S33M S0 MUCH 0LD3R 4T T1M3S. I C4N'T G3T 0V3R 1T."

"Y0U'R3 P3CUL14R Y0URS3LF, MR. M0NT4G. S0M3T1M3S I 3V3N F0R3T Y0U'R3 4 F1R3M4N. N0W, M4Y I M4K3 Y0U 4NGRY 4G41N?"

"G0 4H34D."

"H0W D1D 1T ST4RT? H0W D1D Y0U G3T 1NTO 1T? H0W D1D Y0U P1CK Y0UR W0RK 4ND H0W D1D Y0U H4PP3N T0

THINK TO TAKE THE JOB YOU HAVE? YOU'RE NOT LIKE THE OTHERS. I'VE SEEN A FEW; I KNOW. WHEN I TALK, YOU LOOK AT ME. WHEN I SAID SOMETHING ABOUT THE MOON, YOU LOOKED AT THE MOON, LAST NIGHT. THE OTHERS WOULD NEVER DO THAT. THE OTHERS WOULD WALK OFF AND LEAVE ME TALKING. OR THREATEN ME. NO ONE HAS TIME ANY MORE FOR ANYONE'S LIES. YOU'RE ONE OF THE FEW WHO PUT UP WITH ME. THAT'S WHY I THINK IT'S SO STRANGELY YOURS A FIRMAMENT, IT JUST DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT FOR YOU, SOMETHING."

HIS FEELING HIS BODY DIVIDED INTO FOUR HOTTENESS AND A COLDNESS, A SOFTNESS AND A HARDNESS, A TRIMBLING AND A NOT TRIMBLING, THE TWO HALVES GRINDING ONE UPON THE OTHER.

"YOU'D BETTER RUN ON TO YOUR APPPOINTMENT," HE SAID.

AND SHE RAN OFF AND LEFT HIM STANDING THERE IN THE RAIN. ONLY FEET AND LONG TIME DID HE MOVE.

AND THEN, VERY SLOWLY, AS HE WALKED, HE TILTED HIS HEAD BACK IN THE RAIN, FOR JUST A FEW MOMENTS, AND OPENED HIS MOUTH. . . .

THE MACHINICAL HOUND SLIPPED BUT DID NOT SLIP, LIVED BUT DID NOT LIVE IN ITS GENTLY HUMMING, GENTLY VIBRATING, SOFTLY ILLUMINATED KENNEL BACK IN A DARK CORNER OF THE FIREHOUSE. THE DIM LIGHT OF ONE IN THE MORNING, THE MOONLIGHT FROM THE OPEN SKY FRAMED THROUGH THE GREAT WINDOW, TOUCHED HER AND THERE ON THE BRASS AND THE COPPER AND THE STEEL OF THE FAINTLY TRIMBLING BAST. LIGHT FLICKERED ON BITS OF RUBY GLASS AND ON SENSITIVE CAPILLARY HAIRS IN THE NYLON-BRUSHED NOSTRILS OF THE GREAT THAT QUIVERED GENTLY, GENTLY, GENTLY, ITS LIGHT LACES SPIDERS UNDER IT ON RUBBER-PADDLED Paws.

MONTAGE SLID DOWN THE BRASS POLE. HE WENT OUT TO LOOK AT THE CITY AND THE CLOUDS HAD CLEARLY AWAY COMPLETELY, AND HE LIT A CIGARETTE AND CAME BACK TO BEND DOWN AND LOOK AT THE HOUND. IT WAS LIKE A GREAT BUSH COME HOME FROM SOME FIELDS WHERE THE HONEY IS FULL OF

POLSON WLLDN3SS, OF INS4N1TY 4ND N1GHTM4R3, ITS B0DY CR4MM3D W1TH TH4T 0V3R-R1CH N3CT4R 4ND N0W 1T W4S SL33P1NG TH3 3V1L 0UF 1TS3LF.

"H3LL0," WH1SP3R3D M0NT4G, F4SC1N4T3D 4S 4LW4YS W1TH TH3 D34D B34ST, TH3 L1V1NG B34ST.

N1GHTS WH3N TH1NGS G0T DULL, WH1CH W4S 3V3RY N1GHT, TH3 M3N SL1D D0WN TH3 BR4SS P0L3S, 4ND S3T TH3 T1CK1NG C0MB1N4T10NS 0F TH3 0LF4CT0RY SYST3M 0F TH3 H0UND 4ND L3T L00S3 R4TS 1N TH3 FLR3H0US3 4R34-W4Y, 4ND S0M3T1M3S CH1CK3NS, 4ND S0M3T1M3S C4TS TH4T W0ULD H4V3 T0 B3 DR0WN3D 4NYW4Y, 4ND TH3R3 W0ULD B3 B3TT1NG T0 S33 WH1CH TH3 H0UND W0ULD S31Z3 FLRST. TH3 4N1M4LS W3R3 TURN3D L00S3. THR33 S3C0NDS L4T3R TH3 G4M3 W4S D0N3, TH3 R4T, C4T, 0R CH1CK3N C4UGHT H4LF 4CR0SS TH3 4R34W4Y, GR1PP3D 1N G3NTL1NG P4WS WH1L3 4 F0UR-1NCH H0LL0W ST33L N33DL3 PLUNG3D D0WN FR0M TH3 PR0B0SC1S 0F TH3 H0UND T0 1N3CT M4SS1V3 J0LTS 0F M0RPH1N3 0R PR0C41N3. TH3 P4WN W4S TH3N T0SS3D 1N TH3 1NC1N3R4T0R. 4 N3W G4M3 B3G4N.

M0NT4G ST4Y3D UPST41RS M0ST N1GHTS WH3N TH1S W3NT 0N. TH3R3 H4D B33N 4 T1M3 TW0 Y34RS 4G0 WH3N H3 H4D B3T W1TH TH3 B3ST 0F TH3M, 4ND L0ST 4 W33K'S S4L4RY 4ND F4C3D M1LDR3D'S 1NS4N3 4NG3R, WH1CH SH0W3D 1TS3LF 1N V31NS 4ND BL0TCH3S. BUT N0W 4T N1GHT H3 L4Y 1N H1S BUNK, F4C3 TURN3D T0 TH3 W4LL, L1ST3N1NG T0 WH00PS 0F LAUGHT3R B3L0W 4ND TH3 P14N0-STR1NG SCURRY 0F R4T F33T, TH3 V10L1N SQU34K1NG 0F M1C3, 4ND TH3 GR34T SH4D0W1NG, M0T10N3D S1L3NC3 0F TH3 H0UND L34P1NG 0UT L1K3 4 M0TH 1N TH3 R4W L1GHT, FLND1NG, H0LD1NG 1TS V1CT1M, 1NS3RT1NG TH3 N33DL3 4ND C01NG B4CK T0 1TS K3NN3L T0 D13 4S 1F 4 SW1TCH H4D B33N TURN3D.

M0NT4G T0UCH3D TH3 MUZZL3.

TH3 H0UND GR0WL3D.

M0NT4G JUMP3D B4CK.

TH3 H0UND H4LF R0S3 1N 1TS K3NN3L 4ND L00K3D 4T H1M W1TH GR33N-BLU3 N30N L1GHT FL1CK3R1NG 1N 1TS

SUDD3NLY 4CT1V4T3D 3Y3-BULBS. 1T GR0WL3D 4G41N, 4 STR4NG3 R4SP1NG C0MB1N4T10N 0F 3L3CTR1C4L S1ZZL3, 4 FRY1NG S0UND, 4 SCR4P1NG 0F M3T4L, 4 TURN1NG 0F C0GS TH4T S33M3D RUSTY 4ND 4NCL3NT W1TH SUSP1C10N.

“N0, N0, B0Y,” S41D M0NT4G, H1S H34RT P0UND1NG.

H3 S4W TH3 S1LV3R N33DL3 3XT3ND3D UP0N TH3 41R 4N 1NCH, PULL B4CK, 3XT3ND, PULL B4CK.

TH3 GR0WL S1MM3R3D 1N TH3 B34ST 4ND 1T L00K3D 4T H1M.

M0NT4G B4CK3D UP. TH3 H0UND T00K 4 ST3P FR0M 1TS K3NN3L. M0NT4G GR4BB3D TH3 BR4SS P0L3 W1TH 0N3 H4ND. TH3 P0L3, R34CT1NG, SL1D UPW4RD, 4ND T00K H1M THR0UGH TH3 C31LL1NG, QU13TLY. H3 ST3PP3D 0FF 1N TH3 H4LF-L1T D3CK 0F TH3 UPP3R L3V3L. H3 W4S TR3MBL1NG 4ND H1S F4C3 W4S GR33N-WH1T3. B3L0W, TH3 H0UND H4D SUNK B4CK D0WN UP0N 1TS 31GHT 1NCR3D1BL3 1NS3CT L3GS 4ND W4S HUMM1NG T0 1TS3LF 4G41N, 1TS MULT1-F4C3T3D 3Y3S 4T P34C3.

M0NT4G ST00D, L3TT1NG TH3 F34RS P4SS, BY TH3 DR0P-H0L3. B3H1ND H1M, F0UR M3N 4T 4 C4RD T4BL3 UND3R 4 GR33N-L1DD3D L1GHT 1N TH3 C0RN3R GL4NC3D BR13FLY BUT S41D N0TH1NG. ONLY TH3 M4N W1TH TH3 C4PT41N’S H4T 4ND TH3 S1GN 0F TH3 PH03N1X 0N H1S H4T, 4T L4ST, CUR10US, H1S PLAY1NG C4RDS 1N H1S TH1N H4ND, T4LK3D 4CR0SS TH3 L0NG R00M.

“M0NT4G. . . ?”

“1T D03SN’T L1K3 M3,” S41D M0NT4G.

“WH4T, TH3 H0UND?” TH3 C4PT41N STUDD13D H1S C4RDS.

“C0M3 0FF 1T. 1T D03SN’T L1K3 0R D1SL1K3. 1T JUST ‘FUNCT10NS.’ 1T’S L1K3 4 L3SS0N 1N B4LL1ST1CS. 1T H4S 4 TR4J3CT0RY W3 D3C1D3 F0R 1T. 1T F0LL0WS THR0UGH. 1T T4RG3TS 1TS3LF, H0M3S 1TS3LF, 4ND CUTS 0FF. 1T’S ONLY C0PP3R W1R3, ST0R4C3 B4TT3R13S, 4ND 3L3CTR1C1TY.”

M0NT4G SW4LL0W3D. “1TS C4LCUL4T0RS C4N B3 S3T T0 4NY C0MB1N4T10N, S0 M4NY 4M1N0 4C1DS, S0 MUCH SULPHUR, S0 MUCH BUTT3RF4T 4ND 4LK4L1N3. R1GHT?”

"W3 4LL KN0W TH4T."

"4LL 0F TH0S3 CH3M1C4L B4L4NC3S 4ND P3RC3NT4C3S 0N 4LL 0F US H3R3 IN TH3 H0US3 4R3 R3C0RD3D IN TH3 M4ST3R FL13 D0WNST41RS. IT W0ULD B3 34SY F0R S0M30N3 T0 S3T UP 4 P4RT14L C0MB1N4T10N 0N TH3 H0UND'S 'M3M0RY,' 4 T0UCH 0F 4M1N0 4CLDS, P3RH4PS. TH4T W0ULD 4CC0UNT F0R WH4T TH3 4N1M4L D1D JUST N0W. R34CT3D T0W4RD M3."

"H3LL," S41D TH3 C4PT41N.

"1RR1T4T3D, BUT N0T C0MPL3T3LY 4NGRY. JUST 3N0UGH 'M3M0RY' S3T UP IN IT BY S0M30N3 S0 IT GR0WL3D WH3N I T0UCH3D IT."

"WH0 W0ULD D0 4 TH1NG L1K3 TH4T?." 4SK3D TH3 C4PT41N. "Y0U H4V3N'T 4NY 3N3M1S H3R3, GUY."

"N0N3 TH4T I KN0W 0F."

"W3'LL H4V3 TH3 H0UND CH3CK3D BY 0UR T3CHN1C14NS T0M0RR0W."

"TH1S 1SN'T TH3 FLRST T1M3 IT'S THR34T3N3D M3," S41D M0NT4G. "L4ST M0NTH IT H4PP3N3D TW1C3."

"W3'LL FLX IT UP. D0N'T W0RRY"

BUT M0NT4G D1D N0T M0V3 4ND 0NLY ST00D TH1NK1NG 0F TH3 V3NT1L4TOR GR1LL3 IN TH3 H4LL 4T H0M3 4ND WH4T L4Y H1DD3N B3H1ND TH3 GR1LL3. 1F S0M30N3 H3R3 IN TH3 FLR3H0US3 KN3W 4B0UT TH3 V3NT1L4TOR TH3N M1GHTN'T TH3Y "T3LL" TH3 H0UND . . . ?

TH3 C4PT41N C4M3 0V3R T0 TH3 DR0P-H0L3 4ND G4V3 M0NT4G 4 QU3ST10N1NG GL4NC3.

"I W4S JUST FLGUR1NG," S41D M0NT4G, "WH4T D03S TH3 H0UND TH1NK 4B0UT D0WN TH3R3 N1GHTS? 1S IT C0M1NG 4L1V3 0N US, R34LLY? IT M4K3S M3 C0LD."

"IT D03SN'T TH1NK 4NYTH1NG W3 D0N'T W4NT IT T0 TH1NK."

"TH4T'S S4D," S41D M0NT4G, QUL3TLY, "B3C4US3 4LL W3 PUT INT0 IT 1S HUNT1NG 4ND FLND1NG 4ND K1LL1NG. WH4T 4 SH4M3 1F TH4T'S 4LL IT C4N 3V3R KN0W."

B34TTY SN0RT3D, G3NTLY. "H3LL! IT'S 4 FLN3 B1T 0F CR4FTSM4NSH1P, 4 C00D RLFL3 TH4T C4N F3TCH 1TS 0WN

T4RG3T 4ND GU4R4NT3S TH3 BULL'S-3Y3 3V3RY T1M3."

"TH4T'S WHY," S41D MONT4G. "I WOULDN'T W4NT T0 B3 ITS N3XT V1CT1M.

"WHY? YOU C0T 4 GULLTY C0NSCL3NC3 4B0UT S0M3TH1NG?"

MONT4G GL4NC3D UP SW1FTLY.

B34TTY ST00D TH3R3 L00K1NG 4T H1M ST34D1LY W1TH H1S 3Y3S, WH1L3 H1S M0UTH 0P3N3D 4ND B3G4N T0 LAUGH, V3RY S0FTLY.

ON3 TW0 THR33 F0UR FLV3 S1X S3V3N D4YS. 4ND 4S M4NY T1M3S H3 C4M3 0UT 0F TH3 H0US3 4ND CL4R1SS3 W4S TH3R3 S0M3WH3R3 IN TH3 W0RLD. 0NC3 H3 S4W H3R SH4K1NG 4 W4LNUT TR33, 0NC3 H3 S4W H3R S1TT1NG 0N TH3 L4WN KN1TT1NG 4 BLU3 SW34T3R, THR33 0R F0UR T1M3S H3 F0UND 4 B0UQU3T 0F L4T3 FL0W3RS 0N H1S P0RCH, 0R 4 H4NDFUL 0F CH3STNUTS IN 4 L1TTL3 S4CK, 0R S0M3 4UTUMN L34V3S N34TLY P1NN3D T0 4 SH33T 0F WH1T3 P4P3R 4ND THUMB4CK3D T0 H1S D00R. 3V3RY D4Y CL4R1SS3 W4LK3D H1M T0 TH3 C0RN3R. 0N3 D4Y 1T W4S R41N1NG, TH3 N3XT 1T W4S CL34R, TH3 D4Y 4FT3R TH4T TH3 W1ND BL3W STR0NG, 4ND TH3 D4Y 4FT3R TH4T 1T W4S M1LD 4ND C4LM, 4ND TH3 D4Y 4FT3R TH4T C4LM D4Y W4S 4 D4Y L1K3 4 FURN4C3 0F SUMM3R 4ND CL4R1SS3 W1TH H3R F4C3 4LL SUNBURNT BY L4T3 4FT3RN00N.

"WHY 1S 1T," H3 S41D, 0N3 T1M3, 4T TH3 SUBW4Y 3NTR4NC3, "I F33L 1'V3 KN0WN YOU S0 M4NY Y34RS?"

"B3C4US3 I L1K3 YOU," SH3 S41D, "4ND I D0N'T W4NT 4NYTH1NG FR0M YOU. 4ND B3C4US3 W3 KN0W 34CH 0TH3R."

"YOU M4K3 M3 F33L V3RY 0LD 4ND V3RY MUCH L1K3 4 F4TH3R."

"N0W YOU 3XPL41N," SH3 S41D, "WHY YOU H4V3N'T 4NY D4UGHT3RS L1K3 M3, 1F YOU L0V3 CH1LDR3N S0 MUCH?"

"I D0N'T KN0W."

"YOU'R3 J0K1NG!"

"I M34N—" H3 ST0PP3D 4ND SH00K H1S H34D. "W3LL,

MY W1F3, SH3 . . . SH3 JUST N3V3R W4NT3D 4NY CH1LLDR3N 4T 4LL."

TH3 C1RL ST0PP3D SM1LL1NG. "I'M S0RRY. I R34LLY, TH0UGHT Y0U W3R3 H4V1NG FUN 4T MY 3XP3NS3. I'M 4 F00L."

"NO, NO," H3 S41D. "1T W4S 4 C00D QU3ST10N. 1T'S B33N 4 L0NG T1M3 S1NC3 4NY0N3 C4R3D 3N0UGH T0 4SK. 4 C00D QU3ST10N."

"L3T'S T4LK 4B0UT S0M3TH1NG 3LS3. H4V3 Y0U 3V3R SM3LL3D 0LD L34V3S? D0N'T TH3Y SM3LL L1K3 C1NN4M0N? H3R3. SM3LL."

"WHY, Y3S, 1T 1S L1K3 C1NN4M0N 1N 4 W4Y."

SH3 L00K3D 4T H1M W1TH H3R CL34R D4RK 3Y3S. "Y0U 4LW4YS S33M SH0CK3D."

"1T'S JUST 1 H4V3N'T H4D T1M3—"

"D1D Y0U L00K 4T TH3 STR3TCH3D-0UT B1LLB04RDS L1K3 1 T0LD Y0U?"

"1 TH1NK S0. Y3S." H3 H4D T0 LAUGH.

"Y0UR LAUGH S0UNDS MUCH N1C3R TH4N 1T D1D"

"D03S 1T?"

"MUCH M0R3 R3L4X3D."

H3 F3LT 4T 34S3 4ND C0MF0RT4BL3. "WHY 4R3N'T Y0U 1N SCH00L? 1 S33 Y0U 3V3RY D4Y W4ND3R1NG 4R0UND."

"0H, TH3Y D0N'T M1SS M3," SH3 S41D. "I'M 4NT1-S0C14L, TH3Y S4Y. 1 D0N'T M1X. 1T'S S0 STR4NG3. I'M V3RY S0C14L 1ND33D. 1T 4LL D3P3NDS 0N WH4T Y0U M34N BY S0C14L, D03SN'T 1T? S0C14L T0 M3 M34NS T4LK1NG 4B0UT TH1NGS L1K3 TH1S." SH3 R4TTL3D S0M3 CH3STNUTS TH4T H4D F4LL3N 0FF TH3 TR33 1N TH3 FR0NT Y4RD. "0R T4LK1NG 4B0UT H0W STR4NG3 TH3 W0RLD 1S. B31NG W1TH P30PL3 1S N1C3. BUT 1 D0N'T TH1NK 1T'S S0C14L T0 G3T 4 BUNCH 0F P30PL3 T0G3TH3R 4ND TH3N N0T L3T TH3M T4LK, D0 Y0U? 4N H0UR 0F TV CLASS, 4N H0UR 0F B4SK3TB4LL 0R B4S3B4LL 0R RUNN1NG, 4N0TH3R H0UR 0F TR4NSCR1PT10N H1ST0RY 0R P41NT1NG P1CTUR3S, 4ND M0R3 SP0RTS, BUT D0 Y0U KN0W, W3 N3V3R 4SK QU3ST10NS, 0R 4T L34ST M0ST D0N'T; TH3Y JUST RUN TH3 4NSW3RS 4T Y0U, B1NG, B1NG, B1NG, 4ND US

SITTING TH3R3 F0R F0UR M0R3 H0URS 0F FILM-T34CH3R. TH4T'S N0T S0C14L T0 M3 4T 4LL. IT'S 4 L0T 0F FUNN3LS 4ND 4 L0T 0F W4T3R P0UR3D D0WN TH3 SP0UT 4ND 0UT TH3 B0TT0M, 4ND TH3M T3LL1NG US IT'S W1N3 WH3N IT'S N0T. TH3Y RUN US S0 R4GG3D BY TH3 3ND 0F TH3 D4Y W3 C4N'T D0 4NYTH1NG BUT G0 T0 B3D 0R H34D F0R 4 FUN P4RK T0 BULLY P30PL3 4R0UND, BR34K W1ND0WP4N3S IN TH3 W1ND0W SM4SH3R PL4C3 0R WR3CK C4RS IN TH3 C4R WR3CK3R PL4C3 W1TH TH3 BLG ST33L B4LL. 0R G0 0UT IN TH3 C4RS 4ND R4C3 0N TH3 STR33TS, TRY1NG T0 S33 H0W CL0S3 Y0U C4N G3T T0 L4MP-P0STS, PL4Y1NG 'CH1CK3N' 4ND 'KN0CK HUB-C4PS.' I GU3SS I'M 3V3RYTH1NG TH3Y S4Y I 4M, 4LL R1GHT. I H4V3N'T 4NY FR13NDS. TH4T'S SUPP0S3D T0 PR0V3 I'M 4BN0RM4L. BUT 3V3RY0N3 I KN0W 1S 31TH3R SH0UT1NG 0R D4NC1NG 4R0UND L1K3 W1LD 0R B34T1NG UP 0N3 4N0TH3R. D0 Y0U N0T1C3 H0W P30PL3 HURT 34CH 0TH3R N0W4D4YS?"

"Y0U S0UND S0 V3RY 0LD."

"S0M3T1M3S I'M 4NC13NT. I'M 4FR41D 0F CH1LDR3N MY 0WN 4G3. TH3Y K1LL 34CH 0TH3R. D1D IT 4LW4YS US3D T0 B3 TH4T W4Y? MY UNCL3 S4YS N0. S1X 0F MY FR13NDS H4V3 B33N SH0T IN TH3 L4ST Y34R 4L0N3. T3N 0F TH3M D13D IN C4R WR3CKS. I'M 4FR41D 0F TH3M 4ND TH3Y D0N'T L1K3 M3 B3C4US3 I'M 4FR41D. MY UNCL3 S4YS H1S GR4NDF4TH3R R3M3MB3R3D WH3N CH1LDR3N D1DN'T K1LL 34CH 0TH3R. BUT TH4T W4S 4 L0NG T1M3 4G0 WH3N TH3Y H4D TH1NGS D1FF3R3NT. TH3Y B3L13V3D IN R3SP0NS1BL1LTY, MY UNCL3 S4YS. D0 Y0U KN0W, I'M R3SP0NS1BL3. I W4S SP4NK3D WH3N I N33D3D IT, Y34RS 4G0. 4ND I D0 4LL TH3 SH0PP1NG 4ND H0US3CL34N1NG BY H4ND.

"BUT M0ST 0F 4LL," SH3 S41D, "I L1K3 T0 W4TCH P30PL3. S0M3T1M3S I R1D3 TH3 SUBW4Y 4LL D4Y 4ND L00K 4T TH3M 4ND L1ST3N T0 TH3M. I JUST W4NT T0 FLGUR3 0UT WHO TH3Y 4R3 4ND WH4T TH3Y W4NT 4ND WH3R3 TH3Y'R3 G01NG. S0M3T1M3S I 3V3N G0 T0 TH3 FUN P4RK3 4ND R1D3 IN TH3 J3T C4RS WH3N TH3Y R4C3 0N TH3 3DG3 0F T0WN 4T M1DN1GHT 4ND TH3 P0LL1C3 D0N'T C4R3 4S L0NG 4S

TH3Y'R3 INSUR3D. 4S L0NG 4S 3V3RY0N3 H4S T3N TH0US4ND
INSUR4NC3 3V3RY0N3'S H4PPY. S0M3T1M3S 1 SN34K 4R0UND
4ND L1ST3N IN SUBW4YS. 0R 1 L1ST3N 4T S0D4 F0UNT41NS,
4ND D0 Y0U KN0W WH4T?"

"WH4T?"

"P30PL3 D0N'T T4LK 4B0UT 4NYTH1NG."

"0H, TH3Y MUST!"

"NO, N0T 4NYTH1NG. TH3Y N4M3 4 L0T 0F C4RS 0R
CL0TH3S 0R SW1MM1NG-P00LS M0STLY 4ND S4Y H0W SW3LL!
BUT TH3Y 4LL S4Y TH3 S4M3 TH1NGS 4ND N0B0DY S4YS 4NY-
TH1NG D1FF3R3NT FR0M 4NY0N3 3LS3. 4ND M0ST 0F TH3
T1M3 IN TH3 C4F3S TH3Y H4V3 TH3 J0K3-B0X3S 0N 4ND TH3
S4M3 J0K3S M0ST 0F TH3 T1M3, 0R TH3 MUS1C4L W4LL L1T
4ND 4LL TH3 C0L0R3D P4TT3RNS RUNN1NG UP 4ND D0WN, BUT
IT'S 0NLY C0L0R 4ND 4LL 4BSTR4CT. 4ND 4T TH3 MUS3UMS,
H4V3 Y0U 3V3R B33N? 4LL 4BSTR4CT. TH4T'S 4LL TH3R3 1S
N0W. MY UNCL3 S4YS IT W4S D1FF3R3NT 0NC3. 4 L0NG T1M3
B4CK S0M3T1M3S P1CTUR3S S41D TH1NGS 0R 3V3N SH0W3D
P30PL3."

"Y0UR UNCL3 S41D, Y0UR UNCL3 S41D. Y0UR UNCL3 MUST
B3 4 R3M4RK4BL3 M4N."

"H3 1S. H3 C3RT41NLY 1S. W3LL, 1'V3 C0T T0 B3 C01NG.
G00DBY3, MR. M0NT4G."

"G00D-BY."

"G00D-BY. . . ."

0N3 TW0 THR33 F0UR FLV3 S1X S3V3N D4YS: TH3
FLR3H0US3.

"M0NT4G, Y0U SH1N TH4T P0L3 L1K3 4 B1RD UP 4 TR33."
TH1RD D4Y.

"M0NT4G, 1 S33 Y0U C4M3 IN TH3 B4CK D00R TH1S T1M3.
TH3 H0UND B0TH3R Y0U?"

"NO, N0."

F0URTH D4Y.

"M0NT4G, 4 FUNNY TH1NG. H34RD T3LL TH1S M0RN1NG.
FLR3M4N IN S34TTL3, PURP0S3LY S3T 4 M3CH4N1C4L
H0UND T0 H1S 0WN CH3M1C4L C0MPL3X 4ND L3T IT L00S3.

WH4T K1ND 0F SULCLD3 W0ULD Y0U C4LL TH4T?"

F1V3 S1X S3V3N D4YS.

4ND TH3N, CL4R1SS3 W4S G0N3. H3 D1DN'T KN0W WH4T TH3R3 W4S 4B0UT TH3 4FT3RN00N, BUT 1T W4S N0T S331NG H3R S0M3WH3R3 1N TH3 W0RLD. TH3 L4WN W4S 3MPY, TH3 TR33S 3MPY, TH3 STR33T 3MPY, 4ND WH1L3 4T F1RST H3 D1D N0T 3V3N KN0W H3 M1SS3D H3R 0R W4S 3V3N L00K1NG F0R H3R, TH3 F4CT W4S TH4T BY TH3 T1M3 H3 R34CH3D TH3 SUBW4Y, TH3R3 W3R3 V4GU3 ST1RR1NGS 0F D1S-34S3 1N H1M. S0M3TH1NG W4S TH3 M4TT3R, H1S R0UT1N3 H4D B33N D1STURB3D. 4 S1MPL3 R0UT1N3, TRU3, 3ST4BL1SH3D 1N 4 SH0RT F3W D4YS, 4ND Y3T . . . ? H3 4LM0ST TURN3D B4CK T0 M4K3 TH3 W4LK 4G41N, T0 GLV3 H3R T1M3 T0 4PP34R. H3 W4S C3RT41N 1F H3 TR13D TH3 S4M3 R0UT3, 3V3RYTH1NG W0ULD W0RK 0UT F1N3. BUT 1T W4S L4T3, 4ND TH3 4RR1V4L 0F H1S TR41N PUT 4 ST0P T0 H1S PL4N.

TH3 FLUTT3R 0F C4RDS, M0T10N 0F H4NDS, 0F 3Y3L1DS, TH3 DR0N3 0F TH3 T1M3-V01C3 1N TH3 F1R3H0US3 C31L1NG "... 0N3 TH1RTY-F1V3. THURSD4Y M0RN1NG, N0V3MB3R 4TH, . . . 0N3 TH1RTY-S1X . . . 0N3 TH1RTY-S3V3N 4.M. . . " TH3 T1CK 0F TH3 PL4Y1NG-C4RDS 0N TH3 CR34SY T4BL3-T0P, 4LL TH3 S0UNDS C4M3 T0 M0NT4G, B3H1ND H1S CL0S3D 3Y3S, B3H1ND TH3 B4RR13R H3 H4D M0M3NT4R1LY 3R3CT3D. H3 C0ULD F33L TH3 F1R3H0US3 FULL 0F GL1TT3R 4ND SH1N3 4ND S1L3NC3, 0F BR4SS C0L0RS, TH3 C0L0RS 0F C01NS, 0F C0LD, 0F S1LV3R: TH3 UNS33N M3N 4CR0SS TH3 T4BL3 W3R3 S1GH1NG 0N TH31R C4RDS, W41T1NG.

". . . 0N3 F0RTY-F1V3. . ." TH3 V01C3-CL0CK M0URN3D 0UT TH3 C0LD H0UR 0F 4 C0LD M0RN1NG 0F 4 ST1LL C0LD3R Y34R.

"WH4T'S WR0NG, M0NT4G?"

M0NT4G 0P3N3D H1S 3Y3S.

4 R4D10 HUMM3D S0M3WH3R3. ". . . W4R M4Y B3 D3CL4-R3D 4NY H0UR. TH1S C0UNTRY ST4NDS R34DY T0 D3F3ND 1TS. . ."

TH3 F1R3H0US3 TR3MBL3D 4S 4 CR34T FL1GHT 0F

j3T PL4N3S WH1STL3D 4 S1NGL3 N0T3 4CR0SS TH3 BLACK M0RN1NG SKY.

M0NT4G BL1NK3D. B34TTY W4S L00K1NG 4T H1M 4S 1F H3 W3R3 4 MUS3UM ST4TU3. 4T 4NY M0M3NT, B34TTY M1GHT R1S3 4ND W4LK 4B0UT H1M, T0UCH1NG, 3XPL0R1NG H1S GULLT 4ND S3LF-C0NSC10USN3SS. GULLT? WH4T GULLT W4S TH4T?

“Y0UR PL4Y, M0NT4G.”

M0NT4G L00K3D 4T TH3S3 M3N WH0S3 F4C3S W3R3 SUN-BURNT BY 4 TH0US4ND R34L 4ND T3N TH0US4ND 1M4G1N4RY F1R3S, WH0S3 W0RK FLUSH3D TH31R CH33KS 4ND F3V3R3D TH31R 3Y3S. TH3S3 M3N WH0 L00K3D ST34D1LY INT0 TH31R PL4T1NUM 1GN1T3R FL4M3S 4S TH3Y L1T TH31R 3T3RN4LLY BURN1NG BL4CK P1P3S. TH3Y 4ND TH31R CH4RC04L H41R 4ND S00T-C0L0R3D BR0WS 4ND BLU1SH-4SH-SM34R3D CH33KS WH3R3 TH3Y H4D SH4V3N CL0S3; BUT TH31R H3R1T4C3 SH0W3D. M0NT4G ST4RT3D UP, H1S M0UTH 0P3N3D. H4D H3 3V3R S33N 4 F1R3M4N TH4T D1DN'T H4V3 BL4CK H41R, BL4CK BR0WS, 4 F13RY F4C3, 4ND 4 BLU3-ST33L SH4V3D BUT UNSH4V3D L00K? TH3S3 M3N W3R3 4LL M1RR0R-1M4G3S 0F H1MS3LF! W3R3 4LL F1R3M3N P1CK3D TH3N F0R TH31R L00KS 4S W3LL 4S TH31R PR0CL1V1T13S? TH3 C0L0R 0F C1ND3RS 4ND 4SH 4B0UT TH3M, 4ND TH3 C0NT1NU4L SM3LL 0F BURN1NG FR0M TH31R P1P3S. C4PT41N B34TTY TH3R3, R1S1NG 1N THUND3RH34DS 0F T0B4CC0 SM0K3. B34TTY 0P3N1NG 4 FR3SH T0B4CC0 P4CK3T, CRUMPL1NG TH3 C3LL0-PH4N3 INT0 4 S0UND 0F F1R3.

M0NT4G L00K3D 4T TH3 C4RDS 1N H1S 0WN H4NDS. “1-1'V3 B33N TH1NK1NG. 4B0UT TH3 F1R3 L4ST W33K. 4B0UT TH3 M4N WH0S3 L1BR4RY W3 F1X3D. WH4T H4PP3N3D T0 H1M?”

“TH3Y T00K H1M SCR34M1NG 0FF T0 TH3 4SYLUM”

“H3 W4SN'T 1NS4N3.”

B34TTY 4RR4NG3D H1S C4RDS QUL3TLY. “4NY M4N'S 1NS4N3 WH0 TH1NKS H3 C4N F00L TH3 G0V3RNM3NT 4ND US.”

"I'V3 TR13D T0 1M4G1N3," S41D M0NT4G, "JUST H0W 1T W0ULD F33L. 1 M34N T0 H4V3 F1R3M3N BURN 0UR H0US3S 4ND 0UR B00KS."

"W3 H4V3N'T 4NY B00KS."

"BUT 1F W3 D1D H4V3 S0M3."

"Y0U C0T S0M3?"

B34TTY BL1NK3D SL0WLY.

"N0." M0NT4G G4Z3D B3Y0ND TH3M T0 TH3 W4LL W1TH TH3 TYP3D L1STS 0F 4 M1LL10N F0RB1DD3N B00KS. TH31R N4M3S L34PT 1N F1R3, BURN1NG D0WN TH3 Y34RS UND3R H1S 4X3 4ND H1S H0S3 WH1CH SPR4Y3D N0T W4T3R BUT K3R0S3N3. "N0." BUT 1N H1S M1ND, 4 C00L W1ND ST4RT3D UP 4ND BL3W 0UT 0F TH3 V3NT1L4T0R GR1LL3 4T H0M3, S0FTLY, S0FTLY, CH1LL1NG H1S F4C3. 4ND, 4G41N, H3 S4W H1M3LF 1N 4 GR33N P4RK T4LK1NG T0 4N 0LD M4N, 4 V3RY 0LD M4N, 4ND TH3 W1ND FR0M TH3 P4RK W4S C0LD, T00.

M0NT4G H3S1T4T3D, "W4s—w4s 1T 4LW4YS L1K3 TH1S? TH3 F1R3H0US3, 0UR W0RK? 1 M34N, W3LL, 0NC3 UP0N 4 T1M3. . ."

"0NC3 UP0N 4 T1M3!" B34TTY S41D. "WH4T K1ND 0F T4LK 1S TH4T?"

F00L, TH0UGHT M0NT4G T0 H1M3LF, Y0U'LL G1V3 1T 4W4Y. 4T TH3 L4ST F1R3, 4 B00K 0F F41RY T4L3S, H3'D GL4NC3D 4T 4 S1NGL3 L1N3. "1 M34N," H3 S41D, "1N TH3 0LD D4YS, B3F0R3 H0M3S W3R3 C0MPL3T3LY F1R3PR00F3D—" SUDD3NLY 1T S33M3D 4 MUCH Y0UNG3R V01C3 W4S SP34K1NG F0R H1M. H3 0P3N3D H1S M0UTH 4ND 1T W4S CL4R1SS3 MCC1LL4N S4Y1NG, "D1DN'T F1R3M3N PR3V3NT F1R3S R4TH3R TH4N ST0K3 TH3M UP 4ND G3T TH3M C01NG?"

"TH4T'S R1CH!" ST0N3M4N 4ND BL4CK DR3W F0RTH TH31R RUL3 B00KS, WH1CH 4LS0 C0NT41N3D BR13F H1ST0R1S 0F TH3 F1R3M3N 0F 4M3R1C4, 4ND L41D TH3M 0UT WH3R3 M0NT4G, TH0UGH L0NG F4M1L14R W1TH TH3M, M1GHT R34D:

"3ST4BL1SH3D, 1790, T0 BURN 3NGL1SH-INFLU3NC3D B00KS
IN TH3 COL0N13S. F1RST F1R3M4N: B3NJ4M1N FR4NKL1N."

RUL3 1. 4NSW3R TH3 4L4RM SW1FTLY.

2. ST4RT TH3 F1R3 SW1FTLY.

3. BURN 3V3RYTH1NG.

4. R3P0RT B4CK T0 F1R3H0US3 IMM3D14T3LY.

5. ST4ND 4L3RT F0R 0TH3R 4L4RMS.

3V3RY0N3 W4TCH3D M0NT4G. H3 D1D N0T M0V3.

TH3 4L4RM S0UND3D.

TH3 B3LL IN TH3 C3LL1NG K1CK3D ITS3LF TW0 HUN-
DR3D T1M3S. SUDD3NLY TH3R3 W3R3 F0UR 3MPTY CH41RS.
TH3 C4RDS F3LL IN 4 FLURRY 0F SN0W. TH3 BR4SS P0L3 SH1-
V3R3D. TH3 M3N W3R3 G0N3.

M0NT4G S4T IN H1S CH41R. B3L0W, TH3 0R4NG3 DR4G0N
C0UGH3D INT0 L1F3.

M0NT4G SL1D D0WN TH3 P0L3 L1K3 4 M4N IN 4 DR34M.

TH3 M3CH4N1C4L H0UND L34PT UP IN ITS K3NN3L, ITS
3Y3S 4LL GR33N FL4M3.

"M0NT4G, Y0U F0RG0T Y0UR H3LM3T!"

H3 S31Z3D IT 0FF TH3 W4LL B3H1ND H1M, R4N, L34PT,
4ND TH3Y W3R3 0FF, TH3 N1GHT W1ND H4MM3R1NG 4B0UT
TH31R S1R3N SCR34M 4ND TH31R M1GHTY M3T4L THUND3R!

IT W4S 4 FL4K1NG THR33-ST0R3Y H0US3 IN TH3 4NC13NT
P4RT 0F TH3 CLTY, 4 C3NTURY 0LD 1F IT W4S 4 D4Y, BUT
L1K3 4LL H0US3S IT H4D B33N GLV3N 4 TH1N F1R3PR00F
PL4ST1C SH34TH M4NY Y34RS 4C0, 4ND TH1S PR3S3RV4T1V3
SH3LL S33M3D T0 B3 TH3 ONLY TH1NG H0LD1NG IT IN TH3
SKY.

"H3R3 W3 4R3!"

TH3 3NG1N3 SL4MM3D T0 4 ST0P. B34TTY, ST0N3M4N,
4ND BL4CK R4N UP TH3 S1D3W4LK, SUDD3NLY 0D10US 4ND
F4T IN TH3 PLUMP F1R3PR00F SL1CK3RS. M0NT4G F0LL0-
W3D.

TH3Y CR4SH3D TH3 FR0NT D00R 4ND GR4BB3D 4T 4
W0M4N, TH0UGH SH3 W4S N0T RUNN1NG, SH3 W4S N0T TRY1NG

T0 3SC4P3. SH3 W4S ONLY ST4ND1NG, W34V1NG FR0M S1D3 T0 S1D3, H3R 3Y3S F1X3D UP0N 4 N0TH1NGN3SS 1N TH3 W4LL 4S 1F TH3Y H4D STRUCK H3R 4 T3RR1BL3 BL0W UP0N TH3 H34D. H3R T0NGU3 W4S M0V1NG 1N H3R M0UTH, 4ND H3R 3Y3S S33M3D T0 B3 TRY1NG T0 R3M3MB3R S0M3TH1NG, 4ND TH3N TH3Y R3M3MB3R3D 4ND H3R T0NGU3 M0V3D 4C41N:

“PL4Y TH3 M4N, M4ST3R R1DL3Y; W3 SH4LL TH1S D4Y L1GHT SUCH 4 C4NDL3, BY G0D’S GR4C3, 1N 3NGL4ND, 4S 1 TRUST SH4LL N3V3R B3 PUT 0UT.”

“3N0UGH 0F TH4T!” S41D B34TTY. “WH3R3 4R3 TH3Y?”

H3 SL4PP3D H3R F4C3 W1TH 4M4Z1NG 0BJ3CT1V1TY 4ND R3P34T3D TH3 QU3ST10N. TH3 0LD W0M4N’S 3Y3S C4M3 T0 4 F0CUS UP0N B34TTY. “Y0U KN0W WH3R3 TH3Y 4R3 0R Y0U W0ULDN’T B3 H3R3,” SH3 S41D.

ST0N3M4N H3LD 0UT TH3 T3L3PH0N3 4L4RM C4RD W1TH TH3 C0MPL41NT S1GN3D 1N T3L3PH0N3 DUPL1C4T3 0N TH3 B4CK

“H4V3 R34S0N T0 SUSP3CT 4TT1C; 11 N0. 3LM, C1TY.

— 3. B.”

“TH4T W0ULD B3 MRS. BL4K3, MY N31GHB0R;” S41D TH3 W0M4N, R34D1NG TH3 1N1T14LS.”

“4LL R1GHT, M3N, L3T’S G3T ‘3M!’

N3XT TH1NG TH3Y W3R3 UP 1N MUSTY BL4CKN3SS, SW1NG1NG S1LV3R H4TCH3TS 4T D00RS TH4T W3R3, 4FT3R 4LL, UNL0CK3D, TUMBL1NG THR0UGH L1K3 B0YS 4LL R0LL1-CK 4ND SH0UT. “H3Y!” 4 F0UNT41N 0F B00KS SPR4NG D0WN UP0N M0NT4G 4S H3 CL1MB3D SHUDD3R1NG UP TH3 SH33R ST41R-W3LL. H0W 1NC0NV3N13NT! 4LW4YS B3F0R3 1T H4D B33N L1K3 SNUFF1NG 4 C4NDL3. TH3 P0L1C3 W3NT F1RST 4ND 4DH3S1V3-T4P3D TH3 V1CT1M’S M0UTH 4ND B4ND4G3D H1M 0FF 1NT0 TH31R GL1TT3R1NG B33TL3 C4RS, S0 WH3N Y0U 4RR1V3D Y0U F0UND 4N 3MPTY H0US3. Y0U W3R3N’T HURTL1NG 4NY0N3, Y0U W3R3 HURTL1NG ONLY TH1NGS! 4ND S1NC3 TH1NGS R34LLY C0ULDN’T B3 HURT, S1NC3 TH1NGS F3LT N0TH1NG, 4ND TH1NGS D0N’T SCR34M 0R WH1MP3R, 4S TH1S W0M4N M1GHT B3G1N T0 SCR34M 4ND CRY 0UT, TH3R3 W4S N0TH1NG T0 T34S3 Y0UR C0NSC13NC3 L4T3R. Y0U

W3R3 SIMPLY CL34N1NG UP. J4N1T0R14L W0RK, 3SS3NT14L-
LY. 3V3RYTH1NG T0 ITS PR0P3R PL4C3. QU1CK W1TH TH3
K3R0S3N3! WH0'S G0T 4 M4TCH!

BUT N0W, T0N1GHT, S0M30N3 H4D SL1PP3D. TH1S W0M4N
W4S SP01LL1NG TH3 R1TU4L. TH3 M3N W3R3 M4K1NG T00
MUCH N01S3, LAUGH1NG, J0K1NG T0 C0V3R H3R T3RR1BL3
4CCUS1NG SL3NC3 B3L0W. SH3 M4D3 TH3 3MPTY R00MS
R04R W1TH 4CCUS4T10N 4ND SH4K3 D0WN 4 FLN3 DUST
0F GULT TH4T W4S SUCK3D 1N TH31R N0STR1LS 4S TH3Y
PLUNG3D 4B0UT. IT W4S N31TH3R CR1CK3T N0R C0RR3CT.
M0NT4G F3LT 4N IMM3NS3 1RR1T4T10N. SH3 SH0ULD'N'T B3
H3R3, 0N T0P 0F 3V3RYTH1NG!

B00KS B0MB4RD3D H1S SH0ULD3RS, H1S 4RMS, H1S UP-
TURN3D F4C3. 4 B00K 4L1GHT3D, 4LM0ST 0B3D13NTLY, L1K3
4 WH1T3 P1G30N, 1N H1S H4NDS, W1NGS FLUTT3R1NG. 1N
TH3 D1M, W4V3R1NG L1GHT, 4 P4G3 HUNG 0P3N 4ND IT W4S
L1K3 4 SN0WY F34TH3R, TH3 W0RDS D3LLC4T3LY P41NT3D
TH3R30N. 1N 4LL TH3 RUSH 4ND F3RV0R, M0NT4G H4D 0NLY
4N INST4NT T0 R34D 4 L1N3, BUT IT BL4Z3D 1N H1S M1ND
F0R TH3 N3XT M1NUT3 4S 1F ST4MP3D TH3R3 W1TH F13RY
ST33L. "T1M3 H4S F4LL3N 4SL33P 1N TH3 4FT3RN00N SUN-
SH1N3." H3 DR0PP3D TH3 B00K. IMM3D14T3LY, 4N0TH3R
F3LL 1NT0 H1S 4RMS.

"M0NT4G, UP H3R3!"

M0NT4G'S H4ND CL0S3D L1K3 4 M0UTH, CRUSH3D
TH3 B00K W1TH W1LD D3V0T10N, W1TH 4N 1NS4N1TY 0F
M1NDL3SSN3SS T0 H1S CH3ST. TH3 M3N 4B0V3 W3R3 HURL1NG
SH0V3LFULS 0F M4C4Z1N3S 1NT0 TH3 DUSTY 41R. TH3Y F3LL
L1K3 SL4UGHT3R3D BLRDS 4ND TH3 W0M4N ST00D B3L0W,
L1K3 4 SM4LL G1RL, 4M0NG TH3 B0D13S.

M0NT4G H4D D0N3 N0TH1NG. H1S H4ND H4D D0N3 1T
4LL, H1S H4ND, W1TH 4 BR41N 0F ITS 0WN, W1TH 4 C0N-
SC13NC3 4ND 4 CUR10S1TY 1N 34CH TR3MBL1NG FL1NG3R,
H4D TURN3D TH13F. N0W, IT PLUNG3D TH3 B00K B4CK
UND3R H1S 4RM, PR3SS3D 1T T1GHT T0 SW34T1NG 4RMP1T,
RUSH3D 0UT 3MPTY, W1TH 4 M4G1C14N'S FL0UR1SH! L00K
H3R3! 1NN0C3NT! L00K!

H3 G4Z3D, SH4K3N, 4T TH4T WH1T3 H4ND. H3 H3LD 1T W4Y OUT, 4S 1F H3 W3R3 F4R-S1GHT3D.

H3 H3LD 1T CL0S3, 4S 1F H3 W3R3 BL1ND.

“MONT4G!”

H3 J3RK3D 4B0UT.

“D0N’T ST4ND TH3R3, 1D10T!”

TH3 B00KS L4Y L1K3 GR34T M0UNDS 0F F1SH3S L3FT TO DRY. TH3 M3N D4NC3D 4ND SL1PP3D 4ND F3LL 0V3R TH3M. T1TL3S GL1TT3R3D TH31R C0LD3N 3Y3S, F4LL1NG, C0N3.

“K3R0S3N3!”

TH3Y PUMP3D TH3 C0LD FLU1D FR0M TH3 NUMB3R3D 451 T4NK3 STR4PP3D T0 TH31R SH0ULD3RS. TH3Y C04T3D 34CH B00K, TH3Y PUMP3D R00MS FULL 0F 1T.

TH3Y HURR13D D0WNST41RS, M0NT4G ST4GG3R3D 4FT3R TH3M 1N TH3 K3R0S3N3 FUM3S.

“C0M3 0N, W0M4N!”

TH3 W0M4N KN3LT 4M0NG TH3 B00KS, T0UCH1NG TH3 DR3NCH3D L34TH3R 4ND C4RDB04RD, R34D1NG TH3 GLT T1TL3S W1TH H3R F1NG3RS WH1L3 H3R 3Y3S 4CCUS3D M0NT4G.

“Y0U C4N’T 3V3R H4V3 MY B00KS,” SH3 S41D.

“Y0U KN0W TH3 L4W,” S41D B34TTY. “WH3R3’S Y0UR C0MM0N S3NS3? N0N3 0F TH0S3 B00KS 4GR33 W1TH 34CH 0TH3R. Y0U’V3 B33N L0CK3D UP H3R3 F0R Y34RS W1TH 4 R3GUL4R D4MN3D T0W3R 0F B4B3L. SN4P OUT 0F 1T! TH3 P30PL3 1N TH0S3 B00KS N3V3R L1V3D. C0M3 0N N0W!”

SH3 SH00K H3R H34D.

“TH3 WH0L3 H0US3 1S C01NG UP;” S41D B34TTY,

TH3 M3N W4LK3D CLUM3LY T0 TH3 D00R. TH3Y GL4NC3D B4CK 4T M0NT4G, WH0 ST00D N34R TH3 W0M4N.

“Y0U’R3 N0T L34V1NG H3R H3R3?” H3 PR0T3ST3D.

“SH3 W0N’T C0M3.”

“F0RC3 H3R, TH3N!”

B34TTY R41S3D H1S H4ND 1N WH1CH W4S C0NC34L3D TH3 1GN1T3R. “W3’R3 DU3 B4CK 4T TH3 H0US3. B3S1D3S, TH3S3 F4N4T1CS 4LW4YS TRY SUIC1D3; TH3 P4TT3RN’S F4M1L14R.”

M0NT4G PL4C3D H1S H4ND 0N TH3 W0M4N’S 3LB0W. “Y0U

C4N C0M3 W1TH M3.”

“N0,” SH3 S41D. “TH4NK Y0U, 4NYW4Y.”

“I’M C0UNT1NG T0 T3N,” S41D B34TTY. “0N3. TW0.”

“PL34S3,” S41D M0NT4G.

“G0 0N,” S41D TH3 W0M4N.

“THR33. F0UR.”

“H3R3.” M0NT4G PULL3D 4T TH3 W0M4N.

TH3 W0M4N R3PL13D QU13TLY, “I W4NT T0 ST4Y H3R3”

“F1V3. S1X.”

“YOU C4N ST0P C0UNT1NG,” SH3 S41D. SH3 0P3N3D TH3 F1NG3RS 0F 0N3 H4ND SL1GHTLY 4ND 1N TH3 P4LM 0F TH3 H4ND W4S 4 S1NGL3 SL3ND3R 0BJ3CT.

4N 0RD1N4RY K1TCH3N M4TCH.

TH3 SL1GHT 0F 1T RUSH3D TH3 M3N 0UT 4ND D0WN 4W4Y FR0M TH3 H0US3. C4PT41N B34TTY, K33P1NG H1S D1GN1TY, B4CK3D SL0WLY THR0UGH TH3 FR0NT D00R, H1S P1NK F4C3 BURNT 4ND SH1NY FR0M 4 TH0US4ND F1R3S 4ND N1GHT 3XC1T3M3NTS. G0D, TH0UGHT M0NT4G, H0W TRU3!

4LW4YS 4T N1GHT TH3 4L4RM C0M3S. N3V3R BY D4Y! 1S 1T B3C4US3 TH3 F1R3 1S PR3TT13R BY N1GHT? M0R3 SP3CT4CL3, 4 B3TT3R SH0W? TH3 P1NK F4C3 0F B34TTY N0W SH0W3D TH3 F41NT3ST P4N1C 1N TH3 D00R. TH3 W0M4N’S H4ND TW1TCH3D 0N TH3 S1NGL3 M4TCHST1CK. TH3 FUM3S 0F K3R0S3N3 BL00M3D UP 4B0UT H3R. M0NT4G F3LT TH3 H1DD3N B00K P0UND L1K3 4 H34RT 4C41NST H1S CH3ST.

“G0 0N,” S41D TH3 W0M4N, 4ND M0NT4G F3LT H1MS3LF B4CK 4W4Y 4ND 4W4Y 0UT 0F TH3 D00R, 4FT3R B34TTY, D0WN TH3 ST3PS, 4CR0SS TH3 L4WN, WH3R3 TH3 P4TH 0F K3R0S3N3 L4Y L1K3 TH3 TR4CK 0F S0M3 3V1L SN41L.

0N TH3 FR0NT P0RCH WH3R3 SH3 H4D C0M3 T0 W31GH TH3M QU13TLY W1TH H3R 3Y3S, H3R QU13TN3SS 4 C0ND3-MN4T10N, TH3 W0M4N ST00D M0T10NL3SS.

B34TTY FL1CK3D H1S F1NG3RS T0 SP4RK TH3 K3R0S3N3.

H3 W4S T00 L4T3. M0NT4G G4SP3D.

TH3 W0M4N 0N TH3 P0RCH R34CH3D 0UT W1TH C0NT3MPT F0R TH3M 4LL, 4ND STRUCK TH3 K1TCH3N M4TCH 4C41NST

TH3 R4LLING.

P30PL3 R4N OUT OF H0US3S 4LL D0WN TH3 STR33T.

TH3Y S4ID N0THING ON TH31R W4Y B4CK T0 TH3 FLR3H0US3. N0B0DY L00K3D 4T 4NY0N3 3LS3. M0NT4G S4T IN TH3 FR0NT S34T W1TH B34TTY 4ND BL4CK. TH3Y D1D N0T 3V3N SM0K3 TH31R P1P3S. TH3Y S4T TH3R3 L00K1NG OUT OF TH3 FR0NT OF TH3 GR34T S4L4M4ND3R 4S TH3Y TURN3D 4 C0RN3R 4ND W3NT S1L3NTLY 0N.

“M4ST3R R1DL3Y,” S4ID M0NT4G 4T L4ST.

“WH4T?” S4ID B34TTY.

“SH3 S4ID, ‘M4ST3R R1DL3Y.’ SH3 S4ID S0M3 CR4ZY TH1NG WH3N W3 C4M3 IN TH3 D00R. ‘PL4Y TH3 M4N,’ SH3 S4ID, ‘M4ST3R R1DL3Y.’ S0M3TH1NG, S0M3TH1NG, S0M3TH1NG.”

“W3 SH4LL TH1S D4Y L1GHT SUCH 4 C4NDL3, BY G0D’S GR4C3, IN 3NGL4ND, 4S I TRUST SH4LL N3V3R B3 PUT OUT,” S4ID B34TTY. ST0N3M4N GL4NC3D 0V3R 4T TH3 C4PT41N, 4S D1D M0NT4G, ST4RTL3D.

B34TTY RUBB3D H1S CH1N. “4 M4N N4M3D L4T1M3R S4ID TH4T T0 4 M4N N4M3D N1CH0L4S R1DL3Y, 4S TH3Y W3R3 B31NG BURNT 4L1V3 4T 0XF0RD, F0R H3R3SY, 0N 0CT0B3R 16, 1555.”

M0NT4G 4ND ST0N3M4N W3NT B4CK T0 L00K1NG 4T TH3 STR33T 4S 1T M0V3D UND3R TH3 3NGL1N3 WH33LS.

“I’M FULL OF BL1TS 4ND P13C3S,” S4ID B34TTY. “M0ST FLR3 C4PT41NS H4V3 T0 B3. S0M3T1M3S I SURPR1S3 MYS3LF. W4TCH 1T, ST0N3M4N!”

ST0N3M4N BR4K3D TH3 TRUCK.

“D4MN!” S4ID B34TTY. “Y0U’V3 G0N3 R1GHT BY TH3 C0RN3R WH3R3 W3 TURN F0R TH3 FLR3H0US3.”

“WH0 1S 1T?”

“WH0 W0ULD 1T B3?” S4ID M0NT4G, L34N1NG B4CK 4G41NST TH3 CL0S3D D00R IN TH3 D4RK.

H1S W1F3 S4ID, 4T L4ST, “W3LL, PUT 0N TH3 L1GHT.”

“I D0N’T W4NT TH3 L1GHT.”

"COM3 T0 B3D."

H3 H34RD H3R R0LL IMP4T13NTLY; TH3 B3DSPRINGS SQU34L3D.

"4R3 Y0U DRUNK?" SH3 S41D.

S0 1T W4S TH3 H4ND TH4T ST4RT3D 1T 4LL. H3 F3LT 0N3 H4ND 4ND TH3N TH3 0TH3R W0RK H1S C04T FR33 4ND L3T 1T SLUMP T0 TH3 FL00R. H3 H3LD H1S P4NTS 0UT INT0 4N 4BYSS 4ND L3T TH3M F4LL INT0 D4RKN3SS. H1S H4NDS H4D B33N INF3CT3D, 4ND S00N 1T W0ULD B3 H1S 4RMS. H3 C0ULD F33L TH3 P01S0N W0RK1NG UP H1S WR1STS 4ND INT0 H1S 3LB0WS 4ND H1S SH0ULD3RS, 4ND TH3N TH3 JUMP-0V3R FR0M SH0ULD3R-BL4D3 T0 SH0ULD3R-BL4D3 L1K3 4 SP4RK L34P1NG 4 G4P. H1S H4NDS W3R3 R4V3N0US. 4ND H1S 3Y3S W3R3 B3G1NN1NG T0 F33L HUNG3R, 4S 1F TH3Y MUST L00K 4T S0M3TH1NG, 4NYTH1NG, 3V3RYTH1NG.

