

Reluctantly  
betrothed  
to  
stan

by  
terence sellers

You seemed so interested, dear, when I told you that I once lived in a church -

“Yes - a ‘deconsecrated’ one, if you will”, and I hooked two fingers in the air ironically-

“As if a blessing could be erased.”

“This church of St. Ann’s is in a little town in New Mexico that shall remain nameless ... it had been built in pioneer times, to serve the worship of a townful of coal-miners and their families. The settler-priests expropriated the site, long venerated by the local Indians - where hieroglyphics on the rock indicated a flowing underground stream - so the Christians ‘plonked’ their square box of a church atop that holy, rocky outcrop of the cliff.

“When the mines were closed down, this church of St. Ann suffered a long abandonment, going into disrepair... a flock of hippies moving in during the seventies neither helped the falling plaster. But by 1978, it began to rise into relatively good times - serving as a Montessori school, a studio of dance, at last becoming a waystation for yoga-masters - but the price the structure paid for this renewal in use was - deconsecration.”

(You wonder, my love, why I don’t fall for such a rite of banal magic? For the same reason that I cannot disbelieve in this love of ours -

There are just some things that cannot die.)

“Beginning in the year 1986 I came back to New Mexico, on considering I would like to buy some property. The great beauty of the place I had