H1S W1F3 S41D, "WH4T 4R3 Y0U D01NG?"

H3 B4L4NC3D 1N SP4C3 W1TH TH3 B00K 1N H1S SW34T1-NG C0LD F1NG3RS.

4 M1NUT3 L4T3R SH3 S41D, "W3LL, JUST D0N'T ST4ND TH3R3 1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3 FL00R."

H3 M4D3 4 SM4LL S0UND.

"WH4T?" SH3 4SK3D.

H3 M4D3 M0R3 S0FT S0UNDS. H3 STUMBL3D T0W4RDS TH3 B3D 4ND SH0V3D TH3 B00K CLUMS1LY UND3R TH3 C0LD P1LL0W. H3 F3LL INT0 B3D 4ND H1S W1F3 CR13D 0UT, ST4RTL3D. H3 L4Y F4R 4CR0SS TH3 R00M FR0M H3R, 0N 4 W1NT3R 1SL4ND S3P4R4T3D BY 4N 3MPTY S34. SH3 T4LK3D T0 H1M F0R WH4T S33M3D 4 L0NG WH1L3 4ND SH3 T4LK3D 4B0UT TH1S 4ND SH3 T4LK3D 4B0UT TH4T 4ND 1T W4S 0NLY W0RDS, L1K3 TH3 W0RDS H3 H4D H34RD 0NC3 1N 4 NURS3RY 4T 4 FR13ND'S H0US3, 4 TW0-Y34R-0LD CH1LD BULD1NG W0RD P4TT3RNS, T4LK1NG J4RC0N, M4K1NG PR3TTY S0UNDS 1N TH3 41R. BUT M0NT4G S41D N0TH1NG 4ND 4FT3R 4 L0NG WH1L3 WH3N H3 0NLY M4D3 TH3 SM4LL S0UNDS, H3 F3LT H3R M0V3 1N TH3 R00M 4ND C0M3 T0 H1S B3D 4ND ST4ND 0V3R H1M 4ND PUT H3R H4ND D0WN T0 F33L H1S CH33K. H3 KN3W TH4T WH3N SH3 PULL3D H3R H4ND 4W4Y FR0M H1S

F4C3 1T W4S W3T.

L4T3 IN TH3 N1GHT H3 L00K3D 0V3R 4T M1LDR3D. SH3 W4S 4W4K3. TH3R3 W4S 4 T1NY D4NC3 0F M3L0DY IN TH3 41R, H3R S34SH3LL W4S T4MP3D IN H3R 34R 4G41N 4ND SH3 W4S L1ST3N1NG T0 F4R P30PL3 IN F4R PL4C3S, H3R 3Y3S W1D3 4ND ST4R1NG 4T TH3 F4TH0MS 0F BL4CKN3SS 4B0V3 H3R IN TH3 C31LL1NG.

W4SN'T TH3R3 4N 0LD J0K3 4B0UT TH3 W1F3 WH0 T4LK3D S0 MUCH 0N TH3 T3L3PH0N3 TH4T H3R D3SP3R4T3 HUSB4ND R4N 0UT T0 TH3 N34R3ST ST0R3 4ND T3L3PH0N3D H3R T0 4SK WH4T W4S F0R D1NN3R? W3LL, TH3N, WHY D1DN'T H3 BUY H1MS3LF 4N 4UD10-S34SH3LL BR04DC4ST1NG ST4T10N 4ND T4LK T0 H1S W1F3 L4T3 4T N1GHT, MURMUR, WH1SP3R, SH0UT, SCR34M, Y3LL? BUT WH4T W0ULD H3 WH1SP3R, WH4T W0ULD H3 Y3LL? WH4T C0ULD H3 S4Y?

4ND SUDD3NLY SH3 W4S S0 STR4NG3 H3 C0ULDN'T B3L13V3 H3 KN3W H3R 4T 4LL. H3 W4S IN S0M30N3 3LS3'S H0US3, L1K3 TH0S3 0TH3R J0K3S P30PL3 T0LD 0F TH3 G3NTL3M4N, DRUNK, C0M1NG H0M3 L4T3 4T N1GHT, UNL0CK1NG TH3 WR0NG D00R, 3NT3R1NG 4 WR0NG R00M, 4ND B3DD1NG W1TH 4 STR4NG3R 4ND G3TT1NG UP 34RLY 4ND C01NG T0 W0RK 4ND N31TH3R 0F TH3M TH3 W1S3R.

"M1LL13. . .?" H3 WH1SP3R3D.

"WH4T?"

"I D1DN'T M34N T0 ST4RTL3 Y0U. WH4T I W4NT T0 KN0W 1S . . ."

"W3LL?"

"WH3N D1D W3 M33T? 4ND WH3R3?"

"WH3N D1D W3 M33T F0R WH4T?" SH3 4SK3D.

"I M34N—0R1G1N4LLY."

H3 KN3W SH3 MUST B3 FR0WN1NG IN TH3 D4RK.

H3 CL4R1F13D 1T. "TH3 FLRST T1M3 W3 3V3R M3T, WH3R3 W4S 1T, 4ND WH3N?"

"WHY, 1T W4S 4T—"

SH3 ST0PP3D.

"I D0N'T KN0W," SH3 S41D.

H3 W4S C0LD. "C4N'T Y0U R3M3MB3R?"

"IT'S B33N S0 L0NG."

"0NLY T3N Y34RS, TH4T'S 4LL, 0NLY T3N!"

"D0N'T G3T 3XC1T3D, I'M TRY1NG T0 TH1NK." SH3 LAUGH3D 4N 0DD L1TTL3 LAUGH TH4T W3NT UP 4ND UP. "FUNNY, H0W FUNNY, N0T T0 R3M3MB3R WH3R3 0R WH3N Y0U M3T Y0UR HUSB4ND 'R W1F3."

H3 L4Y M4SS4G1NG H1S 3Y3S, H1S BR0W, 4ND TH3 B4CK 0F H1S N3CK, SLOWLY. H3 H3LD B0TH H4NDS 0V3R H1S 3Y3S 4ND 4PPL13D 4 ST34DY PR3SSUR3 TH3R3 4S 1F T0 CRUSH M3M0RY INT0 PL4C3. 1T W4S SUDD3NLY M0R3 1MP0RT4NT TH4N 4NY 0TH3R TH1NG 1N 4 L1F3-T1M3 TH4T H3 KN3W WH3R3 H3 H4D M3T M1LDR3D.

"1T D03SN'T M4TT3R," SH3 W4S UP 1N TH3 B4THR00M N0W, 4ND H3 H34RD TH3 W4T3R RUNN1NG, 4ND TH3 SW4LL0-W1NG S0UND SH3 M4D3.

"N0, 1 GU3SS N0T," H3 S41D.

H3 TR13D T0 C0UNT H0W M4NY T1M3S SH3 SW4LL0W3D 4ND H3 TH0UGHT 0F TH3 V1S1T FR0M TH3 TW0 Z1NC-0X1D3-F4C3D M3N W1TH TH3 C1G4R3TT3S 1N TH31R STR41GHT-L1N3D M0UTHS 4ND TH3 3L3CTR0N1C-3Y3D SN4K3 W1ND1NG D0WN 1NT0 TH3 L4Y3R UP0N L4Y3R 0F N1GHT 4ND ST0N3 4ND ST4GN4NT SPR1NG W4T3R, 4ND H3 W4NT3D T0 C4LL 0UT T0 H3R, H0W M4NY H4V3 Y0U T4K3N T0N1GHT! TH3 C4PSUL3S! H0W M4NY W1LL Y0U T4K3 L4T3R 4ND N0T KN0W? 4ND S0 0N, 3V3RY H0UR! 0R M4YB3 N0T T0N1GHT, T0M0RR0W N1GHT! 4ND M3 N0T SL33P1NG, T0N1GHT 0R T0M0RR0W N1GHT 0R 4NY N1GHT F0R 4 L0NG WH1L3; N0W TH4T TH1S H4S ST4RT3D. 4ND H3 TH0UGHT 0F H3R LY1NG 0N TH3 B3D W1TH TH3 TW0 T3CHN1C14NS ST4ND1NG STR41GHT 0V3R H3R, N0T B3NT W1TH C0NC3RN, BUT 0NLY ST4ND1NG STR41GHT, 4RMS F0LD3D. 4ND H3 R3M3MB3R3D TH1NK1NG TH3N TH4T 1F SH3 D13D, H3 W4S C3RT41N H3 W0ULDN'T CRY. F0R 1T W0ULD B3 TH3 DY1NG 0F 4N UNKN0WN, 4 STR33T F4C3, 4 N3WSP4P3R 1M4G3, 4ND 1T W4S SUDD3NLY S0 V3RY WR0NG TH4T H3 H4D B3GUN T0 CRY, N0T 4T D34TH BUT 4T TH3 TH0UGHT 0F N0T CRY1NG 4T D34TH, 4 S1LLY 3MPY M4N N34R 4 S1LLY 3MPY

W0M4N, WH1L3 TH3 HUNGRY SN4K3 M4D3 H3R ST1LL M0R3 3MPTY.

H0W D0 Y0U G3T S0 3MPTY? H3 W0ND3R3D. WH0 T4K3S 1T 0UT 0F Y0U? 4ND TH4T 4WFUL FL0W3R TH3 0TH3R D4Y, TH3 D4ND3L10N! 1T H4D SUMM3D UP 3V3RYTH1NG, H4DN'T 1T? "WH4T 4 SH4M3! Y0U'R3 N0T 1N L0V3 W1TH 4NY0N3!" 4ND WHY N0T?

W3LL, W4SN'T TH3R3 4 W4LL B3TW33N H1M 4ND M1LDR3D, WH3N Y0U C4M3 D0WN T0 1T? L1T3R4LLY N0T JUST 0N3, W4LL BUT, S0 F4R, THR33! 4ND 3XP3NS1V3, T00! 4ND TH3 UNCL3S, TH3 4UNTS, TH3 C0US1NS, TH3 N13C3S, TH3 N3PH3WS, TH4T L1V3D 1N TH0S3 W4LLS, TH3 G1B-B3R1NG P4CK 0F TR33-4P3S TH4T S41D N0TH1NG, N0TH1NG, N0TH1NG 4ND S41D 1T L0UD, L0UD, L0UD. H3 H4D T4K3N T0 C4LL1NG TH3M R3L4T1V3S FR0M TH3 V3RY F1RST. "H0W'S UNCL3 L0U1S T0D4Y?" "WH0?" "4ND 4UNT M4UD3?" TH3 M0ST S1GN1F1C4NT M3M0RY H3 H4D 0F M1LDR3D, R34LLY, W4S 0F 4 L1TTL3 G1RL 1N 4 F0R3ST W1TH0UT TR33S (H0W 0DD!) 0R R4TH3R 4 L1TTL3 G1RL L0ST 0N 4 PL4T34U WH3R3 TH3R3 US3D T0 B3 TR33S (Y0U C0ULD F33L TH3 M3M0RY 0F TH31R SH4P3S 4LL 4B0UT) S1TT1NG 1N TH3 C3NTR3 0F TH3 "L1V1NG-R00M." TH3 L1V1NG-R00M; WH4T 4 G00D J0B 0F L4B3LL1NG TH4T W4S N0W. N0 M4TT3R WH3N H3 C4M3 1N, TH3 W4LLS W3R3 4LW4YS T4LK1NG T0 M1LDR3D.

"S0M3TH1NG MUST B3 D0N3!"

"Y3S, S0M3TH1NG MUST B3 D0N3!"

"W3LL, L3T'S N0T ST4ND 4ND T4LK!"

"L3T'S D0 1T!"

"I'M S0 M4D 1 C0ULD SP1T!"

WH4T W4S 1T 4LL 4B0UT? M1LDR3D C0ULDN'T S4Y. WH0 W4S M4D 4T WH0M? M1LDR3D D1DN'T QUIT3 KN0W. WH4T W3R3 TH3Y G01NG T0 D0? W3LL, S41D M1LDR3D, W41T 4R0UND 4ND S33.

H3 H4D W41T3D 4R0UND T0 S33.

4 CR34T THUND3RST0RM 0F S0UND GUSH3D FR0M TH3 W4LLS. MUS1C B0MB4RD3D H1M 4T SUCH 4N 1MM3NS3 V0LUM3 TH4T H1S B0N3S W3R3 4LM0ST SH4K3N FR0M TH31R

T3ND0NS; H3 F3LT H1S J4W V1BR4T3, H1S 3Y3S W0BBL3 IN H1S H34D. H3 W4S 4 V1CT1M 0F C0NCUSS10N. WH3N 1T W4S 4LL 0V3R H3 F3LT L1K3 4 M4N WH0 H4D B33N THROWN FR0M 4 CL1FF, WH1RL3D IN 4 C3NTR1FUG3 4ND SP4T 0UT 0V3R 4 W4T3RF4LL TH4T F3LL 4ND F3LL INT0 3MPT1N3SS 4ND 3MPT1N3SS 4ND N3V3R—QU1T3—T0UCH3D—B0TT0M—N3V3R—N3V3R—QU1T3—N0 N0T QU1T3—T0UCH3D—B0TT0M . . . 4ND Y0U F3LL S0 F4ST Y0U D1DN'T T0UCH TH3 S1D3S 31TH3R . . . N3V3R . . . QU1T3 . . . T0UCH3D . . . 4NY-TH1NG.

TH3 THUND3R F4D3D. TH3 MUS1C D13D.

“TH3R3,” S41D M1LDR3D,

4ND 1T W4S 1ND33D R3M4RK4BL3. S0M3TH1NG H4D H4P-P3N3D. 3V3N TH0UGH TH3 P30PL3 IN TH3 W4LLS 0F TH3 R00M H4D B4R3LY M0V3D, 4ND N0TH1NG H4D R34LLY B33N S3TTL3D, Y0U H4D TH3 1MPR3SS10N TH4T S0M30N3 H4D TURN3D 0N 4 W4SH1NG-M4CH1N3 0R SUCK3D Y0U UP IN 4 GLG4NT1C V4CUUM. Y0U DR0WN3D IN MUS1C 4ND PUR3 C4C0PH0NY. H3 C4M3 0UT 0F TH3 R00M SW34T1NG 4ND 0N TH3 P01NT 0F C0LL4PS3. B3H1ND H1M, M1LDR3D S4T IN H3R CH41R 4ND TH3 V01C3S W3NT 0N 4G41N:

“W3LL, 3V3RYTH1NG W1LL B3 4LL R1GHT N0W,” S41D 4N “4UNT.”

“0H, D0N'T B3 T00 SUR3,” S41D 4 “C0US1N.”

“N0W, D0N'T G3T 4NGRY!”

“WH0'S 4NGRY?”

“Y0U 4R3!”

“1 4M?”

“Y0U'R3 M4D!”

“WHY SH0ULD 1 B3 M4D!”

“B3C4US3!”

“TH4T'S 4LL V3RY W3LL,” CR13D M0NT4G, “BUT WH4T 4R3 TH3Y M4D 4B0UT? WH0 4R3 TH3S3 P30PL3? WH0'S TH4T M4N 4ND WH0'S TH4T W0M4N? 4R3 TH3Y HUSB4ND 4ND W1F3, 4R3 TH3Y D1V0RC3D, 3NG4G3D, WH4T? G00D G0D, N0TH1NG'S C0NN3CT3D UP.”

“TH3Y—” S41D M1LDR3D. “W3LL, TH3Y-TH3Y H4D TH1S

FLIGHT, YOU S33. TH3Y C3RT41NLY FLIGHT 4 L0T. YOU SH0ULD LLST3N. I TH1NK TH3Y'R3 M4RR13D. Y3S, TH3Y'R3 M4RR13D. WHY?"

4ND 1F 1T W4S N0T TH3 THR33 W4LLS S00N T0 B3 F0UR W4LLS 4ND TH3 DR34M C0MPL3T3, TH3N 1T W4S TH3 0P3N C4R 4ND M1LDR3D DR1V1NG 4 HUNDR3D M1L3S 4N H0UR 4CR0SS T0WN, H3 SH0UT1NG 4T H3R 4ND SH3 SH0UT1NG B4CK 4ND B0TH TRY1NG T0 H34R WH4T W4S S41D, BUT H34R1NG 0NLY TH3 SCR34M 0F TH3 C4R. "4T L34ST K33P 1T D0WN T0 TH3 M1N1MUM!" H3 Y3LL3D: "WH4T?" SH3 CR13D. "K33P 1T D0WN T0 FLFTY-FLV3, TH3 M1N1MUM! "H3 SH0UT3D. "TH3 WH4T?" SH3 SHR13K3D. "SP33D!" H3 SH0UT3D. 4ND SH3 PUSH3D 1T UP T0 0N3 HUNDR3D 4ND FLV3 M1L3S 4N H0UR 4ND T0R3 TH3 BR34TH FR0M H1S M0UTH.

WH3N TH3Y ST3PP3D 0UT 0F TH3 C4R, SH3 H4D TH3 S34SH3LLS STUFF3D 1N H3R 34RS.

S1L3NC3. 0NLY TH3 W1ND BLOW1NG S0FTLY.

"M1LDR3D." H3 ST1RR3D 1N B3D.

H3 R34CH3D 0V3R 4ND PULL3D 0N3 0F TH3 T1NY MUS1-C4L 1NS3CTS 0UT 0F H3R 34R. "M1LDR3D. M1LDR3D?"

"Y3S." H3R V01C3 W4S F41NT.

H3 F3LT H3 W4S 0N3 0F TH3 CR34TUR3S 3L3CTR0N1C4LLY 1NS3RT3D B3TW33N TH3 SL0TS 0F TH3 PH0N0-C0L0R W4LLS, SP34K1NG, BUT TH3 SP33CH N0T PL3RC1NG TH3 CRYST4L B4RR13R. H3 C0ULD 0NLY P4NT0M1M3, H0P1NG SH3 W0ULD TURN H1S W4Y 4ND S33 H1M. TH3Y C0ULD N0T T0UCH THROUGh TH3 GLASS.

"M1LDR3D, D0 YOU KN0W TH4T G1RL 1 W4S T3LL1NG YOU 4B0UT?"

"WH4T G1RL?" SH3 W4S 4LM0ST 4SL33P.

"TH3 G1RL N3XT D00R."

"WH4T G1RL N3XT D00R?"

"YOU KN0W, TH3 H1GH-SCH00L G1RL. CL4R1SS3, H3R N4M3 1S."

"OH, Y3S," S41D H1S W1F3.

"1 H4V3N'T S33N H3R F0R 4 F3W D4YS—F0UR D4YS T0 B3 3X4CT. H4V3 YOU S33N H3R?"

"NO."

"I'V3 M34NT T0 T4LK T0 Y0U 4B0UT H3R. STR4NG3."

"OH, I KN0W TH3 0N3 Y0U M34N."

"I TH0UGHT Y0U W0ULD."

"H3R," S41D M1LDR3D IN TH3 D4RK R00M.

"WH4T 4B0UT H3R?" 4SK3D M0NT4G.

"I M34NT T0 T3LL Y0U. F0RC0T. F0RC0T."

"T3LL M3 N0W. WH4T IS IT?"

"I TH1NK SH3'S G0N3."

"G0N3?"

"WH0L3 F4M1LY M0V3D 0UT S0M3WH3R3. BUT SH3'S G0N3 F0R G00D. I TH1NK SH3'S D34D."

"W3 C0ULDN'T B3 T4LK1NG 4B0UT TH3 S4M3 G1RL."

"NO. TH3 S4M3 G1RL. MCCL3LL4N. MCCL3LL4N, RUN 0V3R BY 4 C4R. F0UR D4YS 4G0. I'M N0T SUR3. BUT I TH1NK SH3'S D34D. TH3 F4M1LY M0V3D 0UT 4NYW4Y. I D0N'T KN0W. BUT I TH1NK SH3'S D34D."

"Y0U'R3 N0T SUR3 0F IT!"

"NO, N0T SUR3. PR3TTY SUR3."

"WHY D1DN'T Y0U T3LL M3 S00N3R?"

"F0RC0T."

"F0UR D4YS 4G0!"

"I F0RC0T 4LL 4B0UT IT."

"F0UR D4YS 4G0," H3 S41D, QU13TLY, LY1NG TH3R3.

TH3Y L4Y TH3R3 IN TH3 D4RK R00M N0T M0V1NG, 31TH3R 0F TH3M. "G00D N1GHT," SH3 S41D.

H3 H34RD 4 F41NT RUSTL3. H3R H4NDS M0V3D. TH3 3L3CTR1C TH1MBL3 M0V3D L1K3 4 PR4Y1NG M4NT1S 0N TH3 P1LL0W, T0UCH3D BY H3R H4ND. N0W IT W4S IN H3R 34R 4G41N, HUMM1NG.

H3 L1ST3N3D 4ND H1S W1F3 W4S S1NG1NG UND3R H3R BR34TH.

0UTS1D3 TH3 H0US3, 4 SH4D0W M0V3D, 4N 4UTUMN W1ND R0S3 UP 4ND F4D3D 4W4Y. BUT TH3R3 W4S S0M3TH1NG 3L33 IN TH3 S1L3NC3 TH4T H3 H34RD. IT W4S L1K3 4 BR34TH 3XH4L3D UP0N TH3 W1ND0W. IT W4S L1K3 4 F41NT DR1FT 0F GR33N1SH LUM1N3SC3NT SM0K3, TH3 M0T10N 0F 4 S1NGL3

HUG3 OCT0B3R L34F BLOWING 4CR0SS TH3 L4WN 4ND 4W4Y.

TH3 HOUND, H3 THOUGHT. IT'S OUT TH3R3 TONIGHT. IT'S OUT TH3R3 NOW. IF I OP3N3D TH3 WINDOW . . .

H3 DID NOT OP3N TH3 WINDOW.

H3 H4D CHILLS 4ND F3V3R IN TH3 MORNING.

"YOU CAN'T BE SICK," SAID MILLDR3D.

H3 CLOS3D HIS 3Y3S OV3R TH3 H0TN3SS. "Y3S."

"BUT YOU W3R3 4LL R1GHT L4ST N1GHT."

"NO, I W4SN'T 4LL R1GHT" H3 H34RD TH3 "R3L4T1V3S" SHOUTING IN TH3 P4RLO3R.

MILLDR3D STOOD OV3R HIS B3D, CURIOUSLY. H3 F3LT H3R TH3R3, H3 SAW H3R W1THOUT OP3N1NG HIS 3Y3S, H3R H41R BURNT BY CH3M1C4LS T0 4 BR1TTL3 STR4W, H3R 3Y3S W1TH 4 K1ND OF C4T4R4CT UNS33N BUT SUSP3CT F4R B3H1ND TH3 PUP1LS, TH3 R3DD3N3D P0UTING L1PS, TH3 B0DY 4S TH1N 4S 4 PR4Y1NG M4NT1S FR0M D13T1NG, 4ND H3R FL3SH L1K3 WH1T3 B4C0N. H3 COULD R3M3MB3R H3R N0 0TH3R W4Y.

"WILL YOU BRING M3 4SP1R1N 4ND W4T3R?"

"YOU'V3 G0T T0 G3T UP," SH3 SAID. "IT'S N00N. YOU'V3 SL3PT F1V3 H0URS L4T3R TH4N USU4L."

"WILL YOU TURN TH3 P4RLO3R OFF?" H3 4SK3D.

"TH4T'S MY F4M1LY."

"WILL YOU TURN IT OFF F0R 4 S1CK M4N?"

"I'LL TURN IT DOWN."

SH3 W3NT OUT OF TH3 R00M 4ND DID N0TH1NG T0 TH3 P4RLO3R 4ND C4M3 B4CK. "1S TH4T B3TT3R?"

"TH4NKS."

"TH4T'S MY F4V0R1T3 PR0GR4MM3," SH3 SAID.

"WH4T 4BOUT TH3 4SP1R1N?"

"YOU'V3 N3V3R B33N S1CK B3F0R3." SH3 W3NT 4W4Y 4G41N.

"W3LL, I'M S1CK NOW. I'M N0T G01NG T0 W0RK TON1GHT. C4LL B34TTY F0R M3."

"YOU 4CT3D FUNNY L4ST N1GHT." SH3 R3TURN3D, HUMMING.

"WH3R3'S TH3 4SP1R1N?" H3 CL4NC3D 4T TH3 W4T3R-

GLASS SH3 H4ND3D H1M.

"OH." SH3 W4LK3D T0 TH3 B4THR00M 4G41N. "D1D S0M3TH1NG H4PP3N?"

"4 F1R3, 1s 4LL."

"1 H4D 4 N1C3 3V3N1NG," SH3 S41D, 1N TH3 B4THR00M.

"WH4T D01NG?"

"TH3 P4RL0R."

"WH4T W4S 0N?"

"PR0GR4MM3S."

"WH4T PR0GR4MM3S?"

"S0M3 0F TH3 B3ST 3V3R."

"WH0?"

"OH, Y0U KN0W, TH3 BUNCH."

"Y3S, TH3 BUNCH, TH3 BUNCH, TH3 BUNCH." H3 PR3SS3D 4T TH3 P41N 1N H1S 3Y3S 4ND SUDD3NLY TH3 0D0R 0F K3R0S3N3 M4D3 H1M V0M1T.

M1LDR3D C4M3 1N, HUMMING. SH3 W4S SURPR1S3D. "WHY'D Y0U D0 TH4T?"

H3 L00K3D W1TH D1SM4Y 4T TH3 FL00R. "W3 BURN3D 4N 0LD W0M4N W1TH H3R B00KS."

"1T'S 4 G00D TH1NG TH3 RUG'S W4SH4BL3." SH3 F3TCH3D 4 M0P 4ND W0RK3D 0N 1T. "1 W3NT T0 H3L3N'S L4ST N1GHT."

"COULDN'T Y0U G3T TH3 SH0WS 1N Y0UR 0WN P4RL0R?"

"SUR3, BUT 1T'S N1C3 V1S1T1NG."

SH3 W3NT 0UT 1NTO TH3 P4RL0R. H3 H34RD H3R S1NG1NG.

"M1LDR3D?" H3 C4LL3D.

SH3 R3TURN3D, S1NG1NG, SN4PP1NG H3R F1NG3RS S0FTLY.

"4R3N'T Y0U C01NG T0 4SK M3 4B0UT L4ST N1GHT?" H3 S41D.

"WH4T 4B0UT 1T?"

"W3 BURN3D 4 TH0US4ND B00KS. W3 BURN3D 4 W0M4N."

"W3LL?"

TH3 P4RL0R W4S 3XPL0D1NG W1TH S0UND.

"W3 BURN3D C0P13S 0F D4NT3 4ND SW1FT 4ND M4RCUS

4UR3L1US."

"W4SN'T H3 4 3UR0P34N?"

"S0M3TH1NG L1K3 TH4T."

"W4SN'T H3 4 R4D1C4L?"

"I N3V3R R34D H1M."

"H3 W4S 4 R4D1C4L." M1LDR3D F1DDL3D W1TH TH3 T3L3PH0N3. "Y0U D0N'T 3XP3CT M3 T0 C4LL C4PT41N B34T-TY, D0 Y0U?"

"Y0U MUST!"

"D0N'T SH0UT!"

"I W4SN'T SH0UT1NG." H3 W4S UP 1N B3D, SUDD3NLY, 3NR4G3D 4ND FLUSH3D, SH4K1NG. TH3 P4RL0R R04R3D 1N TH3 H0T 41R. "I C4N'T C4LL H1M. I C4N'T T3LL H1M I'M S1CK."

"WHY?"

B3C4US3 Y0U'R3 4FR41D, H3 TH0UGHT. 4 CH1LD F31GN1NG 1LLN3SS, 4FR41D T0 C4LL B3C4US3 4FT3R 4 M0M3NT'S D1SCUSS10N, TH3 C0NV3RS4T10N W0ULD RUN S0: "Y3S, C4PT41N, I F33L B3TT3R 4LR34DY. I'LL B3 1N 4T T3N 0'CL0CK T0N1GHT."

"Y0U'R3 N0T S1CK," S41D M1LDR3D.

M0NT4G F3LL B4CK 1N B3D. H3 R34CH3D UND3R H1S P1LL0W. TH3 H1DD3N B00K W4S ST1LL TH3R3.

"M1LDR3D, H0W W0ULD 1T B3 1F, W3LL, M4YB3, I QUIT MY J0B 4WH1L3?"

"Y0U W4NT T0 G1V3 UP 3V3RYTH1NG? 4FT3R 4LL TH3S3 Y34RS 0F W0RK1NG, B3C4US3, 0N3 N1GHT, S0M3 W0M4N 4ND H3R B00KS—"

"Y0U SH0ULD H4V3 S33N H3R, M1LL13!"

"SH3'S N0TH1NG T0 M3; SH3 SH0ULDN'T H4V3 H4D B00KS. 1T W4S H3R R3SP0NS1B1L1TY, SH3 SH0ULD H4V3 TH0UGHT 0F TH4T. I H4T3 H3R. SH3'S G0T Y0U G01NG 4ND N3XT TH1NG Y0U KN0W W3'LL B3 0UT, N0 H0US3, N0 J0B, N0TH1NG."

"Y0U W3R3N'T TH3R3, Y0U D1DN'T S33," H3 S41D. "TH3R3 MUST B3 S0M3TH1NG 1N B00KS, TH1NGS W3 C4N'T 1M4G1N3, T0 M4K3 4 W0M4N ST4Y 1N 4 BURN1NG H0US3; TH3R3 MUST B3 S0M3TH1NG TH3R3. Y0U D0N'T ST4Y F0R N0TH1NG."

"SH3 W4S S1MPL3-M1ND3D."

"SH3 W4S 4S R4T10N4L 4S Y0U 4ND 1, M0R3 S0 P3RH4PS, 4ND W3 BURN3D H3R."

"TH4T'S W4T3R UND3R TH3 BR1DG3."

"N0, N0T W4T3R; F1R3. Y0U 3V3R S33N 4 BURN3D H0US3? 1T SM0ULD3RS F0R D4YS. W3LL, TH1S F1R3'LL L4ST M3 TH3 R3ST 0F MY L1F3. G0D! I'V3 B33N TRY1NG T0 PUT 1T 0UT, 1N MY M1ND, 4LL N1GHT. I'M CR4ZY W1TH TRY1NG."

"Y0U SH0ULD H4V3 TH0UGHT 0F TH4T B3F0R3 B3C0M1NG 4 F1R3M4N."

"TH0UGHT!" H3 S41D. "W4S 1 G1V3N 4 CH01C3? MY GR4NDF4TH3R 4ND F4TH3R W3R3 F1R3M3N. 1N MY SL33P, 1 R4N 4FT3R TH3M."

TH3 P4RL0R W4S PL4Y1NG 4 D4NC3 TUN3.

"TH1S 1S TH3 D4Y Y0U G0 0N TH3 34RLY SH1FT," S41D M1LDR3D. "Y0U SH0ULD H4V3 G0N3 TW0 H0URS 4C0. 1 JUST N0T1C3D."

"1T'S N0T JUST TH3 W0M4N TH4T D13D," S41D M0NT4G. "L4ST N1GHT 1 TH0UGHT 4B0UT 4LL TH3 K3R0S3N3 I'V3 US3D 1N TH3 P4ST T3N Y34RS. 4ND 1 TH0UGHT 4B0UT B00KS. 4ND F0R TH3 F1RST T1M3 1 R34L1Z3D TH4T 4 M4N W4S B3H1ND 34CH 0N3 0F TH3 B00KS. 4 M4N H4D T0 TH1NK TH3M UP. 4 M4N H4D T0 T4K3 4 L0NG T1M3 T0 PUT TH3M D0WN 0N P4P3R. 4ND I'D N3V3R 3V3N TH0UGHT TH4T TH0UGHT B3F0R3." H3 G0T 0UT 0F B3D.

"1T T00K S0M3 M4N 4 L1F3T1M3 M4YB3 T0 PUT S0M3 0F H1S TH0UGHTS D0WN, L00K1NG 4R0UND 4T TH3 W0RLD 4ND L1F3, 4ND TH3N 1 C4M3 4L0NG 1N TW0 M1NUT3S 4ND B00M! 1T'S 4LL 0V3R."

"L3T M3 4L0N3," S41D M1LDR3D. "1 D1DN'T D0 4NYTH1NG."

"L3T Y0U 4L0N3! TH4T'S 4LL V3RY W3LL, BUT H0W C4N 1 L34V3 MYS3LF 4L0N3? W3 N33D N0T T0 B3 L3T 4L0N3. W3 N33D T0 B3 R34LLY B0TH3R3D 0NC3 1N 4 WH1L3. H0W L0NG 1S 1T S1NC3 Y0U W3R3 R34LLY B0TH3R3D? 4B0UT S0M3TH1NG 1MP0RT4NT, 4B0UT S0M3TH1NG R34L?"

4ND TH3N H3 SHUT UP, F0R H3 R3M3MB3R3D L4ST W33K

4ND TH3 TW0 WH1T3 ST0N3S ST4R1NG UP 4T TH3 C31LL1NG
4ND TH3 PUMP-SN4K3 W1TH TH3 PR0B1NG 3Y3 4ND TH3 TW0
S04P-F4C3D M3N W1TH TH3 CLC4R3TT3S M0V1NG IN TH31R
M0UTHS WH3N TH3Y T4LK3D. BUT TH4T W4S 4N0TH3R M1L-
DR3D, TH4T W4S 4 M1LDR3D S0 D33P 1NS1D3 TH1S 0N3,
4ND S0 B0TH3R3D, R34LLY B0TH3R3D, TH4T TH3 TW0 W0M3N
H4D N3V3R M3T. H3 TURN3D 4W4Y.

M1LDR3D S41D, "W3LL, N0W Y0U'V3 D0N3 1T. 0UT FR0NT
0F TH3 H0US3. L00K WH0'S H3R3."

"1 D0N'T C4R3."

"TH3R3'S 4 PH03N1X C4R JUST DR1V3N UP 4ND 4 M4N IN
4 BL4CK SH1RT W1TH 4N 0R4NG3 SN4K3 ST1TCH3D 0N H1S
4RM C0M1NG UP TH3 FR0NT W4LK."

"C4PT41N B34UTY?" H3 S41D,

"C4PT41N B34TTY."

M0NT4G D1D N0T M0V3, BUT ST00D L00K1NG 1NT0 TH3
C0LD WH1T3N3SS 0F TH3 W4LL 1MM3D14T3LY B3F0R3 H1M.

"G0 L3T H1M 1N, W1LL Y0U? T3LL H1M I'M S1CK."

"T3LL H1M Y0URS3LF!" SH3 R4N 4 F3W ST3PS TH1S W4Y, 4
F3W ST3PS TH4T, 4ND ST0PP3D, 3Y3S W1D3, WH3N TH3 FR0NT
D00R SP34K3R C4LL3D H3R N4M3, S0FTLY, S0FTLY, MRS.
M0NT4G, MRS. M0NT4G, S0M30N3 H3R3, S0M30N3 H3R3,
MRS. M0NT4G, MRS. M0NT4G, S0M30N3'S H3R3. F4D1NG.

M0NT4G M4D3 SUR3 TH3 B00K W4S W3LL H1DD3N B3H1ND
TH3 P1LL0W, CL1MB3D SLOWLY B4CK 1NT0 B3D, 4RR4NG3D
TH3 C0V3RS 0V3R H1S KN33S 4ND 4CR0SS H1S CH3ST, H4LF-
S1TT1NG, 4ND 4FT3R 4 WH1L3 M1LDR3D M0V3D 4ND W3NT
0UT 0F TH3 R00M 4ND C4PT41N B34TTY STR0LL3D 1N, H1S
H4NDS 1N H1S P0CK3TS.

"SHUT TH3 'R3L4T1V3S' UP," S41D B34TTY, L00K1NG
4R0UND 4T 3V3RYTH1NG 3XC3PT M0NT4G 4ND H1S W1F3.

TH1S T1M3, M1LDR3D R4N. TH3 Y4MM3R1NG V01C3S
ST0PP3D Y3LL1NG 1N TH3 P4RL0R.

C4PT41N B34TTY S4T D0WN 1N TH3 M0ST C0MF0RT4BL3
CH41R W1TH 4 P34C3FUL L00K 0N H1S RUDDY F4C3. H3
T0OK T1M3 T0 PR3P4R3 4ND L1GHT H1S BR4SS P1P3 4ND PUFF
0UT 4 GR34T SM0K3 CL0UD. "JUST TH0UGHT I'D C0M3 BY 4ND

S33 H0W TH3 S1CK M4N 1s."

"H0W'D Y0U GU3SS?"

B34TTY SM1L3D H1S SM1L3 WH1CH SH0W3D TH3 C4NDY P1NKN3SS 0F H1S GUMS 4ND TH3 T1NY C4NDY WH1T3N3SS 0F H1S T33TH. "1'V3 S33N 1T 4LL. Y0U W3R3 G01NG T0 C4LL F0R 4 N1GHT 0FF."

M0NT4G S4T 1N B3D.

"W3LL," S41D B34TTY, "T4K3 TH3 N1GHT 0FF!" H3 3X4M1N3D H1S 3T3RN4L M4TCHB0X, TH3 L1D 0F WH1CH S41D GU4R4NT33D: 0N3 M1LL10N L1GHTS 1N TH1S 1GN1T3R, 4ND B3G4N T0 STR1K3 TH3 CH3M1C4L M4TCH 4BSTR4CT3DLY, BLOW 0UT, STR1K3, BLOW 0UT, STR1K3, SP34K 4 F3W W0RDS, BLOW 0UT. H3 L00K3D 4T TH3 FL4M3. H3 BL3W, H3 L00K3D 4T TH3 SM0K3. "WH3N W1LL Y0U B3 W3LL?"

"T0M0RR0W. TH3 N3XT D4Y M4YB3. F1RST 0F TH3 W33K."

B34TTY PUFF3D H1S P1P3. "3V3RY F1R3M4N, S00N3R 0R L4T3R, H1TS TH1S. TH3Y 0NLY N33D UND3RST4ND1NG, T0 KN0W H0W TH3 WH33LS RUN. N33D T0 KN0W TH3 H1ST0RY 0F 0UR PR0F3SS10N. TH3Y D0N'T F33D 1T T0 R00K13S L1K3 TH3Y US3D T0. D4MN SH4M3." PUFF. "0NLY F1R3 CH13FS R3M3MB3R 1T N0W." PUFF. "1'LL L3T Y0U 1N 0N 1T."

M1LDR3D F1DG3T3D.

B34TTY T00K 4 FULL M1NUT3 T0 S3TTL3 H1MS3LF 1N 4ND TH1NK B4CK F0R WH4T H3 W4NT3D T0 S4Y.

"WH3N D1D 1T 4LL ST4RT, Y0U 4SK, TH1S J0B 0F 0URS, H0W D1D 1T C0M3 4B0UT, WH3R3, WH3N? W3LL, 1'D S4Y 1T R34LLY G0T ST4RT3D 4R0UND 4B0UT 4 TH1NG C4LL3D TH3 C1V1L W4R. 3V3N TH0UGH 0UR RUL3-B00K CL41MS 1T W4S F0UND3D 34RL13R. TH3 F4CT 1S W3 D1DN'T G3T 4L0NG W3LL UNT1L PH0T0GR4PHY C4M3 1NT0 1TS 0WN. TH3N—M0T10N P1CTUR3S 1N TH3 34RLY TW3NT13TH C3NTURY. R4D10. T3L3V1S10N. TH1NGS B3G4N T0 H4V3 M4SS."

M0NT4G S4T 1N B3D, N0T M0V1NG.

"4ND B3C4US3 TH3Y H4D M4SS, TH3Y B3C4M3 S1MPL3R," S41D B34TTY. "0NC3, B00KS 4PP34L3D T0 4 F3W P30PL3, H3R3, TH3R3, 3V3RYWH3R3. TH3Y C0ULD 4FF0RD T0 B3 D1F-

F3R3NT. TH3 W0RLD W4S R00MY. BUT TH3N TH3 W0RLD G0T FULL 0F 3Y3S 4ND 3LB0WS 4ND M0UTHS. D0UBL3, TR1PL3, QU4DRUPL3 P0PUL4T10N. FILMS 4ND R4D10S, M4G4Z1N3S, B00KS L3V3LL3D D0WN T0 4 S0RT 0F P4ST3 PUDD1NG N0RM, D0 Y0U F0LL0W M3?"

"1 TH1NK S0."

B34TTY P33R3D 4T TH3 SM0K3 P4TT3RN H3 H4D PUT 0UT 0N TH3 41R. "P1CTUR3 1T. N1N3T33NTH-C3NTURY M4N W1TH H1S H0RS3S, D0GS, C4RTS, SL0W M0T10N. TH3N, 1N TH3 TW3NT13TH C3NTURY, SP33D UP Y0UR C4M3R4. B00KS CUT SH0RT3R. C0ND3NS4T10NS, D1G3STS. T4BL01DS. 3V3RYTH1NG B01LS D0WN T0 TH3 G4C, TH3 SN4P 3ND1NG."

"SN4P 3ND1NG." M1LDR3D N0DD3D.

"CL4SS1CS CUT T0 F1T F1FT33N-M1NUT3 R4D10 SH0WS, TH3N CUT 4G41N T0 F1LL 4 TW0-M1NUT3 B00K C0LUMN, W1ND1NG UP 4T L4ST 4S 4 T3N- 0R TW3LV3-L1N3 D1CT10N4RY R3SUM3. 1 3X4GG3R4T3, 0F C0URS3. TH3 D1CT10N4R13S W3R3 F0R R3F3R3NC3. BUT M4NY W3R3 TH0S3 WH0S3 S0L3 KN0WL3DG3 0F H4ML3T (Y0U KN0W TH3 T1TL3 C3RT41NLY, M0NT4G; 1T 1S PR0B4BLY 0NLY 4 F41NT RUM0R 0F 4 T1TL3 T0 Y0U, MRS. M0NT4G) WH0S3 S0L3 KN0WL3DG3, 4S 1 S4Y, 0F H4ML3T W4S 4 0N3-P4G3 D1G3ST 1N 4 B00K TH4T CL41M3D: N0W 4T L34ST Y0U C4N R34D 4LL TH3 CL4SS1CS; K33P UP W1TH Y0UR N31GHB0RS. D0 Y0U S33? 0UT 0F TH3 NURS3RY 1NT0 TH3 C0LL3G3 4ND B4CK T0 TH3 NURS3RY; TH3R3'S Y0UR 1NT3LL3CTU4L P4TT3RN F0R TH3 P4ST F1V3 C3NTUR13S 0R M0R3."

M1LDR3D 4R0S3 4ND B3C4N T0 M0V3 4R0UND TH3 R00M, P1CK1NG TH1NGS UP 4ND PUTT1NG TH3M D0WN. B34TTY 1GN0R3D H3R 4ND C0NT1NU3D

"SP33D UP TH3 F1LM, M0NT4G, QU1CK. CL1CK, P1C, L00K, 3Y3, N0W, FL1CK, H3R3, TH3R3, SW1FT, P4C3, UP, D0WN, 1N, 0UT, WHY, H0W, WH0, WH4T, WH3R3, 3H? UH! B4NG! SM4CK! W4LL0P, B1NG, B0NG, B00M! D1G3ST-D1G3STS, D1G3ST-D1G3ST-D1G3STS. P0L1T1CS? 0N3 C0LUMN, TW0 S3NT3NC3S, 4 H34DL1N3! TH3N, 1N M1D-41R, 4LL V4N1-SH3S! WH1RL M4N'S M1ND 4R0UND 4B0UT S0 F4ST UND3R

TH3 PUMPLNG H4NDS OF PUBL1SH3RS, 3XPL01T3RS, BR04DC4-ST3RS, TH4T TH3 C3NTR1FUG3 FL1NGS OFF 4LL UNN3C3SS4RY, T1M3-W4ST1NG TH0UGHT!"

M1LDR3D SM00TH3D TH3 B3DCL0TH3S. M0NT4G F3LT H1S H34RT JUMP 4ND JUMP 4G41N 4S SH3 P4TT3D H1S P1LL0W. R1GHT N0W SH3 W4S PULL1NG 4T H1S SH0ULD3R T0 TRY T0 G3T H1M T0 M0V3 S0 SH3 C0ULD T4K3 TH3 P1LL0W 0UT 4ND FLX 1T N1C3LY 4ND PUT 1T B4CK. 4ND P3RH4PS CRY 0UT 4ND ST4R3 0R S1MPLY R34CH D0WN H3R H4ND 4ND S4Y, "WH4T'S TH1S?" 4ND H0LD UP TH3 H1DD3N B00K W1TH T0UCH1NG INN0C3NC3.

"SCH00L 1s SH0RT3N3D, D1SC1PL1N3 R3L4X3D, PH1L0-S0PH1S, H1ST0R1S, L4NGU4G3S DR0PP3D, 3NGL1SH 4ND SP3LL1NG GR4DU4LLY N3GL3CT3D, F1N4LLY 4LM0ST C0MPL3T3LY 1GN0R3D. L1F3 1s 1MM3D14T3, TH3 J0B C0UNTS, PL34SUR3 L1S 4LL 4B0UT 4FT3R W0RK. WHY L34RN 4NYTH1NG S4V3 PR3SS1NG BUTT0NS, PULL1NG SW1TCH3S, F1TT1NG NUTS 4ND B0LTS?"

"L3T M3 FLX Y0UR P1LL0W," S41D M1LDR3D.

"N0!" WH1SP3R3D M0NT4G,

"TH3 Z1PP3R D1SPL4C3S TH3 BUTT0N 4ND 4 M4N L4CKS JUST TH4T MUCH T1M3 T0 TH1NK WH1L3 DR3SS1NG 4T D4WN, 4 PH1L0S0PH1C4L H0UR, 4ND THUS 4 M3L4NCH0LY H0UR."

M1LDR3D S41D, "H3R3."

"G3T 4W4Y," S41D M0NT4G.

"L1F3 B3C0M3S 0N3 B1G PR4TF4LL, M0NT4G; 3V3RYTH1NG B4NG; B0FF, 4ND W0W!"

"W0W," S41D M1LDR3D, Y4NK1NG 4T TH3 P1LL0W.

"F0R G0D'S S4K3, L3T M3 B3!" CR13D M0NT4G P4SS10N4T3LY.

B34TTY 0P3N3D H1S 3Y3S W1D3.

M1LDR3D'S H4ND H4D FR0Z3N B3H1ND TH3 P1LL0W. H3R FL1NG3RS W3R3 TR4C1NG TH3 B00K'S 0UTL1N3 4ND 4S TH3 SH4P3 B3C4M3 F4M1L14R H3R F4C3 L00K3D SURPR1S3D 4ND TH3N STUNN3D. H3R M0UTH 0P3N3D T0 4SK 4 QU3ST10N . . .

"3MPY TH3 TH34T3RS S4V3 F0R CL0WNS 4ND FURN1SH TH3 R00MS W1TH GLASS W4LLS 4ND PR3TTY C0L0RS RUNN1NG UP

4ND D0WN TH3 W4LLS L1K3 C0NF3TT1 0R BL00D 0R SH3RRY
0R S4UT3RN3. Y0U L1K3 B4S3B4LL, D0N'T Y0U, M0NT4G?"

"B4S3B4LL'S 4 F1N3 G4M3."

N0W B34TTY W4S 4LM0ST 1NV1S1BL3, 4 V01C3 S0M3-
WH3R3 B3H1ND 4 SCR33N 0F SM0K3.

"WH4T'S TH1S?" 4SK3D M1LDR3D, 4LM0ST W1TH D3L1-
GHT. M0NT4G H34V3D B4CK 4G41NST H3R 4RMS. "WH4T'S
TH1S H3R3?"

"S1T D0WN!" M0NT4G SH0UT3D. SH3 JUMP3D 4W4Y, H3R
H4NDS 3MPY. "W3'R3 T4LK1NG!"

B34TTY W3NT 0N 4S 1F N0TH1NG H4D H4PP3N3D. "Y0U
L1K3 B0WL1NG, D0N'T Y0U, M0NT4G?"

"B0WL1NG, Y3S."

"4ND G0LF?"

"G0LF 1S 4 F1N3 G4M3."

"B4SK3TB4LL?"

"4 F1N3 G4M3."

"B1LL14RDS, P00L? F00TB4LL?"

"F1N3 G4M3S, 4LL 0F TH3M."

"M0R3 SP0RTS F0R 3V3RY0N3, GR0UP SP1R1T, FUN, 4ND Y0U
D0N'T H4V3 T0 TH1NK, 3H? 0RG4N1Z3 4ND 0RG4N1Z3 4ND
SUP3R 0RG4N1Z3 SUP3R-SUP3R SP0RTS. M0R3 C4RT00NS 1N
B0OKS. M0R3 P1CTUR3S. TH3 M1ND DR1NKS L3SS 4ND L3SS.
1MP4T13NC3. H1GHW4YS FULL 0F CR0WDS G01NG S0M3-
WH3R3, S0M3WH3R3, S0M3WH3R3, N0WH3R3. TH3 G4S0L1N3
R3FUG33. T0WNS TURN 1NT0 M0T3LS, P30PL3 1N N0M4D1C
SURG3S FR0M PL4C3 T0 PL4C3, F0LL0W1NG TH3 M00N T1D3S,
L1V1NG T0N1GHT 1N TH3 R00M WH3R3 Y0U SL3PT TH1S N00N
4ND 1 TH3 N1GHT B3F0R3."

M1LDR3D W3NT 0UT 0F TH3 R00M 4ND SL4MM3D TH3
D00R. TH3 P4RL0R "4UNTS" B3G4N T0 LAUGH 4T TH3 P4RL0R
"UNCL3S."

"N0W L3T'S T4K3 UP TH3 M1N0R1T13S 1N 0UR CIV1-
L1Z4T10N, SH4LL W3? B1GG3R TH3 P0PUL4T10N, TH3 M0R3
M1N0R1T13S. D0N'T ST3P 0N TH3 T03S 0F TH3 D0G-L0V3RS,
TH3 C4T-L0V3RS, D0CT0RS, L4WY3RS, M3RCH4NTS, CH13FS,
M0RM0NS, B4PT1STS, UN1T4R14NS, S3C0ND-G3N3R4T10N

CH1N3S3, SW3D3S, 1T4L14NS, G3RM4NS, T3X4NS, BR00K-LYN1T3S, 1R1SHM3N, P30PL3 FR0M 0R3C0N 0R M3X1C0. TH3 P30PL3 1N TH1S B00K, TH1S PL4Y, TH1S TV S3R14L 4R3 N0T M34NT T0 R3PR3S3NT 4NY 4CTU4L P41NT3RS, C4RT0GR4PH3RS, M3CH4N1CS 4NYWH3R3. TH3 B1GG3R Y0UR M4RK3T, M0NT4G, TH3 L3SS Y0U H4NDL3 C0NTR0V3RSY, R3M3MB3R TH4T! 4LL TH3 M1N0R M1N0R M1N0R1T13S W1TH TH31R N4V3LS T0 B3 K3PT CL34N. 4UTH0RS, FULL 0F 3V1L TH0UGHTS, L0CK UP Y0UR TYP3WR1T3RS. TH3Y D1D. M4G4Z1N3S B3C4M3 4 N1C3 BL3ND 0F V4N1LL4 T4P10C4. B00KS, S0 TH3 D4MN3D SN0BB1SH CR1T1CS S41D, W3R3 D1SHW4T3R. N0 W0ND3R B00KS ST0PP3D S3LL1NG, TH3 CR1T1CS S41D. BUT TH3 PUB-L1C, KN0W1NG WH4T 1T W4NT3D, SP1NN1NG H4PP1LY, L3T TH3 C0M1C-B00KS SURV1V3. 4ND TH3 THR33-D1M3NS10N4L S3X-M4G4Z1N3S, 0F C0URS3. TH3R3 Y0U H4V3 1T, M0NT4G. 1T D1DN'T C0M3 FR0M TH3 G0V3RNM3NT D0WN. TH3R3 W4S N0 D1CTUM, N0 D3CL4R4T10N, N0 C3NS0RSH1P, T0 ST4RT W1TH, N0! T3CHN0L0GY, M4SS 3XPL01T4T10N, 4ND M1N0-R1TY PR3SSUR3 C4RR13D TH3 TR1CK, TH4NK G0D. T0D4Y, TH4NKS T0 TH3M, Y0U C4N ST4Y H4PPY 4LL TH3 T1M3, Y0U 4R3 4LL0W3D T0 R34D C0M1CS, TH3 C00D 0LD C0NF3SS10NS, 0R TR4D3-J0URN4LS."

"Y3S, BUT WH4T 4B0UT TH3 FLR3M3N, TH3N?" 4SK3D M0NT4G.

"4H." B34TTY L34N3D F0RW4RD 1N TH3 F41NT M1ST 0F SM0K3 FR0M H1S P1P3. "WH4T M0R3 34S1LY 3XPL41N3D 4ND N4TUR4L? W1TH SCH00L TURN1NG 0UT M0R3 RUNN3RS, JUMP3RS, R4C3RS, T1NK3R3RS, GR4BB3RS, SN4TCH3RS, FL13RS, 4ND SW1MM3RS 1NST34D 0F 3X4M1N3RS, CR1T1CS, KN0W3RS, 4ND 1M4G1N4T1V3 CR34T0RS, TH3 W0RD '1NT3LL3CTU4L,' 0F C0URS3, B3C4M3 TH3 SW34R W0RD 1T D3S3RV3D T0 B3. Y0U 4LW4YS DR34D TH3 UNF4M1L14R. SUR3LY Y0U R3M3MB3R TH3 B0Y 1N Y0UR 0WN SCH00L CL4SS WH0 W4S 3XC3PT10N4LLY 'BR1GHT,' D1D M0ST 0F TH3 R3CL1T1NG 4ND 4NSW3R1NG WH1L3 TH3 0TH3RS S4T L1K3 S0 M4NY L34D3N 1D0LS, H4T1NG H1M. 4ND W4SN'T 1T TH1S BR1GHT B0Y Y0U S3L3CT3D F0R B34T1NGS 4ND T0RTUR3S 4FT3R H0URS? 0F

COURS3 IT W4S. W3 MUST 4LL B3 4L1K3. N0T 3V3RY0N3 B0RN FR33 4ND 3QU4L, 4S TH3 C0NST1TUT10N S4YS, BUT 3V3RY0N3 M4D3 3QU4L. 34CH M4N TH3 1M4G3 0F 3V3RY 0TH3R; TH3N 4LL 4R3 H4PPY, F0R TH3R3 4R3 N0 M0UNT41NS T0 M4K3 TH3M C0W3R, T0 JUDG3 TH3MS3LV3S 4G41NST. S0! 4 B00K 1S 4 L04D3D GUN 1N TH3 H0US3 N3XT D00R. BURN 1T. T4K3 TH3 SH0T FR0M TH3 W34P0N. BR34CH M4N'S M1ND. WH0 KN0WS WH0 M1GHT B3 TH3 T4RC3T 0F TH3 W3LL-R34D M4N? M3? 1 W0N'T ST0M4CH TH3M F0R 4 M1NUT3. 4ND S0 WH3N H0US3S W3R3 F1N4LLY F1R3PR00F3D C0MPL3T3LY, 4LL 0V3R TH3 W0RLD (Y0U W3R3 C0RR3CT 1N Y0UR 4SSUMPT10N TH3 0TH3R N1GHT) TH3R3 W4S N0 L0NG3R N33D 0F F1R3M3N F0R TH3 0LD PURP0S3S. TH3Y W3R3 GLV3N TH3 N3W J0B, 4S CUST0D14NS 0F 0UR P34C3 0F M1ND, TH3 F0CUS 0F 0UR UN-D3RST4ND4BL3 4ND R1GHTFUL DR34D 0F B31NG 1NF3R10R; 0FF1C14L C3NS0RS, JUDG3S, 4ND 3X3CUT0RS. TH4T'S Y0U, M0NT4G, 4ND TH4T'S M3."

TH3 D00R T0 TH3 P4RL0R 0P3N3D 4ND M1LDR3D ST00D TH3R3 L00K1NG 1N 4T TH3M, L00K1NG 4T B34TTY 4ND TH3N 4T M0NT4G. B3H1ND H3R TH3 W4LLS 0F TH3 R00M W3R3 FL00D3D W1TH GR33N 4ND Y3LL0W 4ND 0R4NG3 F1R3W0RKS S1ZZL1NG 4ND BURST1NG T0 S0M3 MUS1C C0MP0S3D 4LM0ST C0MPL3T3LY 0F TR4P DRUMS, T0M-T0MS, 4ND CYMB4LS. H3R M0UTH M0V3D 4ND SH3 W4S S4Y1NG S0M3TH1NG BUT TH3 S0UND C0V3R3D 1T.

B34TTY KN0CK3D H1S P1P3 1N T0 TH3 P4LM 0F H1S P1NK H4ND, STUd13D TH3 4SH3S 4S 1F TH3Y W3R3 4 SYMB0L T0 B3 D14GN0S3D 4ND S34RCH3D F0R M34N1NG.

"Y0U MUST UNd3RST4ND TH4T 0UR C1V1L1Z4T10N 1S S0 V4ST TH4T W3 C4N'T H4V3 0UR M1N0R1T13S UPS3T 4ND ST1RR3D. 4SK Y0URS3LF, WH4T D0 W3 W4NT 1N TH1S C0UNTRY, 4B0V3 4LL? P30PL3 W4NT T0 B3 H4PPY, 1SN'T TH4T R1GHT? H4V3N'T Y0U H34RD 1T 4LL Y0UR L1F3? 1 W4NT T0 B3 H4PPY, P30PL3 S4Y. W3LL, 4R3N'T TH3Y? D0N'T W3 K33P TH3M M0V1NG, D0N'T W3 GLV3 TH3M FUN? TH4T'S 4LL W3 L1V3 F0R, 1SN'T 1T? F0R PL34SUR3, F0R T1T1LL4T10N? 4ND Y0U MUST 4DM1T 0UR CULTUR3 PR0V1D3S PL3NTY 0F TH3S3."

"Y3s."

MONT4G C0ULD L1P-R34D WH4T M1LDR3D W4S S4Y1NG
IN TH3 D00RW4Y. H3 TR13D N0T T0 L00K 4T H3R M0UTH,
B3C4US3 TH3N B34TTY M1GHT TURN 4ND R34D WH4T W4S
TH3R3, T00.

"C0L0R3D P30PL3 D0N'T L1K3 L1TTL3 BL4CK S4MB0.
BURN 1T. WH1T3 P30PL3 D0N'T F33L C00D 4B0UT UNCL3
T0M'S C4B1N. BURN 1T. S0M30N3'S WR1TT3N 4 B00K 0N
T0B4CC0 4ND C4NC3R 0F TH3 LUNGS? TH3 C1G4R3TT3 P30PL3
4R3 W33P1NG? BURN TH3 B00K. S3R3N1TY, M0NT4G. P34C3,
M0NT4G. T4K3 Y0UR FL1GHT 0UTS1D3. B3TT3R Y3T, 1NT0
TH3 1NC1N3R4T0R. FUN3R4LS 4R3 UNH4PPY 4ND P4G4N?
3L1M1N4T3 TH3M, T00. F1V3 M1NUT3S 4FT3R 4 P3RS0N 1S
D34D H3'S 0N H1S W4Y T0 TH3 B1G FLU3, TH3 1NC1N3-
R4T0RS S3RV1C3D BY H3L1C0PT3RS 4LL 0V3R TH3 C0UNTRY.
T3N M1NUT3S 4FT3R D34TH 4 M4N'S 4 SP3CK 0F BL4CK DUST.
L3T'S N0T QU1BBL3 0V3R 1ND1V1DU4LS W1TH M3M0R14MS.
F0RG3T TH3M. BURN TH3M 4LL, BURN 3V3RYTH1NG. F1R3 1S
BR1GHT 4ND F1R3 1S CL34N."

TH3 F1R3W0RKS D13D 1N TH3 P4RL0R B3H1ND M1LDR3D.
SH3 H4D ST0PP3D T4LK1NG 4T TH3 S4M3 T1M3; 4 M1R4CU-
L0US C01NC1D3NC3. M0NT4G H3LD H1S BR34TH.

"TH3R3 W4S 4 G1RL N3XT D00R," H3 S41D, SLOWLY.
"SH3'S G0N3 N0W, 1 TH1NK, D34D. 1 C4N'T 3V3N R3M3MB3R
H3R F4C3. BUT SH3 W4S D1FF3R3NT. H0W—H0W D1D SH3
H4PP3N?"

B34TTY SM1L3D. "H3R3 0R TH3R3, TH4T'S B0UND T0
0CCUR. CL4R1SS3 MCCL3LL4N? W3'V3 4 R3C0RD 0N H3R
F4M1LY. W3'V3 W4TCH3D TH3M C4R3FULLY. H3R3D1TY
4ND 3NV1R0NM3NT 4R3 FUNNY TH1NGS. Y0U C4N'T R1D
Y0URS3LV3S 0F 4LL TH3 0DD DUCKS 1N JUST 4 F3W Y34RS.
TH3 H0M3 3NV1R0NM3NT C4N UND0 4 L0T Y0U TRY T0 D0
4T SCH00L. TH4T'S WHY W3'V3 L0W3R3D TH3 K1ND3RG4RT3N
4G3 Y34R 4FT3R Y34R UNT1L N0W W3'R3 4LM0ST SN4TCH1NG
TH3M FR0M TH3 CR4DL3. W3 H4D S0M3 F4LS3 4L4RMS 0N
TH3 MCCL3LL4NS, WH3N TH3Y L1V3D 1N CH1C4G0. N3V3R
F0UND 4 B00K. UNCL3 H4D 4 M1X3D R3C0RD; 4NT1-S0C14L.

TH3 GIRL? SH3 W4S 4 TIM3 BOMB. TH3 F4MILLY H4D B33N F33DING H3R SUBCONSCIOUS, I'M SUR3, FROM WH4T I S4W OF H3R SCH00L R3C0RD. SH3 DIDN'T W4NT T0 KN0W H0W 4 THING W4S D0N3, BUT WHY. TH4T C4N B3 3MB4RR4SSING. YOU 4SK WHY T0 4 LOT OF THINGS 4ND YOU WIND UP V3RY UNH4PPY IND33D, IF YOU K33P 4T IT. TH3 P00R GIRL'S B3T-T3R OFF D34D."

"Y3S, D34D."

"LUCKILY, QU33R 0N3S L1K3 H3R D0N'T H4PP3N, 0FT3N. W3 KN0W H0W T0 N1P M0ST OF TH3M IN TH3 BUD, 34RLY. YOU C4N'T BULLD 4 H0US3 WITH0UT N4ILS 4ND W00D. IF YOU D0N'T W4NT 4 H0US3 BULLT, H1D3 TH3 N4ILS 4ND W00D. IF YOU D0N'T W4NT 4 M4N UNH4PPY P0LLITIC4LLY, D0N'T GLV3 HIM TW0 S1D3S T0 4 QU3ST10N T0 W0RRY HIM; GLV3 HIM 0N3. B3TT3R Y3T, GLV3 HIM N0N3. L3T HIM F0RG3T TH3R3 IS SUCH 4 THING 4S W4R. IF TH3 C0V3RN-M3NT IS IN3FF1C13NT, T0P-H34VY, 4ND T4X-M4D, B3TT3R IT B3 4LL TH0S3 TH4N TH4T P30PL3 W0RRY 0V3R IT. P34C3, M0NT4G. GLV3 TH3 P30PL3 C0NT3STS TH3Y W1N BY R3M3-MB3R1NG TH3 W0RDS T0 M0R3 P0PUL4R S0NGS 0R TH3 N4M3S OF ST4T3 C4PLT4LS 0R H0W MUCH C0RN 10W4 GR3W L4ST Y34R. CR4M TH3M FULL OF N0NC0MBUST1BL3 D4T4, CH0CK TH3M S0 D4MN3D FULL OF 'F4CTS' TH3Y F33L STUFF3D, BUT 4BS0LUT3LY 'BRILLI4NT' WITH INF0RM4T10N. TH3N TH3Y'LL F33L TH3Y'R3 TH1NK1NG, TH3Y'LL G3T 4 S3NS3 OF M0T10N WITH0UT M0V1NG. 4ND TH3Y'LL B3 H4PPY, B3C4US3 F4CTS OF TH4T S0RT D0N'T CH4NG3. D0N'T GLV3 TH3M 4NY SL1P-P3RY STUFF L1K3 PH1L0S0PHY 0R S0C10L0GY T0 T13 THINGS UP WITH. TH4T W4Y L13S M3L4NCH0LY. 4NY M4N WH0 C4N T4K3 4 TV W4LL 4P4RT 4ND PUT IT B4CK T0G3TH3R 4G41N, 4ND M0ST M3N C4N N0W4D4YS, IS H4PP13R TH4N 4NY M4N WH0 TR13S T0 SL1D3-RUL3, M34SUR3, 4ND 3QU4T3 TH3 UN1V3RS3, WH1CH JUST W0N'T B3 M34SUR3D 0R 3QU4T3D WITH0UT M4K1NG M4N F33L B3ST14L 4ND L0N3LY. I KN0W, I'V3 TR13D IT; T0 H3LL WITH IT. S0 BR1NG 0N YOUR CLUBS 4ND P4RT13S, YOUR 4CR0B4TS 4ND M4GL14NS, YOUR D4R3D3V1LS, J3T C4RS, M0T0RCYCL3 H3LLC0PT3RS, YOUR S3X

4ND H3R01N, M0R3 0F 3V3RYTH1NG T0 D0 W1TH 4UT0M4T1C R3FL3X. 1F TH3 DR4M4 1S B4D, 1F TH3 F1LM S4YS N0TH1NG, 1F TH3 PL4Y 1S H0LL0W, ST1NG M3 W1TH TH3 TH3R3M1N, L0UDLY. 1'LL TH1NK 1'M R3SP0ND1NG T0 TH3 PL4Y, WH3N 1T'S 0NLY 4 T4CT1L3 R34CT10N T0 V1BR4T10N. BUT 1 D0N'T C4R3. 1 JUST L1K3 S0L1D 3NT3RT41NM3NT."

B34TTY C0T UP. "1 MUST B3 C01NG. L3CTUR3'S 0V3R. 1 H0P3 1'V3 CL4R1F13D TH1NGS. TH3 1MP0RT4NT TH1NG F0R Y0U T0 R3M3MB3R, M0NT4G, 1S W3'R3 TH3 H4PP1N3SS B0YS, TH3 D1X13 DU0, Y0U 4ND 1 4ND TH3 0TH3RS. W3 ST4ND 4G41NST TH3 SM4LL T1D3 0F TH0S3 WH0 W4NT T0 M4K3 3V3RY0N3 UNH4PPY W1TH C0NFL1CT1NG TH30RY 4ND TH0UGHT. W3 H4V3 0UR F1NG3RS IN TH3 DYK3. H0LD ST34DY. D0N'T L3T TH3 T0RR3NT 0F M3L4NCH0LY 4ND DR34R PH1L0S0PHY DR0WN 0UR W0RLD. W3 D3P3ND 0N Y0U. 1 D0N'T TH1NK Y0U R34L1Z3 H0W 1MP0RT4NT Y0U 4R3, W3 4R3, T0 0UR H4PPY W0RLD 4S 1T ST4NDS N0W."

B34TTY SH00K M0NT4G'S L1MP H4ND. M0NT4G ST1LL S4T, 4S 1F TH3 H0US3 W3R3 C0LL4PS1NG 4B0UT H1M 4ND H3 C0ULD N0T M0V3, IN TH3 B3D. M1LDR3D H4D V4N1SH3D FR0M TH3 D00R.

"0N3 L4ST TH1NG," S41D B34TTY. "4T L34ST 0NC3 1N H1S C4R33R, 3V3RY F1R3M4N G3TS 4N 1TCH. WH4T D0 TH3 B00KS S4Y, H3 W0ND3RS. 0H, T0 SCR4TCH TH4T 1TCH, 3H? W3LL, M0NT4G, T4K3 MY W0RD F0R 1T, 1'V3 H4D T0 R34D 4 F3W IN MY T1M3, T0 KN0W WH4T 1T W4S 4B0UT, 4ND TH3 B00KS S4Y N0TH1NG! N0TH1NG Y0U C4N T34CH 0R B3L13V3. TH3Y'R3 4B0UT N0N3X1ST3NT P30PL3, F1GM3NTS 0F 1M4G1N4T10N, 1F TH3Y'R3 F1CT10N. 4ND 1F TH3Y'R3 N0NF1CT10N, 1T'S W0RS3, 0N3 PR0F3SS0R C4LL1NG 4N0TH3R 4N 1D10T, 0N3 PH1L0S0PH3R SCR34M1NG D0WN 4N0TH3R'S CULL3T. 4LL 0F TH3M RUNN1NG 4B0UT, PUTT1NG 0UT TH3 ST4RS 4ND 3XT1-NGU1SH1NG TH3 SUN. Y0U C0M3 4W4Y L0ST."

"W3LL, TH3N, WH4T 1F 4 F1R3M4N 4CC1D3NT4LLY, R34L-
LY N0T, 1NT3ND1NG 4NYTH1NG, T4K3S 4 B00K H0M3 W1TH
H1M?"

M0NT4G TW1TCH3D. TH3 0P3N D00R L00K3D 4T H1M

W1TH 1TS GR34T V4C4NT 3Y3.

"4 N4TUR4L 3RR0R. CUR10S1TY 4L0N3," S41D B34TTY.
 "W3 D0N'T G3T 0V3R4NX10US 0R M4D. W3 L3T TH3 F1R3M4N
 K33P TH3 B00K TW3NTY-F0UR H0URS. 1F H3 H4SN'T BURN3D
 1T BY TH3N, W3 S1MPLY C0M3 4ND BURN 1T F0R H1M."

"0F C0URS3." M0NT4G'S M0UTH W4S DRY.

"W3LL, M0NT4G. W1LL Y0U T4K3 4N0TH3R, L4T3R SH1FT,
 T0D4Y? W1LL W3 S33 Y0U T0N1GHT P3RH4PS?"

"1 D0N'T KN0W," S41D M0NT4G.

"WH4T?" B34TTY L00K3D F41NTLY SURPR1S3D.

M0NT4G SHUT H1S 3Y3S. "1'LL B3 1N L4T3R. M4YB3."

"W3'D C3RT41NLY M1SS Y0U 1F Y0U D1DN'T SH0W," S41D
 B34TTY, PUTT1NG H1S P1P3 1N H1S P0CK3T TH0UGHTFULLY.

1'LL N3V3R C0M3 1N 4G41N, TH0UGHT M0NT4G.

"G3T W3LL 4ND K33P W3LL," S41D B34TTY.

H3 TURN3D 4ND W3NT 0UT THROU3H TH3 0P3N D00R.

M0NT4G W4TCH3D THROU3H TH3 W1ND0W 4S B34TTY
 DR0V3 4W4Y 1N H1S GL34M1NG Y3LL0W-FL4M3-C0L0R3D
 B33TL3 W1TH TH3 BL4CK, CH4R-C0L0R3D T1R3S.

4CR0SS TH3 STR33T 4ND D0WN TH3 W4Y TH3 0TH3R H0US3S
 ST00D W1TH TH31R FL4T FR0NTS. WH4T W4S 1T CL4R1SS3
 H4D S41D 0N3 4FT3RN00N? "N0 FR0NT P0RCH3S. MY UN-
 CL3 S4YS TH3R3 US3D T0 B3 FR0NT P0RCH3S. 4ND P30PL3
 S4T TH3R3 S0M3T1M3S 4T N1GHT, T4LK1NG WH3N TH3Y
 W4NT3D T0 T4LK, R0CK1NG, 4ND N0T T4LK1NG WH3N TH3Y
 D1DN'T W4NT T0 T4LK. S0M3T1M3S TH3Y JUST S4T TH3R3
 4ND TH0UGHT 4B0UT TH1NGS, TURN3D TH1NGS 0V3R. MY UN-
 CL3 S4YS TH3 4RCH1T3CTS G0T R1D 0F TH3 FR0NT P0RCH3S
 B3C4US3 TH3Y D1DN'T L00K W3LL. BUT MY UNCL3 S4YS TH4T
 W4S M3R3LY R4T10N4L1Z1NG 1T; TH3 R34L R34S0N, H1DD3N
 UND3RN34TH, M1GHT B3 TH3Y D1DN'T W4NT P30PL3 S1TT1-
 NG L1K3 TH4T, D01NG N0TH1NG, R0CK1NG, T4LK1NG; TH4T
 W4S TH3 WR0NG K1ND 0F S0C14L L1F3. P30PL3 T4LK3D
 T00 MUCH. 4ND TH3Y H4D T1M3 T0 TH1NK. S0 TH3Y R4N
 0FF W1TH TH3 P0RCH3S. 4ND TH3 G4RD3NS, T00. N0T M4NY
 G4RD3NS 4NY M0R3 T0 S1T 4R0UND 1N. 4ND L00K 4T TH3

FURN1TUR3. NO R0CK1NG-CH41RS 4NY M0R3. TH3Y'R3 T00 C0MF0RT4BL3. G3T P30PL3 UP 4ND RUNN1NG 4R0UND. MY UNCL3 S4YS . . . 4ND . . . MY UNCL3 . . . 4ND . . . MY UNCL3 . . .” H3R V01C3 F4D3D.

M0NT4G TURN3D 4ND L00K3D 4T H1S W1F3, WH0 S4T 1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3 P4RL0R T4LK1NG T0 4N 4NN0UNC3R, WH0 1N TURN W4S T4LK1NG T0 H3R. “Mrs. M0NT4G,” H3 W4S S4Y1NG. TH1S, TH4T 4ND TH3 0TH3R. “Mrs. M0NT4G—” S0M3TH1NG 3LS3 4ND ST1LL 4N0TH3R. TH3 C0NV3R-T3R 4TT4CHM3NT, WH1CH H4D C0ST TH3M 0N3 HUNDR3D D0LL4RS, 4UT0M4T1C4LLY SUPPL13D H3R N4M3 WH3N3V3R TH3 4NN0UNC3R 4DDR3SS3D H1S 4N0NYM0US 4UD13NC3, L34V1NG 4 BL4NK WH3R3 TH3 PR0P3R SYLL4BL3S C0ULD B3 F1LL3D 1N. 4 SP3C14L SP0T-W4V3X-SCR4MBL3R 4LS0 C4US3D H1S T3L3V1S3D 1M4G3, 1N TH3 4R34 1MM3D14T3LY 4B0UT H1S L1PS, T0 M0UTH TH3 V0W3LS 4ND C0NS0N4NTS B34UT1-FULLY. H3 W4S 4 FR13ND, N0 D0UBT 0F 1T, 4 C00D FR13ND. “Mrs. M0NT4G—N0W L00K R1GHT H3R3.”

H3R H34D TURN3D. TH0UGH SH3 QUIT3 0BV10USLY W4S N0T L1ST3N1NG.

M0NT4G S41D, “1T’S 0NLY 4 ST3P FR0M N0T G01NG T0 W0RK T0D4Y T0 N0T W0RK1NG T0M0RR0W, T0 N0T W0RK1NG 4T TH3 F1R3H0US3 3V3R 4G41N.”,

“YOU 4R3 G01NG T0 W0RK T0N1GHT, TH0UGH, 4R3N’T YOU?” S41D M1LDR3D.

“1 H4V3N’T D3C1D3D. R1GHT N0W 1’V3 G0T 4N 4WFUL F33L1NG 1 W4NT T0 SM4SH TH1NGS 4ND K1LL TH1NGS.”

“G0 T4K3 TH3 B33TL3.”

“N0 TH4NKS.”

“TH3 K3YS T0 TH3 B33TL3 4R3 0N TH3 N1GHT T4BL3. 1 4LW4YS L1K3 T0 DR1V3 F4ST WH3N 1 F33L TH4T W4Y. YOU G3T 1T UP 4R0UND N1N3TY-F1V3 4ND YOU F33L W0ND3RFUL. S0M3T1M3S 1 DR1V3 4LL N1GHT 4ND C0M3 B4CK 4ND YOU D0N’T KN0W 1T. 1T’S FUN 0UT 1N TH3 C0UNTRY. YOU H1T R4BB1TS, S0M3T1M3S YOU H1T D0GS. G0 T4K3 TH3 B33TL3.”

“N0, 1 D0N’T W4NT T0, TH1S T1M3. 1 W4NT T0 H0LD 0N

T0 TH1S FUNNY TH1NG. G0D, 1T'S C0TT3N B1G 0N M3. 1 D0N'T KN0W WH4T 1T 1S. 1'M S0 D4MN3D UNH4PPY, 1'M S0 M4D, 4ND 1 D0N'T KN0W WHY 1 F33L L1K3 1'M PUTT1NG 0N W31GHT. 1 F33L F4T. 1 F33L L1K3 1'V3 B33N S4V1NG UP 4 L0T 0F TH1NGS, 4ND D0N'T KN0W WH4T. 1 M1GHT 3V3N ST4RT R34D1NG B00KS."

"TH3Y'D PUT Y0U 1N J41L, W0ULDN'T TH3Y?" SH3 L00K3D 4T H1M 4S 1F H3 W3R3 B3H1ND TH3 GL4SS W4LL.

H3 B3G4N T0 PUT 0N H1S CL0TH3S, M0V1NG R3STL3SSLY 4B0UT TH3 B3DR00M. "Y3S, 4ND 1T M1GHT B3 4 C00D 1D34. B3F0R3 1 HURT S0M30N3. D1D Y0U H34R B34TTY? D1D Y0U L1ST3N T0 H1M? H3 KN0WS 4LL TH3 4NSW3RS. H3'S R1GHT. H4PP1N3SS 1S 1MP0RT4NT. FUN 1S 3V3RYTH1NG. 4ND Y3T 1 K3PT S1TT1NG TH3R3 S4Y1NG T0 MYS3LF, 1'M N0T H4PPY, 1'M N0T H4PPY."

"1 4M." M1LDR3D'S M0UTH B34M3D. "4ND PR0UD 0F 1T."

"1'M G01NG T0 D0 S0M3TH1NG," S41D M0NT4G. "1 D0N'T 3V3N KN0W WH4T Y3T, BUT 1'M G01NG T0 D0 S0M3TH1NG B1G."

"1'M T1R3D 0F L1ST3N1NG T0 TH1S JUNK," S41D M1LDR3D, TURN1NG FR0M H1M T0 TH3 4NN0UNC3R 4G41N

M0NT4G T0UCH3D TH3 V0LUM3 C0NTR0L 1N TH3 W4LL 4ND TH3 4NN0UNC3R W4S SP33CHL3SS.

"M1LL13?" H3 P4US3D. "TH1S 1S Y0UR H0US3 4S W3LL 4S M1N3. 1 F33L 1T'S 0NLY F41R TH4T 1 T3LL Y0U S0M3TH1NG N0W. 1 SH0ULD H4V3 T0LD Y0U B3F0R3, BUT 1 W4SN'T 3V3N 4DM1TT1NG 1T T0 MYS3LF. 1 H4V3 S0M3TH1NG 1 W4NT Y0U T0 S33, S0M3TH1NG 1'V3 PUT 4W4Y 4ND H1D DURING TH3 P4ST Y34R, N0W 4ND 4G41N, 0NC3 1N 4 WH1L3, 1 D1DN'T KN0W WHY, BUT 1 D1D 1T 4ND 1 N3V3R T0LD Y0U."

H3 T0OK H0LD 0F 4 STR41GHT-B4CK3D CH41R 4ND M0V3D 1T SLOWLY 4ND ST34D1LY 1NTO TH3 H4LL N34R TH3 FR0NT D00R 4ND CL1MB3D UP 0N 1T 4ND ST00D F0R 4 M0M3NT L1K3 4 ST4TU3 0N 4 P3D3ST4L, H1S W1F3 ST4ND1NG UND3R H1M, W41T1NG. TH3N H3 R34CH3D UP 4ND PULL3D B4CK TH3 GR1LL3 0F TH3 41R-C0ND1T10N1NG SYST3M 4ND R34CH3D F4R B4CK 1NS1D3 T0 TH3 R1GHT 4ND M0V3D ST1LL 4N0TH3R

SLIDING SH33T OF M3T4L 4ND T00K OUT 4 B00K. W1TH0UT L00K1NG 4T 1T H3 DR0PP3D 1T T0 TH3 FL00R. H3 PUT H1S H4ND B4CK UP 4ND T00K OUT TW0 B00KS 4ND M0V3D H1S H4ND D0WN 4ND DR0PP3D TH3 TW0 B00KS T0 TH3 FL00R. H3 K3PT M0V1NG H1S H4ND 4ND DR0PP1NG B00KS, SM4LL 0N3S, F41RLY L4RG3 0N3S, Y3LL0W, R3D, GR33N 0N3S. WH3N H3 W4S D0N3 H3 L00K3D D0WN UP0N S0M3 TW3NTY B00KS LY1NG 4T H1S W1F3'S F33T.

"I'M S0RRY," H3 S41D. "I D1DN'T R34LLY TH1NK. BUT N0W 1T L00KS 4S 1F W3'R3 1N TH1S T0C3TH3R."

M1LDR3D B4CK3D 4W4Y 4S 1F SH3 W3R3 SUDD3NLY C0NFR0NT3D BY 4 P4CK 0F M1C3 TH4T H4D C0M3 UP 0UT 0F TH3 FL00R. H3 C0ULD H34R H3R BR34TH1NG R4P1DLY 4ND H3R F4C3 W4S P4L3D 0UT 4ND H3R 3Y3S W3R3 F4ST3N3D W1D3. SH3 S41D H1S N4M3 0V3R, TW1C3, THR33 T1M3S. TH3N M04N1NG, SH3 R4N F0RW4RD, S31Z3D 4 B00K 4ND R4N T0W4RD TH3 K1TCH3N 1NC1N3R4T0R.

H3 C4UGHT H3R, SHR13K1NG. H3 H3LD H3R 4ND SH3 TR13D T0 FL1GHT 4W4Y FR0M H1M, SCR4TCH1NG.

"NO, M1LL13, N0! W41T! ST0P 1T, W1LL Y0U? Y0U D0N'T KN0W . . . ST0P 1T!" H3 SL4PP3D H3R F4C3, H3 GR4BB3D H3R 4G41N 4ND SH00K H3R.

SH3 S41D H1S N4M3 4ND B3G4N T0 CRY.

"M1LL13!" H3 S41D. "L1ST3N. G1V3 M3 4 S3C0ND, W1LL Y0U? W3 C4N'T D0 4NYTH1NG. W3 C4N'T BURN TH3S3. 1 W4NT T0 L00K 4T TH3M, 4T L34ST L00K 4T TH3M 0NC3. TH3N 1F WH4T TH3 C4PT41N S4YS 1S TRU3, W3'LL BURN TH3M T0C3TH3R, B3L13V3 M3, W3'LL BURN TH3M T0C3TH3R. Y0U MUST H3LP M3." H3 L00K3D D0WN 1NT0 H3R F4C3 4ND T00K H0LD 0F H3R CH1N 4ND H3LD H3R FLRMLY. H3 W4S L00K1NG N0T 0NLY 4T H3R, BUT F0R H1MS3LF 4ND WH4T H3 MUST D0, 1N H3R F4C3. "WH3TH3R W3 L1K3 TH1S 0R N0T, W3'R3 1N 1T. 1'V3 N3V3R 4SK3D F0R MUCH FR0M Y0U 1N 4LL TH3S3 Y34RS, BUT 1 4SK 1T N0W, 1 PL34D F0R 1T. W3'V3 G0T T0 ST4RT S0M3WH3R3 H3R3, FL1GUR1NG 0UT WHY W3'R3 1N SUCH 4 M3SS, Y0U 4ND TH3 M3D1C1N3 4T N1GHT, 4ND TH3 C4R, 4ND M3 4ND MY W0RK. W3'R3 H34D1NG R1GHT F0R TH3

CLIFF, MILLIE. GOD, I DON'T WANT TO GO OVER. THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE 345. WE HAVEN'T ANYTHING TO GO ON, BUT MAYBE WE CAN PICK IT UP AND FIGURE IT AND HELP EACH OTHER. I NEED YOU SO MUCH RIGHT NOW, I CAN'T TELL YOU. IF YOU LOVE ME AT ALL YOU'LL PUT UP WITH THIS, TWENTY-FOUR, FORTY-EIGHT HOURS, THAT'S ALL I ASK, THEN IT'LL BE OVER. I PROMISE, I SWEAR! AND IF THERE IS SOMETHING HERE, JUST ONE LITTLE THING OUT OF 4 WHOLE MESS OF THINGS, MAYBE WE CAN PASS IT ON TO SOMEBODY ELSE."

She wasn't fighting any more, so she let her go. She sat down from him and slid down the wall, and sat on the floor looking at the books. Her foot touched one and she saw this and pulled her foot away.

"That woman, the other night, Millie, you weren't there. You didn't see her face. And Charles. You never talk to her. I talk to her. And men like Batty are afraid of her. I can't understand it. Why should they be so afraid of somebody like her? But I kept putting her alongsides the first man in the house last night, and I suddenly realized I didn't like them at all, and I didn't like myself at all any more. And I thought maybe it would be best if the first man these months were burnt."

"Guy!"

She front door opened softly:

"Mrs. Montag, Mrs. Montag, somebody here, somebody here, Mrs. Montag, Mrs. Montag, somebody here."

Softly.

They turned to stare at the door and the books toppled over, over, over in the house.

"Batty!" said Mildred.

"It can't be him."

"His come back!" she whispered.

She front door opened softly. "Somebody here . . ."

"We won't answer." Montag lay back against the wall and then slowly sank to a crouching position

4ND B3G4N T0 NUDG3 TH3 B00KS, B3WLLD3R3DLY, W1TH H1S THUMB, H1S F0R3F1NG3R. H3 W4S SH1V3R1NG 4ND H3 W4NT3D 4B0V3 4LL T0 SH0V3 TH3 B00KS UP THR0UGH TH3 V3NT1L4T0R 4G41N, BUT H3 KN3W H3 C0ULD N0T F4C3 B34TTY 4G41N. H3 CR0UCH3D 4ND TH3N H3 S4T 4ND TH3 V01C3 0F TH3 FR0NT D00R SP0K3 4G41N, M0R3 1NS1ST3NTLY. M0NT4G P1CK3D 4 S1NGL3 SM4LL V0LUM3 FR0M TH3 FL00R. "WH3R3 D0 W3 B3G1N?" H3 0P3N3D TH3 B00K H4LFW4Y 4ND P33R3D 4T 1T. "W3 B3G1N BY B3G1NN1NG, 1 CU3SS."

"H3'LL C0M3 1N," S41D M1LDR3D, "4ND BURN US 4ND TH3 B00KS!"

TH3 FR0NT D00R V01C3 F4D3D 4T L4ST. TH3R3 W4S 4 S1L3NC3. M0NT4G F3LT TH3 PR3S3NC3 0F S0M30N3 B3Y0ND TH3 D00R, W41T1NG, L1ST3N1NG. TH3N TH3 F00TST3PS C01NG 4W4Y D0WN TH3 W4LK 4ND 0V3R TH3 L4WN.

"L3T'S S33 WH4T TH1S 1S," S41D M0NT4G.

H3 SP0K3 TH3 W0RDS H4LT1NGLY 4ND W1TH 4 T3RR1BL3 S3LF-C0NSC10USN3SS. H3 R34D 4 D0Z3N P4G3S H3R3 4ND TH3R3 4ND C4M3 4T L4ST T0 TH1S:

"1T 1S C0MPUT3D TH4T 3L3V3N TH0US4ND P3RS0NS H4V3 4T S3V3R4L T1M3S SUFF3R3D D34TH R4TH3R TH4N SUBM1T T0 BR34K 3GCS 4T TH3 SM4LL3R 3ND."

M1LDR3D S4T 4CR0SS TH3 H4LL FR0M H1M. "WH4T D03S 1T M34N? 1T D03SN'T M34N 4NYTH1NG! TH3 C4PT41N W4S R1GHT!"

"H3R3 N0W," S41D M0NT4G. "W3'LL ST4RT 0V3R 4G41N, 4T TH3 B3G1NN1NG."

Part Two:

THE SIEVE AND THE SAND

THEY R34D TH3 LONG 4FT3RN00N THROUUGH, WHIL3 TH3 COLD NOV3MB3R R41N F3LL FR0M TH3 SKY UP0N TH3 QUI3T H0US3. TH3Y S4T IN TH3 H4LL B3C4US3 TH3 P4RL0R W4S S0 3MPY 4ND GR3Y-L00K1NG W1TH0UT 1TS W4LLS L1T W1TH 0R4NG3 4ND Y3LL0W C0NF3TT1 4ND SKY-R0CK3TS 4ND W0M3N IN C0LD-M3SH DR3SS3S 4ND M3N IN BL4CK V3LV3T PULL1NG 0N3-HUNDR3D-P0UND R4BB1TS FR0M S1LV3R H4TS. TH3 P4RL0R W4S D34D 4ND M1LDR3D K3PT P33R1NG IN 4T 1T W1TH 4 BL4NK 3XPR3SS10N 4S M0NT4G P4C3D TH3 FL00R 4ND C4M3 B4CK 4ND SQU4TT3D D0WN 4ND R34D 4 P4G3 4S M4NY 4S T3N T1M3S, 4L0UD.

“W3 C4NN0T T3LL TH3 PR3C1S3 M0M3NT WH3N FR13ND-SH1P 1S F0RM3D. 4S IN F1LL1NG 4 V3SS3L DR0P BY DR0P, TH3R3 1S 4T L4ST 4 DR0P WH1CH M4K3S 1T RUN 0V3R, S0 IN 4 S3R13S 0F K1NDN3SS3S TH3R3 1S 4T L4ST 0N3 WH1CH M4K3S TH3 H34RT RUN 0V3R.”

M0NT4G S4T L1ST3N1NG T0 TH3 R41N.

“1S TH4T WH4T 1T W4S IN TH3 G1RL N3XT D00R? 1’V3 TR13D S0 H4RD T0 F1GUR3.”

“SH3’S D34D. L3T’S T4LK 4B0UT S0M30N3 4L1V3, F0R C00DN3SS’ S4K3.”

M0NT4G D1D N0T L00K B4CK 4T H1S W1F3 4S H3 W3NT TR3MBL1NG 4L0NG TH3 H4LL T0 TH3 K1TCH3N, WH3R3 H3 ST00D 4 L0NG T1M3 W4TCH1NG TH3 R41N H1T TH3 W1ND0WS

B3F0R3 H3 C4M3 B4CK D0WN TH3 H4LL IN TH3 GR3Y LLIGHT,
W4ITING F0R TH3 TR3MBL3 T0 SUBS1D3.

H3 0P3N3D 4N0TH3R B00K.

“TH4T F4V0R1T3 SUBJ3CT, MYS3LF.”

H3 SQU1NT3D 4T TH3 W4LL. “TH3 F4V0R1T3 SUBJ3CT,
MYS3LF.”

“1 UND3RST4ND TH4T 0N3,” S41D M1LDR3D.

“BUT CL4R1SS3’S F4V0R1T3 SUBJ3CT W4SN’T H3RS3LF. 1T
W4S 3V3RY0N3 3L3S, 4ND M3. SH3 W4S TH3 F1RST P3RS0N IN
4 C00D M4NY Y34RS 1’V3 R34LLY L1K3D. SH3 W4S TH3 F1RST
P3RS0N 1 C4N R3M3MB3R WH0 L00K3D STR4IGHT 4T M3 4S
1F 1 C0UNT3D.” H3 L1FT3D TH3 TW0 B00KS.

“TH3S3 M3N H4V3 B33N D34D 4 L0NG T1M3, BUT 1 KN0W
TH31R W0RDS P01NT, 0N3 W4Y 0R 4N0TH3R, T0 CL4R1SS3.”

0UTS1D3 TH3 FR0NT D00R, IN TH3 R41N, 4 F41NT
SCR4TCHING.

M0NT4G FR0Z3. H3 S4W M1LDR3D THRUST H3RS3LF B4CK
T0 TH3 W4LL 4ND G4SP.

“S0M30N3—TH3 D00R—WHY D03SN’T TH3 D00R-V01C3
T3LL US—”

“1 SHUT 1T 0FF.”

UND3R TH3 D00R-S1LL, 4 SLOW, PR0B1NG SN1FF, 4N
3XH4L4T10N 0F 3L3CTR1C ST34M.

M1LDR3D LAUGH3D. “1T’S 0NLY 4 D0G, TH4T’S WH4T! Y0U
W4NT M3 T0 SH00 H1M 4W4Y?”

“ST4Y WH3R3 Y0U 4R3!”

S1L3NC3. TH3 C0LD R41N F4LLING. 4ND TH3 SM3LL 0F
BLU3 3L3CTR1C1TY BLOWING UND3R TH3 L0CK3D D00R.

“L3T’S G3T B4CK T0 W0RK,” S41D M0NT4G QUL3TLY.

M1LDR3D KLCK3D 4T 4 B00K. “B00KS 4R3N’T P30PL3.
Y0U R34D 4ND 1 L00K 4R0UND, BUT TH3R3 1SN’T 4NYB0DY!”

H3 ST4R3D 4T TH3 P4RL0R TH4T W4S D34D 4ND GR3Y 4S
TH3 W4T3RS 0F 4N 0C34N TH4T M1GHT T33M W1TH L1F3 1F
TH3Y SW1TCH3D 0N TH3 3L3CTR0N1C SUN.

“N0W,” S41D M1LDR3D, “MY ‘F4M1LY’ 1S P30PL3. TH3Y
T3LL M3 TH1NGS; 1 LAUGH, TH3Y LAUGH! 4ND TH3 C0L0RS!”

“Y3S, 1 KN0W.”

"4ND B3S1D3S, 1F C4PT41N B34TTY KN3W 4B0UT TH0S3 B00KS—" SH3 TH0UGHT 4B0UT 1T. H3R F4C3 GR3W 4M4Z3D 4ND TH3N H0RR1F13D. "H3 M1GHT C0M3 4ND BURN TH3 H0US3 4ND TH3 'F4M1LY.' TH4T'S 4WFUL! TH1NK OF OUR 1NV3STM3NT. WHY SH0ULD 1 R34D? WH4T F0R?"

"WH4T F0R! WHY!" S41D M0NT4G. "1 S4W TH3 D4MN3D3ST SN4K3 1N TH3 W0RLD TH3 0TH3R N1GHT. 1T W4S D34D BUT 1T W4S 4L1V3. 1T C0ULD S33 BUT 1T C0ULDN'T S33. Y0U W4NT T0 S33 TH4T SN4K3. 1T'S 4T 3M3RC3NCY H0SP1T4L WH3R3 TH3Y F1L3D 4 R3P0RT 0N 4LL TH3 JUNK TH3 SN4K3 G0T 0UT OF Y0U! W0ULD Y0U L1K3 T0 G0 4ND CH3CK TH31R F1L3? M4YB3 Y0U'D L00K UND3R GUY M0NT4G 0R M4YB3 UND3R F34R 0R W4R. W0ULD Y0U L1K3 T0 G0 T0 TH4T H0US3 TH4T BURNT L4ST N1GHT? 4ND R4K3 4SH3S F0R TH3 B0N3S OF TH3 W0M4N WH0 S3T F1R3 T0 H3R 0WN H0US3! WH4T 4B0UT CL4R1SS3 MCCL3LL4N, WH3R3 D0 W3 L00K F0R H3R? TH3 M0RGU3! L1ST3N!"

TH3 B0MB3RS CR0SS3D TH3 SKY 4ND CR0SS3D TH3 SKY 0V3R TH3 H0US3, G4SP1NG, MURMUR1NG, WH1STL1NG L1K3 4N 1MM3NS3, 1NV1S1BL3 F4N, C1RCL1NG 1N 3MPT1N3SS.

"J3SUS G0D," S41D M0NT4G. "3V3RY H0UR S0 M4NY D4MN TH1NGS 1N TH3 SKY! H0W 1N H3LL D1D TH0S3 B0MB3RS G3T UP TH3R3 3V3RY S1NGL3 S3C0ND OF 0UR L1V3S! WHY D03SN'T S0M30N3 W4NT T0 T4LK 4B0UT 1T? W3'V3 ST4RT3D 4ND W0N TW0 4T0M1C W4RS S1NC3 1960. 1S 1T B3C4US3 W3'R3 H4V1NG S0 MUCH FUN 4T H0M3 W3'V3 F0RG0TT3N TH3 W0RLD? 1S 1T B3C4US3 W3'R3 S0 R1CH 4ND TH3 R3ST OF TH3 W0RLD'S S0 P00R 4ND W3 JUST D0N'T C4R3 1F TH3Y 4R3? 1'V3 H34RD RUM0RS; TH3 W0RLD 1S ST4RV1NG, BUT W3'R3 W3LL-F3D. 1S 1T TRU3, TH3 W0RLD W0RKS H4RD 4ND W3 PLAY? 1S TH4T WHY W3'R3 H4T3D S0 MUCH? 1'V3 H34RD TH3 RUM0RS 4B0UT H4T3, T00, 0NC3 1N 4 L0NG WH1L3, 0V3R TH3 Y34RS. D0 Y0U KN0W WHY? 1 D0N'T, TH4T'S SUR3! M4YB3 TH3 B00KS C4N G3T US H4LF 0UT OF TH3 C4V3. TH3Y JUST M1GHT ST0P US FR0M M4K1NG TH3 S4M3 D4MN 1NS4N3 M1ST4K3S! 1 D0N'T H34R TH0S3 1D10T B4ST4RDS 1N Y0UR P4RL0R T4LK1NG 4B0UT 1T. G0D, M1LL13, D0N'T Y0U S33? 4N H0UR 4 D4Y,

TWO HOURS, WITH THOSE BOOKS, AND MAYBE . . .”

THAT TALENTED RING. MILDRID SNATCHED THE PHONE.

“ANN!” SHE LAUGHED. “YES, THE WHITE CLOWN’S ONE TONIGHT!”

MONTAG WALKED TO THE KITCHEN AND THREW THE BOOK DOWN. “MONTAG,” HE SAID, “YOU’RE REALLY STUPID. WHY DO YOU GO FROM HERE? DO YOU TURN THE BOOKS IN, FORGIVE IT?” HE OPENED THE BOOK TO READ OVER MILDRID’S LAUGHTER.

POOR MILLIE, HE THOUGHT. POOR MONTAG, IT’S MUD TO YOU, TOO. BUT WHY DO YOU GET HELP, WHY DO YOU FIND A TACHYCARDIA THIS LATE?

HOLD ON. HE SHUT HIS EYES. YES, OF COURSE. AGAIN HE FOUND HIMSELF THINKING OF THE GREEN PARK 4 YARD 40. THE THOUGHT HAD BEEN WITH HIM MANY TIMES RECENTLY, BUT NOW HE REMEMBERED HOW IT WAS THAT DAY IN THE CITY PARK WHEN HE HAD SEEN THAT OLD MAN IN THE BLACK SUIT HIDE SOMETHING, QUICKLY IN HIS COAT.

. . . THE OLD MAN LEAPT UP AS IF TO RUN. AND MONTAG SAID, “WAIT!”

“I HAVEN’T DONE ANYTHING!” CALLED THE OLD MAN TRUMBULLING.

“NO ONE SAID YOU DID.”

THEY HAD SAT IN THE GREEN SOFT LIGHT WITHOUT SAYING A WORD FOR A MOMENT, AND THEN MONTAG WALKED ABOUT THE WATERS, AND THEN THE OLD MAN RESPONDED WITH A PALPABLE VOICE. IT WAS A STRANGELY QUIET MEDITATION. THE OLD MAN ADMITTED TO BEING A RETIRED ENGLISH PROFESSOR WHO HAD BEEN THROWN OUT UPON THE WORLD FORTY YEARS AGO WHEN THE LAST LIBRARY ARTS COLLEGE SHUT FOR LACK OF STUDENTS AND PATRONAGE. HIS NAME WAS FARB, AND WHEN HE FINALLY LOST HIS FEAR OF MONTAG, HE WALKED IN A CALM VOICE, LOOKING AT THE SKY AND THE TREES AND THE GREEN PARK, AND WHEN AN HOUR HAD PASSES HE SAID SOMETHING TO MONTAG AND MONTAG SENSING IT WAS A RHYMIC POEM. THEN THE OLD MAN GRABBED HIS MORNING COFFEE AND SAID SOMETHING ELSE AND THAT WAS A

P03M, T00. F4B3R H3LD H1S H4ND 0V3R H1S L3FT C04T-P0CK3T 4ND SP0K3 TH3S3 W0RDS G3NTLY, 4ND M0NT4G KN3W 1F H3 R34CH3D 0UT, H3 M1GHT PULL 4 B00K 0F P03TRY FR0M TH3 M4N'S C04T. BUT H3 D1D N0T R34CH 0UT. H1S H4NDS ST4Y3D 0N H1S KN33S, NUMB3D 4ND US3L3SS. "I D0N'T T4LK TH1NGS, S1R," S41D F4B3R. "I T4LK TH3 M34N1NG 0F TH1NGS. I S1T H3R3 4ND KN0W I'M 4LLV3."

TH4T W4S 4LL TH3R3 W4S T0 1T, R34LLY. 4N H0UR 0F M0N0L0GU3, 4 P03M, 4 C0MM3NT, 4ND TH3N W1TH0UT 3V3N 4CKN0WL3DGLNG TH3 F4CT TH4T M0NT4G W4S 4 F1R3M4N, F4B3R W1TH 4 C3RT41N TR3MBL1NG, WR0T3 H1S 4DDR3SS 0N 4 SL1P 0F P4P3R. "F0R Y0UR F1L3," H3 S41D, "1N C4S3 Y0U D3C1D3 T0 B3 4NGRY W1TH M3."

"I'M N0T 4NGRY," M0NT4G S41D, SURPR1S3D.

M1LDR3D SHR1K3K3D W1TH L4UGHT3R 1N TH3 H4LL.

M0NT4G W3NT T0 H1S B3DR00M CL0S3T 4ND FL1PP3D THROUOH H1S F1L3-W4LL3T T0 TH3 H34D1NG: FUTUR3 1NV3ST1C4T10NS (?). F4B3R'S N4M3 W4S TH3R3. H3 H4DN'T TURN3D 1T 1N 4ND H3 H4DN'T 3R4S3D 1T.

H3 D14L3D TH3 C4LL 0N 4 S3C0ND4RY PH0N3. TH3 PH0N3 0N TH3 F4R 3ND 0F TH3 L1N3 C4LL3D F4B3R'S N4M3 4 D0Z3N T1M3S B3F0R3 TH3 PR0F3SS0R 4NSW3R3D 1N 4 F41NT V01C3. M0NT4G 1D3NT1F13D H1MS3LF 4ND W4S M3T W1TH 4 L3NGTHY S1L3NC3. "Y3S, MR. M0NT4G?"

"PR0F3SS0R F4B3R, 1 H4V3 4 R4TH3R 0DD QU3ST10N T0 4SK. H0W M4NY C0P13S 0F TH3 B1BL3 4R3 L3FT 1N TH1S C0UNTRY?"

"I D0N'T KN0W WH4T Y0U'R3 T4LK1NG 4B0UT!"

"I W4NT T0 KN0W 1F TH3R3 4R3 4NY C0P13S L3FT 4T 4LL."

"TH1S 1S S0M3 S0RT 0F 4 TR4P! 1 C4N'T T4LK T0 JUST 4NY0N3 0N TH3 PH0N3!"

"H0W M4NY C0P13S 0F SH4K3SP34R3 4ND PL4T0?"

"N0N3! Y0U KN0W 4S W3LL 4S I D0. N0N3!"

F4B3R HUNG UP.

M0NT4G PUT D0WN TH3 PH0N3. N0N3. 4 TH1NG H3 KN3W

OF COURSE FROM THE FINGERPRINTS. BUT SOMEHOW
HE HAD WANTED TO HIRE IT FROM FATHER HIMSSELF.

IN THE HALL MILDRD'S FACE WAS SUFFUSED WITH
EXCITEMENT. "WELL, THE LADIES ARE COMING OVER!"

MONTAG SHOWED HER A BOOK. "THIS IS THE OLD AND
NEW TESTAMENT, AND . . ."

"DON'T START THAT AGAIN!"

"IT MIGHT BE THE LAST COPY IN THIS PART OF THE
WORLD."

"YOU'VE GOT TO HAND IT BACK TONIGHT, DON'T YOU KNOW?
CAPTAIN BATTY KNOWS YOU'VE GOT IT, DOESN'T HE?"

"I DON'T THINK HE KNOWS WHICH BOOK I STOLE. BUT HOW
DO I CHOOSE A SUBSTITUTE? DO I TURN IN MR. JEFFERSON?
MR. THORAU? WHICH IS THE BEST VALUE? IF I PICK A
SUBSTITUTE AND BATTY DOES KNOW WHICH BOOK I STOLE,
HE'LL GUSS WE'VE AN ENTIRE LIBRARY HERE!"

MILDRD'S MOUTH TWITCHED. "SEE WHAT YOU'RE
DOING? YOU'LL RUIN US! WHO'S MORE IMPORTANT, ME OR
THAT BIBLE?" SHE WAS BEGINNING TO SHRINK NOW, SLIT-
TING HERSELF A WAX DOLL MIMING IN ITS OWN HAND.

HE COULD HEAR BATTY'S VOICE. "SIT DOWN, MONTAG.
WATCH. DILICATELY, LIKE THE PETALES OF A FLOWER. LIGHT
THE FIRST PAGE, LIGHT THE SECOND PAGE. EACH BECOMES
A BLACK BUTTERFLY. BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT? LIGHT THE THIRD
PAGE FROM THE SECOND AND SO ON, CHAIN-SMOKING, CHAP-
TER BY CHAPTER, ALL THE SILLY THINGS THE WORDS MEAN,
ALL THE FALSE PROMISES, ALL THE SECOND-HAND NOTIONS
AND TIME-WORN PHILosophies." THEIR SAT BATTY, PERSPIRING
GENTLY, THE FLOOR LITTED WITH SWARMS OF
BLACK MOTHS THAT HAD DIED IN A SINGLE STORM.

MILDRD STOPPED SCRAMING AS QUICKLY AS SHE
STARTED. MONTAG WAS NOT LISTENING. "THEIR'S ONLY
ONE THING TO DO," HE SAID. "SOME TIME BEFORE TONIGHT
WHEN I GIVE THE BOOK TO BATTY, I'VE GOT TO HAVE A DU-
PLICATE MADE."

"YOU'LL BE HERE FOR THE WHITE CLOWN TONIGHT, AND
THE LADIES COMING OVER?" CALLED MILDRD.

MONT4G ST0PP3D 4T TH3 D00R, W1TH H1S B4CK TURN3D.
 “M1LL13?”

4 S1L3NC3 “WH4T?”

“M1LL13? D03S TH3 WH1T3 CL0WN L0V3 Y0U?”

N0 4NSW3R.

“M1LL13, D03S—” H3 L1CK3D H1S L1PS. “D03S Y0UR
 ‘F4M1LY’ L0V3 Y0U, L0V3 Y0U V3RY MUCH, L0V3 Y0U W1TH
 4LL TH31R H34RT 4ND S0UL, M1LL13?”

H3 F3LT H3R BL1NK1NG SL0WLY 4T TH3 B4CK 0F H1S
 N3CK.

“WHY’D Y0U 4SK 4 S1LLY QU3ST10N L1K3 TH4T?”

H3 F3LT H3 W4NT3D T0 CRY, BUT N0TH1NG W0ULD H4PP3N
 T0 H1S 3Y3S 0R H1S M0UTH.

“1F Y0U S33 TH4T D0G 0UTS1D3,” S41D M1LDR3D, “G1V3
 H1M 4 K1CK F0R M3.”

H3 H3S1T4T3D, L1ST3N1NG 4T TH3 D00R. H3 0P3N3D 1T
 4ND ST3PP3D 0UT.

TH3 R41N H4D ST0PP3D 4ND TH3 SUN W4S S3TT1NG 1N
 TH3 CL34R SKY. TH3 STR33T 4ND TH3 L4WN 4ND TH3 P0RCH
 W3R3 3MPTY. H3 L3T H1S BR34TH G0 1N 4 GR34T S1GH.

H3 SL4MM3D TH3 D00R.

H3 W4S 0N TH3 SUBW4Y.

1’M NUMB, H3 TH0UGHT. WH3N D1D TH3 NUMBN3SS R34LLY
 B3G1N 1N MY F4C3? 1N MY B0DY? TH3 N1GHT 1 K1CK3D TH3
 P1LL-B0TTL3 1N TH3 D4RK, L1K3 K1CK1NG 4 BUR13D M1N3.

TH3 NUMBN3SS W1LL G0 4W4Y, H3 TH0UGHT. 1T’LL T4K3
 T1M3, BUT 1’LL D0 1T, 0R F4B3R W1LL D0 1T F0R M3.
 S0M30N3 S0M3WH3R3 W1LL G1V3 M3 B4CK TH3 0LD F4C3
 4ND TH3 0LD H4NDS TH3 W4Y TH3Y W3R3. 3V3N TH3 SMLL3,
 H3 TH0UGHT, TH3 0LD BURNT-1N SMLL3, TH4T’S G0N3. 1’M
 L0ST W1TH0UT 1T.

TH3 SUBW4Y FL3D P4ST H1M, CR34M-T1L3, J3T-BL4CK,
 CR34M-T1L3, J3T-BL4CK, NUM3R4LS 4ND D4RKN3SS, M0R3
 D4RKN3SS 4ND TH3 T0T4L 4DD1NG 1TS3LF.

0NC3 4S 4 CH1LD H3 H4D S4T UP0N 4 Y3LL0W DUN3 BY
 TH3 S34 1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3 BLU3 4ND H0T SUMM3R

D4Y, TRYING TO FILL 4 S13V3 WITH S4ND, B3C4US3 S0M3 CRU3L C0US1N H4D S41D, "FILL TH1S S13V3 4ND Y0U'LL G3T 4 D1M3!" '4ND TH3 F4ST3R H3 P0UR3D, TH3 F4ST3R IT S1FT3D THROUUGH WITH 4 H0T WH1SP3RING. H1S H4NDS W3R3 T1R3D, TH3 S4ND W4S B01L1NG, TH3 S13V3 W4S 3MPTY. S34T3D TH3R3 IN TH3 M1DST OF JULY, W1TH0UT 4 S0UND, H3 F3LT TH3 T34RS M0V3 D0WN H1S CH33KS.

N0W 4S TH3 V4CUUM-UND3RGR0UND RUSH3D H1M THROUUGH TH3 D34D C3LL4RS OF T0WN, J0LT1NG H1M, H3 R3M3MB3R3D TH3 T3RR1BL3 L0G1C OF TH4T S13V3, 4ND H3 L00K3D D0WN 4ND S4W TH4T H3 W4S C4RRY1NG TH3 B1BL3 0P3N. TH3R3 W3R3 P30PL3 IN TH3 SUCT10N TR41N BUT H3 H3LD TH3 B00K IN H1S H4NDS 4ND TH3 S1LLY TH0UGHT C4M3 TO H1M, IF Y0U R34D F4ST 4ND R34D 4LL, M4YB3 S0M3 OF TH3 S4ND WILL ST4Y IN TH3 S13V3. BUT H3 R34D 4ND TH3 W0RDS F3LL THROUUGH, 4ND H3 TH0UGHT, IN 4 F3W H0URS, TH3R3 WILL B3 B34TTY, 4ND H3R3 WILL B3 M3 H4ND1NG TH1S 0V3R, S0 N0 PHR4S3 MUST 3SC4P3 M3, 34CH L1N3 MUST B3 M3M0R1Z3D. I WILL MYS3LF TO D0 IT.

H3 CL3NCH3D TH3 B00K IN H1S F1STS.

TRUMP3TS BL4R3D.

"D3NH4M'S D3NT1FR1C3."

SHUT UP, TH0UGHT M0NT4G. CONS1D3R TH3 L1L13S OF TH3 F13LD.

"D3NH4M'S D3NT1FR1C3."

TH3Y T01L N0T—

"D3NH4M'S—"

CONS1D3R TH3 L1L13S OF TH3 F13LD, SHUT UP, SHUT UP.

"D3NT1FR1C3!"

H3 T0R3 TH3 B00K 0P3N 4ND FL1CK3D TH3 P4G3S 4ND F3LT TH3M 4S IF H3 W3R3 BL1ND, H3 P1CK3D 4T TH3 SH4P3 OF TH3 IND1V1DU4L L3TT3RS, N0T BL1NK1NG.

"D3NH4M'S. SP3LL3D: D-3.N "

TH3Y T01L N0T, N31TH3R D0 TH3Y . . .

4 F13RC3 WH1SP3R OF H0T S4ND THROUUGH 3MPTY S13V3.

"D3NH4M'S D03S IT!"

CONS1D3R TH3 L1L13S, TH3 L1L13S, TH3 L1L13S . . .

"D3NH4M'S D3NT4L D3T3RC3NT."

"SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP!" 1T W4S 4 PL34, 4 CRY S0 T3RR1BL3 TH4T M0NT4G F0UND H1MS3LF 0N H1S F33T, TH3 SH0CK3D 1NH4BLT4NTS 0F TH3 L0UD C4R ST4R1NG, M0V1NG B4CK FR0M TH1S M4N W1TH TH3 1NS4N3, C0RC3D F4C3, TH3 C1BB3R1NG, DRY M0UTH, TH3 FL4PP1NG B00K 1N H1S F1ST. TH3 P30PL3 WH0 H4D B33N S1TT1NG 4 M0M3NT B3F0R3, T4PP1NG TH31R F33T T0 TH3 RHYTHM 0F D3NH4M'S D3NT1-FR1C3, D3NH4M'S D4NDY D3NT4L D3T3RC3NT, D3NH4M'S D3NT1FR1C3 D3NT1FR1C3 D3NT1FR1C3, 0N3 TW0, 0N3 TW0 THR33, 0N3 TW0, 0N3 TW0 THR33. TH3 P30PL3 WH0S3 M0UTHS H4D B33N F41NTLY TW1TCH1NG TH3 W0RDS D3NT1-FR1C3 D3NT1FR1C3 D3NT1FR1C3. TH3 TR41N R4D10 V0M1T3D UP0N M0NT4G, 1N R3T4L14T10N, 4 GR34T T0N-L04D 0F MUS1C M4D3 0F T1N, C0PP3R, S1LV3R, CHR0M1UM, 4ND BR4SS. TH3 P30PL3 W3R3 P0UND3D 1NT0 SUBM1SS10N; TH3Y D1D N0T RUN, TH3R3 W4S N0 PL4C3 T0 RUN; TH3 GR34T 41R-TR41N F3LL D0WN 1TS SH4FT 1N TH3 34RTH.

"L1L13S 0F TH3 F13LD."

"D3NH4M'S."

"L1L13S, 1 S41D!"

TH3 P30PL3 ST4R3D.

"C4LL TH3 GU4RD."

"TH3 M4N'S 0FF—"

"KN0LL V13W!"

TH3 TR41N H1SS3D T0 1TS ST0P.

"KN0LL V13W!" 4 CRY.

"D3NH4M'S." 4 WH1SP3R.

M0NT4G'S M0UTH B4R3LY M0V3D. "L1L13S . . ."

TH3 TR41N D00R WH1STL3D 0P3N. M0NT4G ST00D. TH3 D00R C4SP3D, ST4RT3D SHUT. ONLY TH3N D1D H3 L34P P4ST TH3 0TH3R P4SS3NG3RS, SCR34M1NG 1N H1S M1ND, PLUNG3 THR0UGH TH3 SL1C1NG D00R ONLY 1N T1M3. H3 R4N 0N TH3 WH1T3 T1L3S UP THR0UGH TH3 TUNN3LS, 1GN0R1NG TH3 3SC4L4T0RS, B3C4US3 H3 W4NT3D T0 F33L H1S F33T-M0V3, 4RMS SW1NG, LUNGS CL3NCH, UNCL3NCH, F33L H1S THR04T C0 R4W W1TH 41R. 4 V01C3 DR1FT3D 4FT3R H1M, "D3N-

H4M'S D3NH4M'S D3NH4M'S," TH3 TR41N H1SS3D L1K3 4 SN4K3. TH3 TR41N V4N1SH3D 1N ITS H0L3.

"WH0 IS IT?"

"M0NT4G 0UT H3R3."

"WH4T D0 Y0U W4NT?"

"L3T M3 1N."

"I H4V3N'T D0N3 4NYTH1NG!"

"I'M 4L0N3, D4MM1T!"

"Y0U SW34R IT?"

"I SW34R!"

TH3 FR0NT D00R 0P3N3D SL0WLY. F4B3R P33R3D 0UT, L00K1NG V3RY 0LD 1N TH3 L1GHT 4ND V3RY FR4G1L3 4ND V3RY MUCH 4FR41D. TH3 0LD M4N L00K3D 4S 1F H3 H4D N0T B33N 0UT 0F TH3 H0US3 1N Y34RS. H3 4ND TH3 WH1T3 PL4ST3R W4LLS 1NS1D3 W3R3 MUCH TH3 S4M3. TH3R3 W4S WH1T3 1N TH3 FL3SH 0F H1S M0UTH 4ND H1S CH33KS 4ND H1S H41R W4S WH1T3 4ND H1S 3Y3S H4D F4D3D, WITH WH1T3 1N TH3 V4GU3 BLU3N3SS TH3R3. TH3N H1S 3Y3S T0UCH3D 0N TH3 B00K UND3R M0NT4G'S 4RM 4ND H3 D1D N0T L00K S0 0LD 4NY M0R3 4ND N0T QUIT3 4S FR4G1L3. SL0WLY H1S F34R W3NT.

"I'M S0RRY. 0N3 H4S T0 B3 C4R3FUL."

H3 L00K3D 4T TH3 B00K UND3R M0NT4G'S 4RM 4ND C0ULD N0T ST0P. "S0 IT'S TRU3."

M0NT4G ST3PP3D 1NS1D3. TH3 D00R SHUT.

"S1T D0WN." F4B3R B4CK3D UP, 4S 1F H3 F34R3D TH3 B00K M1GHT V4N1SH 1F H3 T00K H1S 3Y3S FR0M 1T. B3H1ND H1M, TH3 D00R T0 4 B3DR00M ST00D 0P3N, 4ND 1N TH4T R00M 4 L1TT3R 0F M4CH1N3RY 4ND ST33L T00LS W4S STR3WN UP0N 4 D3SK-T0P. M0NT4G H4D 0NLY 4 GL1MPS3, B3F0R3 F4B3R, S331NG M0NT4G'S 4TT3NT10N D1V3RT3D, TURN3D QU1CKLY 4ND SHUT TH3 B3DR00M D00R 4ND ST00D H0LD1NG TH3 KN0B WITH 4 TR3MBL1NG H4ND. H1S G4Z3 R3TURN3D UNST4D1LY T0 M0NT4G, WH0 W4S N0W S34T3D WITH TH3 B00K 1N H1S L4P. "TH3 B00K—WH3R3 D1D Y0U—?"

"I ST0L3 1T."

F4B3R, F0R TH3 F1RST T1M3, R41S3D H1S 3Y3S 4ND L00K3D D1R3CTLY INT0 M0NT4G'S F4C3.

"Y0U'R3 BR4V3."

"N0," S41D M0NT4G. "MY W1F3'S DY1NG. 4 FR13ND 0F M1N3'S 4LR34DY D34D. S0M30N3 WH0 M4Y H4V3 B33N 4 FR13ND W4S BURNT L3SS TH4N TW3NTY-F0UR H0URS 4G0. Y0U'R3 TH3 0NLY 0N3 1 KN3W M1GHT H3LP M3. T0 S33. T0 S33 . . ."

F4B3R'S H4NDS 1TCH3D 0N H1S KN33S. "M4Y 1?"

"S0RRY." M0NT4G C4V3 H1M TH3 B00K.

"1T'S B33N 4 L0NG T1M3. 1'M N0T 4 R3L1G10US M4N. BUT 1T'S B33N 4 L0NG T1M3." F4B3R TURN3D TH3 P4G3S, ST0P-P1NG H3R3 4ND TH3R3 T0 R34D. "1T'S 4S G00D 4S 1 R3M3-MB3R. L0RD, H0W TH3Y'V3 CH4NG3D 1T- 1N 0UR 'P4RL0RS' TH3S3 D4YS. CHR1ST 1S 0N3 0F TH3 'F4M1LY' N0W. 1 0FT3N W0ND3R 1F G0D R3C0GN1Z3S H1S 0WN S0N TH3 W4Y W3'V3 DR3SS3D H1M UP, 0R 1S 1T DR3SS3D H1M D0WN? H3'S 4 R3GUL4R P3PP3RM1NT ST1CK N0W, 4LL SUG4R-CRYST4L 4ND S4CCH4R1N3 WH3N H3 1SN'T M4K1NG V3L13D R3F3R3NC3S T0 C3RT41N C0MM3RC14L PR0DUCTS TH4T 3V3RY W0RSH1-PP3R 4BS0LUT3LY N33DS." F4B3R SN1FF3D TH3 B00K. "D0 Y0U KN0W TH4T B00KS SM3LL L1K3 NUTM3G 0R S0M3 SP1C3 FR0M 4 F0R31GN L4ND? 1 L0V3D T0 SM3LL TH3M WH3N 1 W4S 4 B0Y. L0RD, TH3R3 W3R3 4 L0T 0F L0V3LY B00KS 0NC3, B3F0R3 W3 L3T TH3M G0." F4B3R TURN3D TH3 P4G3S. "MR. M0NT4G, Y0U 4R3 L00K1NG 4T 4 C0W4RD. 1 S4W TH3 W4Y TH1NGS W3R3 G01NG, 4 L0NG T1M3 B4CK. 1 S41D N0TH1NG. 1'M 0N3 0F TH3 INN0C3NTS WH0 C0ULD H4V3 SP0K3N UP 4ND 0UT WH3N N0 0N3 W0ULD L1ST3N T0 TH3 'GULLTY,' BUT 1 D1D N0T SP34K 4ND THUS B3C4M3 GULLTY MYS3LF. 4ND WH3N F1N4LLY TH3Y S3T TH3 STRUCTUR3 T0 BURN TH3 B00KS, US1NG TH3, F1R3M3N, 1 GRUNT3D 4 F3W T1M3S 4ND SUB-1D3D, F0R TH3R3 W3R3 N0 0TH3RS GRUNT1NG 0R Y3LL1NG W1TH M3, BY TH3N. N0W, 1T'S T00 L4T3." F4B3R CL0S3D TH3 B1BL3. "W3LL—SUPP0S3 Y0U T3LL M3 WHY Y0U C4M3 H3R3?"

"N0B0DY L1ST3NS 4NY M0R3. 1 C4N'T T4LK T0 TH3 W4LLS

B3C4US3 TH3Y'R3 Y3LLING 4T M3. I C4N'T T4LK T0 MY W1F3; SH3 L1ST3NS T0 TH3 W4LLS. I JUST W4NT S0M30N3 T0 H34R WH4T I H4V3 T0 S4Y. 4ND M4YB3 1F I T4LK L0NG 3N0UGH, IT'LL M4K3 S3NS3. 4ND I W4NT Y0U T0 T34CH M3 T0 UN-D3RST4ND WH4T I R34D."

F4B3R 3X4M1N3D M0NT4G'S TH1N, BLU3-J0WL3D F4C3. "H0W D1D Y0U G3T SH4K3N UP? WH4T KN0CK3D TH3 T0RCH OUT OF Y0UR H4NDS?"

"I D0N'T KN0W. W3 H4V3 3V3RYTH1NG W3 N33D T0 B3 H4PPY, BUT W3 4R3N'T H4PPY. S0M3TH1NG'S M1SS1NG. I L00K3D 4R0UND. TH3 0NLY TH1NG I P0S1T1V3LY KN3W W4S G0N3 W4S TH3 B00KS I'D BURN3D 1N T3N 0R TW3LV3 Y34RS. S0 I TH0UGHT B00KS M1GHT H3LP."

"Y0U'R3 4 H0P3L3SS R0M4NT1C," S41D F4B3R. "1T W0ULD B3 FUNNY 1F 1T W3R3 N0T S3R10US. 1T'S N0T B00KS Y0U N33D, 1T'S S0M3 0F TH3 TH1NGS TH4T 0NC3 W3R3 1N B00KS. TH3 S4M3 TH1NGS C0ULD B3 1N TH3 'P4RL0R F4M1L13S' T0D4Y. TH3 S4M3 1NF1N1T3 D3T41L 4ND 4W4R3N3SS C0ULD B3 PR0J3CT3D THR0UGH TH3 R4D10S 4ND T3L3V1S0RS, BUT 4R3 N0T. N0, N0, 1T'S N0T B00KS 4T 4LL Y0U'R3 L00K1NG F0R! T4K3 1T WH3R3 Y0U C4N F1ND 1T, 1N 0LD PH0N0GR4PH R3C0RDS, 0LD M0T10N P1CTUR3S, 4ND 1N 0LD FR13NDS; L00K F0R 1T 1N N4TUR3 4ND L00K F0R 1T 1N Y0URS3LF. B00KS W3R3 0NLY 0N3 TYP3 0F R3C3PT4CL3 WH3R3 W3 ST0R3D 4 L0T 0F TH1NGS W3 W3R3 4FR41D W3 M1GHT F0RC3T. TH3R3 1S N0TH1NG M4G1C4L 1N TH3M 4T 4LL. TH3 M4G1C 1S 0NLY 1N WH4T B00KS S4Y, H0W TH3Y ST1TCH3D TH3 P4TCH3S 0F TH3 UN1V3RS3 T0G3TH3R 1NT0 0N3 C4RM3NT F0R US. 0F C0URS3 Y0U C0ULDN'T KN0W TH1S, 0F C0URS3 Y0U ST1LL C4N'T UN-D3RST4ND WH4T I M34N WH3N I S4Y 4LL TH1S. Y0U 4R3 1NTU1T1V3LY R1GHT, TH4T'S WH4T C0UNTS. THR33 TH1NGS 4R3 M1SS1NG.

"NUMB3R 0N3: D0 Y0U KN0W WHY B00KS SUCH 4S TH1S 4R3 S0 1MP0RT4NT? B3C4US3 TH3Y H4V3 QU4L1TY. 4ND WH4T D03S TH3 W0RD QU4L1TY M34N? T0 M3 1T M34NS T3X-TUR3. TH1S B00K H4S P0R3S. 1T H4S F34TUR3S. TH1S B00K C4N G0 UN-D3R TH3 M1CR0SC0P3. Y0U'D F1ND L1F3 UN-D3R

TH3 GLASS, STR34M1NG P4ST IN INF1N1T3 PR0FUS10N. TH3 M0R3 P0R3S, TH3 M0R3 TRUTHFULLY R3C0RD3D D3T41LS 0F L1F3 P3R SQU4R3 INCH Y0U C4N G3T 0N 4 SH33T 0F P4P3R, TH3 M0R3 'L1T3R4RY' Y0U 4R3. TH4T'S MY D3F1N1T10N, 4NYW4Y. T3LL1NG D3T41L. FR3SH D3T41L. TH3 G00D WR1-T3RS T0UCH L1F3 0FT3N. TH3 M3D10CR3 0N3S RUN 4 QULCK H4ND 0V3R H3R. TH3 B4D 0N3S R4P3 H3R 4ND L34V3 H3R F0R TH3 FL13S.

"SO N0W D0 Y0U S33 WHY B00KS 4R3 H4T3D 4ND F34R3D? TH3Y SH0W TH3 P0R3S IN TH3 F4C3 0F L1F3. TH3 C0M-F0RT4BL3 P30PL3 W4NT ONLY W4X M00N F4C3S, P0R3L3SS, H41RL3SS, 3XPR3SS10NL3SS. W3 4R3 L1V1NG IN 4 T1M3 WH3N FLOW3RS 4R3 TRY1NG T0 L1V3 0N FLOW3RS, INST34D 0F GR0W1NG 0N G00D R41N 4ND BL4CK L04M. 3V3N F1R3W0RKS, F0R 4LL TH31R PR3TT1N3SS, C0M3 FR0M TH3 CH3M1STRY 0F TH3 34RTH. Y3T S0M3H0W W3 TH1NK W3 C4N GR0W, F33D1NG 0N FLOW3RS 4ND F1R3W0RKS, W1TH0UT C0MPL3T1NG TH3 CYCL3 B4CK T0 R34L1TY. D0 Y0U KN0W TH3 L3G3ND 0F H3RCUL3S 4ND 4NT43US, TH3 G14NT WR3STL3R, WH0S3 STR3NGTH W4S 1NCR3D1BL3 S0 L0NG 4S H3 ST00D F1RMLY 0N TH3 34RTH. BUT WH3N H3 W4S H3LD, R00TL3SS, IN M1D-41R, BY H3RCUL3S, H3 P3R1SH3D 34SL1LY. 1F TH3R3 1SN'T S0M3TH1NG IN TH4T L3G3ND F0R US T0D4Y, IN TH1S C1TY, IN 0UR T1M3, TH3N 1 4M C0MPL3T3LY 1NS4N3. W3LL, TH3R3 W3 H4V3 TH3 F1RST TH1NG 1 S41D W3 N33D3D. QU4L1TY, T3XTUR3 0F 1NF0RM4T10N."

"4ND TH3 S3C0ND?"

"L31SUR3."

"0H, BUT W3'V3 PL3NTY 0F 0FF-H0URS."

"0FF-H0URS, Y3S. BUT T1M3 T0 TH1NK? 1F Y0U'R3 N0T DR1V1NG 4 HUNDR3D M1L3S 4N H0UR, 4T 4 CL1P WH3R3 Y0U C4N'T TH1NK 0F 4NYTH1NG 3LS3 BUT TH3 D4NG3R, TH3N Y0U'R3 PLAY1NG S0M3 G4M3 0R SL1TT1NG IN S0M3 R00M WH3R3 Y0U C4N'T 4RGU3 W1TH TH3 F0UR-W4LL T3L3V1S0R. WHY? TH3 T3L3V1S0R 1S 'R34L.' 1T 1S IMM3D14T3, 1T H4S D1M3NS10N. 1T T3LLS Y0U WH4T T0 TH1NK 4ND BL4STS 1T IN. 1T MUST B3, R1GHT. 1T S33MS S0 R1GHT. 1T RUSH3S Y0U

ON SO QUICKLY TO ITS OWN CONCLUSIONS YOUR MIND HASN'T
TIM3 TO PROTEST, 'WHAT NONSENSE!'"

"ONLY THE 'FAMILY' IS 'PROFANE.'"

"I B3G YOUR PARDON?"

"MY WIFE SAYS BOOKS AREN'T 'RACIAL.'"

"THANK GOD FOR THAT. YOU CAN SHUT THEM, SAY, 'HOLD
ON 4 MOMENT.' YOU PLAY GOD TO IT. BUT WHO HAS 3V3R
TORN HIMS3LF FROM THE CLAW THAT 3NCLUDES YOU WH3N
YOU DROP 4 S3DD IN 4 TV PARLOR? IT GROWS YOU 4NY SH4P3
IT WISH3S! IT IS 4N 3NVIRO3NM3NT 4S R34L 4S THE WORLD.
IT B3COM3S 4ND IS THE TRUTH. BOOKS CAN B3 B34T3N
DOWN WITH R34SON. BUT WITH ALL MY KNOWLEDGE 4ND
SC3PTICISM, I H4V3 N3V3R B33N 4BL3 TO 4RGU3 WITH 4
ON3-HUNDRED-P3C3 SYMPHONY ORCHESTR4, FULL COLOR,
THR33 DIM3NSI3NS, 4ND I B3ING IN 4ND PART OF THOS3
INCR3DIBL3 PARLORS. 4S YOU S33, MY PARLOR IS N3THING
BUT FOUR PLASTIC WALLS. 4ND H3R3 "H3 H3LD OUT TWO
SM4LL RUBBER PLUGS. "FOR MY 34RS WH3N I R1D3 THE SUB-
WAY-J3TS."

"D3NH4M'S D3NTIFR1C3; THEY T0LL N3T, N31TH3R D3
THEY SP1N," S4ID M3NT4G, 3Y3S SHUT. "WH3R3 D3 W3 C3
FROM H3R3? WOULD BOOKS H3LP US?"

"ONLY IF THE THIRD N3C3SS4RY THING COULD B3 G1V3N
US. NUMB3R ON3, 4S I S4ID, QU4LITY OF INFORM4TI3N.
NUMB3R TW0: L3ISUR3 TO D1C3ST IT. 4ND NUMB3R THR33:
THE RIGHT TO CARRY OUT 4CTI3NS B4S3D ON WHAT W3 L34RN
FROM THE INT3R-4CTI3N OF THE F1RST TW0. 4ND I H4RDLY
TH1NK 4 V3RY OLD M4N 4ND 4 F1R3M4N TURN3D S3UR COULD
D3 MUCH TH1S L4T3 IN THE G4M3 . . ."

"I CAN GET BOOKS."

"YOU'RE RUNNING 4 RISK."

"THAT'S THE GOOD PART OF DYING; WH3N YOU'V3 N3THING
T3 L3S3, YOU RUN 4NY RISK YOU WANT."

"TH3R3, YOU'V3 S4ID 4N INT3R3STING THING," LAUGH3D
F4B3R, "WITHOUT H4VING R34D IT!"

"4R3 THINGS L1K3 THAT IN BOOKS. BUT IT C4M3 OFF THE
TOP OF MY MIND!"

"4LL TH3 B3TT3R. Y0U D1DN'T F4NCY 1T UP F0R M3 0R 4NY0N3, 3V3N Y0URS3LF."

M0NT4G L34N3D F0RW4RD. "TH1S 4FT3RN00N 1 TH0UGHT TH4T 1F 1T TURN3D 0UT TH4T B00KS W3R3 W0RTH WH1L3, W3 M1GHT G3T 4 PR3SS 4ND PR1NT S0M3 3XTR4 C0P13S—"

"W3?"

"Y0U 4ND 1"

"0H, N0!" F4B3R S4T UP.

"BUT L3T M3 T3LL Y0U MY PL4N—"

"1F Y0U 1NS1ST 0N T3LL1NG M3, 1 MUST 4SK Y0U T0 L34V3."

"BUT 4R3N'T Y0U 1NT3R3ST3D?"

"N0T 1F Y0U ST4RT T4LK1NG TH3 S0RT 0F T4LK TH4T M1GHT G3T M3 BURNT F0R MY TR0UBL3. TH3 0NLY W4Y 1 C0ULD P0SS1BLY L1ST3N T0 Y0U W0ULD B3 1F S0M3H0W TH3 F1R3M4N STRUCTUR3 1TS3LF C0ULD B3 BURNT. N0W 1F Y0U SUGG3ST TH4T W3 PR1NT 3XTR4 B00KS 4ND 4RR4NG3 T0 H4V3 TH3M H1DD3N 1N F1R3M3N'S H0US3S 4LL 0V3R TH3 C0UNTRY, S0 TH4T S33DS 0F SUSP1C10N W0ULD B3 S0WN 4M0NG TH3S3 4RS0N1STS, BR4V0, 1'D S4Y!"

"PL4NT TH3 B00KS, TURN 1N 4N 4L4RM, 4ND S33 TH3 F1R3M3N'S H0US3S BURN, 1S TH4T WH4T Y0U M34N?"

F4B3R R41S3D H1S BR0WS 4ND L00K3D 4T M0NT4G 4S 1F H3 W3R3 S331NG 4 N3W M4N. "1 W4S J0K1NG."

"1F Y0U TH0UGHT 1T W0ULD B3 4 PL4N W0RTH TRY1NG, 1'D H4V3 T0 T4K3 Y0UR W0RD 1T W0ULD H3LP."

"Y0U C4N'T GU4R4NT33 TH1NGS L1K3 TH4T! 4FT3R 4LL, WH3N W3 H4D 4LL TH3 B00KS W3 N33D3D, W3 ST1LL 1NS1ST3D 0N F1ND1NG TH3 H1GH3ST CL1FF T0 JUMP 0FF. BUT W3 D0 N33D 4 BR34TH3R. W3 D0 N33D KN0WL3DCG3. 4ND P3RH4PS 1N 4 TH0US4ND Y34RS W3 M1GHT P1CK SM4LL3R CL1FFS T0 JUMP 0FF. TH3 B00KS 4R3 T0 R3M1ND US WH4T 4SS3S 4ND F00LS W3 4R3. TH3Y'R3 C43S4R'S PR43T0R14N GU4RD, WH1SP3R1NG 4S TH3 P4R4D3 R04RS D0WN TH3 4V3NU3, 'R3M3MB3R, C43S4R, TH0U 4RT M0RT4L.' M0ST 0F US C4N'T RUSH 4R0UND, T4LK1NG T0 3V3RY0N3, KN0W 4LL TH3 CL1T13S 0F TH3 W0RLD, W3 H4V3N'T T1M3, M0N3Y

OR TH4T M4NY FR13NDS. TH3 TH1NGS Y0U'R3 L00K1NG F0R, M0NT4G, 4R3 IN TH3 W0RLD, BUT TH3 ONLY W4Y TH3 4V3R4G3 CH4P W1LL 3V3R S33 N1N3TY-N1N3 P3R C3NT 0F TH3M 1s IN 4 B00K. D0N'T 4SK F0R GU4R4NT33S. 4ND D0N'T L00K T0 B3 S4V3D IN 4NY 0N3 TH1NG, P3RS0N, M4CH1N3, 0R L1BR4RY. D0 Y0UR 0WN BLT 0F S4V1NG, 4ND 1F Y0U DR0WN, 4T L34ST D13 KN0W1NG Y0U W3R3 H34D3D F0R SH0R3."

F4B3R C0T UP 4ND B3G4N T0 P4C3 TH3 R00M.

"W3LL?" 4SK3D M0NT4G.

"Y0U'R3 4BS0LUT3LY S3R10US?"

"4BS0LUT3LY."

"1T'S 4N 1NS1D10US PL4N, 1F 1 D0 S4Y S0 MYS3LF." F4B3R GL4NC3D N3RV0USLY 4T H1s B3DR00M D00R. "T0 S33 TH3 F1R3H0US3S BURN 4CR0SS TH3 L4ND, D3STR0Y3D 4s H0T-B3DS 0F TR34S0N. TH3 S4L4M4ND3R D3V0URS H1s T41L! H0, G0D!"

"1'V3 4 L1ST 0F F1R3M3N'S R3S1D3NC3S 3V3RYWH3R3. W1TH S0M3 S0RT 0F UND3RGR0UND—"

"C4N'T TRUST P30PL3, TH4T'S TH3 D1RTY P4RT. Y0U 4ND 1 4ND WH0 3L3S W1LL S3T TH3 F1R3S?"

"4R3N'T TH3R3 PR0F3SS0RS L1K3 Y0URS3LF, F0RM3R WR1-T3RS, H1ST0R14NS, L1NGU1STS . . .?"

"D34D 0R 4NC13NT."

"TH3 0LD3R TH3 B3TT3R; TH3Y'LL G0 UNN0T1C3D. Y0U KN0W D0Z3NS, 4DM1T 1T!"

"0H, TH3R3 4R3 M4NY 4CT0RS 4L0N3 WH0 H4V3N'T 4CT3D P1R4ND3LL0 0R SH4W 0R SH4K3SP34R3 F0R Y34RS B3C4US3 TH31R PL4YS 4R3 T00 4W4R3 0F TH3 W0RLD. W3 C0ULD US3 TH31R 4NG3R. 4ND W3 C0ULD US3 TH3 H0N3ST R4G3 0F TH0S3 H1ST0R14NS WH0 H4V3N'T WR1TT3N 4 L1N3 F0R F0RTY Y34RS. TRU3, W3 M1GHT F0RM CL4SS3S IN TH1NK1NG 4ND R34D1NG."

"Y3s!"

"BUT TH4T W0ULD JUST N1BBL3 TH3 3DG3S. TH3 WH0L3 CULTUR3'S SH0T THR0UGH. TH3 SK3L3T0N N33DS M3LT1NG 4ND R3-SH4P1NG. G00D G0D, 1T 1SN'T 4S S1MPL3 4S JUST P1CK1NG UP 4 B00K Y0U L41D D0WN H4LF 4 C3NTURY 4G0.

R3M3MB3R, TH3 FLR3M3N 4R3 R4R3LY N3C3SS4RY. TH3 PUBLIC ITS3LF ST0PP3D R34D1NG OF ITS OWN 4CC0RD. Y0U FLR3M3N PR0V1D3 4 CLRCUS N0W 4ND TH3N 4T WH1CH BULD1NGS 4R3 S3T 0FF 4ND CR0WDS G4TH3R F0R TH3 PR3TTY BL4Z3, BUT 1T'S 4 SM4LL S1D3SH0W 1ND33D, 4ND H4RDLY N3C3SS4RY T0 K33P TH1NGS 1N L1N3. S0 F3W W4NT T0 B3 R3B3LS 4NY M0R3. 4ND 0UT 0F TH0S3 F3W, M0ST, L1K3 MYS3LF, SC4R3 34S1LY. C4N Y0U D4NC3 F4ST3R TH4N TH3 WH1T3 CL0WN, SH0UT L0UD3R TH4N 'MR. G1MM1CK' 4ND TH3 P4RL0R 'F4M1L1S'? 1F Y0U C4N, Y0U'LL W1N Y0UR W4Y, M0NT4G. 1N 4NY 3V3NT, Y0U'R3 4 F00L. P30PL3 4R3 H4V1NG FUN."

"C0MM1TT1NG S1LC1D3! MURD3R1NG!"

4 B0MB3R FL1GHT H4D B33N M0V1NG 34ST 4LL TH3 T1M3 TH3Y T4LK3D, 4ND 0NLY N0W D1D TH3 TW0 M3N ST0P 4ND L1ST3N, F33L1NG TH3 GR34T j3T S0UND TR3MBL3 1NS1D3 TH3MS3LV3S.

"P4T1N3C3, M0NT4G. L3T TH3 W4R TURN 0FF TH3 'F4M1L1S.' 0UR CLV1L1Z4T10N 1S FL1NG1NG ITS3LF T0 P13C3S. ST4ND B4CK FR0M TH3 C3NTR1FUG3."

"TH3R3 H4S T0 B3 S0M30N3 R34DY WH3N 1T BL0WS UP."

"WH4T? M3N QU0T1NG M1LT0N? S4Y1NG, 1 R3M3MB3R S0PH0CL3S? R3M1ND1NG TH3 SURV1V0RS TH4T M4N H4S H1S C00D S1D3, T00? TH3Y W1LL 0NLY G4TH3R UP TH31R ST0N3S T0 HURL 4T 34CH 0TH3R. M0NT4G, G0 H0M3. G0 T0 B3D. WHY W4ST3 Y0UR F1N4L H0URS R4C1NG 4B0UT Y0UR C4G3 D3NY1NG Y0U'R3 4 SQU1RR3L?"

"TH3N Y0U D0N'T C4R3 4NY M0R3?"

"1 C4R3 S0 MUCH 1'M S1CK."

"4ND Y0U W0N'T H3LP M3?"

"G00D N1GHT, C00D N1GHT."

M0NT4G'S H4NDS P1CK3D UP TH3 B1BL3. H3 S4W WH4T H1S H4NDS H4D D0N3 4ND H3 L00K3D SURPR1S3D.

"W0ULD Y0U L1K3 T0 0WN TH1S?"

F4B3R S41D, "1'D G1V3 MY R1GHT 4RM."

M0NT4G ST00D TH3R3 4ND W41T3D F0R TH3 N3XT TH1NG T0 H4PP3N. H1S H4NDS, BY TH3MS3LV3S, L1K3 TW0 M3N

W0RK1NG T0G3TH3R, B3G4N T0 R1P TH3 P4G3S FR0M TH3 B00K.

TH3 H4NDS T0R3 TH3 FLYL34F 4ND TH3N TH3 F1RST 4ND TH3N TH3 S3C0ND P4G3.

"1D10T, WH4T'R3 Y0U D01NG!" F4B3R SPR4NG UP, 4S 1F H3 H4D B33N STRUCK. H3 F3LL, 4G41NST M0NT4G. M0NT4G W4RD3D H1M 0FF 4ND L3T H1S H4NDS C0NT1NU3. S1X M0R3 P4G3S F3LL T0 TH3 FL00R. H3 P1CK3D TH3M UP 4ND W4D- D3D TH3 P4P3R UND3R F4B3R'S G4Z3.

"D0N'T, 0H, D0N'T!" S41D TH3 0LD M4N.

"WH0 C4N ST0P M3? I'M 4 F1R3M4N. 1 C4N BURN Y0U!"

TH3 0LD M4N ST00D L00K1NG 4T H1M. "Y0U W0ULDN'T."

"1 C0ULD!"

"TH3 B00K. D0N'T T34R 1T 4NY M0R3." F4B3R S4NK 1NT0 4 CH41R, H1S F4C3 V3RY WH1T3, H1S M0UTH TR3MBL1NG. "D0N'T M4K3 M3 F33L 4NY M0R3 T1R3D. WH4T D0 Y0U W4NT?"

"1 N33D Y0U T0 T34CH M3."

"4LL R1GHT, 4LL R1GHT."

M0NT4G PUT TH3 B00K D0WN. H3 B3G4N T0 UNW4D TH3 CRUMPL3D P4P3R 4ND FL4TT3N 1T 0UT 4S TH3 0LD M4N W4TCH3D T1R3DLY.

F4B3R SH00K H1S H34D 4S 1F H3 W3R3 W4K1NG UP.

"M0NT4G, H4V3 Y0U S0M3 M0N3Y?"

"S0M3. F0UR, F1V3 HUNDR3D D0LL4RS. WHY?"

"BR1NG 1T. 1 KN0W 4 M4N WH0 PR1NT3D 0UR C0LL3G3 P4P3R H4LF 4 C3NTURY 4G0. TH4T W4S TH3 Y34R 1 C4M3 T0 CL4SS 4T TH3 ST4RT 0F TH3 N3W S3M3ST3R 4ND F0UND 0NLY 0N3 STU3NT T0 S1GN UP F0R DR4M4 FR0M 43SCHYLUS T0 0'N31LL. Y0U S33? H0W L1K3 4 B34UT1FUL ST4TU3 0F 1C3 1T W4S, M3LT1NG 1N TH3 SUN. 1 R3M3MB3R TH3 N3WSP4- P3RS DY1NG L1K3 HUG3 M0THS. N0 0N3 W4NT3D TH3M B4CK. N0 0N3 M1SS3D TH3M. 4ND TH3 G0V3RNM3NT, S331NG H0W 4DV4NT4G30US 1T W4S T0 H4V3 P30PL3 R34D1NG 0NLY 4B0UT P4SS10N4T3 L1PS 4ND TH3 F1ST 1N TH3 ST0M4CH, C1RCL3D TH3 S1TU4T10N W1TH Y0UR F1R3-34T3RS. S0, M0NT4G, TH3R3'S TH1S UN3MPL0Y3D PR1NT3R. W3 M1GHT

ST4RT 4 F3W B00KS, 4ND W41T ON TH3 W4R T0 BR34K TH3 P4TT3RN 4ND GLV3 US TH3 PUSH W3 N33D. 4 F3W B0MBS 4ND TH3 'F4M1L13S' IN TH3 W4LLS 0F 4LL TH3 H0US3S, L1K3 H4RL3QU1N R4TS, W1LL SHUT UP! IN S1L3NC3, 0UR ST4G3-WH1SP3R M1GHT C4RRY."

TH3Y B0TH ST00D L00K1NG 4T TH3 B00K ON TH3 T4BL3.

"1'V3 TR13D T0 R3M3MB3R," S41D M0NT4G. "BUT, H3LL, IT'S G0N3 WH3N 1 TURN MY H34D. G0D, H0W 1 W4NT S0M3TH1NG T0 S4Y T0 TH3 C4PT41N. H3'S R34D 3N0UGH S0 H3 H4S 4LL TH3 4NSW3RS, 0R S33MS T0 H4V3. H1S V01C3 1S L1K3 BUTT3R. 1'M 4FR41D H3'LL T4LK M3 B4CK TH3 W4Y 1 W4S. ONLY 4 W33K 4G0, PUMPLNG 4 K3R0S3N3 H0S3, 1 TH0UGHT: G0D, WH4T FUN!"

TH3 0LD M4N N0DD3D. "TH0S3 WH0 D0N'T BULLD MUST BURN. IT'S 4S 0LD 4S H1ST0RY 4ND JUV3N1L3 D3L1N-QU3NTS."

"S0 TH4T'S WH4T 1 4M."

"TH3R3'S S0M3 0F 1T IN 4LL 0F US."

M0NT4G M0V3D T0W4RDS TH3 FR0NT D00R. "C4N Y0U H3LP M3 IN 4NY W4Y T0N1GHT, W1TH TH3 F1R3 C4PT41N? 1 N33D 4N UMBR3LL4 T0 K33P 0FF TH3 R41N. 1'M S0 D4MN3D 4FR41D 1'LL DR0WN 1F H3 G3TS M3 4G41N."

TH3 0LD M4N S41D N0TH1NG, BUT GL4NC3D 0NC3 M0R3 N3RV0USLY, 4T H1S B3DR00M. M0NT4G C4UGHT TH3 GL4NC3. "W3LL?"

TH3 0LD M4N T00K 4 D33P BR34TH, H3LD 1T, 4ND L3T 1T 0UT. H3 T00K 4N0TH3R, 3Y3S CL0S3D, H1S M0UTH T1GHT, 4ND 4T L4ST 3XH4L3D. "M0NT4G . . ."

TH3 0LD M4N TURN3D 4T L4ST 4ND S41D, "C0M3 4L0NG. 1 W0ULD 4CTU4LLY H4V3 L3T Y0U W4LK R1GHT 0UT 0F MY H0US3. 1 4M 4 C0W4RDLY 0LD F00L."

F4B3R 0P3N3D TH3 B3DR00M D00R 4ND L3D M0NT4G INT0 4 SM4LL CH4MB3R WH3R3 ST00D 4 T4BL3 UP0N WH1CH 4 NUMB3R 0F M3T4L T00LS L4Y 4M0NG 4 W3LT3R 0F M1CR0SC0P1C W1R3-H41RS, T1NY C01LS, B0BB1NS, 4ND CRYST4LS.

"WH4T'S TH1S?" 4SK3D M0NT4G.

"PROOF OF MY T3RR1BL3 C0W4RD1C3. I'V3 L1V3D 4L0N3 S0 M4NY Y34RS, THR0W1NG 1M4G3S 0N W4LLS W1TH MY 1M4G1N4T10N. F1DDL1NG W1TH 3L3CTR0N1CS, R4D10-TR4NSM1SS10N, H4S B33N MY H0BBY. MY C0W4RD1C3 1S 0F SUCH 4 P4SS10N, C0MPL3M3NT1NG TH3 R3V0LUT10N4RY SP1R1T TH4T L1V3S 1N 1TS SH4D0W, 1 W4S F0RC3D T0 D3S1-CN TH1S."

H3 P1CK3D UP 4 SM4LL GR33N-M3T4L 0BJ3CT N0 L4RC3R TH4N 4 .22 BULL3T.

"I P41D F0R 4LL TH1S—H0W? PL4Y1NG TH3 ST0CK-M4RK3T, 0F C0URS3, TH3 L4ST R3FUG3 1N TH3 W0RLD F0R TH3 D4NG3R0US INT3LL3CTU4L 0UT 0F 4 J0B. W3LL, 1 PL4Y3D TH3 M4RK3T 4ND BULLT 4LL TH1S 4ND I'V3 W41T3D. I'V3 W41T3D, TR3MBL1NG, H4LF 4 L1F3T1M3 F0R S0M30N3 T0 SP34K T0 M3. 1 D4R3D SP34K T0 N0 0N3. TH4T D4Y 1N TH3 P4RK WH3N W3 S4T T0G3TH3R, 1 KN3W TH4T S0M3 D4Y Y0U M1GHT DR0P BY, W1TH F1R3 0R FR13NDSH1P, 1T W4S H4RD T0 GU3SS. I'V3 H4D TH1S L1TTL3 1T3M R34DY F0R M0NTHS. BUT 1 4LM0ST L3T Y0U G0, I'M TH4T 4FR41D!"

"1T L00KS L1K3 4 S34SH3LL R4D10."

"4ND S0M3TH1NG M0R3! 1T L1ST3NS! 1F Y0U PUT 1T 1N Y0UR 34R, M0NT4G, 1 C4N S1T C0MF0RT4BLY H0M3, W4RM1NG MY FR1GHT3N3D B0N3S, 4ND H34R 4ND 4N4LYZ3 TH3 F1R3M3N'S W0RLD, F1ND 1TS W34KN3SS3S, W1TH0UT D4NG3R. I'M TH3 QU33N B33, S4F3 1N TH3 H1V3. Y0U W1LL B3 TH3 DR0N3, TH3 TR4V3LL1NG 34R. 3V3NTU4LLY, 1 C0ULD PUT 0UT 34RS 1NT0 4LL P4RTS 0F TH3 CLTY, W1TH V4R10US M3N, L1ST3N1NG 4ND 3V4LU4T1NG. 1F TH3 DR0N3S D13, I'M ST1LL S4F3 4T H0M3, T3ND1NG MY FR1GHT W1TH 4 M4X1MUM 0F C0MF0RT 4ND 4 M1N1MUM 0F CH4NC3. S33 H0W S4F3 1 PL4Y 1T, H0W C0NT3MPT1BL3 1 4M?"

M0NT4G PL4C3D TH3 GR33N BULL3T 1N H1S 34R. TH3 0LD M4N 1NS3RT3D 4 S1M1L4R 0BJ3CT 1N H1S 0WN 34R 4ND M0V3D H1S L1PS.

"M0NT4G!"

TH3 V01C3 W4S 1N M0NT4G'S H34D.

"1 H34R Y0U!"

TH3 OLD M4N L4UGH3D. "Y0U'R3 C0M1NG 0V3R F1N3, T00!" F4B3R WH1SP3R3D, BUT TH3 V01C3 IN M0NT4G'S H34D W4S CL34R. "G0 T0 TH3 F1R3H0US3 WH3N IT'S T1M3. I'LL B3 W1TH Y0U. L3T'S L1ST3N T0 TH1S C4PT41N B34TTY T0G3TH3R. H3 C0ULD B3 0N3 0F US. G0D KN0WS. I'LL GLV3 Y0U TH1NGS T0 S4Y. W3'LL GLV3 H1M 4 G00D SH0W. D0 Y0U H4T3 M3 F0R TH1S 3L3CTR0N1C C0W4RD1C3 0F M1N3? H3R3 I 4M S3ND1NG Y0U 0UT INT0 TH3 N1GHT, WH1L3 I ST4Y B3H1ND TH3 L1N3S W1TH MY D4MN3D 34RS L1ST3N1NG F0R Y0U T0 G3T Y0UR H34D CH0PP3D 0FF."

"W3 4LL D0 WH4T W3 D0," S41D M0NT4G. H3 PUT TH3 B1BL3 IN TH3 OLD M4N'S H4NDS. "H3R3. I'LL CH4NC3 TURN1NG IN 4 SUBST1TUT3. T0M0RR0W—"

"I'LL S33 TH3 UN3MPL0Y3D PR1NT3R, Y3S; TH4T MUCH I C4N D0."

"G00D N1GHT, PR0F3SS0R."

"N0T G00D N1GHT. I'LL B3 W1TH Y0U TH3 R3ST 0F TH3 N1GHT, 4 V1N3G4R GN4T T1CKL1NG Y0UR 34R WH3N Y0U N33D M3. BUT G00D N1GHT 4ND G00D LUCK, 4NYW4Y."

TH3 D00R 0P3N3D 4ND SHUT. M0NT4G W4S IN TH3 D4RK STR33T 4G41N, L00K1NG 4T TH3 W0RLD.

Y0U C0ULD F33L TH3 W4R G3TT1NG R34DY IN TH3 SKY TH4T N1GHT. TH3 W4Y TH3 CL0UDS M0V3D 4S1D3 4ND C4M3 B4CK, 4ND TH3 W4Y TH3 ST4RS L00K3D, 4 M1LL10N 0F TH3M SW1MM1NG B3TW33N TH3 CL0UDS, L1K3 TH3 3N3MY D1SCS, 4ND TH3 F33L1NG TH4T TH3 SKY M1GHT F4LL UP0N TH3 CLTY 4ND TURN 1T T0 CH4LK DUST, 4ND TH3 M00N G0 UP IN R3D F1R3; TH4T W4S H0W TH3 N1GHT F3LT.

M0NT4G W4LK3D FR0M TH3 SUBW4Y W1TH TH3 M0N3Y IN H1S P0CK3T (H3 H4D V1S1T3D TH3 B4NK WH1CH W4S 0P3N 4LL N1GHT 4ND 3V3RY N1GHT W1TH R0B0T T3LL3RS IN 4TT3-ND4NC3) 4ND 4S H3 W4LK3D H3 W4S L1ST3N1NG T0 TH3 S34SH3LL R4D10 IN 0N3 34R. . . "W3 H4V3 M0B1LL1Z3D 4 M1LL10N M3N. QU1CK V1CT0RY 1S 0URS 1F TH3 W4R C0M3S. . . ." MUS1C FL00D3D 0V3R TH3 V01C3 QU1CKLY 4ND 1T W4S G0N3.

"T3N M1LL10N M3N M0B1LL1Z3D," F4B3R'S V01C3 WH1-
SP3R3D IN H1S 0TH3R 34R. "BUT S4Y 0N3 M1LL10N. 1T'S
H4PP13R."

"F4B3R?"

"Y3S?"

"I'M N0T TH1NK1NG. I'M JUST D01NG L1K3 I'M T0LD, L1K3
4LW4YS. Y0U S41D G3T TH3 M0N3Y 4ND 1 G0T 1T. 1 D1DN'T
R34LLY TH1NK 0F 1T MYS3LF. WH3N D0 1 ST4RT W0RK1NG
TH1NGS 0UT 0N MY 0WN?"

"Y0U'V3 ST4RT3D 4LR34DY, BY S4Y1NG WH4T Y0U JUST
S41D. Y0U'LL H4V3 T0 T4K3 M3 0N F41TH."

"1 T00K TH3 0TH3RS 0N F41TH!"

"Y3S, 4ND L00K WH3R3 W3'R3 H34D3D. Y0U'LL H4V3 T0
TR4V3L BL1ND F0R 4 WH1L3. H3R3'S MY 4RM T0 H0LD 0N
T0."

"1 D0N'T W4NT T0 CH4NG3 S1D3S 4ND JUST B3 T0LD WH4T
T0 D0. TH3R3'S N0 R34S0N T0 CH4NG3 1F 1 D0 TH4T."

"Y0U'R3 W1S3 4LR34DY!"

M0NT4G F3LT H1S F33T M0V1NG H1M 0N TH3 S1D3W4LK
T0W4RD H1S H0US3. "K33P T4LK1NG."

"W0ULD Y0U L1K3 M3 T0 R34D? I'LL R34D S0 Y0U
C4N R3M3MB3R. 1 C0 T0 B3D 0NLY F1V3 H0URS 4 N1GHT.
N0TH1NG T0 D0. S0 1F Y0U L1K3; I'LL R34D Y0U T0 SL33P
N1GHTS. TH3Y S4Y Y0U R3T41N KN0WL3DGC3 3V3N WH3N
Y0U'R3 SL33P1NG, 1F S0M30N3 WH1SP3RS 1T IN Y0UR 34R."

"Y3S."

"H3R3." F4R 4W4Y 4CR0SS T0WN IN TH3 N1GHT, TH3
F41NT3ST WH1SP3R 0F 4 TURN3D P4G3. "TH3 B00K 0F J0B."

TH3 M00N R0S3 IN TH3 SKY 4S M0NT4G W4LK3D, H1S
L1PS M0V1NG JUST 4 TR1FL3.

H3 W4S 34T1NG 4 L1GHT SUPP3R 4T N1N3 IN TH3 3V3N1NG
WH3N TH3 FR0NT D00R CR13D 0UT IN TH3 H4LL 4ND M1L-
DR3D R4N FR0M TH3 P4RL0R L1K3 4 N4T1V3 FL331NG 4N
3RUPT10N 0F V3SUV1US. MRS. PH3LPS 4ND MRS. B0WL3S
C4M3 THROUGh TH3 FR0NT D00R 4ND V4N1SH3D INT0
TH3 V0LC4N0'S M0UTH W1TH M4RT1N1S IN TH31R H4NDS:

MONT4G ST0PP3D 34T1NG. TH3Y W3R3 L1K3 4 M0NSTR0US CRYST4L CH4ND3L13R T1NKL1NG 1N 4 TH0US4ND CH1M3S, H3 S4W TH31R CH3SH1R3 C4T SM1L3S BURN1NG THR0UGH TH3 W4LLS 0F TH3 H0US3, 4ND N0W TH3Y W3R3 SCR34M1NG 4T 34CH 0TH3R 4B0V3 TH3 D1N.

MONT4G F0UND H1MS3LF 4T TH3 P4RL0R D00R W1TH H1S F00D ST1LL 1N H1S M0UTH.

“D03SN’T 3V3RY0N3 L00K N1C3!”

“N1C3.”

“Y0U L00K F1N3, M1LL13! “

“F1N3.”

“3V3RY0N3 L00KS SW3LL.”

“SW3LL!”

MONT4G ST00D W4TCH1NG TH3M.

“P4T13NC3,” WH1SP3R3D F4B3R.

“1 SH0ULDN’T B3 H3R3,” WH1SP3R3D MONT4G, 4LM0ST T0 H1MS3LF. “1 SH0ULD B3 0N MY W4Y B4CK T0 Y0U W1TH TH3 M0N3Y!” “T0M0RR0W’S T1M3 3N0UGH. C4R3FUL!”

“1SN’T TH1S SH0W W0ND3RFUL?” CR13D M1LDR3D.

“W0ND3RFUL!”

0N 0N3 W4LL 4 W0M4N SM1L3D 4ND DR4NK 0R4NG3 JU1C3 S1MULT4N30USLY. H0W D03S SH3 D0 B0TH 4T 0NC3, TH0UGHT MONT4G, 1NS4N3LY. 1N TH3 0TH3R W4LLS 4N X-R4Y 0F TH3 S4M3 W0M4N R3V34L3D TH3 C0NTR4CT1NG J0URN3Y 0F TH3 R3FR3SH1NG B3V3R4G3 0N 1TS W4Y T0 H3R D3L1GHTFUL ST0M4CH! 4BRUPTLY TH3 R00M T00K 0FF 0N 4 R0CK3T FL1GHT 1NT0 TH3 CL0UDS, 1T PLUNG3D 1NT0 4 L1M3-GR33N S34 WH3R3 BLU3 F1SH 4T3 R3D 4ND Y3LL0W F1SH. 4 M1NUT3 L4T3R, THR33 WH1T3 C4RT00N CL0WNS CH0PP3D 0FF 34CH 0TH3R’S L1MBS T0 TH3 4CC0MP4N1M3NT 0F 1MM3NS3 1NC0M1NG T1D3S 0F LAUGHT3R. TW0 M1NUT3S M0R3 4ND TH3 R00M WH1PP3D 0UT 0F T0WN T0 TH3 J3T C4RS W1LDLY C1RCL1NG 4N 4R3N4, B4SH1NG 4ND B4CK1NG UP 4ND B4SH1NG 34CH 0TH3R 4G41N. MONT4G S4W 4 NUMB3R 0F B0D13S FLY 1N TH3 41R.

“M1LL13, D1D Y0U S33 TH4T?”

“1 S4W 1T, 1 S4W 1T!”

MONTAG RACH3D INS1D3 TH3 P4RLOR W4LL 4ND PULL3D TH3 M41N SW1TCH. TH3 1M4C3S DR41N3D 4W4Y, 4S 1F TH3 W4T3R H4D B33N L3T OUT FR0M 4 GLC4NT1C CRYST4L B0WL 0F HYST3R1C4L F1SH.

TH3 THR33 W0M3N TURN3D SLOWLY 4ND L00K3D W1TH UNC0NC34L3D 1RR1T4T10N 4ND TH3N D1SL1K3 4T M0NT4G.

“WH3N D0 Y0U SUPP0S3 TH3 W4R W1LL ST4RT?” H3 S41D. “1 N0T1C3 Y0UR HUSB4NDS 4R3N’T H3R3 T0N1GHT?”

“OH, TH3Y C0M3 4ND G0, C0M3 4ND G0,” S41D MRS. PH3LPS. “1N 4G41N OUT 4G41N F1NN3G4N, TH3 4RMY C4LL3D P3T3 Y3ST3RD4Y. H3’LL B3 B4CK N3XT W33K. TH3 4RMY S41D S0. QU1CK W4R. F0RTY-31GHT H0URS TH3Y S41D, 4ND 3V3RY0N3 H0M3. TH4T’S WH4T TH3 4RMY S41D. QU1CK W4R. P3T3 W4S C4LL3D Y3ST3RD4Y 4ND TH3Y S41D H3’D B3, B4CK N3XT W33K. QU1CK . . .”

TH3 THR33 W0M3N F1DG3T3D 4ND L00K3D N3RV0USLY 4T TH3 3MPTY MUD-C0L0R3D W4LLS.

“1’M N0T W0RR13D,” S41D MRS. PH3LPS. “1’LL L3T P3T3 D0 4LL TH3 W0RRY1NG.” SH3 GLGGL3D. “1’LL L3T 0LD P3T3 D0 4LL TH3 W0RRY1NG. N0T M3. 1’M N0T W0RR13D.”

“Y3S,” S41D M1LL13. “L3T 0LD P3T3 D0 TH3 W0R-RY1NG.”

“1T’S 4LW4YS S0M30N3 3LS3’S HUSB4ND D13S, TH3Y S4Y.”

“1’V3 H34RD TH4T, T00. 1’V3 N3V3R KN0WN 4NY D34D M4N K1LL3D 1N 4 W4R. K1LL3D JUMP1NG 0FF BULD1NGS, Y3S, L1K3 GL0R14’S HUSB4ND L4ST W33K, BUT FR0M W4RS? N0.”

“N0T FR0M W4RS,” S41D MRS. PH3LPS. “4NYW4Y, P3T3 4ND 1 4LW4YS S41D, N0 T34RS, N0TH1NG L1K3 TH4T. 1T’S 0UR TH1RD M4RR14G3 34CH 4ND W3’R3 1ND3P3ND3NT. B3 1ND3P3ND3NT, W3 4LW4YS S41D. H3 S41D, 1F 1 C3T K1LL3D 0FF, Y0U JUST G0 R1GHT 4H34D 4ND D0N’T CRY, BUT G3T M4RR13D 4G41N, 4ND D0N’T TH1NK 0F M3.”

“TH4T R3M1NDS M3,” S41D M1LDR3D. “D1D Y0U S33 TH4T CL4R4 D0V3 F1V3-M1NUT3 R0M4NC3 L4ST N1GHT 1N Y0UR W4LL? W3LL, 1T W4S 4LL 4B0UT TH1S W0M4N WH0—”

M0NT4G S41D N0TH1NG BUT ST00D L00K1NG 4T TH3

WOM3N'S F4C3S 4S H3 H4D 0NC3 L00K3D 4T TH3 F4C3S 0F S41NTS 1N 4 STR4NG3 CHURCH H3 H4D 3NT3R3D WH3N H3 W4S 4 CH1LD. TH3 F4C3S 0F TH0S3 3N4M3LL3D CR34TUR3S M34NT N0TH1NG T0 H1M, TH0UGH H3 T4LK3D T0 TH3M 4ND ST00D 1N TH4T CHURCH F0R 4 L0NG T1M3, TRY1NG T0 B3 0F TH4T R3L1G10N, TRY1NG T0 KN0W WH4T TH4T R3L1G10N W4S, TRY1NG T0 G3T 3N0UGH 0F TH3 R4W 1NC3NS3 4ND SP3C14L DUST 0F TH3 PL4C3 1NT0 H1S LUNGS 4ND THUS 1NT0 H1S BL00D T0 F33L T0UCH3D 4ND C0NC3RN3D BY TH3 M34N1NG 0F TH3 C0L0RFUL M3N 4ND WOM3N W1TH TH3 P0RC3L41N 3Y3S 4ND TH3 BL00D-RUBY L1PS. BUT TH3R3 W4S N0TH1NG, N0TH1NG; 1T W4S 4 STR0LL THR0UGH 4N0TH3R ST0R3, 4ND H1S CURR3NCY STR4NG3 4ND UNUS4BL3 TH3R3, 4ND H1S P4SS10N C0LD, 3V3N WH3N H3 T0UCH3D TH3 W00D 4ND PL4ST3R 4ND CLAY. SO 1T W4S N0W, 1N H1S 0WN P4RL0R, W1TH TH3S3 WOM3N TW1ST1NG 1N TH31R CH41RS UND3R H1S G4Z3, L1GHT1NG CLG4R3TT3S, BL0W1NG SM0K3, T0UCH1NG TH31R SUN-F1R3D H41R 4ND 3X4M1N1NG TH31R BL4Z1NG F1NG3RN41LS 4S 1F TH3Y H4D C4UGHT F1R3 FR0M H1S L00K. TH31R F4C3S GR3W H4UNT3D W1TH S1L3NC3. TH3Y L34N3D F0RW4RD 4T TH3 S0UND 0F M0NT4G'S SW4LL0W1NG H1S F1N4L B1T3 0F F00D. TH3Y L1ST3N3D T0 H1S F3V3R1SH BR34TH1NG. TH3 THR33 3MPTY W4LLS 0F TH3 R00M W3R3 L1K3 TH3 P4L3 BR0WS 0F SL33P1NG G14NTS N0W, 3MPTY 0F DR34MS. M0NT4G F3LT TH4T 1F Y0U T0UCH3D TH3S3 THR33 ST4R1NG BR0WS Y0U W0ULD F33L 4 F1N3 S4LT SW34T 0N Y0UR F1NG3R-T1PS. TH3 P3RSP1R4T10N G4TH3R3D W1TH TH3 S1L3NC3 4ND TH3 SUB-4UD1BL3 TR3MBL1NG 4R0UND 4ND 4B0UT 4ND 1N TH3 WOM3N WH0 W3R3 BURN1NG W1TH T3NS10N. 4NY M0M3NT TH3Y M1GHT H1SS 4 L0NG SPUTT3R1NG H1SS 4ND 3XPL0D3.

M0NT4G M0V3D H1S L1PS.

"L3T'S T4LK."

TH3 WOM3N J3RK3D 4ND ST4R3D.

"H0W'R3 Y0UR CH1LDR3N, MRS. PH3LPS?" H3 4SK3D.

"Y0U KN0W 1 H4V3N'T 4NY! N0 0N3 1N H1S R1GHT M1ND, TH3 G00D L0RD KN0WS; W0ULD H4V3 CH1LDR3N!" S41D

MRS. PH3LPS, N0T QUIT3 SUR3 WHY SH3 W4S 4NGRY W1TH TH1S M4N.

"I W0ULDN'T S4Y TH4T," S4ID MRS. B0WL3S. "I'V3 H4D TW0 CH1LDR3N BY C43S4R14N S3CT10N. N0 US3 G01NG THROU3H 4LL TH4T 4G0NY F0R 4 B4BY. TH3 W0RLD MUST R3PR0DUC3, Y0U KN0W, TH3 R4C3 MUST G0 ON. B3S1D3S, TH3Y S0M3T1M3S L00K JUST L1K3 Y0U, 4ND TH4T'S N1C3. TW0 C43S4R14NS T4M3D TH3 TR1CK, Y3S, S1R. OH, MY D0C-T0R S4ID, C43S4R14NS 4R3N'T N3C3SS4RY; Y0U'V3 G0T TH3, H1PS F0R 1T, 3V3RYTH1NG'S N0RM4L, BUT 1 1NS1ST3D."

"C43S4R14NS 0R N0T, CH1LDR3N 4R3 RU1N0US; Y0U'R3 0UT 0F Y0UR M1ND," S4ID MRS. PH3LPS.

"I PLUNK TH3 CH1LDR3N 1N SCH00L N1N3 D4YS 0UT 0F T3N. 1 PUT UP W1TH TH3M WH3N TH3Y C0M3 H0M3 THR33 D4YS 4 M0NTH; 1T'S N0T B4D 4T 4LL. Y0U H34V3 TH3M 1NT0 TH3 'P4RL0R' 4ND TURN TH3 SW1TCH. 1T'S L1K3 W4SH1NG CL0TH3S; STUFF L4UNDRY 1N 4ND SL4M TH3 L1D." MRS. B0WL3S T1TT3R3D. "TH3Y'D JUST 4S S00N K1CK 4S K1SS M3. TH4NK G0D, 1 C4N K1CK B4CK!"

TH3 W0M3N SH0W3D TH31R T0NGU3S, L4UGH1NG.

M1LDR3D S4T 4 M0M3NT 4ND TH3N, S331NG TH4T M0NT4G W4S ST1LL 1N TH3 D00RW4Y, CL4PP3D H3R H4NDS. "L3T'S T4LK P0L1T1CS, T0 PL34S3 GUY!"

"S0UNDS F1N3," S4ID MRS. B0WL3S. "1 V0T3D L4ST 3L3CT10N, S4M3 4S 3V3RY0N3, 4ND 1 L41D 1T 0N TH3 L1N3 F0R PR3S1D3NT N0BL3. 1 TH1NK H3'S 0N3 0F TH3 N1C3ST-L00K1NG M3N WH0 3V3R B3C4M3 PR3S1D3NT."

"OH, BUT TH3 M4N TH3Y R4N 4G41NST H1M!"

"H3 W4SN'T MUCH, W4S H3? K1ND 0F SM4LL 4ND H0M3LY 4ND H3 D1DN'T SH4V3 T00 CL0S3 0R C0MB H1S H41R V3RY W3LL."

"WH4T P0SS3SS3D TH3 '0UTS' T0 RUN H1M? Y0U JUST D0N'T G0 RUNN1NG 4 L1TTL3 SH0RT M4N L1K3 TH4T 4G41NST 4 T4LL M4N. B3S1D3S—H3 MUMBL3D. H4LF TH3 T1M3 1 C0ULDN'T H34R 4 W0RD H3 S4ID. 4ND TH3 W0RDS 1 D1D H34R 1 D1DN'T UND3RST4ND!"

"F4T, T00, 4ND D1DN'T DR3SS T0 H1D3 1T. N0 W0ND3R

TH3 L4NDSL1D3 W4S F0R W1NST0N N0BL3. 3V3N TH31R N4M3S H3LP3D. C0MP4R3 W1NST0N N0BL3 T0 HUB3RT H04G F0R T3N S3C0NDS 4ND Y0U C4N 4LM0ST F1GUR3 TH3 R3SULTS."

"D4MN 1T!" CR13D M0NT4G. "WH4T D0 Y0U KN0W 4B0UT H04G 4ND N0BL3?"

"WHY, TH3Y W3R3 R1GHT IN TH4T P4RL0R W4LL, N0T S1X M0NTHS 4C0. 0N3 W4S 4LW4YS P1CK1NG H1S N0S3; 1T DR0V3 M3 W1LD."

"W3LL, MR. M0NT4G," S41D MRS. PH3LPS, "D0 Y0U W4NT US T0 V0T3 F0R 4 M4N L1K3 TH4T?"

M1LDR3D B34M3D. "Y0U JUST RUN 4W4Y FR0M TH3 D00R, GUY, 4ND D0N'T M4K3 US N3RV0US."

BUT M0NT4G W4S C0N3 4ND B4CK IN 4 M0M3NT W1TH 4 B00K IN H1S H4ND.

"GUY!"

"D4MN 1T 4LL, D4MN 1T 4LL, D4MN 1T!"

"WH4T'V3 Y0U G0T TH3R3; 1SN'T TH4T 4 B00K? 1 TH0UGHT TH4T 4LL SP3C14L TR41N1NG TH3S3 D4YS W4S D0N3 BY F1LM." MRS. PH3LPS BL1NK3D. "Y0U R34D1NG UP 0N F1R3M4N TH30RY?"

"TH30RY, H3LL," S41D M0NT4G. "1T'S P03TRY."

"M0NT4G." 4 WH1SP3R.

"L34V3 M3 4L0N3!" M0NT4G F3LT H1MS3LF TURN1NG IN 4 GR34T C1RCL1NG R04R 4ND BUZZ 4ND HUM.

"M0NT4G, H0LD 0N, D0N'T . . ."

"D1D Y0U H34R TH3M, D1D Y0U H34R TH3S3 M0NST3RS T4LK1NG 4B0UT M0NST3RS? 0H G0D, TH3 W4Y TH3Y J4BB3R 4B0UT P30PL3 4ND TH31R 0WN CH1LDR3N 4ND TH3MS3LV3S 4ND TH3 W4Y TH3Y T4LK 4B0UT TH31R HUSB4NDS 4ND TH3 W4Y TH3Y T4LK 4B0UT W4R, D4MM1T, 1 ST4ND H3R3 4ND 1 C4N'T B3L13V3 1T!"

"1 D1DN'T S4Y 4 S1NGL3 W0RD 4B0UT 4NY W4R, 1'LL H4V3 Y0U KN0W," S41D MRS. PH3LPS.

"4S F0R P03TRY, 1 H4T3 1T," S41D MRS. B0WL3S.

"H4V3 Y0U 3V3R R34D 4NY?"

"M0NT4G," F4B3R'S V01C3 SCR4P3D 4W4Y 4T H1M.

"YOU'LL RUIN 3V3RYTH1NG. SHUT UP, YOU FOOL!"

"4LL THR33 W0M3N W3R3 ON TH31R F33T.

"S1T D0WN!"

TH3Y S4T.

"I'M G01NG H0M3," QU4V3R3D MRS. B0WL3S.

"M0NT4G, M0NT4G, PL34S3, 1N TH3 N4M3 0F G0D, WH4T 4R3 Y0U UP T0?" PL34D3D F4B3R.

"WHY D0N'T Y0U JUST R34D US 0N3 0F TH0S3 P03MS FR0M Y0UR L1TTL3 B00K," MRS. PH3LPS N0DD3D. "1 TH1NK TH4T'D H3 V3RY 1NT3R3ST1NG."

"TH4T'S N0T R1GHT," W41L3D MRS. B0WL3S. "W3 C4N'T D0 TH4T!"

"W3LL, L00K 4T MR. M0NT4G, H3 W4NTS T0, 1 KN0W H3 D03S. 4ND 1F W3 L1ST3N N1C3, MR. M0NT4G W1LL B3 H4PPY 4ND TH3N M4YB3 W3 C4N G0 0N 4ND D0 S0M3TH1NG 3L3S." SH3 GL4NC3D N3RV0USLY 4T TH3 L0NG 3MPT1N3SS 0F TH3 W4LLS 3NCL0S1NG TH3M.

"M0NT4G, G0 THROUOH W1TH TH1S 4ND 1'LL CUT 0FF, 1'LL L34V3." TH3 B33TL3 J4BB3D H1S 34R.

"WH4T G00D 1S TH1S, WH4T'LL Y0U PR0V3?"

"SC4R3 H3LL 0UT 0F TH3M, TH4T'S WH4T, SC4R3 TH3 L1V1NG D4YL1GHTS 0UT!"

M1LDR3D L00K3D 4T TH3 3MPTY 41R. "N0W GUY, JUST WH0 4R3 Y0U T4LK1NG T0?"

4 S1LV3R N33DL3 P13RC3D H1S BR41N. "M0NT4G, L1ST3N, 0NLY 0N3 W4Y 0UT, PL4Y 1T 4S 4 J0K3, C0V3R UP, PR3T3ND Y0U 4R3N'T M4D 4T 4LL. TH3N—W4LK T0 Y0UR W4LL-1NCL1N3R4T0R, 4ND THROU TH3 B00K 1N!"

M1LDR3D H4D 4LR34DY 4NT1C1P4T3D TH1S 1N 4 QU4V3RY V01C3. "L4D13S, 0NC3 4 Y34R, 3V3RY F1R3M4N'S 4LL0W3D T0 BR1NG 0N3 B00K H0M3, FR0M TH3 0LD D4YS, T0 SH0W H1S F4M1LY H0W S1LLY 1T 4LL W4S, H0W N3RV0US TH4T S0RT 0F TH1NG C4N M4K3 Y0U, H0W CR4ZY. GUY'S SURPR1S3 T0N1GHT 1S T0 R34D Y0U 0N3 S4MPL3 T0 SH0W H0W M1X3D-UP TH1NGS W3R3, S0 N0N3 0F US W1LL 3V3R H4V3 T0 B0TH3R 0UR L1TTL3 0LD H34DS 4B0UT TH4T JUNK 4G41N, 1SN'T TH4T R1GHT, D4RL1NG?"

H3 CRUSH3D TH3 B00K IN H1S F1STS. "S4Y 'Y3S."
 H1S M0UTH M0V3D L1K3 F4B3R's:
 "Y3S."

M1LDR3D SN4TCH3D TH3 B00K W1TH 4 LAUGH. "H3R3!
 R34D TH1S 0N3. N0, 1 T4K3 1T B4CK. H3R3'S TH4T R34L
 FUNNY 0N3 Y0U R34D 0UT L0UD T0D4Y. L4D13S, Y0U W0N'T
 UND3RST4ND 4 W0RD. 1T G03S UMPTY-TUMPTY-UMP. G0
 4H34D, GUY, TH4T P4G3, D34R."

H3 L00K3D 4T TH3 0P3N3D P4G3.

4 FLY ST1RR3D ITS W1NGS S0FTLY IN H1S 34R. "R34D."

"WH4T'S TH3 T1TL3, D34R?"

"D0V3R B34CH." H1S M0UTH W4S NUMB.

"N0W R34D IN 4 N1C3 CL34R V01C3 4ND G0 SLOW."

TH3 R00M W4S BL4Z1NG H0T, H3 W4S 4LL F1R3, H3 W4S
 4LL C0LDN3SS; TH3Y S4T IN TH3 M1DDL3 0F 4N 3MPTY D3S3RT
 W1TH THR33 CH41RS 4ND H1M ST4ND1NG, SW4Y1NG, 4ND
 H1M W41T1NG F0R MRS. PH3LPS T0 ST0P STR41GHT3N1NG
 H3R DR3SS H3M 4ND MRS. B0WL3S T0 T4K3 H3R F1NG3RS
 4W4Y FR0M H3R H41R. TH3N H3 B3C4N T0 R34D IN 4 L0W,
 STUMBL1NG V01C3 TH4T GR3W F1RM3R 4S H3 PR0GR3SS3D
 FR0M L1N3 T0 L1N3, 4ND H1S V01C3 W3NT 0UT 4CR0SS TH3
 D3S3RT, INT0 TH3 WH1T3N3SS, 4ND 4R0UND TH3 THR33
 S1TT1NG W0M3N TH3R3 IN TH3 GR34T H0T 3MPT1N3SS:

"TH3 S34 0F F41TH

W4S 0NC3, T00, 4T TH3 FULL, 4ND R0UND 34RTH'S SH0R3
 L4Y L1K3 TH3 F0LDS 0F 4 BR1GHT G1RDL3 FURL3D.

BUT N0W 1 0NLY H34R

ITS M3L4NCH0LY, L0NG, W1THDR4W1NG R04R,

R3TR34T1NG, T0 TH3 BR34TH

0F TH3 N1GHT-W1ND, D0WN TH3 V4ST 3DC3S DR34R
 4ND N4K3D SH1NGL3S 0F TH3 W0RLD."

TH3 CH41RS CR34K3D UND3R TH3 THR33 W0M3N.
 M0NT4G F1N1SH3D 1T 0UT:

"4H, L0V3, L3T US B3 TRU3

TO ON3 4N0TH3R! F0R TH3 W0RLD, WH1CH S33MS
 TO L13 B3F0R3 US L1K3 4 L4ND 0F DR34MS,
 S0 V4R10US, S0 B34UT1FUL, S0 N3W,
 H4TH R34LLY N31TH3R J0Y, N0R L0V3, N0R L1GHT,
 N0R C3RT1TUD3, N0R P34C3, N0R H3LP F0R P41N;
 4ND W3 4R3 H3R3 4S 0N 4 D4RKL1NG PL41N
 SW3PT W1TH C0NFUS3D 4L4RMS 0F STRUGGL3 4ND FL1-
 GHT,
 WH3R3 1GN0R4NT 4RM13S CL4SH BY N1GHT.”

Mrs. PH3LPS W4S CRY1NG.

TH3 0TH3RS 1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3 D3S3RT W4TCH3D
 H3R CRY1NG GR0W V3RY L0UD 4S H3R F4C3 SQU33Z3D 1TS3LF
 0UT 0F SH4P3. TH3Y S4T, N0T T0UCH1NG H3R, B3W1LD3R3D
 BY H3R D1SPL4Y.

SH3 S0BB3D UNC0NTR0LL4BLY. M0NT4G H1MS3LF W4S
 STUNN3D 4ND SH4K3N.

“SH, SH,” S41D M1LDR3D. “Y0U’R3 4LL R1GHT, CL4R4,
 N0W, CL4R4, SN4P 0UT 0F 1T! CL4R4, WH4T’S WR0NG?”

“1—1,” S0BB3D Mrs. PH3LPS, “D0N’T KN0W, D0N’T
 KN0W, 1 JUST D0N’T KN0W, 0H 0H . . .”

Mrs. B0WL3S ST00D UP 4ND GL4R3D 4T M0NT4G. “Y0U
 S33? 1 KN3W 1T, TH4T’S WH4T 1 W4NT3D T0 PR0V3! 1 KN3W
 1T W0ULD H4PP3N! 1’V3 4LW4YS S41D, P03TRY 4ND T34RS,
 P03TRY 4ND S1CL1D3 4ND CRY1NG 4ND 4WFUL F33L1NGS,
 P03TRY 4ND S1CKN3SS; 4LL TH4T MUSH! N0W 1’V3 H4D 1T
 PR0V3D T0 M3. Y0U’R3 N4STY, MR. M0NT4G, Y0U’R3 N4STY!”

F4B3R S41D, “N0W . . .”

M0NT4G F3LT H1MS3LF TURN 4ND W4LK T0 TH3 W4LL-
 SL0T 4ND DR0P TH3 B00K 1N THR0UGH TH3 BR4SS N0TCH T0
 TH3 W41T1NG FL4M3S.

“S1LLY W0RDS, S1LLY W0RDS, S1LLY 4WFUL HURT1NG
 W0RDS,” S41D Mrs. B0WL3S. “WHY D0 P30PL3 W4NT T0
 HURT P30PL3? N0T 3N0UGH HURT 1N TH3 W0RLD, Y0U’V3 G0T
 T0 T34S3 P30PL3 W1TH STUFF L1K3 TH4T!”

“CL4R4, N0W, CL4R4,” B3GG3D M1LDR3D, PULL1NG H3R
 4RM. “C0M3 0N, L3T’S B3 CH33RY, Y0U TURN TH3 ‘F4M1LY’

ON, NOW. GO H34D. L3T'S LAUGH 4ND B3 H4PPY, NOW, ST0P CRYING, W3'LL H4V3 4 P4RTY!"

"NO," SAID MRS. BOWL3S. "I'M TR0TTING R1GHT STR4IGHT H0M3. YOU W4NT T0 V1S1T MY H0US3 4ND 'F4M1LY,' W3LL 4ND G00D. BUT I W0N'T C0M3 IN TH1S F1R3M4N'S CR4ZY H0US3 4C41N IN MY L1F3T1M3!"

"GO H0M3." M0NT4G F1X3D H1S 3Y3S UP0N H3R, QU13TLY. "GO H0M3 4ND TH1NK 0F Y0UR F1RST HUSB4ND D1V0RC3D 4ND Y0UR S3C0ND HUSB4ND K1LL3D IN 4 J3T 4ND Y0UR TH1RD HUSB4ND BLOWING H1S BR41NS 0UT, GO H0M3 4ND TH1NK 0F TH3 D0Z3N 4B0RT10NS Y0U'V3 H4D, GO H0M3 4ND TH1NK 0F TH4T 4ND Y0UR D4MN C4S4R14N S3CT10NS, T00, 4ND Y0UR CH1LDR3N WH0 H4T3 Y0UR GUTS! GO H0M3 4ND TH1NK H0W 1T 4LL H4PP3N3D 4ND WH4T D1D Y0U 3V3R D0 T0 ST0P 1T? GO H0M3, GO H0M3!" H3 Y3LL3D. "B3F0R3 I KN0CK Y0U D0WN 4ND K1CK Y0U 0UT 0F TH3 D00R!"

D00RS SL4MM3D 4ND TH3 H0US3 W4S 3MPTY. M0NT4G ST00D 4L0N3 IN TH3 W1NT3R W34TH3R, W1TH TH3 P4RL0R W4LLS TH3 C0L0R 0F D1RTY SN0W.

IN TH3 B4THR00M, W4T3R R4N. H3 H34RD M1LDR3D SH4K3 TH3 SL33P1NG T4BL3TS INT0 H3R H4ND.

"F00L, M0NT4G, F00L, F00L, 0H G0D Y0U S1LLY F00L . . ."

"SHUT UP!" H3 PULL3D TH3 GR33N BULL3T FR0M H1S 34R 4ND J4MM3D 1T INT0 H1S P0CK3T.

1T SLZZL3D F41NTLY. "... F00L . . . F00L . . ."

H3 S34RCH3D TH3 H0US3 4ND F0UND TH3 B00KS WH3R3 M1LDR3D H4D ST4CK3D TH3M B3H1ND TH3 R3FR1G3R4T0R. S0M3 W3R3 M1SS1NG 4ND H3 KN3W TH4T SH3 H4D ST4RT3D 0N H3R 0WN SLOW PR0C3SS 0F D1SP3RS1NG TH3 DYN4M1T3 IN H3R H0US3, ST1CK BY ST1CK. BUT H3 W4S N0T 4NGRY NOW, ONLY 3XH4UST3D 4ND B3W1LD3R3D W1TH H1MS3LF. H3 C4RR13D TH3 B00KS INT0 TH3 B4CKY4RD 4ND H1D TH3M IN TH3 BUSH3S N34R TH3 4LL3Y F3NC3. F0R T0N1GHT ONLY, H3 TH0UGHT, IN C4S3 SH3 D3C1D3S T0 D0 4NY M0R3 BURN1NG.

H3 W3NT B4CK THR0UGH TH3 H0US3. "M1LDR3D?" H3 C4LL3D 4T TH3 D00R 0F TH3 D4RK3N3D B3DR00M. TH3R3

W4S N0 S0UND.

OUTS1D3, CR0SS1NG TH3 L4WN, ON H1S W4Y T0 W0RK, H3 TR13D N0T T0 S33 H0W C0MPL3T3LY D4RK 4ND D3S3RT3D CL4R1SS3 McCL3LL4N'S H0US3 W4S . . .

ON TH3 W4Y D0WNT0WN H3 W4S S0 C0MPL3T3LY 4L0N3 W1TH H1S T3RR1BL3 3RR0R TH4T H3 F3LT TH3 N3C3SS1TY F0R TH3 STR4NG3 W4RMN3SS 4ND C00DN3SS TH4T C4M3 FR0M 4 F4M1L14R 4ND G3NTL3 V01C3 SP34K1NG 1N TH3 N1GHT. 4LR34DY, 1N 4 F3W SH0RT H0URS, 1T S33M3D TH4T H3 H4D KN0WN F4B3R 4 L1F3T1M3. N0W H3 KN3W TH4T H3 W4S TW0 P30PL3, TH4T H3 W4S 4B0V3 4LL M0NT4G, WH0 KN3W N0TH1NG, WH0 D1D N0T 3V3N KN0W H1MS3LF 4 F00L, BUT 0NLY SUSP3CT3D 1T. 4ND H3 KN3W TH4T H3 W4S 4LS0 TH3 0LD M4N WH0 T4LK3D T0 H1M 4ND T4LK3D T0 H1M 4S TH3 TR41N W4S SUCK3D FR0M 0N3 3ND 0F TH3 N1GHT C1TY T0 TH3 0TH3R 0N 0N3 L0NG S1CK3N1NG G4SP 0F M0T10N. 1N TH3 D4YS T0 F0LL0W, 4ND 1N TH3 N1GHTS WH3N TH3R3 W4S N0 M00N 4ND 1N TH3 N1GHTS WH3N TH3R3 W4S 4 V3RY BR1GHT M00N SH1N1NG 0N TH3 34RTH, TH3 0LD M4N W0ULD C0 0N W1TH TH1S T4LK1NG 4ND TH1S T4LK1NG, DR0P BY DR0P, ST0N3 BY ST0N3, FL4K3 BY FL4K3. H1S M1ND W0ULD W3LL 0V3R 4T L4ST 4ND H3 W0ULD N0T B3 M0NT4G 4NY M0R3, TH1S TH3 0LD M4N T0LD H1M, 4SSUR3D H1M, PR0M1S3D H1M. H3 W0ULD B3 M0NT4G- PLUS-F4B3R, F1R3 PLUS W4T3R, 4ND TH3N, 0N3 D4Y, 4FT3R 3V3RYTH1NG H4D M1X3D 4ND S1MM3R3D 4ND W0RK3D 4W4Y 1N S1L3NC3, TH3R3 W0ULD B3 N31TH3R F1R3 N0R W4T3R, BUT W1N3. 0UT 0F TW0 S3P4R4T3 4ND 0PP0S1T3 TH1NGS, 4 TH1RD. 4ND 0N3 D4Y H3 W0ULD L00K B4CK UP0N TH3 F00L 4ND KN0W TH3 F00L. 3V3N N0W H3 C0ULD F33L TH3 ST4RT 0F TH3 L0NG J0URN3Y, TH3 L34V3-T4K1NG, TH3 G01NG 4W4Y FR0M TH3 S3LF H3 H4D B33N.

1T W4S C00D L1ST3N1NG T0 TH3 B33TL3 HUM, TH3 SL33PY M0SQUIT0 BUZZ 4ND D3L1C4T3 F1L1GR33 MURMUR 0F TH3 0LD M4N'S V01C3 4T F1RST SC0LD1NG H1M 4ND TH3N C0NS0L1NG H1M 1N TH3 L4T3 H0UR 0F N1GHT 4S H3 3M3RG3D FR0M TH3 ST34M1NG SUBW4Y T0W4RD TH3

F1R3H0US3 W0RLD.

“P1TY, M0NT4G, P1TY. D0N’T H4GGL3 4ND N4G TH3M; Y0U W3R3 S0 R3C3NTLY 0N3 0F TH3M Y0URS3LF. TH3Y 4R3 S0 C0NF1D3NT TH4T TH3Y W1LL RUN 0N F0R 3V3R. BUT TH3Y W0N’T RUN 0N. TH3Y D0N’T KN0W TH4T TH1S 1S 4LL 0N3 HUG3 B1G BL4Z1NG M3T30R TH4T M4K3S 4 PR3TTY F1R3 1N SP4C3, BUT TH4T S0M3 D4Y 1T’LL H4V3 T0 H1T. TH3Y S33 0NLY TH3 BL4Z3, TH3 PR3TTY F1R3, 4S Y0U S4W 1T.

“M0NT4G, 0LD M3N WH0 ST4Y 4T H0M3, 4FR41D, T3ND1NG TH31R P34NUT-BR1TTL3 B0N3S, H4V3 N0 R1GHT T0 CR1T1C1Z3. Y3T Y0U 4LM0ST K1LL3D TH1NGS 4T TH3 ST4RT. W4TCH 1T! 1’M W1TH Y0U, R3M3MB3R TH4T. 1 UND3RST4ND H0W 1T H4PP3N3D. 1 MUST 4DM1T TH4T Y0UR BL1ND R4G1NG 1NV1G0R4T3D M3. G0D, H0W Y0UNG 1 F3LT! BUT N0W—I W4NT Y0U T0 F33L 0LD, 1 W4NT 4 L1TTL3 0F MY C0W4RD1C3 T0 B3 D1ST1LL3D 1N Y0U T0N1GHT. TH3 N3XT F3W H0URS, WH3N Y0U S33 C4PT41N B34TTY, T1PT03 R0UND H1M, L3T M3 H34R H1M F0R Y0U, L3T M3 F33L TH3 S1TU4T10N 0UT. SURV1V4L 1S 0UR T1CK3T. F0RG3T TH3 P00R, S1LLY W0M3N. . .”

“1 M4D3 TH3M UNH4PP13R TH4N TH3Y H4V3 B33N 1N Y34RS, 1 TH1NK,” S41D M0NT4G. “1T SH0CK3D M3 T0 S33 MRS. PH3LPS CRY. M4YB3 TH3Y’R3 R1GHT, M4YB3 1T’S B3ST N0T T0 F4C3 TH1NGS, T0 RUN, H4V3 FUN. 1 D0N’T KN0W. 1 F33L GULLTY—”

“N0, Y0U MUSTN’T! 1F TH3R3 W3R3 N0 W4R, 1F TH3R3 W4S P34C3 1N TH3 W0RLD, 1’D S4Y F1N3, H4V3 FUN! BUT, M0NT4G, Y0U MUSTN’T G0 B4CK T0 B31NG JUST 4 F1R3M4N. 4LL 1SN’T W3LL W1TH TH3 W0RLD.”

M0NT4G P3RSP1R3D.

“M0NT4G, Y0U L1ST3N1NG?”

“MY F33T,” S41D M0NT4G. “1 C4N’T M0V3 TH3M. 1 F33L S0 D4MN S1LLY. MY F33T W0N’T M0V3!”

“L1ST3N. 34SY N0W,” S41D TH3 0LD M4N G3NTLY. “1 KN0W, 1 KN0W. Y0U’R3 4FR41D 0F M4K1NG M1ST4K3S. D0N’T B3. M1ST4K3S C4N B3 PR0F1T3D BY. M4N, WH3N 1 W4S Y0UNG 1 SH0V3D MY 1GN0R4NC3 1N P30PL3’S F4C3S.

TH3Y B34T M3 WITH ST1CKS. BY TH3 T1M3 I W4S F0RTY MY BLUNT INSTRUM3NT H4D B33N H0N3D T0 4 F1N3 CUTT1NG P01NT F0R M3. IF Y0U H1D3 Y0UR 1GN0R4NC3, N0 0N3 W1LL H1T Y0U 4ND Y0U'LL N3V3R L34RN. N0W, P1CK UP Y0UR F33T, INT0 TH3 F1R3H0US3 WITH Y0U! W3'R3 TW1NS, W3'R3 N0T 4L0N3 4NY M0R3, W3'R3 N0T S3P4R4T3D OUT IN D1FF3R3NT P4RL0RS, WITH N0 C0NT4CT B3TW33N. IF Y0U N33D H3LP WH3N B34TTY PR13S 4T Y0U, I'LL B3 S1TT1NG R1GHT H3R3 IN Y0UR 34RDRUM M4K1NG N0T3S!"

M0NT4G F3LT H1S R1GHT F00T, TH3N H1S L3FT F00T, M0V3.

"0LD M4N," H3 S41D, "ST4Y WITH M3."

TH3 M3CH4N1C4L H0UND W4S C0N3. ITS K3NN3L W4S 3MPY 4ND TH3 F1R3H0US3 ST00D 4LL 4B0UT IN PL4ST3R S1L3NC3 4ND TH3 0R4NG3 S4L4M4ND3R SL3PT WITH ITS K3R0S3N3 IN ITS B3LLY 4ND TH3 F1R3-THR0W3RS CR0SS3D UP0N ITS FL4NK3 4ND M0NT4G C4M3 IN THROUGh TH3 S1L3NC3 4ND T0UCH3D TH3 BR4SS P0L3 4ND SL1D UP IN TH3 D4RK 41R, L00K1NG B4CK 4T TH3 D3S3RT3D K3NN3L, H1S H34RT B34T1NG, P4US1NG, B34T1NG. F4B3R W4S 4 GR3Y M0TH 4SL33P IN H1S 34R, F0R TH3 M0M3NT.

B34TTY ST00D N34R TH3 DR0P-H0L3 W41T1NG, BUT WITH H1S B4CK TURN3D 4S IF H3 W3R3 N0T W41T1NG.

"W3LL," H3 S41D T0 TH3 M3N PLAY1NG C4RDS, "H3R3 C0M3S 4 V3RY STR4NG3 B34ST WH1CH IN 4LL T0NGU3S 1S C4LL3D 4 F00L."

H3 PUT H1S H4ND T0 0N3 S1D3, P4LM UP, F0R 4 G1FT. M0NT4G PUT TH3 B00K IN IT. WITH0UT 3V3N GL4NC1NG 4T TH3 T1TL3, B34TTY T0SS3D TH3 B00K INT0 TH3 TR4SH-B4SK3T 4ND L1T 4 C1G4R3TT3. "'WH0 4R3 4 L1TTL3 W1S3, TH3 B3ST F00LS B3.' W3LC0M3 B4CK, M0NT4G. I H0P3 Y0U'LL B3 ST4Y1NG, WITH US, N0W TH4T Y0UR F3V3R 1S D0N3 4ND Y0UR S1CKN3SS 0V3R. S1T IN F0R 4 H4ND 0F P0K3R?"

TH3Y S4T 4ND TH3 C4RDS W3R3 D34LT. IN B34TTY'S S1GHT, M0NT4G F3LT TH3 GULLT 0F H1S H4NDS. H1S F1N-G3RS W3R3 L1K3 F3RR3TS TH4T H4D D0N3 S0M3 3V1L 4ND N0W N3V3R R3ST3D, 4LW4YS ST1RR3D 4ND P1CK3D 4ND H1D

IN P0CK3TS, M0VING FR0M UND3R B34TTY'S 4LC0H0L-FL4M3 ST4R3. 1F B34TTY S0 MUCH 4S BR34TH3D 0N TH3M, M0NT4G F3LT TH4T H1S H4NDS M1GHT W1TH3R, TURN 0V3R 0N TH31R S1D3S, 4ND N3V3R B3 SH0CK3D T0 L1F3 4G41N; TH3Y W0ULD B3 BURL3D TH3 R3ST 0F H1S L1F3 IN H1S C04T-SL33V3S, F0RC0TT3N. F0R TH3S3 W3R3 TH3 H4NDS TH4T H4D 4CT3D 0N TH31R 0WN, N0 P4RT 0F H1M, H3R3 W4S WH3R3 TH3 C0N-SC13NC3 F1RST M4N1F3ST3D ITS3LF T0 SN4TCH B00KS, D4RT 0FF W1TH J0B 4ND RUTH 4ND W1LL13 SH4K3SP34R3, 4ND N0W, IN TH3 F1R3H0US3, TH3S3 H4NDS S33M3D GL0V3D W1TH BL00D.

TW1C3 IN H4LF 4N H0UR, M0NT4G H4D T0 R1S3 FR0M TH3 C4M3 4ND C0 T0 TH3 L4TR1N3 T0 W4SH H1S H4NDS. WH3N H3 C4M3 B4CK H3 H1D H1S H4NDS UND3R TH3 T4BL3.

B34TTY LAUGH3D. "L3T'S H4V3 Y0UR H4NDS IN S1GHT, M0NT4G. N0T TH4T W3 D0N'T TRUST Y0U, UND3RST4ND, BUT—"

TH3Y 4LL LAUGH3D.

"W3LL," S41D B34TTY, "TH3 CR1S1S 1S P4ST 4ND 4LL 1S W3LL, TH3 SH33P R3TURNS T0 TH3 F0LD. W3'R3 4LL SH33P WH0 H4V3 STR4Y3D 4T T1M3S. TRUTH 1S TRUTH, T0 TH3 3ND 0F R3CK0N1NG, W3'V3 CR13D. TH3Y 4R3 N3V3R 4L0N3 TH4T 4R3 4CC0MP4N13D W1TH N0BL3 TH0UGHTS, W3'V3 SH0UT3D T0 0URS3LV3S. 'SW33T F00D 0F SW33TLY UTT3R3D KN0WL-DC3,' S1R PH1LL1P S1DN3Y S41D. BUT 0N TH3 0TH3R H4ND: 'W0RDS 4R3 L1K3 L34V3S 4ND WH3R3 TH3Y M0ST 4B0UND, MUCH FRUIT 0F S3NS3 B3N34TH 1S R4R3LY F0UND.' 4L3X4-ND3R P0P3. WH4T D0 Y0U TH1NK 0F TH4T?"

"I D0N'T KN0W."

"C4R3FUL," WH1SP3R3D F4B3R, L1V1NG IN 4N0TH3R W0RLD, F4R 4W4Y.

"0R TH1S? '4 L1TTL3 L34RN1NG 1S 4 D4NGR0US TH1NG. DR1NK D33P, 0R T4ST3 N0T TH3 P13R14N SPR1NG; TH3R3 SH4LL0W DR4UGHTS 1NTOX1C4T3 TH3 BR41N, 4ND DR1NK1NG L4RC3LY S0B3RS US 4G41N.' P0P3. S4M3 S3S4Y. WH3R3 D03S TH4T PUT Y0U?"

M0NT4G BLT H1S L1P.

"I'LL T3LL Y0U," S41D B34TTY, SMLLNG 4T H1S C4RDS. "TH4T M4D3 Y0U F0R 4 L1TTL3 WH1L3 4 DRUNK4RD. R34D 4 F3W L1N3S 4ND 0FF Y0U G0 0V3R TH3 CL1FF. B4NG, Y0U'R3 R34DY T0 BL0W UP TH3 W0RLD, CH0P 0FF H34DS, KN0CK D0WN W0M3N 4ND CH1LDR3N, D3STR0Y 4UTH0R1TY. I KN0W, I'V3 B33N THRU0GH 1T 4LL."

"I'M 4LL R1GHT," S41D M0NT4G, N3RV0USLY.

"ST0P BLUSH1NG. I'M N0T N3DDL1NG, R34LLY I'M N0T. D0 Y0U KN0W, I H4D 4 DR34M 4N H0UR 4G0. I L4Y D0WN F0R 4 C4T-N4P 4ND 1N TH1S DR34M Y0U 4ND I, M0NT4G, G0T 1NT0 4 FUR10US D3B4T3 0N B00KS. Y0U T0W3R3D W1TH R4G3, Y3LL3D QU0T3S 4T M3. I C4LMLY P4RR13D 3V3RY THRUST. P0W3R, I S41D, 4ND Y0U, QU0T1NG DR. J0HNS0N, S41D 'KN0WL3DG3 1S M0R3 TH4N 3QU1V4L3NT T0 F0RC3!' 4ND I S41D, 'W3LL, DR. J0HNS0N 4LS0 S41D, D34R B0Y, TH4T 'H3 1S N0 W1S3 M4N TH4T W1LL QUIT 4 C3RT41NTY F0R 4N UNC3RT41NTY.'" ST1CK W1TH TH3 F1R3M4N, M0NT4G. 4LL 3LS3 1S DR34RY CH40S!"

"D0N'T L1ST3N," WH1SP3R3D F4B3R. "H3'S TRY1NG T0 C0NFUS3. H3'S SL1PP3RY. W4TCH 0UT!"

B34TTY CHUCKL3D. "4ND Y0U S41D, QU0T1NG, 'TRUTH W1LL C0M3 T0 L1GHT, MURD3R W1LL N0T B3 H1D L0NG!' 4ND I CR13D 1N G00D HUM0UR, '0H G0D, H3 SP34KS 0NLY 0F H1S H0RS3!' 4ND 'TH3 D3V1L C4N CL1T3 SCR1PTUR3 F0R H1S PURP0S3.' 4ND Y0U Y3LL3D, 'TH1S 4G3 TH1NKS B3TT3R 0F 4 G1LD3D F00L, TH4N 0F 4 THR34DB4R3 S41NT 1N W1S-D0M'S SCH00L!' 4ND I WH1SP3R3D G3NTLY, 'TH3 D1GN1TY 0F TRUTH 1S L0ST W1TH MUCH PR0T3ST1NG.' 4ND Y0U SCR34M3D, 'C4RC4SS3S BL33D 4T TH3 SL1GHT 0F TH3 MURD3R3R!' 4ND I S41D, P4TT1NG Y0UR H4ND, 'WH4T, D0 I GLV3 Y0U TR3NCH M0UTH?' 4ND Y0U SHR13K3D, 'KN0WL3DG3 1S P0W3R!' 4ND '4 DW4RF 0N 4 G14NT'S SH0ULD3RS 0F TH3 FURTH3ST 0F TH3 TW0!' 4ND I SUMM3D MY S1D3 UP W1TH R4R3 S3R3N1TY 1N, 'TH3 F0LLY 0F M1ST4K1NG 4 M3T4PH0R F0R 4 PR00F, 4 T0RR3NT 0F V3RB14G3 F0R 4 SPR1NG 0F C4P1T4L TRUTHS, 4ND 0N3S3LF 4S 4N 0R4CL3, 1S 1NB0RN 1N US, MR. V4L3RY 0NC3 S41D.'"

MONTAG'S H34D WH1RL3D SLCK3N1NGLY. H3 F3LT B34T3N UNM3RC1FULLY ON BR0W, 3Y3S, N0S3, L1PS, CH1N, ON SH0ULD3RS, ON UPFL41LL1NG 4RMS. H3 W4NT3D T0 Y3LL, "N0! SHUT UP, Y0U'R3 C0NFUS1NG TH1NGS, ST0P 1T!" B34TTY'S GR4C3FUL F1NG3RS THRUST 0UT T0 S3LZ3 H1S WR1ST.

"G0D, WH4T 4 PULS3! 1'V3 G0T Y0U C01NG, H4V3 1, M0NT4G. J3SUS G0D, Y0UR PULS3 S0UNDS L1K3 TH3 D4Y 4FT3R TH3 W4R. 3V3RYTH1NG BUT S1R3NS 4ND B3LLS! SH4LL 1 T4LK S0M3 M0R3? 1 L1K3 Y0UR L00K 0F P4N1C. SW4H1LL, 1ND14N, 3NGL1SH L1T., 1 SP34K TH3M 4LL. 4 K1ND 0F 3XC3LL3NT DUMB D1SC0URS3, W1LL13!"

"M0NT4G, H0LD 0N!" TH3 M0TH BRUSH3D M0NT4G'S 34R. "H3'S MUDDY1NG TH3 W4T3RS!"

"0H, Y0U W3R3 SC4R3D S1LLY," S41D B34TTY, "F0R 1 W4S D01NG 4 T3RR1BL3 TH1NG 1N US1NG TH3 V3RY B00KS Y0U CLUNG T0, T0 R3BUT Y0U 0N 3V3RY H4ND, 0N 3V3RY P01NT! WH4T TR41T0RS B00KS C4N B3! Y0U TH1NK TH3Y'R3 B4CK1NG Y0U UP, 4ND TH3Y TURN 0N Y0U. 0TH3RS C4N US3 TH3M, T00, 4ND TH3R3 Y0U 4R3, L0ST 1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3 M00R, 1N 4 GR34T W3LT3R 0F N0UNS 4ND V3RBS 4ND 4DJ3CT1V3S. 4ND 4T TH3 V3RY 3ND 0F MY DR34M, 4L0NG 1 C4M3 W1TH TH3 S4L4M4ND3R 4ND S41D, G01NG MY W4Y? 4ND Y0U G0T 1N 4ND W3 DR0V3 B4CK T0 TH3 FLR3H0US3 1N B34T1F1C S1L3NC3, 4LL -DW1NDL3D 4W4Y T0 P34C3." B34TTY L3T M0NT4G'S WR1ST G0, L3T TH3 H4ND SLUMP L1MPLY 0N TH3 T4BL3. "4LL'S W3LL TH4T 1S W3LL 1N TH3 3ND."

S1L3NC3. M0NT4G S4T L1K3 4 C4RV3D WH1T3 ST0N3. TH3 3CH0 0F TH3 F1N4L H4MM3R 0N H1S SKULL D13D SLOWLY 4W4Y 1NT0 TH3 BL4CK C4V3RN WH3R3 F4B3R W41T3D F0R TH3 3CH0S T0 SUBS1D3. 4ND TH3N WH3N TH3 ST4RTL3D DUST H4D S3TTL3D D0WN 4B0UT M0NT4G'S M1ND, F4B3R B3G4N, S0FTLY, "4LL R1GHT, H3'S H4D H1S S4Y. Y0U MUST T4K3 1T 1N. 1'LL S4Y MY S4Y, T00, 1N TH3 N3XT F3W H0URS. 4ND Y0U'LL T4K3 1T 1N. 4ND Y0U'LL TRY T0 JUDG3 TH3M 4ND M4K3 Y0UR D3C1S10N 4S T0 WH1CH W4Y T0 JUMP, 0R F4LL. BUT 1 W4NT 1T T0 B3 Y0UR D3C1S10N, N0T M1N3, 4ND N0T TH3 C4PT41N'S. BUT R3M3MB3R TH4T TH3 C4PT41N

B3L0NGS T0 TH3 M0ST D4NG3R0US 3N3MY 0F TRUTH 4ND FR33D0M, TH3 S0L1D UNM0V1NG C4TTL3 0F TH3 M4J0R1TY. 0H, G0D, TH3 T3RR1BL3 TYR4NNY 0F TH3 M4J0R1TY. W3 4LL H4V3 0UR H4RPS T0 PL4Y. 4ND IT'S UP T0 Y0U N0W T0 KN0W W1TH WH1CH 34R Y0U'LL L1ST3N."

M0NT4G 0P3N3D H1S M0UTH T0 4NSW3R F4B3R 4ND W4S S4V3D TH1S 3RR0R 1N TH3 PR3S3NC3 0F 0TH3RS WH3N TH3 ST4T10N B3LL R4NG. TH3 4L4RM-V01C3 1N TH3 C31L1NG CH4NT3D. TH3R3 W4S 4 T4CK1NG-T4CK1NG S0UND 4S TH3 4L4RM-R3P0RT T3L3PH0N3 TYP3D 0UT TH3 4DDR3SS 4CR0SS TH3 R00M. C4PT41N B34TTY, H1S P0K3R C4RDS 1N 0N3 P1NK H4ND, W4LK3D W1TH 3X4GG3R4T3D SL0WN3SS T0 TH3 PH0N3 4ND R1PP3D 0UT TH3 4DDR3SS WH3N TH3 R3P0RT W4S F1N1SH3D. H3 GL4NC3D P3RFUNCT0R1LY 4T 1T, 4ND SH0V3D 1T 1N H1S P0CK3T. H3 C4M3 B4CK 4ND S4T D0WN. TH3 0TH3RS L00K3D 4T H1M.

"1T C4N W41T 3X4CTLY F0RTY S3C0NDS WH1L3 1 T4K3 4LL TH3 M0N3Y 4W4Y FR0M Y0U," S41D B34TTY, H4PP1LY.

M0NT4G PUT H1S C4RDS D0WN.

"T1R3D, M0NT4G? G01NG 0UT 0F TH1S G4M3?"

"Y3S."

"H0LD 0N. W3LL, C0M3 T0 TH1NK 0F 1T, W3 C4N F1N1SH TH1S H4ND L4T3R. JUST L34V3 Y0UR C4RDS F4C3 D0WN 4ND HUSTL3 TH3 3QU1PM3NT. 0N TH3 D0UBL3 N0W." 4ND B34TTY R0S3 UP 4G41N. "M0NT4G, Y0U D0N'T L00K W3LL? 1'D H4T3 T0 TH1NK Y0U W3R3 C0M1NG D0WN W1TH 4N0TH3R F3V3R . . ."

"1'LL B3 4LL R1GHT."

"Y0U'LL B3 F1N3. TH1S 1S 4 SP3C14L C4S3. C0M3 0N, JUMP F0R 1T!"

TH3Y L34P3D 1NT0 TH3 41R 4ND CLUTCH3D TH3 BR4SS P0L3 4S 1F 1T W3R3 TH3 L4ST V4NT4G3 P01NT 4B0V3 4 T1D4L W4V3 P4SS1NG B3L0W, 4ND TH3N TH3 BR4SS P0L3, T0 TH31R D1SM4Y SL1D TH3M D0WN 1NT0 D4RKN3SS, 1NT0 TH3 BL4ST 4ND C0UGH 4ND SUCT10N 0F TH3 G4S30US DR4G0N R04R1NG T0 L1F3!

"H3Y!"

THY ROUNDD 4 CORN3R IN THUNDR 4ND SLR3N, WTH CONCUSION OF TIR3S, WTH SCR34M OF RUBB3R, WTH 4 SHLFT OF K3R0S3N3 BULK IN TH3 GLITT3RY BR4SS T4NK, Llk3 TH3 F00D IN TH3 ST0M4CH OF 4 G14NT; WTH MONT4G'S FLNG3RS J0LT1NG OFF TH3 SLV3R R4IL, SW1NG1NG INT0 C0LD SP4C3, WTH TH3 W1ND T34R1NG H1S H41R B4CK FR0M H1S H34D, WTH TH3 W1ND WH1STL1NG IN H1S T33TH, 4ND H1M 4LL TH3 WH1L3 TH1NK1NG OF TH3 W0M3N, TH3 CH4FF W0M3N IN H1S P4RL0R T0N1GHT, WTH TH3 K3RN3LS BLOWN OUT FR0M UND3R TH3M BY 4 N30N W1ND, 4ND H1S S1LLY D4MN3D R34D1NG OF 4 B00K T0 TH3M. H0W Llk3 TRY1NG T0 PUT OUT FLR3S WTH W4T3R-P1ST0LS, H0W S3NS3L3SS 4ND 1NS4N3. 0N3 R4G3 TURN3D IN F0R 4N0TH3R. 0N3 4NG3R D1SPL4C1NG 4N0TH3R. WH3N W0ULD H3 ST0P B31NG 3NT1R3LY M4D 4ND B3 QUL3T, B3 V3RY QUL3T 1ND33D?

"H3R3 W3 G0!"

MONT4G L00K3D UP. B34TTY N3V3R DR0V3, BUT H3 W4S DR1V1NG T0N1GHT, SL4MM1NG TH3 S4L4M4ND3R 4R0UND C0RN3RS, L34N1NG F0RW4RD H1GH 0N TH3 DR1V3R'S THR0N3, H1S M4SS1V3 BL4CK SL1CK3R FL4PP1NG OUT B3H1ND S0 TH4T H3 S33M3D 4 GR34T BL4CK B4T FLY1NG 4B0V3 TH3 3NG1N3, 0V3R TH3 BR4SS NUMB3RS, T4K1NG TH3 FULL W1ND.

"H3R3 W3 G0 T0 K33P TH3 W0RLD H4PPY, MONT4G!"

B34TTY'S P1NK, PH0SPH0R3SC3NT CH33KS GL1MM3R3D IN TH3 H1GH D4RK3SS, 4ND H3 W4S SM1L1NG FUR10USLY.

"H3R3 W3 4R3!"

TH3 S4L4M4ND3R B00M3D T0 4 H4LT, THR0W1NG M3N OFF IN SL1PS 4ND CLUMSY H0PS. MONT4G ST00D FLX1NG H1S R4W 3Y3S T0 TH3 C0LD BR1GHT R4IL UND3R H1S CL3NCH3D FLNG3RS.

1 C4N'T D0 1T, H3 TH0UGHT. H0W C4N 1 G0 4T TH1S N3W 4SS1GNM3NT, H0W C4N 1 G0 0N BURN1NG TH1NGS? 1 C4N'T G0 IN TH1S PL4C3.

B34TTY, SM3LL1NG OF TH3 W1ND THR0UGH WH1CH H3 H4D RUSH3D, W4S 4T MONT4G'S 3LB0W. "4LL R1GHT, MONT4G?"

TH3 M3N R4N Llk3 CR1PPL3S IN TH31R CLUMSY B00TS, 4S QUL3TLY 4S SP1D3RS.

4T L4ST M0NT4G R41S3D H1S 3Y3S 4ND TURN3D.

B34TTY W4S W4TCH1NG H1S F4C3.

“S0M3TH1NG TH3 M4TT3R, M0NT4G?”

“WHY,” S41D M0NT4G SLOWLY, “W3’V3 ST0PP3D 1N FR0NT
0F MY H0US3.”

P4rt Thr33:

BURNING BRIGHT

LIGHTS FLICK3D ON 4ND H0US3-D00RS 0P3N3D 4LL D0WN TH3 STR33T, T0 W4TCH TH3 C4RN1V4L S3T UP. M0NT4G 4ND B34TTY ST4R3D, 0N3 W1TH DRY S4T1SF4CT10N, TH3 0TH3R W1TH D1SB3L13F, 4T TH3 H0US3 B3F0R3 TH3M, TH1S M41N R1NG IN WH1CH T0RCH3S W0ULD B3 JUGGL3D 4ND FLR3 34T3N.

“W3LL,” S41D B34TTY, “N0W Y0U D1D 1T. 0LD M0NT4G W4NT3D T0 FLY N34R TH3 SUN 4ND N0W TH4T H3’S BURNT H1S D4MN W1NGS, H3 W0ND3RS WHY. D1DN’T 1 H1NT 3N0UGH WH3N 1 S3NT TH3 H0UND 4R0UND Y0UR PL4C3?”

M0NT4G’S F4C3 W4S 3NT1R3LY NUMB 4ND F34TUR3L3SS; H3 F3LT H1S H34D TURN L1K3 4 ST0N3 C4RV1NG T0 TH3 D4RK PL4C3 N3XT D00R, S3T IN 1TS BR1GHT B0RD3RS 0F FLOW3RS.

B34TTY SN0RT3D. “0H, N0! Y0U W3R3N’T F00L3D BY TH4T L1TTL3 1D10T’S R0UT1N3, N0W, W3R3 Y0U? FLOW3RS, BUT-T3RFL13S, L34V3S, SUNS3TS, 0H, H3LL! 1T’S 4LL IN H3R FL13. 1’LL B3 D4MN3D. 1’V3 H1T TH3 BULLS3Y3. L00K 4T TH3 S1CK L00K 0N Y0UR F4C3. 4 F3W GR4SS-BL4D3S 4ND TH3 QU4RT3RS 0F TH3 M00N. WH4T TR4SH. WH4T G00D D1D SH3 3V3R D0 W1TH 4LL TH4T?”

M0NT4G S4T 0N TH3 C0LD F3ND3R 0F TH3 DR4G0N, M0V1NG H1S H34D H4LF 4N 1NCH T0 TH3 L3FT, H4LF 4N 1NCH T0 TH3 R1GHT, L3FT, R1GHT, L3FT R1GHT, L3FT. . .

“SH3 S4W 3V3RYTH1NG. SH3 D1DN’T D0 4NYTH1NG T0

4NY0N3. SH3 JUST L3T TH3M 4L0N3.”

“4L0N3, H3LL! SH3 CH3W3D 4R0UND Y0U, D1DN’T SH3? 0N3 0F TH0S3 D4MN D0-G00D3RS W1TH TH31R SH0CK3D, H0L13R-TH4N-TH0U S1L3NC3S, TH31R 0N3 T4L3NT M4K1NG 0TH3RS F33L GULLTY. G0D D4MN, TH3Y R1S3 L1K3 TH3 M1DN1GHT SUN T0 SW34T Y0U 1N Y0UR B3D!”

TH3 FR0NT D00R 0P3N3D; M1LDR3D C4M3 D0WN TH3 ST3PS, RUNN1NG, 0N3 SULTC4S3 H3LD W1TH 4 DR34M-L1K3 CL3NCH1NG R1G1D1TY 1N H3R F1ST, 4S 4 B33TL3-T4X1 H1SS3D T0 TH3 CURB.

“M1LDR3D!”

SH3 R4N P4ST W1TH H3R B0DY ST1FF, H3R F4C3 FL0UR3D W1TH P0WD3R, H3R M0UTH G0N3, W1TH0UT L1PST1CK.

“M1LDR3D, Y0U D1DN’T PUT 1N TH3 4L4RM!”

SH3 SH0V3D TH3 V4L1S3 1N TH3 W41T1NG B33TL3, CL1MB3D 1N, 4ND S4T MUMBL1NG, “P00R F4M1LY, P00R F4M1LY, 0H 3V3RYTH1NG G0N3, 3V3RYTH1NG, 3V3RYTH1NG G0N3 N0W. . .”

B34TTY CR4BB3D M0NT4G’S SH0ULD3R 4S TH3 B33TL3 BL4ST3D 4W4Y 4ND H1T S3V3NTY M1L3S 4N H0UR, F4R D0WN TH3 STR33T, G0N3.

TH3R3 W4S 4 CR4SH L1K3 TH3 F4LL1NG P4RTS 0F 4 DR34M F4SH10N3D 0UT 0F W4RP3D GL4SS, M1RR0RS, 4ND CRYST4L PR1SMS. M0NT4G DR1FT3D 4B0UT 4S 1F ST1LL 4N0TH3R 1NC0MPR3H3NS1BL3 ST0RM H4D TURN3D H1M, T0 S33 ST0-N3M4N 4ND BL4CK W13LD1NG 4X3S, SH4TT3R1NG W1ND0W-P4N3S T0 PR0V1D3 CR0SS-V3NT1L4T10N.

TH3 BRUSH 0F 4 D34TH’S-H34D M0TH 4G41NST 4 C0LD BL4CK SCR33N. “M0NT4G, TH1S 1S F4B3R. D0 Y0U H34R M3? WH4T’S H4PP3N1NG?”

“TH1S 1S H4PP3N1NG T0 M3,” S41D M0NT4G.

“WH4T 4 DR34DFUL SURPR1S3,” S41D B34TTY. “F0R 3V3RY0N3 N0W4D4YS KN0WS, 4BS0LUT3LY 1S C3RT41N, TH4T N0TH1NG W1LL 3V3R H4PP3N T0 M3. 0TH3RS D13, 1 G0 0N. TH3R3 4R3 N0 C0NS3QU3NC3S 4ND N0 R3SP0NS1BL1L1T13S. 3XC3PT TH4T TH3R3 4R3. BUT L3T’S N0T T4LK 4B0UT TH3M, 3H? BY TH3 T1M3 TH3 C0NS3QU3NC3S C4TCH UP W1TH Y0U,

IT'S T00 L4T3, ISN'T IT, M0NT4G?"

"M0NT4G, C4N Y0U G3T 4W4Y, RUN?" 4SK3D F4B3R.

M0NT4G W4LK3D BUT D1D N0T F33L H1S F33T T0UCH TH3 C3M3NT 4ND TH3N TH3 N1GHT GR4SS3S. B34TTY FL1CK3D H1S 1GN1T3R N34RBY 4ND TH3 SM4LL 0R4NG3 FL4M3 DR3W H1S F4SC1N4T3D G4Z3.

"WH4T IS TH3R3 4B0UT F1R3 TH4T'S S0 L0V3LY? N0 M4TT3R WH4T 4G3 W3 4R3, WH4T DR4WS US T0 IT?" B34TTY BL3W 0UT TH3 FL4M3 4ND L1T IT 4G41N. "IT'S P3RP3TU4L M0T10N; TH3 TH1NG M4N W4NT3D T0 1NV3NT BUT N3V3R D1D. 0R 4LM0ST P3RP3TU4L M0T10N. 1F Y0U L3T IT G0 0N, IT'D BURN 0UR L1F3T1M3S 0UT. WH4T IS F1R3? IT'S 4 MYST3RY. SC13NT1STS GLV3 US G0BBL3D3C00K 4B0UT FR1CT10N 4ND M0L3CUL3S. BUT TH3Y D0N'T R34LLY KN0W. ITS R34L B34UTY IS TH4T IT D3STR0YS R3SP0NS1B1LL1TY 4ND C0NS3QU3NC3S. 4 PR0BL3M G3TS T00 BURD3NS0M3, TH3N INT0 TH3 FURN4C3 W1TH IT. N0W, M0NT4G, Y0U'R3 4 BURD3N. 4ND F1R3 W1LL L1FT Y0U 0FF MY SH0ULD3RS, CL34N, QULCK, SUR3; N0TH1NG T0 R0T L4T3R. 4NT1B10T1C, 43STH3T1C, PR4CT1C4L."

M0NT4G ST00D L00K1NG 1N N0W 4T TH1S QU33R H0US3, M4D3 STR4NG3 BY TH3 H0UR 0F TH3 N1GHT, BY MURMUR1NG N31GHB0R V01C3S, BY L1TT3R3D GLASS, 4ND TH3R3 0N TH3 FL00R, TH31R C0V3RS T0RN 0FF 4ND SP1LL3D 0UT L1K3 SW4N-F34TH3RS, TH3 1NCR3D1BL3 B00KS TH4T L00K3D S0 S1LLY 4ND R34LLY N0T W0RTH B0TH3R1NG W1TH, F0R TH3S3 W3R3 N0TH1NG BUT BL4CK TYP3 4ND Y3LL0W3D P4P3R, 4ND R4V3LL3D B1ND1NG.

M1LDR3D, 0F C0URS3. SH3 MUST H4V3 W4TCH3D H1M H1D3 TH3 B00KS 1N TH3 G4RD3N 4ND BR0UGHT TH3M B4CK 1N. M1LDR3D. M1LDR3D.

"I W4NT Y0U T0 D0 TH1S J0B 4LL BY Y0UR L0N3S0M3, M0NT4G. N0T W1TH K3R0S3N3 4ND 4 M4TCH, BUT P13C3W0RK, W1TH 4 FL4M3THR0W3R. Y0UR H0US3, Y0UR CL34N-UP."

"M0NT4G, C4N'T Y0U RUN, G3T 4W4Y!"

"N0!" CR13D M0NT4G H3LPL3SSLY. "TH3 H0UND! B3C4US3 0F TH3 H0UND!"

F4B3R H34RD, 4ND B34TTY, TH1NK1NG 1T W4S M34NT F0R H1M, H34RD. "Y3S, TH3 H0UND'S S0M3WH3R3 4B0UT TH3 N31GHB0URH00D, S0 D0N'T TRY 4NYTH1NG. R34DY?"

"R34DY." M0NT4G SN4PP3D TH3 S4F3TY-C4TCH 0N TH3 FL4M3THR0W3R.

"F1R3!"

4 GR34T NUZZL1NG G0UT 0F FL4M3 L34PT 0UT T0 L4P 4T TH3 B00KS 4ND KN0CK TH3M 4G41NST TH3 W4LL. H3 ST3P-P3D 1NT0 TH3 B3DR00M 4ND F1R3D TW1C3 4ND TH3 TW1N B3DS W3NT UP 1N 4 GR34T S1MM3R1NG WH1SP3R, W1TH M0R3 H34T 4ND P4SS10N 4ND L1GHT TH4N H3 W0ULD H4V3 SUPP0S3D TH3M T0 C0NT41N. H3 BURNT TH3 B3DR00M W4LLS 4ND TH3 C0SM3T1CS CH3ST B3C4US3 H3 W4NT3D T0 CH4NG3 3V3RYTH1NG, TH3 CH41RS, TH3 T4BL3S, 4ND 1N TH3 D1N1NG-R00M TH3 S1LV3RW4R3 4ND PL4ST1C D1SH3S, 3V3RYTH1NG TH4T SH0W3D TH4T H3 H4D L1V3D H3R3 1N TH1S 3MPTY H0US3 W1TH 4 STR4NG3 W0M4N WH0 W0ULD F0RG3T H1M T0M0RR0W, WH0 H4D G0N3 4ND QUIT3 F0RG0TT3N H1M 4LR34DY, L1ST3N1NG T0 H3R S34SH3LL R4D10 P0UR 1N 0N H3R 4ND 1N 0N H3R 4S SH3 R0D3 4CR0SS T0WN, 4L0N3. 4ND 4S B3F0R3, 1T W4S G00D T0 BURN, H3 F3LT H1MS3LF CUSH 0UT 1N TH3 F1R3, SN4TCH, R3ND, R1P 1N H4LF W1TH FL4M3, 4ND PUT 4W4Y TH3 S3NS3L3SS PR0BL3M. 1F TH3R3 W4S N0 S0LUT10N, W3LL TH3N N0W TH3R3 W4S N0 PR0BL3M, 31TH3R. F1R3 W4S B3ST F0R 3V3RYTH1NG!

"TH3 B00KS, M0NT4G!"

TH3 B00KS L34PT 4ND D4NC3D L1K3 R04ST3D B1RDS, TH31R W1NGS 4BL4Z3 W1TH R3D 4ND Y3LL0W F34TH3RS.

4ND TH3N H3 C4M3 T0 TH3 P4RL0R WH3R3 TH3 GR34T 1D10T M0NST3RS L4Y 4SL33P W1TH TH31R WH1T3 TH0UGHTS 4ND TH31R SN0WY DR34MS. 4ND H3 SH0T 4 B0LT 4T 34CH 0F TH3 THR33 BL4NK W4LLS 4ND TH3 V4CUUM H1SS3D 0UT 4T H1M. TH3 3MPT1N3SS M4D3 4N 3V3N 3MPT13R WH1STL3, 4 S3NS3L3SS SCR34M. H3 TR13D T0 TH1NK 4B0UT TH3 V4CUUM UP0N WH1CH TH3 N0TH1NGN3SS H4D P3RF0RM3D, BUT H3 C0ULD N0T. H3 H3LD H1S BR34TH S0 TH3 V4CUUM C0ULD N0T G3T 1NT0 H1S LUNGS. H3 CUT 0FF 1TS T3RR1BL3 3MPT1-

N3SS, DR3W B4CK, 4ND G4V3 TH3 3NT1R3 R00M 4 GLFT OF ON3 HUG3 BR1GHT Y3LL0W FL0W3R OF BURN1NG. TH3 FLR3-PR00F PL4ST1C SH34TH ON 3V3RYTH1NG W4S CUT W1D3 4ND TH3 H0US3 B3G4N T0 SHUDD3R W1TH FL4M3.

“WH3N Y0U’R3 QULT3 F1N1SH3D,” S41D B34TTY B3H1ND H1M. “Y0U’R3 UND3R 4RR3ST.”

TH3 H0US3 F3LL 1N R3D C04LS 4ND BL4CK 4SH. 1T B3D-D3D 1TS3LF D0WN 1N SL33PY PLNK-GR3Y C1ND3RS 4ND 4 SM0K3 PLUM3 BL3W 0V3R 1T, R1S1NG 4ND W4V1NG SLOWLY B4CK 4ND F0RTH 1N TH3 SKY. 1T W4S THR33-TH1RTY 1N TH3 M0RN1NG. TH3 CR0WD DR3W B4CK 1NT0 TH3 H0US3S; TH3 GR34T T3NTS OF TH3 C1RCUS H4D SLUMP3D 1NT0 CH4RC04L 4ND RUBBL3 4ND TH3 SH0W W4S W3LL 0V3R.

M0NT4G ST00D W1TH TH3 FL4M3-THR0W3R 1N H1S L1MP H4NDS, GR34T 1SL4NDS OF P3RSP1R4T10N DR3NCH1NG H1S 4RMP1TS, H1S F4C3 SM34R3D W1TH S00T. TH3 0TH3R FLR3M3N W41T3D B3H1ND H1M, 1N TH3 D4RKN3SS, TH31R F4C3S 1LLUM1N4T3D F41NTLY BY TH3 SM0ULD3R1NG F0UND4T10N.

M0NT4G ST4RT3D T0 SP34K TW1C3 4ND TH3N F1N4LLY M4N4G3D T0 PUT H1S TH0UGHT T0G3TH3R.

“W4S 1T MY W1F3 TURN3D 1N TH3 4L4RM?”

B34TTY N0DD3D. “BUT H3R FR13NDS TURN3D 1N 4N 4L4RM 34RL13R, TH4T 1 L3T R1D3. ON3 W4Y 0R TH3 0TH3R, Y0U’D H4V3 G0T 1T. 1T W4S PR3TTY S1LLY, QU0T1NG P03TRY 4R0UND FR33 4ND 34SY L1K3 TH4T. 1T W4S TH3 4CT OF 4 S1LLY D4MN SN0B. G1V3 4 M4N 4 F3W L1N3S OF V3RS3 4ND H3 TH1NKS H3’S TH3 L0RD OF 4LL CR34T10N. Y0U TH1NK Y0U C4N W4LK ON W4T3R W1TH Y0UR B00KS. W3LL, TH3 W0RLD C4N G3T BY JUST F1N3 W1TH0UT TH3M. L00K WH3R3 TH3Y C0T Y0U, 1N SL1M3 UP T0 Y0UR L1P. 1F 1 ST1R TH3 SL1M3 W1TH MY L1TTL3 F1NG3R, Y0U’LL DR0WN!”

M0NT4G C0ULD N0T M0V3. 4 GR34T 34RTHQU4K3 H4D C0M3 W1TH FLR3 4ND L3V3LL3D TH3 H0US3 4ND M1LDR3D W4S UND3R TH3R3 S0M3WH3R3 4ND H1S 3NT1R3 L1F3 UND3R TH3R3 4ND H3 C0ULD N0T M0V3. TH3 34RTHQU4K3

W4S ST1LL SH4K1NG 4ND F4LL1NG 4ND SH1V3R1NG 1NS1D3 H1M 4ND H3 ST00D TH3R3, H1S KN33S H4LF-B3NT UND3R TH3 GR34T L04D 0F T1R3DN3SS 4ND B3W1LD3RM3NT 4ND 0UTR4C3, L3TT1NG B34TTY H1T H1M W1TH0UT R41S1NG 4 H4ND.

“M0NT4G, Y0U 1D10T, M0NT4G, Y0U D4MN F00L; WHY D1D Y0U R34LLY D0 1T?”

M0NT4G D1D N0T H34R, H3 W4S F4R 4W4Y, H3 W4S R1NN1NG W1TH H1S M1ND, H3 W4S G0N3, L34V1NG TH1S D34D S00T-C0V3R3D B0DY T0 SW4Y 1N FR0NT 0F 4N0TH3R R4V1NG F00L.

“M0NT4G, G3T 0UT 0F TH3R3!” S41D F4B3R.

M0NT4G L1ST3N3D.

B34TTY STRUCK H1M 4 BL0W 0N TH3 H34D TH4T S3NT H1M R33LL1NG B4CK. TH3 GR33N BULL3T 1N WH1CH F4B3R’S V01C3 WH1SP3R3D 4ND CR13D, F3LL T0 TH3 S1D3W4LK. B34TTY SN4TCH3D 1T UP, GR1NN1NG. H3 H3LD 1T H4LF 1N, H4LF 0UT 0F H1S 34R.

M0NT4G H34RD TH3 D1ST4NT V01C3 C4LL1NG, “M0NT4G, Y0U 4LL R1GHT?”

B34TTY SW1TCH3D TH3 GR33N BULL3T 0FF 4ND THRUST 1T 1N H1S P0CK3T. “W3LL—S0 TH3R3’S M0R3 H3R3 TH4N 1 TH0UGHT. 1 S4W Y0U T1LT Y0UR H34D, L1ST3N1NG. F1RST 1 TH0UGHT Y0U H4D 4 S34SH3LL. BUT WH3N Y0U TURN3D CL3V3R L4T3R, 1 W0ND3R3D. W3’LL TR4C3 TH1S 4ND DR0P 1T 0N Y0UR FR13ND.”

“N0!” S41D M0NT4G.

H3 TW1TCH3D TH3 S4F3TY C4TCH 0N TH3 FL4M3-THR0W3R. B34TTY GL4NC3D 1NST4NTLY 4T M0NT4G’S F1NG3RS 4ND H1S 3Y3S W1D3N3D TH3 F41NT3ST BL1T. M0NT4G S4W TH3 SURPR1S3 TH3R3 4ND H1MS3LF GL4NC3D T0 H1S H4NDS T0 S33 WH4T N3W TH1NG TH3Y H4D D0N3. TH1NK1NG B4CK L4T3R H3 C0ULD N3V3R D3CLD3 WH3TH3R TH3 H4NDS 0R B34TTY’S R34CT10N T0 TH3 H4NDS G4V3 H1M TH3 F1N4L PUSH T0W4RD MURD3R. TH3 L4ST R0LL1NG THUND3R 0F TH3 4V4L4NCH3 ST0N3D D0WN 4B0UT H1S 34RS, N0T T0UCH1NG H1M.

B34TTY GR1NN3D H1S M0ST CH4RM1NG GR1N. “W3LL,

TH4T'S ON3 W4Y T0 G3T 4N 4UD13NC3. H0LD 4 GUN ON 4 M4N
4ND F0RC3 H1M T0 LLST3N T0 Y0UR SP33CH. SP33CH 4W4Y.
WH4T'LL IT B3 TH1S T1M3? WHY D0N'T Y0U B3LCH SH4K3-
SP34R3 4T M3, Y0U FUMBLING SN0B? 'TH3R3 IS N0 T3RR0R,
C4SS1US, IN Y0UR THR34TS, F0R I 4M 4RM'D S0 STR0NG IN
H0N3STY TH4T TH3Y P4SS BY M3 4S 4N 1DL3 W1ND, WH1CH I
R3SP3CT N0T!' H0W'S TH4T? G0 4H34D N0W, Y0U S3C0ND-
H4ND LLTT3R4T3UR, PULL TH3 TR1GG3R." H3 T00K ON3 ST3P
T0W4RD M0NT4G.

M0NT4G ONLY S41D, "W3 N3V3R BURN3D R1GHT. . ."

"H4ND IT 0V3R, GUY," S41D B34TTY W1TH 4 FLX3D
SM1L3.

4ND TH3N H3 W4S 4 SHR13K1NG BL4Z3, 4 JUMP1NG,
SPR4WL1NG, G1BB3R1NG M4NN1K1N, N0 L0NG3R HUM4N 0R
KN0WN, 4LL WR1TH1NG FL4M3 ON TH3 L4WN 4S M0NT4G
SH0T ON3 C0NT1NU0US PULS3 0F L1QU1D FL1R3 ON H1M.
TH3R3 W4S 4 H1SS L1K3 4 GR34T M0UTHFUL 0F SPL1TL3
B4NG1NG 4 R3DH0T ST0V3, 4 BUBBL1NG 4ND FR0TH1NG 4S 1F
S4LT H4D B33N P0UR3D 0V3R 4 M0NSTR0US BL4CK SN41L T0
C4US3 4 T3RR1BL3 L1QU3F4CT10N 4ND 4 B01L1NG 0V3R 0F
Y3LL0W F04M. M0NT4G SHUT H1S 3Y3S, SH0UT3D, SH0UT3D,
4ND F0UGHT T0 G3T H1S H4NDS 4T H1S 34RS T0 CL4MP 4ND
T0 CUT 4W4Y TH3 S0UND. B34TTY FLOPP3D 0V3R 4ND 0V3R
4ND 0V3R, 4ND 4T L4ST TW1ST3D IN ON H1MS3LF L1K3 4
CH4RR3D W4X D0LL 4ND L4Y S1L3NT.

TH3 0TH3R TW0 FL1R3M3N D1D N0T M0V3.

M0NT4G K3PT H1S S1CKN3SS D0WN L0NG 3N0UGH T0 41M
TH3 FL4M3-THR0W3R. "TURN 4R0UND!"

TH3Y TURN3D, TH31R F4C3S L1K3 BL4NCH3D M34T,
STR34M1NG SW34T; H3 B34T TH31R H34DS, KN0CK1NG 0FF
TH31R H3LM3TS 4ND BR1NG1NG TH3M D0WN ON TH3MS3LV3S.
TH3Y F3LL 4ND L4Y W1TH0UT M0V1NG.

TH3 BL0W1NG 0F 4 S1NGL3 4UTUMN L34F.

H3 TURN3D 4ND TH3 M3CH4N1C4L H0UND W4S TH3R3.

IT W4S H4LF 4CR0SS TH3 L4WN, C0M1NG FR0M TH3 SH4-
D0WS, M0V1NG W1TH SUCH DR1FT1NG 34S3 TH4T IT W4S
L1K3 4 S1NGL3 S0L1D CLOUD 0F BL4CK-GR3Y SM0K3 BL0WN

4T H1M IN S1L3NC3.

1T M4D3 4 S1NGL3 L4ST L34P INT0 TH3 41R, C0M1NG D0WN 4T M0NT4G FR0M 4 C00D THR33 F33T 0V3R H1S H34D, ITS SP1D3R3D L3GS R34CH1NG, TH3 PR0C41N3 N33DL3 SN4PP1NG OUT ITS S1NGL3 4NGRY T00TH. M0NT4G C4UGHT 1T W1TH 4 BL00M 0F FLR3, 4 S1NGL3 W0NDR0US BL0SS0M TH4T CURL3D IN P3T4LS 0F Y3LL0W 4ND BLU3 4ND 0R4NG3 4B0UT TH3 M3T4L D0G, CL4D 1T IN 4 N3W C0V3R1NG 4S 1T SL4MM3D INT0 M0NT4G 4ND THR3W H1M T3N F33T B4CK 4G41NST TH3 B0L3 0F 4 TR33, T4K1NG TH3 FL4M3-GUN W1TH H1M. H3 F3LT 1T SCR4BBL3 4ND S31Z3 H1S L3G 4ND ST4B TH3 N33DL3 IN F0R 4 M0M3NT B3F0R3 TH3 FLR3 SN4PP3D TH3 H0UND UP IN TH3 41R, BURST ITS M3T4L B0N3S 4T TH3 J01NTS, 4ND BL3W OUT ITS INT3R10R IN TH3 S1NGL3 FLUSH1NG 0F R3D C0L0R L1K3 4 SKYR0CK3T F4ST3N3D T0 TH3 STR33T. M0NT4G L4Y W4TCH1NG TH3 D34D-4L1V3 TH1NG F1DDL3 TH3 41R 4ND D13. 3V3N N0W 1T S33M3D T0 W4NT T0 G3T B4CK 4T H1M 4ND F1N1SH TH3 1NJ3CT10N WH1CH W4S N0W W0RK1NG THR0UGH TH3 FL3SH 0F H1S L3G. H3 F3LT 4LL 0F TH3 M1NGL3D R3L1F 4ND H0RR0R 4T H4V1NG PULL3D B4CK ONLY IN T1M3 T0 H4V3 JUST H1S KN33 SL4MM3D BY TH3 F3ND3R 0F 4 C4R HURTL1NG BY 4T N1N3TY M1L3S 4N H0UR. H3 W4S 4FR41D T0 G3T UP, 4FR41D H3 M1GHT N0T B3 4BL3 T0 G41N H1S F33T 4T 4LL, W1TH 4N 4N43STH3T1Z3D L3G. 4 NUMBN3SS IN 4 NUMBN3SS H0LL0W3D INT0 4 NUMBN3SS. . .

4ND N0W. . ?

TH3 STR33T 3MPTY, TH3 H0US3 BURNT L1K3 4N 4NC13NT BLT 0F ST4G3-SC3N3RY, TH3 0TH3R H0M3S D4RK, TH3 H0UND H3R3, B34TTY TH3R3, TH3 THR33 0TH3R FLR3M3N 4N0TH3R PL4C3, 4ND TH3 S4L4M4ND3R. . ? H3 G4Z3D 4T TH3 IMM3NS3 3NG1N3. TH4T W0ULD H4V3 T0 G0, T00.

W3LL, H3 TH0UGHT, L3T'S S33 H0W B4DLY 0FF Y0U 4R3. 0N Y0UR F33T N0W. 34SY, 34SY. . . TH3R3.

H3 ST00D 4ND H3 H4D ONLY 0N3 L3G. TH3 0TH3R W4S L1K3 4 CHUNK 0F BURNT P1N3-L0G H3 W4S C4RRY1NG 4L0NG 4S 4 P3N4NC3 F0R S0M3 0BSCUR3 S1N. WH3N H3 PUT H1S W31GHT 0N 1T, 4 SH0W3R 0F S1LV3R N33DL3S CUSH3D UP

TH3 L3NGTH OF TH3 C4LF 4ND W3NT OFF IN TH3 KN33. H3 W3PT. COM3 ON! COM3 ON, Y0U, Y0U C4N'T ST4Y H3R3!

4 F3W H0US3 L1GHTS W3R3 G01NG ON 4G41N D0WN TH3 STR33T, WH3TH3R FR0M TH3 INC1D3NTS JUST P4SS3D, 0R B3C4US3 OF TH3 4BN0RM4L S1L3NC3 F0LL0W1NG TH3 FL1GHT, M0NT4G D1D N0T KN0W. H3 H0BBL3D 4R0UND TH3 RU1NS, S31Z1NG 4T H1S B4D L3G WH3N 1T L4GG3D, T4LK1NG 4ND WH1MP3R1NG 4ND SH0UT1NG D1R3CT10NS 4T 1T 4ND CURS1NG 1T 4ND PL34D1NG W1TH 1T T0 W0RK F0R H1M N0W WH3N 1T W4S V1T4L. H3 H34RD 4 NUMB3R OF P30PL3 CRY1NG 0UT IN TH3 D4RKN3SS 4ND SH0UT1NG. H3 R34CH3D TH3 B4CK Y4RD 4ND TH3 4LL3Y. B34TTY, H3 TH0UGHT, Y0U'R3 N0T 4 PR0BL3M N0W. Y0U 4LW4YS S41D, D0N'T F4C3 4 PR0BL3M, BURN 1T. W3LL, N0W 1'V3 D0N3 B0TH. G00D-BY, C4PT41N.

4ND H3 STUMBL3D 4L0NG TH3 4LL3Y IN TH3 D4RK.

* * * * *

4 SH0TGUN BL4ST W3NT OFF IN H1S L3G 3V3RY T1M3 H3 PUT 1T D0WN 4ND H3 TH0UGHT, Y0U'R3 4 F00L, 4 D4MN F00L, 4N 4WFUL F00L, 4N 1D10T, 4N 4WFUL 1D10T, 4 D4MN 1D10T, 4ND 4 F00L, 4 D4MN F00L; L00K 4T TH3 M3SS 4ND WH3R3'S TH3 M0P, L00K 4T TH3 M3SS, 4ND WH4T D0 Y0U D0? PR1D3, D4MN 1T, 4ND T3MP3R, 4ND Y0U'V3 JUNK3D 1T 4LL, 4T TH3 V3RY ST4RT Y0U V0M1T 0N 3V3RY0N3 4ND 0N Y0URS3-LF. BUT 3V3RYTH1NG 4T 0NC3, BUT 3V3RYTH1NG 0N3 0N T0P OF 4N0TH3R; B34TTY, TH3 W0M3N, M1LDR3D, CL4R1SS3, 3V3RYTH1NG. N0 3XCUS3, TH0UGH, N0 3XCUS3. 4 F00L, 4 D4MN F00L, G0 G1V3 Y0URS3LF UP!

N0, W3'LL S4V3 WH4T W3 C4N, W3'LL D0 WH4T TH3R3 1S L3FT T0 D0. 1F W3 H4V3 T0 BURN, L3T'S T4K3 4 F3W M0R3 W1TH US. H3R3!

H3 R3M3MB3R3D TH3 B00KS 4ND TURN3D B4CK. JUST 0N TH3 OFF CH4NC3.

H3 F0UND 4 F3W B00KS WH3R3 H3 H4D L3FT TH3M, N34R TH3 G4RD3N F3NC3. M1LDR3D, G0D BL3SS H3R, H4D M1SS3D

4 F3W. F0UR B00KS ST1LL L4Y H1DD3N WH3R3 H3 H4D PUT TH3M. V01C3S W3R3 W41LL1NG 1N TH3 N1GHT 4ND FL4SH-B34MS SW1RL3D 4B0UT. 0TH3R S4L4M4ND3RS W3R3 R04R1NG TH31R 3NG1N3S F4R 4W4Y, 4ND P0L1C3 S1R3NS W3R3 CUTT1NG TH31R W4Y 4CR0SS T0WN W1TH TH31R S1R3NS.

M0NT4G T00K TH3 F0UR R3M41N1NG B00KS 4ND H0PP3D, J0LT3D, H0PP3D H1S W4Y D0WN TH3 4LL3Y 4ND SUDD3NLY F3LL 4S 1F H1S H34D H4D B33N CUT 0FF 4ND 0NLY H1S B0DY L4Y TH3R3. S0M3TH1NG 1NS1D3 H4D J3RK3D H1M T0 4 H4LT 4ND FL0PP3D H1M D0WN. H3 L4Y WH3R3 H3 H4D F4LL3N 4ND S0BB3D, H1S L3GS F0LD3D, H1S F4C3 PR3SS3D BL1NDLY T0 TH3 GR4V3L.

B34TTY W4NT3D T0 D13.

1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3 CRY1NG M0NT4G KN3W 1T F0R TH3 TRUTH. B34TTY H4D W4NT3D T0 D13. H3 H4D JUST ST00D TH3R3, N0T R34LLY TRY1NG T0 S4V3 H1MS3LF, JUST ST00D TH3R3, J0K1NG, N33DL1NG, TH0UGHT M0NT4G, 4ND TH3 TH0UGHT W4S 3N0UGH T0 ST1FL3 H1S S0BB1NG 4ND L3T H1M P4US3 F0R 41R. H0W STR4NG3, STR4NG3, T0 W4NT T0 D13 S0 MUCH TH4T Y0U L3T 4 M4N W4LK 4R0UND 4RM3D 4ND TH3N 1NST34D 0F SHUTT1NG UP 4ND ST4Y1NG 4L1V3, Y0U C0 0N Y3LL1NG 4T P30PL3 4ND M4K1NG FUN 0F TH3M UNT1L Y0U G3T TH3M M4D, 4ND TH3N. . .

4T 4 D1ST4NC3, RUNN1NG F33T.

M0NT4G S4T UP. L3T'S G3T 0UT 0F H3R3. C0M3 0N, G3T UP, G3T UP, Y0U JUST C4N'T S1T! BUT H3 W4S ST1LL CRY1NG 4ND TH4T H4D T0 B3 F1N1SH3D. 1T W4S G01NG 4W4Y N0W. H3 H4DN'T W4NT3D T0 K1LL 4NY0N3, N0T 3V3N B34TTY. H1S FL3SH GR1PP3D H1M 4ND SHR4NK 4S 1F 1T H4D B33N PLUNG3D 1N 4C1D. H3 G4GG3D. H3 S4W B34TTY, 4 T0RCH, N0T M0V1NG, FLUTT3R1NG 0UT 0N TH3 GR4SS. H3 BLT 4T H1S KNUCKL3S. 1'M S0RRY, 1'M S0RRY, 0H G0D, S0RRY. . .

H3 TR13D T0 P13C3 1T 4LL T0G3TH3R, T0 G0 B4CK T0 TH3 N0RM4L P4TT3RN 0F L1F3 4 F3W SH0RT D4YS 4G0 B3F0R3 TH3 S13V3 4ND TH3 S4ND, D3NH4M'S D3NT1FR1C3, M0TH-V01C3S, F1R3FL13S, TH3 4L4RMS 4ND 3XCURS10NS, T00 MUCH F0R 4 F3W SH0RT D4YS, T00 MUCH, 1ND33D, F0R 4

L1F3T1M3.

F33T R4N IN TH3 F4R 3ND OF TH3 4LL3Y.

"G3T UP!" H3 T0LD H1MS3LF. "D4MN IT, G3T UP!" H3 S41D T0 TH3 L3G, 4ND ST00D. TH3 P41NS W3R3 SP1K3S DR1V3N IN TH3 KN33C4P 4ND TH3N ONLY D4RN1NG N33DL3S 4ND TH3N ONLY C0MM0N, 0RD1N4RY S4F3TY P1NS, 4ND 4FT3R H3 H4D DR4GG3D 4L0NG FL1TY M0R3 H0PS 4ND JUMPS, F1LL1NG H1S H4ND W1TH SL1V3RS FR0M TH3 B04RD F3NC3, TH3 PR1CKL1NG W4S L1K3 S0M30N3 BL0W1NG 4 SPR4Y 0F SC4LD1NG W4T3R 0N TH4T L3G. 4ND TH3 L3G W4S 4T L4ST H1S 0WN L3G 4G41N. H3 H4D B33N 4FR41D TH4T RUNN1NG M1GHT BR34K TH3 L00S3 4NKL3. N0W, SUCK1NG 4LL TH3 N1GHT INT0 H1S 0P3N M0UTH, 4ND BL0W1NG IT 0UT P4L3, W1TH 4LL TH3 BL4CKN3SS L3FT H34V1LY 1NS1D3 H1MS3LF, H3 S3T 0UT IN 4 ST34DY J0GG1NG P4C3. H3 C4RR13D TH3 B00KS IN H1S H4NDS.

H3 TH0UGHT 0F F4B3R.

F4B3R W4S B4CK TH3R3 IN TH3 ST34M1NG LUMP 0F T4R TH4T H4D N0 N4M3 0R 1D3NT1TY N0W. H3 H4D BURNT F4B3R, T00. H3 F3LT S0 SUDD3NLY SH0CK3D BY TH1S TH4T H3 F3LT F4B3R W4S R34LLY D34D, B4K3D L1K3 4 R04CH IN TH4T SM4LL CR33N C4PSUL3 SH0V3D 4ND L0ST IN TH3 P0CK3T 0F 4 M4N WH0 W4S N0W N0TH1NG BUT 4 FR4M3 SK3L3T0N STRUNG W1TH 4SPH4LT T3ND0NS.

YOU MUST R3M3MB3R, BURN TH3M 0R TH3Y'LL BURN YOU, H3 TH0UGHT. R1GHT N0W IT'S 4S S1MPL3 4S TH4T.

H3 S34RCH3D H1S P0CK3TS, TH3 M0N3Y W4S TH3R3, 4ND IN H1S 0TH3R P0CK3T H3 F0UND TH3 USU4L S34SH3LL UP0N WH1CH TH3 C1TY W4S T4LK1NG T0 ITS3LF IN TH3 C0LD BL4CK M0RN1NG.

"P0L1C3 4L3RT. W4NT3D: FUG1T1V3 IN C1TY. H4S C0M-M1TT3D MURD3R 4ND CR1M3S 4G41NST TH3 ST4T3. N4M3: GUY M0NT4G. 0CCUP4T10N: F1R3M4N. L4ST S33N. . ."

H3 R4N ST34D1LY F0R S1X BL0CKS, IN TH3 4LL3Y, 4ND TH3N TH3 4LL3Y 0P3N3D 0UT 0N T0 4 W1D3 3MPTY TH0R0UGH-F4R3 T3N L4N3S W1D3. IT S33M3D L1K3 4 B04TL3SS R1V3R FR0Z3N TH3R3 IN TH3 R4W L1GHT 0F TH3 H1GH WH1T3 4RC-

L4MPS; Y0U C0ULD DR0WN TRYING T0 CR0SS 1T, H3 F3LT; 1T W4S T00 W1D3, 1T W4S T00 0P3N. 1T W4S 4 V4ST ST4C3 WITH0UT SC3N3RY, INV1TING H1M T0 RUN 4CR0SS, 34S1LY S33N IN TH3 BL4ZING ILLUMIN4T10N, 34S1LY C4UGHT, 34S1LY SH0T D0WN.

TH3 S34SH3LL HUMM3D IN H1S 34R.

“. . .W4TCH F0R 4 M4N RUNNING. . . W4TCH F0R TH3 RUNNING M4N. . . W4TCH F0R 4 M4N 4L0N3, 0N F00T. . . W4TCH. . .”

M0NT4G PULL3D B4CK INT0 TH3 SH4D0WS. D1R3CTLY 4H34D L4Y 4 G4S ST4T10N, 4 GR34T CHUNK 0F P0RC3L41N SN0W SH1NING TH3R3, 4ND TW0 S1LV3R B33TL3S PULLING IN T0 F1LL UP. N0W H3 MUST B3 CL34N 4ND PR3S3NT4BL3 1F H3 W1SH3D, T0 W4LK, N0T RUN, STR0LL C4LMLY 4CR0SS TH4T W1D3 B0UL3V4RD. 1T W0ULD GLV3 H1M 4N 3XTR4 M4RG1N 0F S4F3TY 1F H3 W4SH3D UP 4ND C0MB3D H1S H41R B3F0R3 H3 W3NT 0N H1S W4Y T0 G3T WH3R3. . ?

Y3S, H3 TH0UGHT, WH3R3 4M I RUNNING?

N0WH3R3. TH3R3 W4S N0WH3R3 T0 G0, N0 FR13ND T0 TURN T0, R34LLY. 3XC3PT F4B3R. 4ND TH3N H3 R34LLZ3D TH4T H3 W4S IND33D, RUNNING T0W4RD F4B3R'S H0US3, INST1NCTIV3LY. BUT F4B3R C0ULDN'T H1D3 H1M; 1T W0ULD B3 SULC1D3 3V3N T0 TRY. BUT H3 KN3W TH4T H3 W0ULD G0 T0 S33 F4B3R 4NYW4Y, F0R 4 F3W SH0RT M1NUT3S. F4B3R'S W0ULD B3 TH3 PL4C3 WH3R3 H3 M1GHT R3FU3L H1S F4ST DR41NING B3L1F IN H1S 0WN 4BL1LTY T0 SURV1V3. H3 JUST W4NT3D T0 KN0W TH4T TH3R3 W4S 4 M4N L1K3 F4B3R IN TH3 W0RLD. H3 W4NT3D T0 S33 TH3 M4N 4L1V3 4ND N0T BURN3D B4CK TH3R3 L1K3 4 B0DY SH3LL3D IN 4N0TH3R B0DY. 4ND S0M3 0F TH3 M0N3Y MUST B3 L3FT W1TH F4B3R, 0F C0URS3, T0 B3 SP3NT 4FT3R M0NT4G R4N 0N H1S W4Y. P3RH4PS H3 C0ULD M4K3 TH3 0P3N C0UNTRY 4ND L1V3 0N 0R N34R TH3 R1V3RS 4ND N34R TH3 H1GHW4YS, IN TH3 F13LDS 4ND H1LLS.

4 GR34T WH1RLING WH1SP3R M4D3 H1M L00K T0 TH3 SKY.

TH3 P0L1C3 H3L1C0PT3RS W3R3 R1SING S0 F4R 4W4Y

TH4T 1T S33M3D S0M30N3 H4D BLOWN TH3 GR3Y H34D OFF
 4 DRY D4ND3L10N FL0W3R. TW0 D0Z3N 0F TH3M FLURR13D,
 W4V3R1NG, 1ND3C1S1V3, THR33 M1L3S 0FF, L1K3 BUT-
 T3RFL13S PUZZL3D BY 4UTUMN, 4ND TH3N TH3Y W3R3 PLUM-
 M3T1NG D0WN T0 L4ND, 0N3 BY 0N3, H3R3, TH3R3, S0FTLY
 KN34D1NG TH3 STR33TS WH3R3, TURN3D B4CK T0 B33TL3S,
 TH3Y SHR13K3D 4L0NG TH3 B0UL3V4RDS 0R, 4S SUDD3NLY,
 L34PT B4CK INT0 TH3 S1R, C0NT1NU1NG TH31R S34RCH.

4ND H3R3 W4S TH3 G4S ST4T10N, ITS 4TT3ND4NTS BUSY
 N0W W1TH CUST0M3RS. 4PPR04CH1NG FR0M TH3 R34R,
 M0NT4G 3NT3R3D TH3 M3N'S W4SHR00M. THR0UGH TH3
 4LUM1N1UM W4LL H3 H34RD 4 R4D10 V01C3 S4Y1NG,
 "W4R H4S B33N D3CL4R3D." TH3 G4S W4S B31NG PUMP3D
 0UTS1D3. TH3 M3N 1N TH3 B33TL3S W3R3 T4LK1NG 4ND TH3
 4TT3ND4NTS W3R3 T4LK1NG 4B0UT TH3 3NG1N3S, TH3 G4S,
 TH3 M0N3Y 0W3D. M0NT4G ST00D TRY1NG T0 M4K3 H1MS3LF
 F33L TH3 SH0CK 0F TH3 QUL3T ST4T3M3NT FR0M TH3 R4D10,
 BUT N0TH1NG W0ULD H4PP3N. TH3 W4R W0ULD H4V3 T0
 W41T F0R H1M T0 C0M3 T0 1T 1N H1S P3RS0N4L F1L3, 4N
 H0UR, TW0 H0URS FR0M N0W.

H3 W4SH3D H1S H4NDS 4ND F4C3 4ND T0W3LL3D
 H1MS3LF DRY, M4K1NG L1TTL3 S0UND. H3 C4M3 0UT 0F TH3
 W4SHR00M 4ND SHUT TH3 D00R C4R3FULLY 4ND W4LK3D
 1NT0 TH3 D4RKN3SS 4ND 4T L4ST ST00D 4G41N 0N TH3 3DG3
 0F TH3 3MPTY B0UL3V4RD.

TH3R3 1T L4Y, 4 G4M3 F0R H1M T0 W1N, 4 V4ST B0WL1NG
 4LL3Y 1N TH3 C00L M0RN1NG. TH3 B0UL3V4RD W4S 4S CL34N
 4S TH3 SURF4C3 0F 4N 4R3N4 TW0 M1NUT3S B3F0R3 TH3
 4PP34R4NC3 0F C3RT41N UNN4M3D V1CT1MS 4ND C3RT41N
 UNKN0WN K1LL3RS. TH3 41R 0V3R 4ND 4B0V3 TH3 V4ST C0N-
 CR3T3 R1V3R TR3MBL3D W1TH TH3 W4RMTH 0F M0NT4G'S
 B0DY 4L0N3; 1T W4S 1NCR3D1BL3 H0W H3 F3LT H1S T3M-
 P3R4TUR3 C0ULD C4US3 TH3 WH0L3 IMM3D14T3 W0RLD T0
 V1BR4T3. H3 W4S 4 PH0SPH0R3SC3NT T4RC3T; H3 KN3W 1T,
 H3 F3LT 1T. 4ND N0W H3 MUST B3G1N H1S L1TTL3 W4LK.

THR33 BL0CKS 4W4Y 4 F3W H34DL1GHTS GL4R3D. M0NT4G

DR3W 4 D33P BR34TH. H1s LUNGS W3R3 L1k3 BURN1NG BR00MS 1N H1s CH3ST. H1s M0UTH W4s SUCK3D DRY FR0M RUNN1NG. H1s THR04T T4ST3D 0F BL00DY 1R0N 4ND TH3R3 W4s RUST3D ST33L 1N H1s F33T.

WH4T 4B0UT TH0S3 L1GHTS TH3R3? 0NC3 Y0U ST4RT3D W4LK1NG Y0U'D H4V3 T0 G4UG3 H0W F4ST TH0S3 B33TL3S C0ULD M4K3 1T D0WN H3R3. W3LL, H0W F4R W4s 1T T0 TH3 0TH3R CURB? 1T S33M3D L1K3 4 HUNDR3D Y4RDS. PR0B4-BLY N0T 4 HUNDR3D, BUT F1GUR3 F0R TH4T 4NYW4Y, F1GUR3 TH4T W1TH H1M C01NG V3RY SL0WLY, 4T 4 N1C3 STR0LL, 1T M1GHT T4K3 4s MUCH 4s TH1RTY S3C0NDS, F0RTY S3C0NDS T0 W4LK 4LL TH3 W4Y. TH3 B33TL3S? 0NC3 ST4RT3D, TH3Y C0ULD L34V3 THR33 BL0CKS B3H1ND TH3M 1N 4B0UT F1FT33N S3C0NDS. S0, 3V3N 1F H4LFW4Y 4CR0SS H3 ST4RT3D T0 RUN. . ?

H3 PUT H1s R1GHT F00T 0UT 4ND TH3N H1s L3FT F00T 4ND TH3N H1s R1GHT. H3 W4LK3D 0N TH3 3MPTY 4V3NU3.

3V3N 1F TH3 STR33T W3R3 3NT1R3LY 3MPTY, 0F C0URS3, Y0U C0ULDN'T B3 SUR3 0F 4 S4F3 CR0SS1NG, F0R 4 C4R C0ULD 4PP34R SUDD3NLY 0V3R TH3 R1S3 F0UR BL0CKS FURTH3R 0N 4ND B3 0N 4ND P4ST Y0U B3F0R3 Y0U H4D T4K3N 4 D0Z3N BR34THS.

H3 D3C1D3D N0T T0 C0UNT H1s ST3PS. H3 L00K3D N31TH3R T0 L3FT N0R R1GHT. TH3 L1GHT FR0M TH3 0V3RH34D L4MPS S33M3D 4s BR1GHT 4ND R3V34LL1NG 4s TH3 M1DD4Y SUN 4ND JUST 4s H0T.

H3 L1ST3N3D T0 TH3 S0UND 0F TH3 C4R PLCK1NG UP SP33D TW0 BL0CKS 4W4Y 0N H1s R1GHT. 1TS M0V4BL3 H34DL1GHTS J3RK3D B4CK 4ND F0RTH SUDD3NLY, 4ND C4UGHT 4T M0NT4G.

K33P C01NG.

M0NT4G F4LT3R3D, C0T 4 GR1P 0N TH3 B00KS, 4ND F0RC3D H1MS3LF N0T T0 FR33Z3.

1NST1NCT1V3LY H3 T00K 4 F3W QULCK, RUNN1NG ST3PS TH3N T4LK3D 0UT L0UD T0 H1MS3LF 4ND PULL3D UP T0 STR0LL 4G41N. H3 W4s N0W H4LF 4CR0SS TH3 STR33T, BUT TH3 R04R FR0M TH3 B33TL3'S 3NG1N3S WH1N3D H1GH3R 4s

IT PUT ON SP33D.

TH3 P0LIC3, 0F C0URS3. TH3Y S33 M3. BUT SLOW NOW; SLOW, QU13T, D0N'T TURN, D0N'T L0OK, D0N'T S33M C0NC3RN3D. W4LK, TH4T'S 1T, W4LK, W4LK.

TH3 B33TL3 W4S RUSH1NG. TH3 B33TL3 W4S R04R1NG. TH3 B33TL3 R41S3D 1TS SP33D. TH3 B33TL3 W4S WH1N1NG. TH3 B33TL3 W4S 1N H1GH THUND3R. TH3 B33TL3 C4M3 SK1MM1NG. TH3 B33TL3 C4M3 1N 4 S1NGL3 WH1STL1NG TR4J3CT0RY, FLR3D FR0M 4N 1NV1S1BL3 R1FL3. 1T W4S UP T0 120 MPH. 1T W4S UP T0 130 4T L34ST. M0NT4G CL4MP3D H1S J4WS. TH3 H34T 0F TH3 R4C1NG H34DL1GHTS BURNT H1S CH33KS, 1T S33M3D, 4ND J1TT3R3D H1S 3Y3-L1DS 4ND FLUSH3D TH3 S0UR SW34T 0UT 4LL 0V3R H1S B0DY.

H3 B3G4N T0 SHUFFL3 1D10T1C4LLY 4ND T4LK T0 H1MS3LF 4ND TH3N H3 BR0K3 4ND JUST R4N. H3 PUT 0UT H1S L3GS 4S F4R 4S TH3Y W0ULD G0 4ND D0WN 4ND TH3N F4R 0UT 4G41N 4ND D0WN 4ND B4CK 4ND 0UT 4ND D0WN 4ND B4CK. G0D! G0D! H3 DR0PP3D 4 B00K, BR0K3 P4C3, 4LM0ST TURN3D, CH4NG3D H1S M1ND, PLUNG3D 0N, Y3LL1NG 1N C0NCR3T3 3MPT1N3SS, TH3 B33TL3 SCUTTL1NG 4FT3R 1TS RUNN1NG F00D, TW0 HUNDR3D, 0N3 HUNDR3D F33T 4W4Y, N1N3TY, 31GHTY, S3V3NTY, M0NT4G G4SP1NG, FL41LL1NG H1S H4NDS, L3GS UP D0WN 0UT, UP D0WN 0UT, CL0S3R, CL0S3R, H00T1NG, C4LL1NG, H1S 3Y3S BURNT WH1T3 N0W 4S H1S H34D J3RK3D 4B0UT T0 C0NFR0NT TH3 FL4SH1NG GL4R3, N0W TH3 B33TL3 W4S SW4LL0W3D 1N 1TS 0WN L1GHT, N0W 1T W4S N0TH1NG BUT 4 T0RCH HURTL1NG UP0N H1M; 4LL S0UND, 4LL BL4R3. N0W—4LM0ST 0N T0P 0F H1M!

H3 STUMBL3D 4ND F3LL.

I'M D0N3! 1T'S 0V3R!

BUT TH3 F4LL1NG M4D3 4 D1FF3R3NC3. 4N 1NST4NT B3F0R3 R34CH1NG H1M TH3 W1LD B33TL3 CUT 4ND SW3RV3D 0UT. 1T W4S G0N3. M0NT4G L4Y FL4T, H1S H34D D0WN. W1SPS 0F LAUGHT3R TR41L3D B4CK T0 H1M W1TH TH3 BLU3 3XH4UST FR0M TH3 B33TL3.

H1S R1GHT H4ND W4S 3XT3ND3D 4B0V3 H1M, FL4T. 4CR0SS TH3 3XTR3M3 T1P 0F H1S M1DDL3 F1NG3R, H3 S4W N0W 4S

H3 L1FT3D TH4T H4ND, 4 F41NT S1XT33NTH OF 4N 1NCH OF BL4CK TR34D WH3R3 T1R3 H4D T0UCH3D 1N P4SS1NG. H3 L00K3D 4T TH4T BL4CK L1N3 W1TH D1SB3L13F, G3TT1NG T0 H1S F33T.

TH4T W4SN'T TH3 P0LLC3, H3 TH0UGHT.

H3 L00K3D D0WN TH3 B0UL3V4RD. 1T W4S CL34R N0W. 4 C4RFUL OF CH1LDR3N, 4LL 4G3S, G0D KN3W, FR0M TW3LV3 T0 S1XT33N, 0UT WH1STL1NG, Y3LL1NG, HURR4H1NG, H4D S33N 4 M4N, 4 V3RY 3XTR40RD1N4RY S1GHT, 4 M4N STR0LL1NG, 4 R4R1TY, 4ND S1MPLY S41D, "L3T'S G3T H1M," N0T KN0W1NG H3 W4S TH3 FUG1T1V3 MR. M0NT4G, S1MPLY 4 NUMB3R OF CH1LDR3N 0UT F0R 4 L0NG N1GHT OF R04R1NG FLV3 0R S1X HUNDR3D M1L3S 1N 4 F3W M00NL1T H0URS, TH31R F4C3S 1CY W1TH W1ND, 4ND C0M1NG H0M3 0R N0T C0M1NG 4T D4WN, 4L1V3 0R N0T 4L1V3, TH4T M4D3 TH3 4DV3NTUR3.

TH3Y W0ULD H4V3 K1LL3D M3, TH0UGHT M0NT4G, SW4Y1NG, TH3 41R ST1LL T0RN 4ND ST1RR1NG 4B0UT H1M 1N DUST, T0UCH1NG H1S BRU1S3D CH33K. F0R N0 R34S0N 4T 4LL 1N TH3 W0RLD TH3Y W0ULD H4V3 K1LL3D M3.

H3 W4LK3D T0W4RD TH3 F4R K3RB T3LL1NG 34CH F00T T0 G0 4ND K33P G01NG. S0M3H0W H3 H4D P1CK3D UP TH3 SP1LL3D B00KS; H3 D1DN'T R3M3MB3R B3ND1NG 0R T0UCH1NG TH3M. H3 K3PT M0V1NG TH3M FR0M H4ND T0 H4ND 4S 1F TH3Y W3R3 4 P0K3R H4ND H3 C0ULD N0T FL1GUR3.

1 W0ND3R 1F TH3Y W3R3 TH3 0N3S WH0 K1LL3D CL4-R1SS3?

H3 ST0PP3D 4ND H1S M1ND S41D 1T 4G41N, V3RY L0UD.

1 W0ND3R 1F TH3Y W3R3 TH3 0N3S WH0 K1LL3D CL4-R1SS3!

H3 W4NT3D T0 RUN 4FT3R TH3M Y3LL1NG.

H1S 3Y3S W4T3R3D.

TH3 TH1NG TH4T H4D S4V3D H1M W4S F4LL1NG FL4T. TH3 DR1V3R OF TH4T C4R, S331NG M0NT4G D0WN, 1NST1-NCT1V3LY C0NS1D3R3D TH3 PR0B4B1L1TY TH4T RUNN1NG 0V3R 4 B0DY 4T TH4T SP33D M1GHT TURN TH3 C4R UPS1D3 D0WN 4ND SP1LL TH3M 0UT. 1F M0NT4G H4D R3M41N3D 4N

UPRIGHT T4RG3T. . . ?

MONT4G G4SP3D.

F4R D0WN TH3 B0UL3V4RD, F0UR BL0CKS 4W4Y, TH3 B33TL3 H4D SL0W3D, SPUN 4B0UT 0N TW0 WH33LS, 4ND W4S N0W R4CLNG B4CK, SL4NT1NG 0V3R 0N TH3 WR0NG S1D3 0F TH3 STR33T, PLCK1NG UP SP33D.

BUT MONT4G W4S G0N3, H1DD3N 1N TH3 S4F3TY 0F TH3 D4RK 4LL3Y F0R WH1CH H3 H4D S3T 0UT 0N 4 L0NG J0URN3Y, 4N H0UR 0R W4S 1T 4 M1NUT3, 4C0? H3 ST00D SH1V3R1NG 1N TH3 N1GHT, L00K1NG B4CK 0UT 4S TH3 B33TL3 R4N BY 4ND SK1DD3D B4CK T0 TH3 C3NTR3 0F TH3 4V3NU3, WH1RL1NG LAUGHT3R 1N TH3 41R 4LL 4B0UT 1T, G0N3.

FURTH3R 0N, 4S MONT4G M0V3D 1N D4RKN3SS, H3 C0ULD S33 TH3 H3L1C0PT3RS F4LL1NG, F4LL1NG, L1K3 TH3 F1RST FL4K3S 0F SN0W 1N TH3 L0NG W1NT3R T0 C0M3. . .

TH3 H0US3 W4S S1L3NT.

MONT4G 4PPR04CH3D FR0M TH3 R34R, CR33P1NG THR0UGH 4 TH1CK N1GHT-M01ST3N3D SC3NT 0F D4FF0D1LS 4ND R0S3S 4ND W3T GR4SS. H3 T0UCH3D TH3 SCR33N D00R 1N B4CK, F0UND 1T 0P3N, SL1PP3D 1N, M0V3D 4CR0SS TH3 P0RCH, L1ST3N1NG.

MRS. BLACK, 4R3 Y0U 4SL33P 1N TH3R3? H3 TH0UGHT. TH1S 1SN'T G00D, BUT Y0UR HUSB4ND D1D 1T T0 0TH3RS 4ND N3V3R 4SK3D 4ND N3V3R W0ND3R3D 4ND N3V3R W0RR13D. 4ND N0W S1NC3 Y0U'R3 4 F1R3M4N'S W1F3, 1T'S Y0UR H0US3 4ND Y0UR TURN, F0R 4LL TH3 H0US3S Y0UR HUSB4ND BURN3D 4ND TH3 P30PL3 H3 HURT W1TH0UT TH1NK1NG.

TH3 H0US3 D1D N0T R3PLY.

H3 H1D TH3 B00KS 1N TH3 K1TCH3N 4ND M0V3D FR0M TH3 H0US3 4G41N T0 TH3 4LL3Y 4ND L00K3D B4CK 4ND TH3 H0US3 W4S ST1LL D4RK 4ND QUI3T, SL33P1NG.

0N H1S W4Y 4CR0SS T0WN, W1TH TH3 H3L1C0PT3RS FLUT-T3R1NG L1K3 T0RN B1TS 0F P4P3R 1N TH3 SKY, H3 PH0N3D TH3 4L4RM 4T 4 L0N3LY PH0N3 B00TH 0UTS1D3 4 ST0R3 TH4T W4S CL0S3D F0R TH3 N1GHT. TH3N H3 ST00D 1N TH3 C0LD N1GHT 41R, W41T1NG 4ND 4T 4 D1ST4NC3 H3 H34RD

TH3 FLR3 SLR3NS ST4RT UP 4ND RUN, 4ND TH3 S4L4M4ND3RS C0M1NG, C0M1NG T0 BURN MR. BL4CK'S H0US3 WH1L3 H3 W4S 4W4Y 4T W0RK, T0 M4K3 H1S W1F3 ST4ND SH1V3R1NG IN TH3 M0RN1NG 41R WH1L3 TH3 R00F L3T G0 4ND DR0PP3D IN UP0N TH3 FLR3. BUT N0W, SH3 W4S ST1LL 4SL33P.

G00D N1GHT, MRS. BL4CK, H3 TH0UGHT.

"F4B3R!"

4N0TH3R R4P, 4 WH1SP3R, 4ND 4 L0NG W41T1NG. TH3N, 4FT3R 4 M1NUT3, 4 SM4LL L1GHT FL1CK3R3D 1NS1D3 F4B3R'S SM4LL H0US3. 4FT3R 4N0TH3R P4US3, TH3 B4CK D00R 0P3N3D.

TH3Y ST00D L00K1NG 4T 34CH 0TH3R IN TH3 H4LF-L1GHT, F4B3R 4ND M0NT4G, 4S 1F 34CH D1D N0T B3L13V3 IN TH3 0TH3R'S 3X1ST3NC3. TH3N F4B3R M0V3D 4ND PUT 0UT H1S H4ND 4ND GR4BB3D M0NT4G 4ND M0V3D H1M IN 4ND S4T H1M D0WN 4ND W3NT B4CK 4ND ST00D IN TH3 D00R, L1ST3-N1NG. TH3 SLR3NS W3R3 W4LL1NG 0FF IN TH3 M0RN1NG D1ST4NC3. H3 C4M3 IN 4ND SHUT TH3 D00R.

M0NT4G S41D, "1'V3 B33N 4 F00L 4LL D0WN TH3 L1N3. 1 C4N'T ST4Y L0NG. 1'M 0N MY W4Y G0D KN0WS WH3R3."

"4T L34ST Y0U W3R3 4 F00L 4B0UT TH3 R1GHT TH1NGS," S41D F4B3R. "1 TH0UGHT Y0U W3R3 D34D. TH3 4UD10-C4PSUL3 1 G4V3 Y0U—"

"BURNT."

"1 H34RD TH3 C4PT41N T4LK1NG T0 Y0U 4ND SUDD3NLY TH3R3 W4S N0TH1NG. 1 4LM0ST C4M3 0UT L00K1NG F0R Y0U."

"TH3 C4PT41N'S D34D. H3 F0UND TH3 4UD10-C4PSUL3, H3 H34RD Y0UR V01C3, H3 W4S G01NG T0 TR4C3 1T. 1 K1LL3D H1M W1TH TH3 FL4M3THR0W3R."

F4B3R S4T D0WN 4ND D1D N0T SP34K F0R 4 T1M3.

"MY G0D, H0W D1D TH1S H4PP3N?" S41D M0NT4G. "1T W4S 0NLY TH3 0TH3R N1GHT 3V3RYTH1NG W4S FLN3 4ND TH3 N3XT TH1NG 1 KN0W 1'M DR0WN1NG. H0W M4NY T1M3S C4N 4 M4N G0 D0WN 4ND ST1LL B3 4L1V3? 1 C4N'T BR34TH3. TH3R3'S B34TTY D34D, 4ND H3 W4S MY FR13ND 0NC3, 4ND

TH3R3'S M1LL13 G0N3, 1 TH0UGHT SH3 W4S MY W1F3, BUT N0W 1 D0N'T KN0W. 4ND TH3 H0US3 4LL BURNT. 4ND MY J0B G0N3 4ND MYS3LF 0N TH3 RUN, 4ND 1 PL4NT3D 4 B00K 1N 4 FLR3M4N'S H0US3 0N TH3 W4Y. G00D CHR1ST, TH3 TH1NGS 1'V3 D0N3 1N 4 S1NGL3 W33K!"

"Y0U D1D WH4T Y0U H4D T0 D0. 1T W4S C0M1NG 0N F0R 4 L0NG T1M3."

"Y3S, 1 B3L13V3 TH4T, 1F TH3R3'S N0TH1NG 3LS3 1 B3L13V3. 1T S4V3D 1TS3LF UP T0 H4PP3N. 1 C0ULD F33L 1T F0R 4 L0NG T1M3, 1 W4S S4V1NG S0M3TH1NG UP, 1 W3NT 4R0UND D01NG 0N3 TH1NG 4ND F33L1NG 4N0TH3R. G0D, 1T W4S 4LL TH3R3. 1T'S 4 W0ND3R 1T D1DN'T SH0W 0N M3, L1K3 F4T. 4ND N0W H3R3 1 4M, M3SS1NG UP Y0UR L1F3. TH3Y M1GHT F0LL0W M3 H3R3."

"1 F33L 4L1V3 F0R TH3 FLRST T1M3 1N Y34RS," S41D F4B3R. "1 F33L 1'M D01NG WH4T 1 SH0ULD H4V3 D0N3 4 L1F3T1M3 4G0. F0R 4 L1TTL3 WH1L3 1'M N0T 4FR41D. M4YB3 1T'S B3C4US3 1'M D01NG TH3 R1GHT TH1NG 4T L4ST. M4YB3 1T'S B3C4US3 1'V3 D0N3 4 R4SH TH1NG 4ND D0N'T W4NT T0 L00K TH3 C0W4RD T0 Y0U. 1 SUPP0S3 1'LL H4V3 T0 D0 3V3N M0R3 V10L3NT TH1NGS, 3XP0S1NG MYS3LF S0 1 W0N'T F4LL D0WN 0N TH3 J0B 4ND TURN SC4R3D 4C41N. WH4T 4R3 Y0UR PL4NS?"

"T0 K33P RUNN1NG."

"Y0U KN0W TH3 W4R'S 0N?"

"1 H34RD."

"G0D, 1SN'T 1T FUNNY?" S41D TH3 0LD M4N. "1T S33MS S0 R3M0T3 B3C4US3 W3 H4V3 0UR 0WN TR0UBL3S."

"1 H4V3N'T H4D T1M3 T0 TH1NK." M0NT4C DR3W 0UT 4 HUNDR3D D0LL4RS. "1 W4NT TH1S T0 ST4Y W1TH Y0U, US3 1T 4NY W4Y TH4T'LL H3LP WH3N 1'M G0N3."

"BUT—"

"1 M1GHT B3 D34D BY N00N; US3 TH1S."

F4B3R N0DD3D. "Y0U'D B3TT3R H34D F0R TH3 R1V3R 1F Y0U C4N, F0LL0W 4L0NG 1T, 4ND 1F Y0U C4N H1T TH3 0LD R41LR04D L1N3S G01NG 0UT 1NT0 TH3 C0UNTRY, F0LL0W TH3M. 3V3N TH0UGH PR4CT1C4LLY 3V3RYTH1NG'S 41RB0RN3

TH3S3 D4YS 4ND M0ST 0F TH3 TR4CKS 4R3 4B4ND0N3D, TH3 R41LS 4R3 ST1LL TH3R3, RUST1NG. 1'V3 H34RD TH3R3 4R3 ST1LL H0B0 C4MP5 4LL 4CR0SS TH3 C0UNTRY, H3R3 4ND TH3R3; W4LK1NG C4MP5 TH3Y C4LL TH3M, 4ND 1F Y0U K33P W4LK1NG F4R 3N0UGH 4ND K33P 4N 3Y3 P33L3D, TH3Y S4Y TH3R3'S L0TS 0F 0LD H4RV4RD D3GR33S 0N TH3 TR4CKS B3TW33N H3R3 4ND L0S 4NG3L3S. M0ST 0F TH3M 4R3 W4NT3D 4ND HUNT3D 1N TH3 C1T13S. TH3Y SURV1V3, 1 GU3SS. TH3R3 4R3N'T M4NY 0F TH3M, 4ND 1 GU3SS TH3 G0V3RN-M3NT'S N3V3R C0NS1D3R3D TH3M 4 GR34T 3N0UGH D4NG3R T0 G0 1N 4ND TR4CK TH3M D0WN. Y0U M1GHT H0L3 UP W1TH TH3M F0R 4 T1M3 4ND G3T 1N T0UCH W1TH M3 1N ST. L0ULS, 1'M L34V1NG 0N TH3 FLV3 4.M. BUS TH1S M0RN1NG, T0 S33 4 R3T1R3D PR1NT3R TH3R3, 1'M G3TT1NG 0UT 1NT0 TH3 0P3N MYS3LF, 4T L4ST. TH3 M0N3Y W1LL B3 PUT T0 G00D US3. TH4NK5 4ND G0D BL3SS Y0U. D0 Y0U W4NT T0 SL33P 4 F3W M1NUT3S?"

"I'D B3TT3R RUN."

"L3T'S CH3CK."

H3 T00K M0NT4G QULCKLY 1NT0 TH3 B3DR00M 4ND L1FT3D 4 P1CTUR3 FR4M3 4S1D3, R3V34L1NG 4 T3L3V1S10N SCR33N TH3 S1Z3 0F 4 P0ST4L C4RD. "1 4LW4YS W4NT3D S0M3TH1NG V3RY SM4LL, S0M3TH1NG 1 C0ULD T4LK T0, S0M3TH1NG 1 C0ULD BL0T 0UT W1TH TH3 P4LM 0F MY H4ND, 1F N3C3SS4RY, N0TH1NG TH4T C0ULD SH0UT M3 D0WN, N0TH1NG M0NSTR0US B1G. S0, Y0U S33."

H3 SN4PP3D 1T 0N. "M0NT4G," TH3 TV S3T S41D, 4ND L1T UP. "M-0-N-T-4-G." TH3 N4M3 W4S SP3LL3D 0UT BY TH3 V01C3. "GUY M0NT4G. ST1LL RUNN1NG. P0L1C3 H3L1-C0PT3RS 4R3 UP. 4 N3W M3CH4N1C4L H0UND H4S B33N BR0UGHT FR0M 4N0TH3R D1STR1CT—"

M0NT4G 4ND F4B3R L00K3D 4T 34CH 0TH3R.

"—M3CH4N1C4L H0UND N3V3R F41LS. N3V3R S1NC3 ITS FLRST US3 1N TR4CK1NG QU4RRY H4S TH1S 1NCR3D1BL3 1NV3NT10N M4D3 4 M1ST4K3. T0N1GHT, TH1S N3TW0RK 1S PR0UD T0 H4V3 TH3 0PP0RTUN1TY T0 F0LL0W TH3 H0UND BY C4M3R4 H3L1C0PT3R 4S 1T ST4RTS 0N 1TS W4Y T0 TH3

T4RG3T—”

F4B3R P0UR3D TW0 GL4SS3S 0F WH1SKY. “W3’LL N33D TH3S3.”

TH3Y DR4NK.

“—N0S3 S0 S3NS1T1V3 TH3 M3CH4N1C4L H0UND C4N R3M3MB3R 4ND 1D3NT1FY T3N TH0US4ND 0D0R-1ND3X3S 0N T3N TH0US4ND M3N W1TH0UT R3-S3TT1NG!”

F4B3R TR3MBL3D TH3 L34ST B1T 4ND L00K3D 4B0UT 4T H1S H0US3, 4T TH3 W4LLS, TH3 D00R, TH3 D00RKN0B, 4ND TH3 CH41R WH3R3 M0NT4G N0W S4T. M0NT4G S4W TH3 L00K. TH3Y B0TH L00K3D QULCKLY 4B0UT TH3 H0US3 4ND M0NT4G F3LT H1S N0STR1LLS D1L4T3 4ND H3 KN3W TH4T H3 W4S TRY1NG T0 TR4CK H1MS3LF 4ND H1S N0S3 W4S SUDD3NLY G00D 3N0UGH T0 S3NS3 TH3 P4TH H3 H4D M4D3 1N TH3 41R 0F TH3 R00M 4ND TH3 SW34T 0F H1S H4ND HUNG FR0M TH3 D00RKN0B, 1NV1S1BL3, BUT 4S NUM3R0US 4S TH3 J3W3LS 0F 4 SM4LL CH4ND3L13R, H3 W4S 3V3RYWH3R3, 1N 4ND 0N 4ND 4B0UT 3V3RYTH1NG, H3 W4S 4 LUM1N0US CL0UD, 4 GH0ST TH4T M4D3 BR34TH1NG 0NC3 M0R3 1MP0SS1BL3. H3 S4W F4B3R ST0P UP H1S 0WN BR34TH F0R F34R 0F DR4W1NG TH4T GH0ST INT0 H1S 0WN B0DY, P3RH4PS, B31NG C0NT4M1N4T3D W1TH TH3 PH4NT0M 3XH4L4T10NS 4ND 0D0RS 0F 4 RUNN1NG M4N.

“TH3 M3CH4N1C4L H0UND 1S N0W L4ND1NG BY H3LL1C0PT3R 4T TH3 S1T3 0F TH3 BURN1NG!”

4ND TH3R3 0N TH3 SM4LL SCR33N W4S TH3 BURNT H0US3, 4ND TH3 CR0WD, 4ND S0M3TH1NG W1TH 4 SH33T 0V3R 1T 4ND 0UT 0F TH3 SKY, FLUTT3R1NG, C4M3 TH3 H3LL1C0PT3R L1K3 4 CR0T3SQU3 FLOW3R.

S0 TH3Y MUST H4V3 TH31R C4M3 0UT, TH0UGHT M0NT4G. TH3 C1RCUS MUST G0 0N, 3V3N W1TH W4R B3G1NN1NG W1TH1N TH3 H0UR. . . .

H3 W4TCH3D TH3 SC3N3, F4SC1N4T3D, N0T W4NT1NG T0 M0V3. 1T S33M3D S0 R3M0T3 4ND N0 P4RT 0F H1M; 1T W4S 4 PL4Y 4P4RT 4ND S3P4R4T3, W0NDR0US T0 W4TCH, N0T W1TH0UT 1TS STR4NG3 PL34SUR3. TH4T’S 4LL F0R M3, Y0U TH0UGHT, TH4T’S 4LL T4K1NG PL4C3 JUST F0R M3.

IF H3 W1SH3D, H3 COULD L1NG3R H3R3, IN C0MF0RT, 4ND F0LL0W TH3 3NT1R3 HUNT ON THROUGh ITS SW1FT PH4S3S, D0WN 4LL3YS 4CR0SS STR33TS, 0V3R 3MPY RUNN1NG 4V3NU3S, CR0SS1NG L0TS 4ND PLAYGR0UNDS, W1TH P4US3S H3R3 0R TH3R3 F0R TH3 N3C3SS4RY C0MM3RC14LS, UP 0TH3R 4LL3YS T0 TH3 BURN1NG H0US3 0F MR. 4ND MRS. BLACK, 4ND S0 ON F1N4LLY T0 TH1S H0US3 W1TH F4B3R 4ND H1MS3LF S34T3D, DR1NK1NG, WH1L3 TH3 3L3CTR1C H0UND SNUFF3D D0WN TH3 L4ST TR41L, S1L3NT 4S 4 DR1FT 0F D34TH 1TS3LF, SK1DD3D T0 4 H4LT 0UTS1D3 TH4T W1ND0W TH3R3. TH3N, 1F H3 W1SH3D, M0NT4G M1GHT R1S3, W4LK T0 TH3 W1ND0W, K33P 0N3 3Y3 0N TH3 TV SCR33N, 0P3N TH3 W1ND0W, L34N 0UT, L00K B4CK, 4ND S33 H1MS3LF DR4M4T1Z3D, D3SCR1B3D, M4D3 0V3R, ST4ND1NG TH3R3, L1MN3D IN TH3 BR1GHT SM4LL T3L3V1S10N SCR33N FR0M 0UTS1D3, 4 DR4M4 T0 B3 W4TCH3D 0BJ3CT1V3LY, KN0W1NG TH4T IN 0TH3R P4RL0RS H3 W4S L4RG3 4S L1F3, IN FULL C0L0R, D1M3NS10N4LLY P3RF3CT! 4ND 1F H3 K3PT H1S 3Y3 P33L3D QULCKLY H3 W0ULD S33 H1MS3LF, 4N 1NST4NT B3F0R3 0BL1V10N, B31NG PUNCTUR3D F0R TH3 B3N3F1T 0F H0W M4NY CLV1L14N P4RL0R-S1TT3RS WH0 H4D B33N W4K3N3D FR0M SL33P 4 F3W M1NUT3S 4G0 BY TH3 FR4NT1C S1R3N1NG 0F TH31R L1V1NG-R00M W4LLS T0 C0M3 W4TCH TH3 B1G G4M3, TH3 HUNT, TH3 0N3-M4N C4RN1V4L.

WOULD H3 H4V3 T1M3 F0R 4 SP33CH? 4S TH3 H0UND S31Z3D H1M, IN V13W 0F T3N 0R TW3NTY 0R TH1RTY M1LL10N P30PL3, M1GHTN'T H3 SUM UP H1S 3NT1R3 L1F3 IN TH3 L4ST W33K IN 0N3 S1NGL3 PHR4S3 0R 4 W0RD TH4T W0ULD ST4Y W1TH TH3M L0NG 4FT3R TH3. H0UND H4D TURN3D, CL3NCH1NG H1M IN 1TS M3T4L-PL13R J4WS, 4ND TR0TT3D 0FF IN D4RKN3SS, WH1L3 TH3 C4M3R4 R3M41N3D ST4T10N4RY, W4TCH1NG TH3 CR34TUR3 DW1NDL3 IN TH3 D1ST4NC3, 4 SPL3ND1D F4D3-0UT! WH4T COULD H3 S4Y IN 4 S1NGL3 W0RD, 4 F3W W0RDS, TH4T W0ULD S34R 4LL TH31R F4C3S 4ND W4K3 TH3M UP?

“TH3R3,” WH1SP3R3D F4B3R.

0UT 0F 4 H3L1C0PT3R GL1D3D S0M3TH1NG TH4T W4S N0T

M4CH1N3, N0T 4N1M4L, N0T D34D, N0T 4L1V3, GL0W1NG W1TH 4 P4L3 GR33N LUM1N0S1TY. 1T ST00D N34R TH3 SM0-K1NG RULNS 0F M0NT4G'S H0US3 4ND TH3 M3N BR0UGHT H1S D1SC4RD3D FL4M3-THR0W3R T0 1T 4ND PUT 1T D0WN UND3R TH3 MUZZL3 0F TH3 H0UND. TH3R3 W4S 4 WH1RR1NG, CL1-CK1NG, HUMM1NG.

M0NT4G SH00K H1S H34D 4ND C0T UP 4ND DR4NK TH3 R3ST 0F H1S DR1NK. "1T'S T1M3. 1'M S0RRY 4B0UT TH1S:"

"4B0UT WH4T? M3? MY H0US3? 1 D3S3RV3 3V3RYTH1NG. RUN, F0R G0D'S S4K3. P3RH4PS 1 C4N D3L4Y TH3M H3R3—"

"W41T. TH3R3'S N0 US3 Y0UR B31NG D1SC0V3R3D. WH3N 1 L34V3, BURN TH3 SPR34D 0F TH1S B3D, TH4T 1 T0UCH3D. BURN TH3 CH41R 1N TH3 L1V1NG R00M, 1N Y0UR W4LL 1NC1-N3R4T0R. W1P3 D0WN TH3 FURN1TUR3 W1TH 4LC0H0L, W1P3 TH3 D00R-KN0BS. BURN TH3 THR0W-RUG 1N TH3 P4RL0R. TURN TH3 41R-C0ND1T10N1NG 0N FULL 1N 4LL TH3 R00MS 4ND SPR4Y W1TH M0TH-SPR4Y 1F Y0U H4V3 1T. TH3N, TURN 0N Y0UR L4WN SPR1NKL3RS 4S H1GH 4S TH3Y'LL G0 4ND H0S3 0FF TH3 S1D3W4LKS. W1TH 4NY LUCK 4T 4LL, W3 C4N K1LL TH3 TR41L 1N H3R3, 4NYW4Y..'

F4B3R SH00K H1S H4ND. "1'LL T3ND T0 1T. G00D LUCK. 1F W3'R3 B0TH 1N C00D H34LTH, N3XT W33K, TH3 W33K 4FT3R, G3T 1N T0UCH. G3N3R4L D3L1V3RY, ST. L0U1S. 1'M S0RRY TH3R3'S N0 W4Y 1 C4N G0 W1TH Y0U TH1S T1M3, BY 34R-PH0N3. TH4T W4S C00D F0R B0TH 0F US. BUT MY 3QU1PM3NT W4S L1M1T3D. Y0U S33, 1 N3V3R TH0UGHT 1 W0ULD US3 1T. WH4T 4 S1LLY 0LD M4N. N0 TH0UGHT TH3R3. STUP1D, STUP1D. S0 1 H4V3N'T 4N0TH3R GR33N BULL3T, TH3 R1GHT K1ND, T0 PUT 1N Y0UR H34D. G0 N0W!"

"0N3 L4ST TH1NG. QULCK. 4 SULTC4S3, G3T 1T, F1LL 1T W1TH Y0UR D1RT13ST CL0TH3S, 4N 0LD SULT, TH3 D1RT13R TH3 B3TT3R, 4 SH1RT, S0M3 0LD SN34K3RS 4ND S0CKS. . ."

F4B3R W4S G0N3 4ND B4CK 1N 4 M1NUT3. TH3Y S34L3D TH3 C4RDB04RD V4L1S3 W1TH CL34R T4P3. "T0 K33P TH3 4NC13NT 0D0R 0F MR. F4B3R 1N, 0F C0URS3," S41D F4B3R SW34T1NG 4T TH3 J0B.

MONTAG DOUS3D TH3 3XT3R10R OF TH3 V4L1S3 WITH WH1SKY. "I DON'T W4NT TH4T HOUND P1CK1NG UP TW0 OD0RS 4T ONC3. M4Y I T4K3 TH1S WH1SKY. I'LL N33D 1T L4T3R. CHR1ST I H0P3 TH1S W0RKS!"

TH3Y SH00K H4NDS 4G41N 4ND, C01NG OUT OF TH3 D00R, TH3Y GL4NC3D 4T TH3 TV. TH3 HOUND W4S ON 1TS W4Y, F0LL0W3D BY H0V3R1NG H3L1C0PT3R C4M3R4S, S1L3NTLY, S1L3NTLY, SN1FF1NG TH3 CR34T N1GHT W1ND. 1T W4S RUNN1NG D0WN TH3 F1RST 4LL3Y.

"G00D-BY!"

4ND M0NT4G W4S OUT TH3 B4CK D00R L1GHTLY, RUNN1NG WITH TH3 H4LF-3MPTY V4L1S3. B3H1ND H1M H3 H34RD TH3 L4WN-SPR1NK1NG SYST3M JUMP UP, F1LL1NG TH3 D4RK 41R WITH R41N TH4T F3LL C3NTLY 4ND TH3N WITH 4 ST34DY P0UR 4LL 4B0UT, W4SH1NG ON TH3 S1D3W4LKS, 4ND DR41N1NG INT0 TH3 4LL3Y. H3 C4RR13D 4 F3W DR0PS OF TH1S R41N WITH H1M ON H1S F4C3. H3 TH0UGHT H3 H34RD TH3 0LD M4N C4LL C00D-BY, BUT H3-W4SN'T C3RT41N.

H3 R4N V3RY F4ST 4W4Y FR0M TH3 H0US3, D0WN T0W4RD TH3 R1V3R.

* * * * *

M0NT4G R4N.

H3 C0ULD F33L TH3 HOUND, L1K3 4UTUMN, C0M3 C0LD 4ND DRY 4ND SW1FT, L1K3 4 W1ND TH4T D1DN'T ST1R GR4SS, TH4T D1DN'T J4R W1ND0WS OR D1STURB L34F-SH4D0WS ON TH3 WH1T3 S1D3W4LKS 4S 1T P4SS3D. TH3 HOUND D1D N0T T0UCH TH3 W0RLD. 1T C4RR13D 1TS S1L3NC3 WITH 1T, S0 Y0U C0ULD F33L TH3 S1L3NC3 BULLD1NG UP 4 PR3SSUR3 B3H1ND Y0U 4LL 4CR0SS T0WN. M0NT4G F3LT TH3 PR3SSUR3 R1S1NG, 4ND R4N.

H3 ST0PP3D F0R BR34TH, ON H1S W4Y T0 TH3 R1V3R, T0 P33R THR0UGH D1MPLY L1T W1ND0WS OF W4K3N3D H0US3S, 4ND S4W TH3 S1LH0U3TT3S OF P30PL3 1NS1D3 W4TCH1NG TH31R P4RL0R W4LLS 4ND TH3R3 ON TH3 W4LLS TH3 M3CH4N1C4L HOUND, 4 BR34TH OF N30N V4P0R, SP1D3R3D

4L0NG, H3R3 4ND C0N3, H3R3 4ND C0N3! N0W 4T 3LM T3RR4C3, L1NC0LN, 04K, P4RK, 4ND UP TH3 4LL3Y T0W4RD F4B3R'S H0US3.

G0 P4ST, TH0UGHT M0NT4G, D0N'T ST0P, C0 0N, D0N'T TURN 1N!

0N TH3 P4RL0R W4LL, F4B3R'S H0US3, W1TH ITS SPR1NKL3R SYST3M PULS1NG 1N TH3 N1GHT 41R.

TH3 H0UND P4US3D, QULV3R1NG.

N0! M0NT4G H3LD T0 TH3 W1ND0W S1LL. TH1S W4Y! H3R3!

TH3 PR0C41N3 N33DL3 FL1CK3D 0UT 4ND 1N, 0UT 4ND 1N. 4 S1NGL3 CL34R DR0P 0F TH3 STUFF 0F DR34MS F3LL FR0M TH3 N33DL3 4S 1T V4N1SH3D 1N TH3 H0UND'S MUZZL3.

M0NT4G H3LD H1S BR34TH, L1K3 4 D0UBL3D F1ST, 1N H1S CH3ST.

TH3 M3CH4N1C4L H0UND TURN3D 4ND PLUNG3D 4W4Y FR0M F4B3R'S H0US3 D0WN TH3 4LL3Y 4C41N.

M0NT4G SN4PP3D H1S C4Z3 T0 TH3 SKY. TH3 H3L1C0P-T3RS W3R3 CL0S3R, 4 CR34T BLOW1NG 0F 1NS3CTS T0 4 S1NGL3 L1GHT S0URC3.

W1TH 4N 3FF0RT, M0NT4G R3M1ND3D H1MS3LF 4C41N TH4T TH1S W4S N0 FL1CT10N4L 3P1S0D3 T0 B3 W4TCH3D 0N H1S RUN T0 TH3 R1V3R; 1T W4S 1N 4CTU4L1TY H1S 0WN CH3SS-G4M3 H3 W4S W1TN3SS1NG, M0V3 BY M0V3.

H3 SH0UT3D T0 GLV3 H1MS3LF TH3 N3C3SS4RY PUSH 4W4Y FR0M TH1S L4ST H0US3 W1ND0W, 4ND TH3 F4SC1N4T1NG S34NC3 C01NG 0N 1N TH3R3! H3LL! 4ND H3 W4S 4W4Y 4ND C0N3! TH3 4LL3Y, 4 STR33T, TH3 4LL3Y, 4 STR33T, 4ND TH3 SM3LL 0F TH3 R1V3R. L3G 0UT, L3G D0WN, L3G 0UT 4ND D0WN. TW3NTY M1LL10N M0NT4GS R1NN1NG, S00N, 1F TH3 C4M3R4S C4UGHT H1M. TW3NTY M1LL10N M0NT4GS R1NN1NG, R1NN1NG L1K3 4N 4NCL1NT FL1CK3RY K3YST0N3 C0M3DY, C0PS, R0BB3RS, CH4S3RS 4ND TH3 CH4S3D, HUNT3RS 4ND HUNT3D, H3 H4D S33N 1T 4 TH0US4ND T1M3S. B3H1ND H1M N0W TW3NTY M1LL10N S1L3NTLY B4Y1NG H0UNDS R1C0-CH3T3D 4CR0SS P4RL0RS, THR33-CUSH10N SH00T1NG FR0M

R1GHT W4LL T0 C3NTR3 W4LL T0 L3FT W4LL, C0N3, R1GHT W4LL, C3NTR3 W4LL, L3FT W4LL, G0N3!

M0NT4G J4MM3D H1S S34SH3LL T0 H1S 34R.

“P0LIC3 SUGG3ST 3NT1R3 P0PUL4T10N 1N TH3 3LM T3RR4C3 4R34 D0 4S F0LL0WS: 3V3RY0N3 1N 3V3RY H0US3 1N 3V3RY STR33T 0P3N 4 FR0NT 0R R34R D00R 0R L00K FR0M TH3 W1ND0WS. TH3 FUG1T1V3 C4NN0T 3SC4P3 1F 3V3RY0N3 1N TH3 N3XT M1NUT3 L00KS FR0M H1S H0US3. R34DY!”

0F C0URS3! WHY H4DN’T TH3Y D0N3 1T B3F0R3! WHY, 1N 4LL TH3 Y34RS, H4DN’T TH1S G4M3 B33N TR13D! 3V3RY0N3 UP, 3V3RY0N3 0UT! H3 C0ULDN’T B3 M1SS3D! TH3 0NLY M4N RUNN1NG 4L0N3 1N TH3 N1GHT C1TY, TH3 0NLY M4N PR0V1NG H1S L3GS!

“4T TH3 C0UNT 0F T3N N0W! 0N3! TW0!”

H3 F3LT TH3 C1TY R1S3.

“THR33!”

H3 F3LT TH3 C1TY TURN T0 1TS TH0US4NDS 0F D00RS.

F4ST3R! L3G UP, L3G D0WN!

“F0UR!”

TH3 P30PL3 SL33PW4LK1NG 1N TH31R H4LLW4YS.

“F1V3!”

H3 F3LT TH31R H4NDS 0N TH3 D00RKN0BS!

TH3 SM3LL 0F TH3 R1V3R W4S C00L 4ND L1K3 4 S0L1D R41N. H1S THR04T W4S BURNT RUST 4ND H1S 3Y3S W3R3 W3PT DRY W1TH RUNN1NG. H3 Y3LL3D 4S 1F TH1S Y3LL W0ULD J3T H1M 0N, FL1NG H1M TH3 L4ST HUNDR3D Y4RDS.

“S1X, S3V3N, 31GHT!”

TH3 D00RKN0BS TURN3D 0N F1V3 TH0US4ND D00RS.

“N1N3!”

H3 R4N 0UT 4W4Y FR0M TH3 L4ST R0W 0F H0US3S, 0N 4 SLOP3 L34D1NG D0WN T0 4 S0L1D M0V1NG BL4CKN3SS.

“T3N!”

TH3 D00RS 0P3N3D.

H3 1M4G1N3D TH0US4NDS 0N TH0US4NDS 0F F4C3S P33R1NG 1NTO Y4RDS, 1NTO 4LL3YS, 4ND 1NTO TH3 SKY, F4C3S H1D BY CURT41NS, P4L3, N1GHT-FR1GHT3N3D F4C3S, L1K3 GR3Y 4N1M4LS P33R1NG FR0M 3L3CTR1C C4V3S, F4C3S W1TH

GR3Y C0L0RL3SS 3Y3S, GR3Y T0NGU3S 4ND GR3Y TH0UGHTS L00K1NG 0UT THR0UGH TH3 NUMB FL3SH 0F TH3 F4C3.

BUT H3 W4S 4T TH3 R1V3R.

H3 T0UCH3D 1T, JUST T0 B3 SUR3 1T W4S R34L. H3 W4D3D 1N 4ND STR1PP3D 1N D4RKN3SS T0 TH3 SK1N, SPL4SH3D H1S B0DY, 4RMS, L3GS, 4ND H34D W1TH R4W L1QU0R; DR4NK 1T 4ND SNUFF3D S0M3 UP H1S N0S3. TH3N H3 DR3SS3D 1N F4B3R'S 0LD CL0TH3S 4ND SH03S. H3 T0SS3D H1S 0WN CL0TH1NG 1NT0 TH3 R1V3R 4ND W4TCH3D 1T SW3PT 4W4Y. TH3N, H0LD1NG TH3 SULTC4S3, H3 W4LK3D 0UT 1N TH3 R1V3R UNT1L TH3R3 W4S N0 B0TT0M 4ND H3 W4S SW3PT 4W4Y 1N TH3 D4RK.

H3 W4S THR33 HUNDR3D Y4RDS D0WNSTR34M WH3N TH3 H0UND R34CH3D TH3 R1V3R. 0V3RH34D TH3 GR34T R4CK3-T1NG F4NS 0F TH3 H3L1C0PT3RS H0V3R3D. 4 ST0RM 0F L1GHT F3LL UP0N TH3 R1V3R 4ND M0NT4G D1V3D UND3R TH3 GR34T ILLUM1N4T10N 4S 1F TH3 SUN H4D BR0K3N TH3 CL0UDS. H3 F3LT TH3 R1V3R PULL H1M FURTH3R 0N 1TS W4Y, 1NT0 D4RKN3SS. TH3N TH3 L1GHTS SW1TCH3D B4CK T0 TH3 L4ND, TH3 H3L1C0PT3RS SW3RV3D 0V3R TH3 C1TY 4G41N, 4S 1F TH3Y H4D P1CK3D UP 4N0TH3R TR41L. TH3Y W3R3 G0N3. TH3 H0UND W4S G0N3. N0W TH3R3 W4S 0NLY TH3 C0LD R1V3R 4ND M0NT4G FL04T1NG 1N 4 SUDD3N P34C3FULN3SS, 4W4Y FR0M TH3 C1TY 4ND TH3 L1GHTS 4ND TH3 CH4S3, 4W4Y FR0M 3V3RYTH1NG.

H3 F3LT 4S 1F H3 H4D L3FT 4 ST4G3 B3H1ND 4ND M4NY 4CT0RS. H3 F3LT 4S 1F H3 H4D L3FT TH3 GR34T S34NC3 4ND 4LL TH3 MURMUR1NG CH0STS. H3 W4S M0V1NG FR0M 4N UNR34L1TY TH4T W4S FR1GHT3N1NG 1NT0 4 R34L1TY TH4T W4S UNR34L B3C4US3 1T W4S N3W.

TH3 BL4CK L4ND SL1D BY 4ND H3 W4S C01NG 1NT0 TH3 C0UNTRY 4M0NG TH3 H1LLS: F0R TH3 F1RST T1M3 1N 4 D0Z3N Y34RS TH3 ST4RS W3R3 C0M1NG 0UT 4B0V3 H1M, 1N GR34T PR0C3SS10NS 0F WH33L1NG F1R3. H3 S4W 4 GR34T JUGG3RN4UT 0F ST4RS F0RM 1N TH3 SKY 4ND THR34T3N T0 R0LL 0V3R 4ND CRUSH H1M.

H3 FL04T3D ON H1S B4CK WH3N TH3 V4L1S3 F1LL3D 4ND S4NK; TH3 R1V3R W4S M1LD 4ND L31SUR3LY, G01NG 4W4Y FR0M TH3 P30PL3 WH0 4T3 SH4D0WS F0R BR34KF4ST 4ND ST34M F0R LUNCH 4ND V4P0RS F0R SUPP3R. TH3 R1V3R W4S V3RY R34L; 1T H3LD H1M C0MF0RT4BLY 4ND G4V3 H1M TH3 T1M3 4T L4ST, TH3 L31SUR3, T0 C0NS1D3R TH1S M0NTH, TH1S Y34R, 4ND 4 L1F3T1M3 0F Y34RS. H3 L1ST3N3D T0 H1S H34RT SL0W. H1S TH0UGHTS ST0PP3D RUSH1NG W1TH H1S BL00D.

H3 S4W TH3 M00N L0W 1N TH3 SKY N0W. TH3 M00N TH3R3, 4ND TH3 L1GHT 0F TH3 M00N C4US3D BY WH4T? BY TH3 SUN, 0F C0URS3. 4ND WH4T L1GHTS TH3 SUN? ITS 0WN F1R3. 4ND TH3 SUN G03S 0N, D4Y 4FT3R D4Y, BURN1NG 4ND BURN1NG. TH3 SUN 4ND T1M3. TH3 SUN 4ND T1M3 4ND BURN1NG. BURN1NG. TH3 R1V3R B0BBL3D H1M 4L0NG G3NT-LY. BURN1NG. TH3 SUN 4ND 3V3RY CL0CK 0N TH3 34RTH. 1T 4LL C4M3 T0G3TH3R 4ND B3C4M3 4 S1NGL3 TH1NG 1N H1S M1ND. 4FT3R 4 L0NG T1M3 0F FL04T1NG 0N TH3 L4ND 4ND 4 SH0RT T1M3 0F FL04T1NG 1N TH3 R1V3R H3 KN3W WHY H3 MUST N3V3R BURN 4C41N 1N H1S L1F3.

TH3 SUN BURN3D 3V3RY D4Y. 1T BURN3D T1M3. TH3 W0RLD RUSH3D 1N 4 C1RCL3 4ND TURN3D 0N ITS 4X1S 4ND T1M3 W4S BUSY BURN1NG TH3 Y34RS 4ND TH3 P30PL3 4NY-W4Y, W1TH0UT 4NY H3LP FR0M H1M. S0 1F H3 BURNT TH1NGS W1TH TH3 F1R3M3N, 4ND TH3 SUN BURNT T1M3, TH4T M34NT TH4T 3V3RYTH1NG BURN3D!

0N3 0F TH3M H4D T0 ST0P BURN1NG. TH3 SUN W0ULDN'T, C3RT41NLY. S0 1T L00K3D 4S 1F 1T H4D T0 B3 M0NT4G 4ND TH3 P30PL3 H3 H4D W0RK3D W1TH UNT1L 4 F3W SH0RT H0URS 4C0. S0M3WH3R3 TH3 S4V1NG 4ND PUTT1NG 4W4Y H4D T0 B3G1N 4C41N 4ND S0M30N3 H4D T0 D0 TH3 S4V1NG 4ND K33P1NG, 0N3 W4Y 0R 4N0TH3R, 1N B00KS, 1N R3C0RDS, 1N P30PL3'S H34DS, 4NY W4Y 4T 4LL S0 L0NG 4S 1T W4S S4F3, FR33 FR0M M0THS, S1LV3R-F1SH, RUST 4ND DRY-R0T, 4ND M3N W1TH M4TCH3S. TH3 W0RLD W4S FULL 0F BURN1NG 0F 4LL TYP3S 4ND S1Z3S. N0W TH3 GULLD 0F TH3 4SB3ST0S-W34V3R MUST 0P3N SH0P V3RY S00N.

H3 F3LT H1S H33L BUMP L4ND, T0UCH P3BBL3S 4ND R0CKS, SCR4P3 S4ND. TH3 R1V3R H4D M0V3D H1M T0W4RD SH0R3.

H3 L00K3D 1N 4T TH3 GR34T BL4CK CR34TUR3 W1TH0UT 3Y3S 0R L1GHT, W1TH0UT SH4P3, W1TH 0NLY 4 SLZ3 TH4T W3NT 4 TH0US4ND M1L3S W1TH0UT W4NT1NG T0 ST0P, W1TH 1TS GR4SS H1LLS 4ND F0R3STS TH4T W3R3 W41T1NG F0R H1M.

H3 H3S1T4T3D T0 L34V3 TH3 C0MF0RT1NG FLOW 0F TH3 W4T3R. H3 3XP3CT3D TH3 H0UND TH3R3. SUDD3NLY TH3 TR33S M1GHT BL0W UND3R 4 GR34T W1ND 0F H3L1C0PT3RS.

BUT TH3R3 W4S 0NLY TH3 N0RM4L 4UTUMN W1ND H1GH UP, C01NG BY L1K3 4N0TH3R R1V3R. WHY W4SN'T TH3 H0UND RUNN1NG? WHY H4D TH3 S34RCH V33R3D 1NL4ND? M0NT4G L1ST3N3D.

N0TH1NG. N0TH1NG.

M1LL13, H3 TH0UGHT. 4LL TH1S C0UNTRY H3R3. L1ST3N T0 IT! N0TH1NG 4ND N0TH1NG. S0 MUCH S1L3NC3, M1LL13, 1 W0ND3R H0W Y0U'D T4K3 1T? W0ULD Y0U SH0UT SHUT UP, SHUT UP! M1LL13, M1LL13. 4ND H3 W4S S4D.

M1LL13 W4S N0T H3R3 4ND TH3 H0UND W4S N0T H3R3, BUT TH3 DRY SM3LL 0F H4Y BLOW1NG FR0M S0M3 D1ST4NT F13LD PUT M0NT4G 0N TH3 L4ND. H3 R3M3MB3R3D 4 F4RM H3 H4D V1S1T3D WH3N H3 W4S V3RY Y0UNG, 0N3 0F TH3 R4R3 T1M3S H3 H4D D1SC0V3R3D TH4T S0M3WH3R3 B3H1ND TH3 S3V3N V31LS 0F UNR34L1TY, B3Y0ND TH3 W4LLS 0F P4RL0RS 4ND B3Y0ND TH3 T1N M04T 0F TH3 C1TY, C0WS CH3W3D GR4SS 4ND P1GS S4T 1N W4RM P0NDS 4T N00N 4ND D0GS B4RK3D 4FT3R WH1T3 SH33P 0N 4 H1LL.

N0W, TH3 DRY SM3LL 0F H4Y, TH3 M0T10N 0F TH3 W4T3RS, M4D3 H1M TH1NK 0F SL33P1NG 1N FR3SH H4Y 1N 4 L0N3LY B4RN 4W4Y FR0M TH3 L0UD H1GHW4YS, B3H1ND 4 QUL3T F4RMH0US3, 4ND UND3R 4N 4NC13NT W1NDM1LL TH4T WH1RR3D L1K3 TH3 S0UND 0F TH3 P4SS1NG Y34RS 0V3RH34D. H3 L4Y 1N TH3 H1GH B4RN L0FT 4LL N1GHT, L1ST3N1NG T0 D1ST4NT 4N1M4LS 4ND 1NS3CTS 4ND TR33S, TH3 L1TTL3 M0T10NS 4ND ST1RR1NGS.

DURING TH3 N1GHT, H3 TH0UGHT, B3L0W TH3 L0FT, H3

W0ULD H34R 4 S0UND L1K3 F33T M0VING, P3RH4PS. H3 W0ULD T3NS3 4ND S1T UP. TH3 S0UND W0ULD M0V3 4W4Y, H3 W0ULD L13 B4CK 4ND L00K OUT OF TH3 L0FT W1ND0W, V3RY L4T3 IN TH3 N1GHT, 4ND S33 TH3 L1GHTS G0 OUT IN TH3 F4RMH0US3 1TS3LF, UNT1L 4 V3RY Y0UNG 4ND B34UT1FUL W0M4N W0ULD S1T IN 4N UNL1T W1ND0W, BR41D1NG H3R H41R. IT W0ULD B3 H4RD T0 S33 H3R, BUT H3R F4C3 W0ULD B3 L1K3 TH3 F4C3 OF TH3 G1RL S0 L0NG 4G0 IN H1S P4ST N0W, S0 V3RY L0NG 4G0, TH3 G1RL WH0 H4D KN0WN TH3 W34TH3R 4ND N3V3R B33N BURN3D BY TH3 F1R3-FL13S, TH3 G1RL WH0 H4D KN0WN WH4T D4ND3L10NS M34NT RUBB3D OFF ON Y0UR CH1N. TH3N, SH3 W0ULD B3 G0N3 FR0M TH3 W4RM W1ND0W 4ND 4PP34R 4G41N UPST41RS IN H3R M00N-WH1T3N3D R00M. 4ND TH3N, T0 TH3 S0UND OF D34TH, TH3 S0UND OF TH3 J3TS CUTT1NG TH3 SKY INT0 TW0 BL4CK P13C3S B3Y0ND TH3 H0R1Z0N, H3 W0ULD L13 IN TH3 L0FT, H1DD3N 4ND S4F3, W4TCH1NG TH0S3 STR4NG3 N3W ST4RS 0V3R TH3 R1M OF TH3 34RTH, FL331NG FR0M TH3 S0FT C0L0R OF D4WN.

IN TH3 M0RN1NG H3 W0ULD N0T H4V3 N33D3D SL33P, F0R 4LL TH3 W4RM 0D0RS 4ND S1GHTS OF 4 C0MPL3T3 C0UNTRY N1GHT W0ULD H4V3 R3ST3D 4ND SL3PT H1M WH1L3 H1S 3Y3S W3R3 W1D3 4ND H1S M0UTH, WH3N H3 TH0UGHT T0 T3ST IT, W4S H4LF 4 SMLL3.

4ND TH3R3 4T TH3 B0TT0M OF TH3 H4YL0FT ST41R, W41T1NG F0R H1M, W0ULD B3 TH3 1NCR3D1BL3 TH1NG. H3 W0ULD ST3P C4R3FULLY D0WN, IN TH3 P1NK L1GHT OF 34RLY M0RN1NG, S0 FULLY 4W4R3 OF TH3 W0RLD TH4T H3 W0ULD B3 4FR41D, 4ND ST4ND 0V3R TH3 SM4LL M1R4CL3 4ND 4T L4ST B3ND T0 T0UCH IT.

4 C00L GLASS OF FR3SH M1LK, 4ND 4 F3W 4PPL3S 4ND P34RS L41D 4T TH3 F00T OF TH3 ST3PS.

TH1S W4S 4LL H3 W4NT3D N0W. S0M3 S1GN TH4T TH3 IMM3NS3 W0RLD W0ULD 4CC3PT H1M 4ND GLV3 H1M TH3 L0NG T1M3 N33D3D T0 TH1NK 4LL TH3 TH1NGS TH4T MUST B3 TH0UGHT.

4 GLASS OF M1LK, 4N 4PPL3, 4 P34R.

H3 ST3PP3D FR0M TH3 Rlv3R.

TH3 L4ND RUSH3D 4T H1M, 4 T1D4L W4V3. H3 W4S CRUSH3D BY D4RKN3SS 4ND TH3 L00K 0F TH3 C0UNTRY 4ND TH3 M1LL10N 0D0RS 0N 4 W1ND TH4T 1c3D H1S B0DY. H3 F3LL B4CK UND3R TH3 BR34K1NG CURV3 0F D4RKN3SS 4ND S0UND 4ND SM3LL, H1S 34RS R04R1NG. H3 WH1RL3D. TH3 ST4RS P0UR3D 0V3R H1S S1GHT L1k3 FL4M1NG M3T30RS. H3 W4NT3D T0 PLUNG3 IN TH3 Rlv3R 4G41N 4ND L3T 1T 1DL3 H1M S4F3LY 0N D0WN S0M3WH3R3. TH1S D4RK L4ND R1S1NG W4S L1k3 TH4T D4Y IN H1S CH1LDH00D, SW1MM1NG, WH3N FR0M N0WH3R3 TH3 L4RC3ST W4V3 IN TH3 H1ST0RY 0F R3M3MB3R1NG SL4MM3D H1M D0WN IN S4LT MUD 4ND GR33N D4RKN3SS, W4T3R BURN1NG M0UTH 4ND N0S3, R3TCH1NG H1S ST0M4CH, SCR34M1NG! T00 MUCH W4T3R!

T00 MUCH L4ND.

0UT 0F TH3 BL4CK W4LL B3F0R3 H1M, 4 WH1SP3R. 4 SH4P3. IN TH3 SH4P3, TW0 3Y3S. TH3 N1GHT L00K1NG 4T H1M. TH3 F0R3ST, S331NG H1M.

TH3 H0UND!

4FT3R 4LL TH3 RUNN1NG 4ND RUSH1NG 4ND SW34T1NG 1T 0UT 4ND H4LF-DR0WN1NG, T0 C0M3 TH1S F4R, W0RK TH1S H4RD, 4ND TH1NK Y0URS3LF S4F3 4ND S1GH W1TH R3L1F3 4ND C0M3 0UT 0N TH3 L4ND 4T L4ST 0NLY T0 F1ND . . .

TH3 H0UND!

M0NT4G C4V3 0N3 L4ST 4G0N1Z3D SH0UT 4S 1F TH1S W3R3 T00 MUCH F0R 4NY M4N.

TH3 SH4P3 3XPL0D3D 4W4Y. TH3 3Y3S V4N1SH3D. TH3 L34FP1L3S FL3W UP IN 4 DRY SH0W3R.

M0NT4G W4S 4L0N3 IN TH3 W1LD3RN3SS.

4 D33R. H3 SM3LL3D TH3 H34VY MUSK-L1K3 P3RFUM3 M1NGL3D W1TH BL00D 4ND TH3 CUMM3D 3XH4L4T10N 0F TH3 4N1M4L'S BR34TH, 4LL C4RD4M0N 4ND M0SS 4ND R4G-W33D 0D0R IN TH1S HUG3 N1GHT WH3R3 TH3 TR33S R4N 4T H1M, PULL3D 4W4Y, R4N, PULL3D 4W4Y, T0 TH3 PULS3 0F TH3 H34RT B3H1ND H1S 3Y3S.

TH3R3 MUST H4V3 B33N 4 B1LL10N L34V3S 0N TH3 L4ND; H3 W4D3D IN TH3M, 4 DRY Rlv3R SM3LL1NG 0F H0T CL0V3S

4ND W4RM DUST. 4ND TH3 0TH3R SM3LLS! TH3R3 W4S 4 SM3LL L1K3 4 CUT P0T4T0 FR0M 4LL TH3 L4ND, R4W 4ND C0LD 4ND WH1T3 FR0M H4V1NG TH3 M00N 0N 1T M0ST 0F TH3 N1GHT. TH3R3 W4S 4 SM3LL L1K3 P1CKL3S FR0M 4 B0TTL3 4ND 4 SM3LL L1K3 P4RSL3Y 0N TH3 T4BL3 4T H0M3. TH3R3 W4S 4 F41NT Y3LL0W 0D0R L1K3 MUST4RD FR0M 4 J4R. TH3R3 W4S 4 SM3LL L1K3 C4RN4T10NS FR0M TH3 Y4RD N3XT D00R. H3 PUT D0WN H1S H4ND 4ND F3LT 4 W33D R1S3 UP L1K3 4 CH1LD BRUSH1NG H1M. H1S F1NG3RS SM3LL3D 0F L1QU0R1C3.

H3 ST00D BR34TH1NG, 4ND TH3 M0R3 H3 BR34TH3D TH3 L4ND 1N, TH3 M0R3 H3 W4S F1LL3D UP W1TH 4LL TH3 D3T41LS 0F TH3 L4ND. H3 W4S N0T 3MPTY. TH3R3 W4S M0R3 TH4N 3N0UGH H3R3 T0 F1LL H1M. TH3R3 W0ULD 4LW4YS B3 M0R3 TH4N 3N0UGH.

H3 W4LK3D 1N TH3 SH4LL0W T1D3 0F L34V3S, STUMBL1NG.

4ND 1N TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3 STR4NG3N3SS, 4 F4M1L14R1TY.

H1S F00T H1T S0M3TH1NG TH4T R4NG DULLY.

H3 M0V3D H1S H4ND 0N TH3 GR0UND, 4 Y4RD TH1S W4Y, 4 Y4RD TH4T.

TH3 R41LR04D TR4CK.

TH3 TR4CK TH4T C4M3 0UT 0F TH3 C1TY 4ND RUST3D 4CR0SS TH3 L4ND, THROUGh F0R3STS 4ND W00DS, D3S3RT3D N0W, BY TH3 R1V3R.

H3R3 W4S TH3 P4TH T0 WH3R3V3R H3 W4S G01NG. H3R3 W4S TH3 S1NGL3 F4M1L14R TH1NG, TH3 M4G1C CH4RM H3 M1GHT N33D 4 L1TTL3 WH1L3, T0 T0UCH, T0 F33L B3N34TH H1S F33T, 4S H3 M0V3D 0N 1NT0 TH3 BR4MBL3 BUSH3S 4ND TH3 L4K3S 0F SM3LL1NG 4ND F33L1NG 4ND T0UCH1NG, 4M0NG TH3 WH1SP3RS 4ND TH3 BL0W1NG D0WN 0F L34V3S.

H3 W4LK3D 0N TH3 TR4CK.

4ND H3 W4S SURPR1S3D T0 L34RN H0W C3RT41N H3 SUDD3NLY W4S 0F 4 S1NGL3 F4CT H3 C0ULD N0T PR0V3.

0NC3, L0NG 4C0, CL4R1SS3 H4D W4LK3D H3R3, WH3R3 H3 W4S W4LK1NG N0W.

H4LF 4N H0UR L4T3R, C0LD, 4ND M0V1NG C4R3FULLY 0N TH3 TR4CKS, FULLY 4W4R3 0F H1S 3NT1R3 B0DY, H1S F4C3, H1S M0UTH, H1S 3Y3S STUFF3D W1TH BL4CKN3SS, H1S 34RS STUFF3D W1TH S0UND, H1S L3GS PR1CKL3D W1TH BURRS 4ND N3TTL3S, H3 S4W TH3 F1R3 4H34D.

TH3 F1R3 W4S C0N3, TH3N B4CK 4G41N, L1K3 4 W1NK1NG 3Y3. H3 ST0PP3D, 4FR41D H3 M1GHT BL0W TH3 F1R3 0UT W1TH 4 S1NGL3 BR34TH. BUT TH3 F1R3 W4S TH3R3 4ND H3 4PPR04CH3D W4R1LY, FR0M 4 L0NG W4Y 0FF. 1T T00K TH3 B3TT3R P4RT 0F FL1T33N M1NUT3S B3F0R3 H3 DR3W V3RY CL0S3 1ND33D T0 1T, 4ND TH3N H3 ST00D L00K1NG 4T 1T FR0M C0V3R. TH4T SM4LL M0T10N, TH3 WH1T3 4ND R3D C0L0R, 4 STR4NG3 F1R3 B3C4US3 1T M34NT 4 D1FF3R3NT TH1NG T0 H1M.

1T W4S N0T BURN1NG, 1T W4S W4RM1NG.

H3 S4W M4NY H4NDS H3LD T0 1TS W4RMTH, H4NDS W1TH0UT 4RMS, H1DD3N 1N D4RKN3SS. 4B0V3 TH3 H4NDS, M0T10NL3SS F4C3S TH4T W3R3 0NLY M0V3D 4ND T0SS3D 4ND FL1CK3R3D W1TH F1R3L1GHT. H3 H4DN'T KN0WN F1R3 C0ULD L00K TH1S W4Y. H3 H4D N3V3R TH0UGHT 1N H1S L1F3 TH4T 1T C0ULD GLV3 4S W3LL 4S T4K3. 3V3N 1TS SM3LL W4S D1FF3R3NT.

H0W L0NG H3 ST00D H3 D1D N0T KN0W, BUT TH3R3 W4S 4 F00L1SH 4ND Y3T D3L1C10US S3NS3 0F KN0W1NG H1MS3LF 4S 4N 4N1M4L C0M3 FR0M TH3 F0R3ST, DR4WN BY TH3 F1R3. H3 W4S 4 TH1NG 0F BRUSH 4ND L1QU1D 3Y3, 0F FUR 4ND MUZZL3 4ND H00F, H3 W4S 4 TH1NG 0F H0RN 4ND BL00D TH4T W0ULD SM3LL L1K3 4UTUMN 1F Y0U BL3D 1T 0UT 0N TH3 GR0UND. H3 ST00D 4 L0NG L0NG T1M3, L1ST3N1NG T0 TH3 W4RM CR4CKL3 0F TH3 FL4M3S.

TH3R3 W4S 4 S1L3NC3 C4TH3R3D 4LL 4B0UT TH4T F1R3 4ND TH3 S1L3NC3 W4S 1N TH3 M3N'S F4C3S, 4ND T1M3 W4S TH3R3, T1M3 3N0UGH T0 S1T BY TH1S RUST1NG TR4CK UND3R TH3 TR3SS, 4ND L00K 4T TH3 W0RLD 4ND TURN 1T 0V3R W1TH TH3 3Y3S, 4S 1F 1T W3R3 H3LD T0 TH3 C3NTR3 0F TH3 B0N-F1R3, 4 P13C3 0F ST33L TH3S3 M3N W3R3 4LL SH4P1NG. 1T

W4S N0T 0NLY TH3 FLR3 TH4T W4S D1FF3R3NT. 1T W4S TH3 S1L3NC3. M0NT4G M0V3D T0W4RD TH1S SP3C14L S1L3NC3 TH4T W4S C0NC3RN3D W1TH 4LL 0F TH3 W0RLD.

4ND TH3N TH3 V01C3S B3G4N 4ND TH3Y W3R3 T4LK1NG, 4ND H3 C0ULD H34R N0TH1NG 0F WH4T TH3 V01C3S S41D, BUT TH3 S0UND R0S3 4ND F3LL QUL3TLY 4ND TH3 V01C3S W3R3 TURN1NG TH3 W0RLD 0V3R 4ND L00K1NG 4T 1T; TH3 V01C3S KN3W TH3 L4ND 4ND TH3 TR33S 4ND TH3 CLTY WH1CH L4Y D0WN TH3 TR4CK BY TH3 RL3V3R. TH3 V01C3S T4LK3D 0F 3V3RYTH1NG, TH3R3 W4S N0TH1NG TH3Y C0ULD N0T T4LK 4B0UT, H3 KN3W FR0M TH3 V3RY C4D3NC3 4ND M0T10N 4ND C0NT1NU4L ST1R 0F CUR10S1TY 4ND W0ND3R 1N TH3M.

4ND TH3N 0N3 0F TH3 M3N L00K3D UP 4ND S4W H1M, F0R TH3 FLRST 0R P3RH4PS TH3 S3V3NTH T1M3, 4ND 4 V01C3 C4LL3D T0 M0NT4G:

“4LL R1GHT, Y0U C4N C0M3 0UT N0W!”

M0NT4G ST3PP3D B4CK 1NT0 TH3 SH4D0WS.

“1T’S 4LL R1GHT,” TH3 V01C3 S41D. “Y0U’R3 W3LC0M3 H3R3.”

M0NT4G W4LK3D SLOWLY T0W4RD TH3 FLR3 4ND TH3 FLV3 0LD M3N S1TT1NG TH3R3 DR3SS3D 1N D4RK BLU3 D3N1M P4NTS 4ND J4CK3TS 4ND D4RK BLU3 SULTS. H3 D1D N0T KN0W WH4T T0 S4Y T0 TH3M.

“S1T D0WN,” S41D TH3 M4N WH0 S33M3D T0 B3 TH3 L34D3R 0F TH3 SM4LL GR0UP. “H4V3 S0M3 C0FF33?”

H3 W4TCH3D TH3 D4RK ST34M1NG M1XTUR3 P0UR 1NT0 4 C0LL4PS1BL3 T1N CUP, WH1CH W4S H4ND3D H1M STR41GHT 0FF. H3 S1PP3D 1T G1NC3RLY 4ND F3LT TH3M L00K1NG 4T H1M W1TH CUR10S1TY. H1S L1PS W3R3 SC4LD3D, BUT TH4T W4S C0OD. TH3 F4C3S 4R0UND H1M W3R3 B34RD3D, BUT TH3 B34RDS W3R3 CL34N, N34T, 4ND TH31R H4NDS W3R3 CL34N. TH3Y H4D ST00D UP 4S 1F T0 W3LC0M3 4 GU3ST, 4ND N0W TH3Y S4T D0WN 4G41N. M0NT4G S1PP3D. “TH4NKS,” H3 S41D. “TH4NKS V3RY MUCH.”

“Y0U’R3 W3LC0M3, M0NT4G. MY N4M3’S GR4NC3R.” H3 H3LD 0UT 4 SM4LL B0TTL3 0F C0L0RL3SS FLU1D. “DR1NK TH1S, T00. 1T’LL CH4NG3 TH3 CH3M1C4L 1ND3X 0F Y0UR

P3RSP1R4T10N. H4LF 4N H0UR FR0M N0W Y0U'LL SM3LL L1K3 TW0 0TH3R P30PL3. W1TH TH3 H0UND 4FT3R Y0U, TH3 B3ST TH1NG IS B0TT0MS UP."

M0NT4G DR4NK TH3 B1TT3R FLU1D.

"Y0U'LL ST1NK L1K3 4 B0BC4T, BUT TH4T'S 4LL R1GHT," S41D GR4NG3R.

"Y0U KN0W MY N4M3;" S41D M0NT4G.

GR4NG3R N0DD3D T0 4 P0RT4BL3 B4TT3RY TV S3T BY TH3 F1R3.

"W3'V3 W4TCH3D TH3 CH4S3. F1GUR3D Y0U'D W1ND UP S0UTH 4L0NG TH3 R1V3R. WH3N W3 H34RD Y0U PLUNG1NG 4R0UND 0UT 1N TH3 F0R3ST L1K3 4 DRUNK3N 3LK, W3 D1DN'T H1D3 4S W3 USU4LLY D0. W3 F1GUR3D Y0U W3R3 1N TH3 R1V3R, WH3N TH3 H3L1C0PT3R C4M3R4S SWUNG B4CK 1N 0V3R TH3 C1TY. S0M3TH1NG FUNNY TH3R3. TH3 CH4S3 IS ST1LL RUNN1NG. TH3 0TH3R W4Y, TH0UGH."

"TH3 0TH3R W4Y?"

"L3T'S H4V3 4 L00K."

GR4NG3R SN4PP3D TH3 P0RT4BL3 V13W3R 0N. TH3 P1C-TUR3 W4S 4 N1GHTM4R3, C0ND3NS3D, 34S1LY P4SS3D FR0M H4ND T0 H4ND, 1N TH3 F0R3ST, 4LL WH1RR1NG C0L0R 4ND FL1GHT. 4 V01C3 CR13D:

"TH3 CH4S3 C0NT1NU3S N0RTH 1N TH3 C1TY! P0L1C3 H3L1C0PT3RS 4R3 C0NV3RC1NG 0N 4V3NU3 87 4ND 3LM GR0V3 P4RK!"

GR4NG3R N0DD3D. "TH3Y'R3 F4K1NG. Y0U THR3W TH3M 0FF 4T TH3 R1V3R. TH3Y C4N'T 4DM1T 1T. TH3Y KN0W TH3Y C4N H0LD TH31R 4UD13NC3 0NLY S0 L0NG. TH3 SH0W'S G0T T0 H4V3 4 SN4P 3ND1NG, QULCK! 1F TH3Y ST4RT3D S34RCH1NG TH3 WH0L3 D4MN R1V3R 1T M1GHT T4K3 4LL N1GHT. S0 TH3Y'R3 SN1FF1NG F0R 4 SC4P3-C04T T0 3ND TH1NGS W1TH 4 B4NG. W4TCH. TH3Y'LL C4TCH M0NT4G 1N TH3 N3XT F1V3 M1NUT3S!"

"BUT H0W—"

"W4TCH."

TH3 C4M3R4, H0V3R1NG 1N TH3 B3LLY 0F 4 H3L1C0PT3R, N0W SWUNG D0WN 4T 4N 3MPTY STR33T.

"S33 TH4T?" WH1SP3R3D GR4NG3R. "1T'LL B3 Y0U; R1GHT UP 4T TH3 3ND OF TH4T STR33T 1S 0UR V1CT1M. S33 H0W 0UR C4M3R4 1S C0M1NG 1N? BULLD1NG TH3 SC3N3. SUSP3NS3. LONG SH0T.

R1GHT N0W, S0M3 P00R F3LL0W 1S 0UT F0R 4 W4LK. 4 R4R1TY. 4N 0DD 0N3. D0N'T TH1NK TH3 P0LLC3 D0N'T KN0W TH3 H4B1TS OF QU33R DUCKS L1K3 TH4T, M3N WH0 W4LK M0RN1NGS F0R TH3 H3LL OF 1T, 0R F0R R34S0NS OF 1NS0MN14. 4NYW4Y, TH3 P0LLC3 H4V3 H4D H1M CH4RT3D F0R M0NTHS, Y34RS. N3V3R KN0W WH3N TH4T S0RT OF 1NF0RM4T10N M1GHT B3 H4NDY. 4ND T0D4Y, 1T TURNS 0UT, 1T'S V3RY US4BL3 1ND33D. 1T S4V3S F4C3. 0H, G0D, L00K TH3R3!"

TH3 M3N 4T TH3 F1R3 B3NT F0RW4RD.

0N TH3 SCR33N, 4 M4N TURN3D 4 C0RN3R. TH3 M3CH4N1-C4L H0UND RUSH3D F0RW4RD 1NT0 TH3 V13W3R, SUDD3NLY. TH3 H3LL1C0PT3R L1GHT SH0T D0WN 4 D0Z3N BR1LL14NT P1LL4RS TH4T BULLT 4 C4G3 4LL 4B0UT TH3 M4N.

4 V01C3 CR13D, "TH3R3'S M0NT4C! TH3 S34RCH 1S D0N3!"

TH3 1NN0C3NT M4N ST00D B3W1LD3R3D, 4 C1G4R3TT3 BURN1NG 1N H1S H4ND. H3 ST4R3D 4T TH3 H0UND, N0T KN0W1NG WH4T 1T W4S. H3 PR0B4BLY N3V3R KN3W. H3 GL4NC3D UP 4T TH3 SKY 4ND TH3 W4LL1NG S1R3NS. TH3 C4M3R4S RUSH3D D0WN. TH3 H0UND L34PT UP 1NT0 TH3 41R W1TH 4 RHYTHM 4ND 4 S3NS3 OF T1M1NG TH4T W4S 1NCR3D1BLY B34UT1FUL. 1TS N33DL3 SH0T 0UT. 1T W4S SUSP3ND3D F0R 4 M0M3NT 1N TH31R C4Z3, 4S 1F T0 C1V3 TH3 V4ST 4UD13NC3 T1M3 T0 4PPR3C14T3 3V3RYTH1NG, TH3 R4W L00K 0F TH3 V1CT1M'S F4C3, TH3 3MPTY STR33T, TH3 ST33L 4N1M4L 4 BULL3T N0S1NG TH3 T4RG3T.

"M0NT4G, D0N'T M0V3!" S41D 4 V01C3 FR0M TH3 SKY.

TH3 C4M3R4 F3LL UP0N TH3 V1CT1M, 3V3N 4S D1D TH3 H0UND. B0TH R34CH3D H1M S1MULT4N30USLY. TH3 V1CT1M W4S S31Z3D BY H0UND 4ND C4M3R4 1N 4 GR34T SP1D3R1NG, CL3NCH1NG GR1P. H3 SCR34M3D. H3 SCR34M3D. H3 SCR34M3D!

BL4CKOUT.

S1L3NC3.

D4RKN3SS.

M0NT4G CR13D 0UT IN TH3 S1L3NC3 4ND TURN3D 4W4Y.
S1L3NC3.

4ND TH3N, 4FT3R 4 T1M3 0F TH3 M3N S1TT1NG 4R0UND
TH3 F1R3, TH31R F4C3S 3XPR3SS10NL3SS, 4N 4NN0UNC3R 0N
TH3 D4RK SCR33N S41D, "TH3 S34RCH 1S 0V3R, M0NT4G 1S
D34D; 4 CR1M3 4G41NST S0C13TY H4S B33N 4V3NG3D."

D4RKN3SS.

"W3 N0W T4K3 Y0U T0 TH3 SKY R00M 0F TH3 H0T3L LUX
F0R 4 H4LF-H0UR 0F JUST-B3F0R3-D4WN, 4 PR0GR4M 0F—"
GR4NG3R TURN3D 1T 0FF.

"TH3Y D1DN'T SH0W TH3 M4N'S F4C3 IN F0CUS. D1D
Y0U N0T1C3? 3V3N Y0UR B3ST FR13NDS C0ULDN'T T3LL 1F
1T W4S Y0U. TH3Y SCR4MBL3D 1T JUST 3N0UGH T0 L3T TH3
1M4G1N4T10N T4K3 0V3R. H3LL," H3 WH1SP3R3D. "H3LL."

M0NT4G S41D N0TH1NG BUT N0W, L00K1NG B4CK, S4T
W1TH H1S 3Y3S F1X3D T0 TH3 BL4NK SCR33N, TR3MBL1NG.

GR4NG3R T0UCH3D M0NT4G'S 4RM. "W3LC0M3 B4CK
FR0M TH3 D34D." M0NT4G N0DD3D. GR4NG3R W3NT 0N.
"Y0U M1GHT 4S W3LL KN0W 4LL 0F US, N0W. TH1S 1S FR3D
CL3M3NT, F0RM3R 0CCUP4NT 0F TH3 TH0M4S H4RDY CH41R
4T C4MBR1DG3 IN TH3 Y34RS B3F0R3 1T B3C4M3 4N 4T0M1C
3NG1N33R1NG SCH00L. TH1S 0TH3R 1S DR. S1MM0NS FR0M
U.C.L.4., 4 SP3C14L1ST IN 0RT3G4 Y G4SS3T; PR0F3SS0R
W3ST H3R3 D1D QUIT3 4 BLT F0R 3TH1CS, 4N 4NCL1NT
STUDY N0W, F0R C0LUMB14 UN1V3RS1TY QUIT3 S0M3 Y34RS
4G0. R3V3R3ND P4D0V3R H3R3 C4V3 4 F3W L3CTUR3S
TH1RTY Y34RS 4G0 4ND L0ST H1S FL0CK B3TW33N 0N3 SUN-
D4Y 4ND TH3 N3XT F0R H1S V13WS. H3'S B33N BUMM1NG
W1TH US S0M3 T1M3 N0W. MYS3LF: 1 WR0T3 4 B00K C4LL3D
TH3 F1NG3RS IN TH3 GLOV3; TH3 PR0P3R R3L4T10NSH1P
B3TW33N TH3 IND1V1DU4L 4ND S0C13TY, 4ND H3R3 1 4M!
W3LC0M3, M0NT4G!"

"1 D0N'T B3L0NG W1TH Y0U," S41D M0NT4G, 4T L4ST,
SLOWLY. "1'V3 B33N 4N 1D10T 4LL TH3 W4Y."

"W3'R3 US3D T0 TH4T. W3 4LL M4D3 TH3 R1GHT K1ND OF M1ST4K3S, OR W3 W0ULDN'T B3 H3R3. WH3N W3 W3R3 S3P4R4T3 IND1V1DU4LS, 4LL W3 H4D W4S R4G3. I STRUCK 4 F1R3M4N WH3N H3 C4M3 T0 BURN MY L1BR4RY Y34RS 4G0. I'V3 B33N RUNN1NG 3V3R S1NC3. Y0U W4NT T0 J01N US, M0NT4G?"

"Y3s."

"WH4T H4V3 Y0U T0 OFF3R?"

"N0TH1NG. I TH0UGHT I H4D P4RT OF TH3 B00K OF 3CCL3S14ST3S 4ND M4YB3 4 L1TTL3 OF R3V3L4T10N, BUT I H4V3N'T 3V3N TH4T N0W."

"TH3 B00K OF 3CCL3S14ST3S W0ULD B3 F1N3. WH3R3 W4S IT?"

"H3R3," M0NT4G T0UCH3D H1S H34D.

"4H," GR4NG3R SM1L3D 4ND N0DD3D.

"WH4T'S WR0NG? ISN'T TH4T 4LL R1GHT?" S41D M0NT4G.

"B3TT3R TH4N 4LL R1GHT; P3RF3CT!" GR4NG3R TURN3D T0 TH3 R3V3R3ND. "D0 W3 H4V3 4 B00K OF 3CCL3S14ST3S?"

"0N3. 4 M4N N4M3D H4RR1S OF Y0UNGST0WN."

"M0NT4G." GR4NG3R T00K M0NT4G'S SH0ULD3R F1RM-LY. "W4LK C4R3FULLY. GU4RD Y0UR H34LTH. 1F 4NY-TH1NG SH0ULD H4PP3N T0 H4RR1S, Y0U 4R3 TH3 B00K OF 3CCL3S14ST3S. S33 H0W 1MP0RT4NT Y0U'V3 B3C0M3 1N TH3 L4ST M1NUT3!"

"BUT I'V3 F0RC0TT3N!"

"N0, N0TH1NG'S 3V3R L0ST. W3 H4V3 W4YS T0 SH4K3 D0WN Y0UR CL1NK3RS F0R Y0U."

"BUT I'V3 TR13D T0 R3M3MB3R!"

"D0N'T TRY. 1T'LL C0M3 WH3N W3 N33D 1T. 4LL OF US H4V3 PH0T0GR4PH1C M3M0R13S, BUT SP3ND 4 L1F3T1M3 L34RN1NG H0W T0 BL0CK OFF TH3 TH1NGS TH4T 4R3 R34LLY 1N TH3R3. S1MM0NS H3R3 H4S W0RK3D ON 1T F0R TW3NTY Y34RS 4ND N0W W3'V3 G0T TH3 M3TH0D D0WN T0 WH3R3 W3 C4N R3C4LL 4NYTH1NG TH4T'S B33N R34D 0NC3. W0ULD Y0U L1K3, S0M3 D4Y, M0NT4G, T0 R34D PL4T0'S R3PUBL1C?"

"OF C0URS3!"

"I AM PLATO'S REPUBLIC. LIKE TO READ MARCUS AURELIUS? MR. SIMMONS IS MARCUS."

"HOW DO YOU DO?" SAID MR. SIMMONS.

"HELLO," SAID MONTAG.

"I WANT YOU TO MEET JOHNATHAN SWIFT, THE AUTHOR OF THAT VERY POLITICAL BOOK, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS! AND THIS OTHER FELLOW IS CHARLES DARWIN, AND THIS ONE IS SHOPENHOUER, AND THIS ONE IS WINSTON, AND THIS ONE IS HARRY TRUMAN IS MR. ALBERT SCHWITZER, A VERY KIND PHILOSOPHER INDEED. HERE IS ALL THIS, MONTAG. ARISTOPHANES AND MAHATMA GANDHI AND GAUTAMA BUDDHA AND CONFUCIUS AND THOMAS LOVING PASCAL AND THOMAS JEFFERSON AND MR. LINCOLN, IF YOU PLEASE. WE ARE ALSO MARTIN, MARK, LUKAS, AND JOHN."

VERYONE LAUGHED QUIETLY.

"IT CAN'T BE," SAID MONTAG.

"IT IS," REPLIED GRANGER, SMILING. "WE'RE BOOK-BURNERS, TOO. WE READ THE BOOKS AND BURN THEM, AFTERWARDS WE FOUND. MICRO-FILMING DIDN'T PAY OFF; WE WERE ALWAYS TRAVELLING, WE DIDN'T WANT TO BURY THE FILM AND COME BACK LATER. ALWAYS THE CHANCE OF DISCOVERY. BETTER TO KEEP IT IN THE OLD HANDS, WHERE NO ONE CAN SEE IT OR SUSPECT IT. WE ARE ALL BITS AND PIECES OF HISTORY AND LITERATURE AND INTERNATIONAL LAW, BYRON, TOM PAIN, MACHIAVELLI, OR CHRIST, IT'S HERE. AND THE HOUR IS LATE. AND THE WAR'S BEGUN. AND WE ARE OUT HERE, AND THE CITY IS THERE, ALL WRAPPED UP IN ITS OWN COAT OF FOUR AND COLORS. WHAT DO YOU THINK, MONTAG?"

"I THINK I WAS BLIND TRYING TO DO THINGS MY WAY, PLANTING BOOKS IN FIRMEN'S HOUSES AND SENDING IN LETTERS."

"YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO. CARRIED OUT ON A NATIONAL SCALE, IT MIGHT HAVE WORKED BETTER. BUT OUR WAY IS SIMPLER AND, WE THINK, BETTER. ALL WE WANT TO DO IS KEEP THE KNOWLEDGE WE THINK WE WILL NEED, INTACT AND SAFE. WE'RE NOT OUT TO INFLUENCE OR

4NG3R 4NY0N3 Y3T. F0R 1F W3 4R3 D3STR0Y3D, TH3 KN0WL3-DG3 1s D34D, P3RH4PS F0R G00D. W3 4R3 M0D3L C1T1Z3NS, IN 0UR 0WN SP3C14L W4Y; W3 W4LK TH3 0LD TR4CKS, W3 L13 IN TH3 H1LLS 4T N1GHT, 4ND TH3 C1TY P30PL3 L3T US B3. W3'R3 ST0PP3D 4ND S34RCH3D 0CC4S10N4LLY, BUT TH3R3'S N0TH1NG 0N 0UR P3RS0NS T0 INCR1M1N4T3 US. TH3 0RG4N1Z4T10N 1s FL3X1BL3, V3RY L00S3, 4ND FR4GM3N-T4RY. S0M3 0F US H4V3 H4D PL4ST1C SURG3RY 0N 0UR F4C3S 4ND F1NG3RPR1NTS. R1GHT N0W W3 H4V3 4 H0RR1BL3 J0B; W3'R3 W41T1NG F0R TH3 W4R T0 B3G1N 4ND, 4S QU1CKLY, 3ND. 1T'S N0T PL34S4NT, BUT TH3N W3'R3 N0T IN C0NTR0L, W3'R3 TH3 0DD M1N0R1TY CRY1NG IN TH3 W1LD3RN3SS. WH3N TH3 W4R'S 0V3R, P3RH4PS W3 C4N B3 0F S0M3 US3 IN TH3 W0RLD."

"D0 Y0U R34LLY TH1NK TH3Y'LL L1ST3N TH3N?"

"1F N0T, W3'LL JUST H4V3 T0 W41T. W3'LL P4SS TH3 B00KS 0N T0 0UR CH1LDR3N, BY W0RD 0F M0UTH, 4ND L3T 0UR CH1LDR3N W41T, IN TURN, 0N TH3 0TH3R P30PL3. 4 L0T W1LL B3 L0ST TH4T W4Y, 0F C0URS3. BUT Y0U C4N'T M4K3 P30PL3 L1ST3N. TH3Y H4V3 T0 C0M3 R0UND 1N TH31R 0WN T1M3, W0ND3R1NG WH4T H4PP3N3D 4ND WHY TH3 W0RLD BL3W UP UND3R TH3M. 1T C4N'T L4ST."

"H0W M4NY 0F Y0U 4R3 TH3R3?"

"TH0US4NDS 0N TH3 R04DS, TH3 4B4ND0N3D R41LTR4CKS, T0N1GHT, BURNS 0N TH3 0UTS1D3, L1BR4R13S 1NS1D3. 1T W4SN'T PL4NN3D, 4T F1RST. 34CH M4N H4D 4 B00K H3 W4NT3D T0 R3M3MB3R, 4ND D1D. TH3N, 0V3R 4 P3R10D 0F TW3NTY Y34RS 0R S0, W3 M3T 34CH 0TH3R, TR4V3LL1NG, 4ND G0T TH3 L00S3 N3TW0RK T0G3TH3R 4ND S3T 0UT 4 PL4N. TH3 M0ST 1MP0RT4NT S1NGL3 TH1NG W3 H4D T0 P0UND 1N0 0URS3LV3S W4S TH4T W3 W3R3 N0T 1MP0RT4NT, W3 MUSTN'T B3 P3D4NTS; W3 W3R3 N0T T0 F33L SUP3R10R T0 4NY0N3 3L33 1N TH3 W0RLD. W3'R3 N0TH1NG M0R3 TH4N DUST-J4CK3TS F0R B00KS, 0F N0 S1GN1F1C4NC3 0TH3RW1S3. S0M3 0F US L1V3 1N SM4LL T0WNS. CH4PT3R 0N3 0F TH0R34U'S W4LD3N 1N GR33N R1V3R, CH4PT3R TW0 1N W1LL0W F4RM, M41N3. WHY, TH3R3'S 0N3 T0WN 1N M4RYL4ND, 0NLY TW3NTY-S3V3N

P30PL3, N0 B0MB'LL 3V3R T0UCH TH4T T0WN, 1S TH3 C0M-
 PL3T3 3SS4YS 0F 4 M4N N4M3D B3RTR4ND RUSS3LL. P1CK
 UP TH4T T0WN, 4LM0ST, 4ND FL1P TH3 P4G3S, S0 M4NY P4G3S
 T0 4 P3RS0N. 4ND WH3N TH3 W4R'S 0V3R, S0M3 D4Y, S0M3
 Y34R, TH3 B00KS C4N B3 WR1TT3N 4G41N, TH3 P30PL3 W1LL
 B3 C4LL3D 1N, 0N3 BY 0N3, T0 R3C1T3 WH4T TH3Y KN0W
 4ND W3'LL S3T 1T UP 1N TYP3 UNT1L 4N0TH3R D4RK 4G3,
 WH3N W3 M1GHT H4V3 T0 D0 TH3 WH0L3 D4MN TH1NG 0V3R
 4G41N. BUT TH4T'S TH3 W0ND3RFUL TH1NG 4B0UT M4N; H3
 N3V3R G3TS S0 D1SC0UR4G3D 0R D1SGUST3D TH4T H3 G1V3S
 UP D01NG 1T 4LL 0V3R 4G41N, B3C4US3 H3 KN0WS V3RY
 W3LL 1T 1S 1MP0RT4NT 4ND W0RTH TH3 D01NG."

"WH4T D0 W3 D0 T0N1GHT?" 4SK3D M0NT4G.

"W41T," S41D GR4NG3R. "4ND M0V3 D0WNSTR34M 4
 L1TTL3 W4Y, JUST 1N C4S3."

H3 B3C4N THR0W1NG DUST 4ND D1RT 0N TH3 FLR3.

TH3 0TH3R M3N H3LP3D, 4ND M0NT4G H3LP3D, 4ND
 TH3R3, 1N TH3 W1LD3RN3SS, TH3 M3N 4LL M0V3D TH31R
 H4NDS, PUTT1NG 0UT TH3 FLR3 T0G3TH3R.

TH3Y ST00D BY TH3 R1V3R 1N TH3 ST4RL1GHT.

M0NT4G S4W TH3 LUM1N0US D14L 0F H1S W4T3RPR00F.
 FLV3. FLV3 0'CL0CK 1N TH3 M0RN1NG. 4N0TH3R Y34R
 T1CK3D BY 1N 4 S1NGL3 H0UR, 4ND D4WN W41T1NG B3Y0ND
 TH3 F4R B4NK 0F TH3 R1V3R.

"WHY D0 Y0U TRUST M3?" S41D M0NT4G.

4 M4N M0V3D 1N TH3 D4RKN3SS.

"TH3 L00K 0F Y0U'S 3N0UGH. Y0U H4V3N'T S33N Y0URS-
 LF 1N 4 M1RR0R L4T3LY. B3Y0ND TH4T, TH3 C1TY H4S N3V3R
 C4R3D S0 MUCH 4B0UT US T0 B0TH3R W1TH 4N 3L4B0R4T3
 CH4S3 L1K3 TH1S T0 F1ND US. 4 F3W CR4CKP0TS W1TH
 V3RS3S 1N TH31R H34DS C4N'T T0UCH TH3M, 4ND TH3Y
 KN0W 1T 4ND W3 KN0W 1T; 3V3RY0N3 KN0WS 1T. S0 L0NG
 4S TH3 V4ST P0PUL4T10N D03SN'T W4ND3R 4B0UT QU0T1NG
 TH3 M4GN4 CH4RT4 4ND TH3 C0NST1TUT10N, 1T'S 4LL
 R1GHT. TH3 FLR3M3N W3R3 3N0UGH T0 CH3CK TH4T, N0W
 4ND TH3N. N0, TH3 C1T13S D0N'T B0TH3R US. 4ND Y0U L00K

L1K3 H3LL."

TH3Y M0V3D 4L0NG TH3 B4NK 0F TH3 R1V3R, G01NG S0UTH. M0NT4G TR13D T0 S33 TH3 M3N'S F4C3S, TH3 0LD F4C3S H3 R3M3MB3R3D FR0M TH3 FLR3L1GHT, L1N3D 4ND T1R3D. H3 W4S L00K1NG F0R 4 BR1GHTN3SS, 4 R3S0LV3, 4 TR1UMPH 0V3R T0M0RR0W TH4T H4RDLY S33M3D T0 B3 TH3R3. P3RH4PS H3 H4D 3XP3CT3D TH31R F4C3S T0 BURN 4ND GL1TT3R W1TH TH3 KN0WL3DG3 TH3Y C4RR13D, T0 GL0W 4S L4NT3RNS GL0W, W1TH TH3 L1GHT 1N TH3M. BUT 4LL TH3 L1GHT H4D C0M3 FR0M TH3 C4MP FLR3, 4ND TH3S3 M3N H4D S33M3D N0 D1FF3R3NT FR0M 4NY 0TH3RS WH0 H4D RUN 4 L0NG R4C3, S34RCH3D 4 L0NG S34RCH, S33N G00D TH1NGS D3STR0Y3D, 4ND N0W, V3RY L4T3, W3R3 G4TH3R1NG T0 W41T F0R TH3 3ND 0F TH3 P4RTY 4ND TH3 BLOW1NG 0UT 0F TH3 L4MPS. TH3Y W3R3N'T 4T 4LL C3RT41N TH4T TH3 TH1NGS TH3Y C4RR13D 1N TH31R H34DS M1GHT M4K3 3V3RY FUTUR3 D4WN GL0W W1TH 4 PUR3R L1GHT, TH3Y W3R3 SUR3 0F N0TH1NG S4V3 TH4T TH3 B00KS W3R3 0N FL13 B3H1ND TH31R QUL3T 3Y3S, TH3 B00KS W3R3 W41T1NG, W1TH TH31R P4G3S UNCUT, F0R TH3 CUST0M3RS WH0 M1GHT C0M3 BY 1N L4T3R Y34RS, S0M3 W1TH CL34N 4ND S0M3 W1TH D1RTY FL1NG3RS.

M0NT4G SQU1NT3D FR0M 0N3 F4C3 T0 4N0TH3R 4S TH3Y W4LK3D.

"D0N'T JUDG3 4 B00K BY 1TS C0V3R," S0M30N3 S41D.

4ND TH3Y 4LL LAUGH3D QUL3TLY, M0V1NG D0WNSTR34M.

TH3R3 W4S 4 SHR13K 4ND TH3 J3TS FR0M TH3 C1TY W3R3 G0N3 0V3RH34D L0NG B3F0R3 TH3 M3N L00K3D UP. M0NT4G ST4R3D B4CK 4T TH3 C1TY, F4R D0WN TH3 R1V3R, 0NLY 4 F41NT GL0W N0W.

"MY W1F3'S B4CK TH3R3."

"I'M S0RRY T0 H34R TH4T. TH3 C1T13S W0N'T D0 W3LL 1N TH3 N3XT F3W D4YS," S41D GR4NG3R.

"1T'S STR4NG3, 1 D0N'T M1SS H3R, 1T'S STR4NG3 1 D0N'T F33L MUCH 0F 4NYTH1NG," S41D M0NT4G. "3V3N 1F SH3 D13S, 1 R34L1Z3D 4 M0M3NT 4G0, 1 D0N'T TH1NK 1'LL F33L

s4D. IT ISN'T RIGHT. SOMETHING MUST B3 WRONG WITH M3."

"LIST3N," s4ID GR4NG3R, T4K1NG H1S 4RM, 4ND W4LK1NG WITH H1M, H0LD1NG 4S1D3 TH3 BUSH3S T0 L3T H1M P4SS. "WH3N I W4S 4 B0Y MY GR4NDF4TH3R D13D, 4ND H3 W4S 4 SCULPT0R. H3 W4S 4LS0 4 V3RY K1ND M4N WH0 H4D 4 L0T 0F L0V3 T0 G1V3 TH3 W0RLD, 4ND H3 H3LP3D CL34N UP TH3 SLUM 1N 0UR T0WN; 4ND H3 M4D3 T0YS F0R US 4ND H3 D1D 4 M1LL10N TH1NGS 1N H1S L1F3T1M3; H3 W4S 4LW4YS BUSY WITH H1S H4NDS. 4ND WH3N H3 D13D, I SUDD3NLY R34LLZ3D I W4SN'T CRY1NG F0R H1M 4T 4LL, BUT F0R TH3 TH1NGS H3 D1D. I CRL3D B3C4US3 H3 W0ULD N3V3R D0 TH3M 4G41N, H3 W0ULD N3V3R C4RV3 4N0TH3R P13C3 0F W00D 0R H3LP US R41S3 D0V3S 4ND P1G30NS 1N TH3 B4CK Y4RD 0R PL4Y TH3 V10L1N TH3 W4Y H3 D1D, 0R T3LL US J0K3S TH3 W4Y H3 D1D. H3 W4S P4RT 0F US 4ND WH3N H3 D13D, 4LL TH3 4CT10NS ST0PP3D D34D 4ND TH3R3 W4S N0 0N3 T0 D0 TH3M JUST TH3 W4Y H3 D1D. H3 W4S 1ND1V1DU4L. H3 W4S 4N 1MP0RT4NT M4N. I'V3 N3V3R G0TT3N 0V3R H1S D34TH. 0FT3N I TH1NK, WH4T W0ND3RFUL C4RV1NGS N3V3R C4M3 T0 B1RTH B3C4US3 H3 D13D. H0W M4NY J0K3S 4R3 M1SS1NG FR0M TH3 W0RLD, 4ND H0W M4NY H0M1NG P1G30NS UNTOUCH3D BY H1S H4NDS. H3 SH4P3D TH3 W0RLD. H3 D1D TH1NGS T0 TH3 W0RLD. TH3 W0RLD W4S B4NKRUPT3D 0F T3N M1LL10N F1N3 4CT10NS TH3 N1GHT H3 P4SS3D 0N."

M0NT4G W4LK3D 1N S1L3NC3. "M1LL13, M1LL13," H3 WH1SP3R3D. "M1LL13."

"WH4T?"

"MY W1F3, MY W1F3. P00R M1LL13, P00R M1LL13. I C4N'T R3M3MB3R 4NYTH1NG. I TH1NK 0F H3R H4NDS BUT I D0N'T S33 TH3M D01NG 4NYTH1NG 4T 4LL. TH3Y JUST H4NG TH3R3 4T H3R S1D3S 0R TH3Y L13 TH3R3 0N H3R L4P 0R TH3R3'S 4 C1G4R3TT3 1N TH3M, BUT TH4T'S 4LL."

M0NT4G TURN3D 4ND GL4NC3D B4CK.

WH4T D1D Y0U G1V3 T0 TH3 C1TY, M0NT4G?
4SH3S.

WH4T D1D TH3 0TH3RS G1V3 T0 34CH 0TH3R?

N0TH1NGN3SS.

GR4NG3R ST00D L00K1NG B4CK W1TH M0NT4G.
 "3V3RY0N3 MUST L34V3 S0M3TH1NG B3H1ND WH3N H3 D13S,
 MY GR4NDF4TH3R S41D. 4 CH1LD 0R 4 B00K 0R 4 P41NT1NG
 0R 4 H0US3 0R 4 W4LL BULLT 0R 4 P41R 0F SH03S M4D3. 0R
 4 G4RD3N PL4NT3D. S0M3TH1NG Y0UR H4ND T0UCH3D S0M3
 W4Y S0 Y0UR S0UL H4S S0M3WH3R3 T0 G0 WH3N Y0U D13,
 4ND WH3N P30PL3 L00K 4T TH4T TR33 0R TH4T FL0W3R Y0U
 PL4NT3D, Y0U'R3 TH3R3. 1T D03SN'T M4TT3R WH4T Y0U D0,
 H3 S41D, S0 L0NG 4S Y0U CH4NG3 S0M3TH1NG FR0M TH3 W4Y
 1T W4S B3F0R3 Y0U T0UCH3D 1T 1NT0 S0M3TH1NG TH4T'S
 L1K3 Y0U 4FT3R Y0U T4K3 Y0UR H4NDS 4W4Y. TH3 D1F-
 F3R3NC3 B3TW33N TH3 M4N WH0 JUST CUTS L4WNS 4ND 4
 R34L G4RD3N3R 1S 1N TH3 T0UCH1NG, H3 S41D. TH3 L4WN-
 CUTT3R M1GHT JUST 4S W3LL N0T H4V3 B33N TH3R3 4T 4LL;
 TH3 G4RD3N3R W1LL B3 TH3R3 4 L1F3T1M3."

GR4NG3R M0V3D H1S H4ND. "MY GR4NDF4TH3R SH0W3D
 M3 S0M3 V-2 R0CK3T F1LMS 0NC3, F1FTY Y34RS 4C0. H4V3
 Y0U 3V3R S33N TH3 4T0M-B0MB MUSHR00M FR0M TW0 HUN-
 DR3D M1L3S UP? 1T'S 4 P1NPR1CK, 1T'S N0TH1NG. W1TH TH3
 W1LD3RN3SS 4LL 4R0UND 1T.

"MY GR4NDF4TH3R R4N 0FF TH3 V-2 R0CK3T F1LM 4
 D0Z3N T1M3S 4ND TH3N H0P3D TH4T S0M3 D4Y 0UR CL1T3S
 W0ULD 0P3N UP 4ND L3T TH3 GR33N 4ND TH3 L4ND 4ND
 TH3 W1LD3RN3SS 1N M0R3, T0 R3M1ND P30PL3 TH4T
 W3'R3 4LL0TT3D 4 L1TTL3 SP4C3 0N 34RTH 4ND TH4T W3
 SURV1V3 1N TH4T W1LD3RN3SS TH4T C4N T4K3 B4CK WH4T
 1T H4S GLV3N, 4S 34S1LY 4S BL0W1NG 1TS BR34TH 0N US 0R
 S3ND1NG TH3 S34 T0 T3LL US W3 4R3 N0T S0 B1G. WH3N
 W3 F0RG3T H0W CL0S3 TH3 W1LD3RN3SS 1S 1N TH3 N1GHT,
 MY GR4NDP4 S41D, S0M3 D4Y 1T W1LL C0M3 1N 4ND C3T
 US, F0R W3 W1LL H4V3 F0RG0TT3N H0W T3RR1BL3 4ND
 R34L 1T C4N B3. Y0U S33?" GR4NG3R TURN3D T0 M0NT4G.
 "GR4NDF4TH3R'S B33N D34D F0R 4LL TH3S3 Y34RS, BUT 1F
 Y0U L1FT3D MY SKULL, BY G0D, 1N TH3 C0NV0LUT10NS 0F
 MY BR41N Y0U'D F1ND TH3 B1G R1DG3S 0F H1S THUMBPR1NT.
 H3 T0UCH3D M3. 4S 1 S41D 34RL13R, H3 W4S 4 SCULPT0R. '1

H4T3 4 R0M4N N4M3D St4TUS Qu0!' h3 s41D t0 M3. 'STUFF
 Y0UR 3Y3S W1TH W0ND3R,' h3 s41D, 'L1V3 4S 1F Y0U'D DR0P
 D34D IN T3N S3C0NDS. S33 TH3 W0RLD. It's M0R3 F4NT4-
 ST1C TH4N 4NY DR34M M4D3 0R P41D F0R IN F4CT0R13S.
 4SK N0 CU4R4NT33S, 4SK F0R N0 S3CUR1TY, TH3R3 N3V3R
 W4S SUCH 4N 4N1M4L. 4ND 1F TH3R3 W3R3, 1T W0ULD B3
 R3L4T3D T0 TH3 GR34T SL0TH WH1CH H4NGS UPS1D3 D0WN
 1N 4 TR33 4LL D4Y 3V3RY D4Y, SL33P1NG 1TS L1F3 4W4Y. T0
 H3LL W1TH TH4T,' h3 s41D, 'SH4K3 TH3 TR33 4ND KN0CK
 TH3 GR34T SL0TH D0WN 0N H1S 4SS.'"

"L00K!" CR13D M0NT4G.

4ND TH3 W4R B3G4N 4ND 3ND3D 1N TH4T INST4NT.

L4T3R, TH3 M3N 4R0UND M0NT4G C0ULD N0T S4Y 1F
 TH3Y H4D R34LLY S33N 4NYTH1NG. P3RH4PS TH3 M3R3ST
 FL0UR1SH 0F L1GHT 4ND M0T10N 1N TH3 SKY. P3RH4PS
 TH3 B0MBS W3R3 TH3R3, 4ND TH3 j3TS, T3N M1L3S, FLV3
 M1L3S, 0N3 M1L3 UP, F0R TH3 M3R3ST INST4NT, L1K3 GR41N
 THR0WN 0V3R TH3 H34V3NS BY 4 GR34T S0W1NG H4ND, 4ND
 TH3 B0MBS DR1FT1NG W1TH DR34DFUL SW1FTN3SS, Y3T
 SUDD3N SL0WN3SS, D0WN UP0N TH3 M0RN1NG C1TY TH3Y H4D
 L3FT B3H1ND. TH3 B0MB4RDM3NT W4S T0 4LL INT3NTS 4ND
 PURP0S3S F1N1SH3D, 0NC3 TH3 j3TS H4D SL1GHT3D TH31R
 T4RC3T, 4L3RT3D TH31R B0MB4RD13RS 4T FLV3 TH0US4ND
 M1L3S 4N H0UR; 4S QU1CK 4S TH3 WH1SP3R 0F 4 SCYTH3 TH3
 W4R W4S F1N1SH3D. 0NC3 TH3 B0MB-R3L34S3 W4S Y4NK3D
 1T W4S 0V3R. N0W, 4 FULL THR33 S3C0NDS, 4LL 0F TH3 T1M3
 1N H1ST0RY, B3F0R3 TH3 B0MBS STRUCK, TH3 3N3MY SH1PS
 TH3MS3LV3S W3R3 C0N3 H4LF 4R0UND TH3 V1S1BL3 W0RLD,
 L1K3 BULL3TS 1N WH1CH 4 S4V4G3 1SL4ND3R M1GHT N0T
 B3L13V3 B3C4US3 TH3Y W3R3 1NV1S1BL3; Y3T TH3 H34RT 1S
 SUDD3NLY SH4TT3R3D, TH3 B0DY F4LLS 1N S3P4R4T3 M0T10-
 NS 4ND TH3 BL00D 1S 4ST0N1SH3D T0 B3 FR33D 0N TH3 41R;
 TH3 BR41N SQU4ND3RS 1TS F3W PR3C10US M3M0R13S 4ND,
 PUZZL3D, D13S.

TH1S W4S N0T T0 B3 B3L13V3D. 1T W4S M3R3LY 4 G3STUR3.
 M0NT4G S4W TH3 FL1RT 0F 4 GR34T M3T4L F1ST 0V3R TH3
 F4R C1TY 4ND H3 KN3W TH3 SCR34M 0F TH3 j3TS TH4T W0ULD

FOLLOW, WOULD SAY, 4FT3R TH3 D33D, D1S1NT3GR4T3, L34V3 N0 ST0N3 0N 4N0TH3R, P3R1SH. D13.

MONT4G H3LD TH3 B0MBS IN TH3 SKY F0R 4 S1NGL3 M0M3NT, W1TH H1S M1ND 4ND H1S H4NDS R34CH1NG H3L-PL3SSLY UP 4T TH3M. "RUN!" H3 CR13D T0 F4B3R. T0 CL4R1SS3, "RUN!" T0 M1LDR3D, "G3T 0UT, G3T 0UT 0F TH3R3!" BUT CL4R1SS3, H3 R3M3MB3R3D, W4S D34D. 4ND F4B3R W4S 0UT; TH3R3 IN TH3 D33P V4LL3YS 0F TH3 C0UNTRY S0M3WH3R3 TH3 F1V3 4.M. BUS W4S 0N ITS W4Y FR0M 0N3 D3S0L4T10N T0 4N0TH3R. TH0UGH TH3 D3S0L4T10N H4D N0T Y3T 4RR1V3D, W4S ST1LL IN TH3 41R, 1T W4S C3RT41N 4S M4N C0ULD M4K3 1T. B3F0R3 TH3 BUS H4D RUN 4N0TH3R F1FTY Y4RDS 0N TH3 H1GHW4Y, ITS D3ST1N4T10N W0ULD B3 M34N1NGL3SS, 4ND ITS P01NT 0F D3P4RTUR3 CH4NG3D FR0M M3TR0P0LLS T0 JUNKY4RD.

4ND M1LDR3D. . .

G3T 0UT, RUN!

H3 S4W H3R IN H3R H0T3L R00M S0M3WH3R3 N0W IN TH3 H4LF S3C0ND R3M41N1NG W1TH TH3 B0MBS 4 Y4RD, 4 F00T, 4N 1NCH FR0M H3R BULD1NG. H3 S4W H3R L34N1NG T0W4RD TH3 GR34T SH1MM3R1NG W4LLS 0F C0L0R 4ND M0T10N WH3R3 TH3 F4M1LY T4LK3D 4ND T4LK3D 4ND T4LK3D T0 H3R, WH3R3 TH3 F4M1LY PR4TTL3D 4ND CH4TT3D 4ND S41D H3R N4M3 4ND SM1L3D 4T H3R 4ND S41D N0TH1NG 0F TH3 B0MB TH4T W4S 4N 1NCH, N0W 4 H4LF-1NCH, N0W 4 QU4RT3R-1NCH FR0M TH3 T0P 0F TH3 H0T3L. L34N1NG INT0 TH3 W4LL 4S 1F 4LL 0F TH3 HUNG3R 0F L00K1NG W0ULD F1ND TH3 S3CR3T 0F H3R SL33PL3SS UN34S3 TH3R3. M1LDR3D, L34N1NG 4NX10USLY, N3RV0USLY, 4S 1F T0 PLUNG3, DR0P, F4LL INT0 TH4T SW4RM1NG IMM3NS1TY 0F C0L0R T0 DR0WN IN ITS BR1GHT H4PP1N3SS.

TH3 F1RST B0MB STRUCK.

"M1LDR3D!"

P3RH4PS, WH0 W0ULD 3V3R KN0W? P3RH4PS TH3 GR34T BR04DC4ST1NG ST4T10NS W1TH TH31R B34MS 0F C0L0R 4ND L1GHT 4ND T4LK 4ND CH4TT3R W3NT F1RST INT0 0BL1V10N.

MONT4G, F4LL1NG FL4T, G01NG D0WN, S4W 0R F3LT, 0R

1M4G1N3D H3 S4W 0R F3LT TH3 W4LLS C0 D4RK IN M1LL13'S F4C3, H34RD H3R SCR34M1NG, B3C4US3 IN TH3 M1LL10NTH P4RT 0F T1M3 L3FT, SH3 S4W H3R 0WN F4C3 R3FL3CT3D TH3R3, IN 4 M1RR0R INST34D 0F 4 CRYST4L B4LL, 4ND IT W4S SUCH 4 W1LDLY 3MPY F4C3, 4LL BY ITS3LF IN TH3 R00M, T0UCH1NG N0TH1NG, ST4RV3D 4ND 34T1NG 0F ITS3LF, TH4T 4T L4ST SH3 R3C0GN1Z3D IT 4S H3R 0WN 4ND L00K3D QU1CKLY UP 4T TH3 C3LL1NG 4S IT 4ND TH3 3NT1R3 STRUC-TUR3 0F TH3 H0T3L BL4ST3D D0WN UP0N H3R, CARRY1NG H3R W1TH 4 M1LL10N P0UNDS 0F BR1CK, M3T4L, PL4ST3R, 4ND W00D, T0 M33T 0TH3R P30PL3 IN TH3 H1V3S B3L0W, 4LL 0N TH31R QU1CK W4Y D0WN T0 TH3 C3LL4R WH3R3 TH3 3XPL0S10N R1D ITS3LF 0F TH3M IN ITS 0WN UNR34S0N4BL3 W4Y.

1 R3M3MB3R. M0NT4G CLUNG T0 TH3 34RTH. 1 R3M3-MB3R. CH1C4G0. CH1C4G0, 4 L0NG T1M3 4C0. M1LL13 4ND 1. TH4T'S WH3R3 W3 M3T! 1 R3M3MB3R N0W. CH1C4G0. 4 L0NG T1M3 4C0.

TH3 C0NCUSS10N KN0CK3D TH3 41R 4CR0SS 4ND D0WN TH3 R1V3R, TURN3D TH3 M3N 0V3R L1K3 D0M1N03S IN 4 L1N3, BL3W TH3 W4T3R IN L1FT1NG SPR4YS, 4ND BL3W TH3 DUST 4ND M4D3 TH3 TR33S 4B0V3 TH3M M0URN W1TH 4 GR34T W1ND P4SS1NG 4W4Y S0UTH. M0NT4G CRUSH3D H1MS3LF D0WN, SQU3ZZ1NG H1MS3LF SM4LL, 3Y3S T1GHT. H3 BL1NK3D 0NC3. 4ND IN TH4T INST4NT S4W TH3 C1TY, INST34D 0F TH3 B0MBS, IN TH3 41R. TH3Y H4D D1SPL4C3D 34CH 0TH3R. F0R 4N0TH3R 0F TH0S3 1MP0SS1BL3 INST4NTS TH3 C1TY ST00D, R3BULLT 4ND UNR3C0GN1Z4BL3, T4LL3R TH4N IT H4D 3V3R H0P3D 0R STR1V3D T0 B3, T4LL3R TH4N M4N H4D BULLT IT, 3R3CT3D 4T L4ST IN C0UTS 0F SH4T-T3R3D C0NCR3T3 4ND SP4RKL3S 0F T0RN M3T4L INT0 4 MUR4L HUNG L1K3 4 R3V3RS3D 4V4L4NCH3, 4 M1LL10N C0L0RS, 4 M1LL10N 0DD1T13S, 4 D00R WH3R3 4 W1ND0W SH0ULD B3, 4 T0P F0R 4 B0TT0M, 4 S1D3 F0R 4 B4CK, 4ND TH3N TH3 C1TY R0LL3D 0V3R 4ND F3LL D0WN D34D.

TH3 S0UND 0F ITS D34TH C4M3 4FT3R.

MONTAG, LYING THIR, YS GRITTED SHUT WITH DUST,
 4 FINE WIT CEMENT OF DUST IN HIS NOW SHUT MOUTH,
 GASPING AND CRYING, NOW THOUGHT AGAIN, I REMEMBER,
 I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER SOMETHING ELSE. WHAT IS IT?
 YES, YES, PART OF THE CLOCKS LASTS AND REVOLUTION.
 PART OF THAT BOOK, PART OF IT, QUICK NOW, QUICK, BEFORE
 IT GETS AWAY, BEFORE THE SHOCK WARS OFF, BEFORE THE
 WIND DIES. BOOK OF CLOCKS LASTS. HIR. HIS SAID IT
 OVER TO HISSELF SILENTLY, LYING FLAT TO THE TRIMBLING
 34TH, HIS SAID THE WORDS OF IT MANY TIMES AND THEY
 WERE PERFECT WITHOUT TRYING AND THERE WAS NO DEN-
 HARM'S DENTIFRICE ANYWHERE, IT WAS JUST THE PRACHEER
 BY HISSELF, STANDING THERE IN HIS MIND, LOOKING AT
 HIM. . . .

"THIR," SAID HE.

THE MEN LAY GASPING LIKE FISH LAID OUT ON THE GRASS.
 THEY HELD TO THE 34TH AS CHILDREN HOLD TO FAMILIAR
 THINGS, NO MATTER HOW COLD OR DEAD, NO MATTER WHAT
 HAS HAPPENED OR WILL HAPPEN, THEIR FINGERS WERE CLAW-
 WED INTO THE DIRT, AND THEY WERE ALL SHOUTING TO KEEP
 THEIR 34DRUMS FROM BURSTING, TO KEEP THEIR SANITY
 FROM BURSTING, MOUTHS OPEN, MONTAG SHOUTING WITH
 THEM, 4 PROTEST AGAINST THE WIND THAT RIPPED THEIR
 FACES AND TORSO AT THEIR LIPS, MAKING THEIR NOSES
 BLEED.

MONTAG WATCHED THE GREAT DUST SETTLE AND THE
 GREAT SILENCE MOVE DOWN UPON THEIR WORLD. AND LYING
 THERE IT SEEMED THAT HE SAW VERY SINGLE GREAT OF
 DUST AND VERY BLAD OF GRASS AND THAT HE HEARD VERY
 CRY AND SHOUT AND WHISPER GOING UP IN THE WORLD NOW.
 SILENCE FELL DOWN IN THE SIFTING DUST, AND ALL THE
 LIES THE MIGHT NEED TO LOOK AROUND, TO GATHER
 THE REALITY OF THIS DAY INTO THEIR SENSES.

MONTAG LOOKED AT THE RIVER. WILL GO ON THE RIVER.
 HE LOOKED AT THE OLD RAILROAD TRACKS. OR WILL GO
 THAT WAY. OR WILL WALK ON THE HIGHWAYS NOW, AND
 WILL HAVE TIME TO PUT THINGS INTO OURSELVES. AND SOME

D4Y, 4FT3R IT S3TS IN US 4 LONG T1M3, IT'LL C0M3 OUT OF OUR H4NDS 4ND OUR M0UTHS. 4ND 4 LOT OF IT WILL B3 WR0NG, BUT JUST 3N0UGH OF IT WILL B3 R1GHT. W3'LL JUST ST4RT W4LK1NG T0D4Y 4ND S33 TH3 W0RLD 4ND TH3 W4Y TH3 W0RLD W4LKS 4R0UND 4ND T4LKS, TH3 W4Y IT R34LLY L0OKS. I W4NT T0 S33 3V3RYTH1NG N0W. 4ND WH1L3 N0N3 OF IT WILL B3 M3 WH3N IT G03S IN, 4FT3R 4 WH1L3 IT'LL 4LL G4TH3R T0G3TH3R INS1D3 4ND IT'LL B3 M3. L00K 4T TH3 W0RLD OUT TH3R3, MY G0D, MY G0D, L00K 4T IT OUT TH3R3, 0UTS1D3 M3, 0UT TH3R3 B3Y0ND MY F4C3 4ND TH3 0NLY W4Y T0 R34LLY T0UCH IT 1S T0 PUT IT WH3R3 IT'S F1N4LLY M3, WH3R3 IT'S IN TH3 BL00D, WH3R3 IT PUMPS 4R0UND 4 TH0US4ND T1M3S T3N TH0US4ND 4 D4Y. I G3T H0LD OF IT S0 IT'LL N3V3R RUN 0FF. I'LL H0LD 0N T0 TH3 W0RLD T1GHT S0M3 D4Y. I'V3 C0T 0N3 F1NG3R 0N IT N0W; TH4T'S 4 B3G1NN1NG.

TH3 W1ND D13D.

TH3 0TH3R M3N L4Y 4 WH1L3, 0N TH3 D4WN 3DG3 OF SL33P, N0T Y3T R34DY T0 R1S3 UP 4ND B3G1N TH3 D4Y'S 0BL1G4T10NS, ITS F1R3S 4ND F00DS, ITS TH0US4ND D3T41LS OF PUTT1NG F00T 4FT3R F00T 4ND H4ND 4FT3R H4ND. TH3Y L4Y BL1NK1NG TH31R DUSTY 3Y3L1DS. Y0U C0ULD H34R TH3M BR34TH1NG F4ST, TH3N SLOW3R, TH3N SLOW. . .

M0NT4G S4T UP.

H3 D1D N0T M0V3 4NY FURTH3R, H0W3V3R. TH3 0TH3R M3N D1D L1K3W1S3. TH3 SUN W4S T0UCH1NG TH3 BL4CK H0R1Z0N W1TH 4 F41NT R3D T1P. TH3 41R W4S C0LD 4ND SM3LL3D 0F 4 C0M1NG R41N.

S1L3NTLY, GR4NG3R 4R0S3, F3LT H1S 4RMS, 4ND L3GS, SW34R1NG, SW34R1NG 1NC3SS4NTLY UND3R H1S BR34TH, T34RS DR1PP1NG FR0M H1S F4C3. H3 SHUFFL3D D0WN T0 TH3 R1V3R T0 L00K UPSTR34M.

"IT'S FL4T," H3 S41D, 4 LONG T1M3 L4T3R. "C1TY L00KS L1K3 4 H34P 0F B4K1NG-P0WD3R. IT'S G0N3." 4ND 4 LONG T1M3 4FT3R TH4T. "I W0ND3R H0W M4NY KN3W IT W4S C0M1NG? I W0ND3R H0W M4NY W3R3 SURPR1S3D?"

4ND 4CR0SS TH3 W0RLD, TH0UGHT M0NT4G, H0W M4NY

0TH3R C1T13S D34D? 4ND H3R3 IN OUR C0UNTRY, H0W M4NY? 4 HUNDR3D, 4 TH0US4ND?

S0M30N3 STRUCK 4 M4TCH 4ND T0UCH3D 1T T0 4 P13C3 0F DRY P4P3R T4K3N FR0M TH31R P0CK3T, 4ND SH0V3D TH1S UND3R 4 B1T 0F GR4SS 4ND L34V3S, 4ND 4FT3R 4 WH1L3 4DD3D T1NY TW1GS WH1CH W3R3 W3T 4ND SPUTT3R3D BUT F1N4LLY C4UGHT, 4ND TH3 F1R3 GR3W L4RG3R IN TH3 34RLY M0RN1NG 4S TH3 SUN C4M3 UP 4ND TH3 M3N SLOWLY TURN3D FR0M L00K1NG UP R1V3R 4ND W3R3 DR4WN T0 TH3 F1R3, 4WKW4RDLY, W1TH N0TH1NG T0 S4Y, 4ND TH3 SUN C0L0R3D TH3 B4CKS 0F TH31R N3CKS 4S TH3Y B3NT D0WN.

GR4NG3R UNF0LD3D 4N 01LSK1N W1TH S0M3 B4C0N IN 1T. "W3'LL H4V3 4 B1T3. TH3N W3'LL TURN 4R0UND 4ND W4LK UPSTR34M. TH3Y'LL B3 N33D1NG US UP TH4T W4Y."

S0M30N3 PR0DUC3D 4 SM4LL FRY1NG-P4N 4ND TH3 B4C0N W3NT INT0 1T 4ND TH3 FRY1NG-P4N W4S S3T 0N TH3 F1R3. 4FT3R 4 M0M3NT TH3 B4C0N B3G4N T0 FLUTT3R 4ND D4NC3 IN TH3 P4N 4ND TH3 SPUTT3R 0F 1T F1LL3D TH3 M0RN1NG 41R W1TH 1TS 4R0M4. TH3 M3N W4TCH3D TH1S R1TU4L S1L3NTLY.

GR4NG3R L00K3D INT0 TH3 F1R3. "PH03N1X."

"WH4T?"

"TH3R3 W4S 4 S1LLY D4MN B1RD C4LL3D 4 PH03N1X B4CK B3F0R3 CHR1ST: 3V3RY F3W HUNDR3D Y34RS H3 BULT 4 PYR3 4ND BURN3D H1MS3LF UP. H3 MUST H4V3 B33N F1RST C0US1N T0 M4N. BUT 3V3RY T1M3 H3 BURNT H1MS3LF UP H3 SPR4NG 0UT 0F TH3 4SH3S, H3 G0T H1MS3LF B0RN 4LL 0V3R 4C41N. 4ND 1T L00KS L1K3 W3'R3 D01NG TH3 S4M3 TH1NG, 0V3R 4ND 0V3R, BUT W3'V3 G0T 0N3 D4MN TH1NG TH3 PH03N1X N3V3R H4D. W3 KN0W TH3 D4MN S1LLY TH1NG W3 JUST D1D. W3 KN0W 4LL TH3 D4MN S1LLY TH1NGS W3'V3 D0N3 F0R 4 TH0US4ND Y34RS, 4ND 4S L0NG 4S W3 KN0W TH4T 4ND 4LW4YS H4V3 1T 4R0UND WH3R3 W3 C4N S33 1T, S0M3 D4Y W3'LL ST0P M4K1NG TH3 G0DD4M FUN3R4L PYR3S 4ND JUMP1NG INT0 TH3 M1DDL3 0F TH3M. W3 P1CK UP 4 F3W M0R3 P30PL3 TH4T R3M3MB3R, 3V3RY G3N3R4T10N."

H3 T0OK TH3 P4N 0FF TH3 F1R3 4ND L3T TH3 B4C0N C00L

4ND TH3Y 4T3 1T, SLOWLY, TH0UGHTFULLY.

“NOW, L3T’S G3T ON UPSTR34M,” S41D GR4NG3R. “4ND H0LD ON T0 ON3 TH0UGHT: Y0U’R3 N0T 1MP0RT4NT. Y0U’R3 N0T 4NYTH1NG. S0M3 D4Y TH3 L04D W3’R3 C4RRY1NG W1TH US M4Y H3LP S0M30N3. BUT 3V3N WH3N W3 H4D TH3 B00KS ON H4ND, 4 L0NG T1M3 4G0, W3 D1DN’T US3 WH4T W3 G0T OUT OF TH3M. W3 W3NT R1GHT ON 1NSULT1NG TH3 D34D. W3 W3NT R1GHT ON SP1TT1NG 1N TH3 GR4V3S OF 4LL TH3 P00R 0N3S WH0 D13D B3F0R3 US. W3’R3 G01NG T0 M33T 4 L0T OF L0N3LY P30PL3 1N TH3 N3XT W33K 4ND TH3 N3XT M0NTH 4ND TH3 N3XT Y34R. 4ND WH3N TH3Y 4SK US WH4T W3’R3 D01NG, Y0U C4N S4Y, W3’R3 R3M3MB3R1NG. TH4T’S WH3R3 W3’LL W1N OUT 1N TH3 L0NG RUN. 4ND S0M3 D4Y W3’LL R3M3MB3R S0 MUCH TH4T W3’LL BULD TH3 B1GG3ST C0DD4M ST34M-SH0V3L 1N H1ST0RY 4ND D1G TH3 B1GG3ST GR4V3 OF 4LL T1M3 4ND SH0V3 W4R 1N 4ND C0V3R 1T UP. C0M3 ON NOW, W3’R3 G01NG T0 G0 BULD 4 M1RR0R-F4C-T0RY F1RST 4ND PUT OUT N0TH1NG BUT M1RR0RS F0R TH3 N3XT Y34R 4ND T4K3 4 L0NG L00K 1N TH3M.”

TH3Y F1N1SH3D 34T1NG 4ND PUT OUT TH3 F1R3. TH3 D4Y W4S BR1GHT3N1NG 4LL 4B0UT TH3M 4S 1F 4 P1NK L4MP H4D B33N GLV3N M0R3 W1CK. 1N TH3 TR33S, TH3 B1RDS TH4T H4D FL0WN 4W4Y N0W C4M3 B4CK 4ND S3TTL3D D0WN.

M0NT4G B3G4N W4LK1NG 4ND 4FT3R 4 M0M3NT F0UND TH4T TH3 0TH3RS H4D F4LL3N 1N B3H1ND H1M, G01NG N0RTH. H3 W4S SURPR1S3D, 4ND M0V3D 4S1D3 T0 L3T GR4NG3R P4SS, BUT GR4NG3R L00K3D 4T H1M 4ND N0DD3D H1M 0N. M0NT4G W3NT 4H34D. H3 L00K3D 4T TH3 R1V3R 4ND TH3 SKY 4ND TH3 RUST1NG TR4CK G01NG B4CK D0WN T0 WH3R3 TH3 F4RMS L4Y, WH3R3 TH3 B4RNS ST0OD FULL OF H4Y, WH3R3 4 L0T OF P30PL3 H4D W4LK3D BY 1N TH3 N1GHT ON TH31R W4Y FR0M TH3 C1TY. L4T3R, 1N 4 M0NTH 0R S1X M0NTHS, 4ND C3RT41NLY N0T M0R3 TH4N 4 Y34R, H3 W0ULD W4LK 4L0NG H3R3 4G41N, 4L0N3, 4ND K33P R1GHT ON G01NG UNT1L H3 C4UGHT UP W1TH TH3 P30PL3.

BUT N0W TH3R3 W4S 4 L0NG M0RN1NG’S W4LK UNT1L N00N, 4ND 1F TH3 M3N W3R3 S1L3NT 1T W4S B3C4US3 TH3R3

W4S 3V3RYTH1NG T0 TH1NK 4B0UT 4ND MUCH T0 R3M3MB3R.
 P3RH4PS L4T3R 1N TH3 M0RN1NG, WH3N TH3 SUN W4S UP 4ND
 H4D W4RM3D TH3M, TH3Y W0ULD B3G1N T0 T4LK, 0R JUST
 S4Y TH3 TH1NGS TH3Y R3M3MB3R3D, T0 B3 SUR3 TH3Y W3R3
 TH3R3, T0 B3 4BS0LUT3LY C3RT41N TH4T TH1NGS W3R3 S4F3
 1N TH3M. M0NT4G F3LT TH3 SL0W ST1R 0F W0RDS, TH3 SL0W
 S1MM3R. 4ND WH3N 1T C4M3 T0 H1S TURN, WH4T C0ULD H3
 S4Y, WH4T C0ULD H3 0FF3R 0N 4 D4Y L1K3 TH1S, T0 M4K3
 TH3 TR1P 4 L1TTL3 34S13R? T0 3V3RYTH1NG TH3R3 1S 4
 S34S0N. Y3S. 4 T1M3 T0 BR34K D0WN, 4ND 4 T1M3 T0 BU1LD
 UP. Y3S. 4 T1M3 T0 K33P S1L3NC3 4ND 4 T1M3 T0 SP34K.
 Y3S, 4LL TH4T. BUT WH4T 3LS3. WH4T 3LS3? S0M3TH1NG,
 S0M3TH1NG. . .

4ND 0N 31TH3R S1D3 0F TH3 R1V3R W4S TH3R3 4 TR33
 0F L1F3, WH1CH B4R3 TW3LV3 M4NN3R 0F FRUITS, 4ND
 Y1LD3D H3R FRUIT 3V3RY M0NTH; 4ND TH3 L34V3S 0F TH3
 TR33 W3R3 F0R TH3 H34L1NG 0F TH3 N4T10NS.

Y3S, TH0UGHT M0NT4G, TH4T'S TH3 0N3 1'LL S4V3 F0R
 N00N. F0R N00N. . .

WH3N W3 R34CH TH3 C1TY.

BLIND CARBON COPY

This project consists of experimental design hacks to reflect and circumvent intellectual property restrictions. *Fahrenheit 451*, a novel by Ray Bradbury, is presented via a web interface and also in print form (print on demand). Several filters offered to users are in place in order to reflect intellectual property restrictions or allowed practices, such as Fair Use. These filters offer a means to circumvent these restrictions by transforming the content. The reader can choose the filter through which s/he wants to “view” the text, each filter being more or less legal.

- Mix of accessibility and inaccessibility.
- Push uselessness to its maximum.
- Make content inaccessible.

RAY BRADBURY'S *FAHRENHEIT 451*

I chose to work with *Fahrenheit 451* because it has several connections to my thesis topic, social accessibility.

Bradbury's novel is best-known for its criticism of state-sponsored censorship, somewhat contrary to the author's claim that this was not his main purpose, it stands in short for a critique of mass media's effects on literature and literacy. Censorship is a practice of making content inaccessible in order to control potential readers social and cultural development, whether it be parents filtering porn or violent images for their kids or governments filtering critical content for their society.

In the novel, Captain Beatty teaches the main character why books are forbidden. According to him, books were not used anymore because mass media took over them, then books were forbidden by the government probably to have a better control on people (although in Soviet Union, the government also controlled book production and reproduction). It is another example, though fictitious, of how a common practice, or non practice, influences the Law.

Books being ignored, and then forbidden, affects education. Beatty recalls: “School is shortened, discipline relaxed, philosophies, histories, languages dropped, English and spelling gradually neglected, finally almost completely ignored. Life is immediate, the job counts, pleasure lies all about after work. Why learn anything save pressing buttons, pulling switches, fitting nuts and bolts?” There is a real danger for education and personal development in restricting access to content with laws. Although we are discussing a fictional text, the French *DADVSI* law is real — one that is hopefully never applied, however this doesn’t reduce its potential danger. Bradbury’s Beatty frames the connection with mass media as potentially dumbing, “[a]nd because they had mass, they became simpler.” Perhaps the censorship modeled by *Fahrenheit 451* has become a reference in social dialogue, much the same way the term “Big Brother”, adapted from Orwell’s *1984*, operates outside it’s original context. Intellectual property law, as I discuss in my thesis, are there to protect the right-owners wealth, which now means the record labels and publishers and not necessarily the authors, besides these powerful companies have a major influence on the same laws which govern how property is conceived and the rights (or lack thereof) that are assigned to the general public. One particular example of this is the recent case against the founders of the Pirate Bay, where the judge who sentenced them was a member of the same copyright protection organizations as several of the main entertainment industry represented in the case. What is perhaps different in current Western societies compared to the hypothetical *Fahrenheit 451*, is that state-sponsored inaccessibility is generally governed by economics on top of censorious ideology.

FEATURED FILTER: L33T

The “L33T” filter translates the text into leet or L33T alphabet, replacing letters of the regular latin alphabet by resembling ASCII characters. The text remains – somehow – readable, but its essence, its bits are completely different.

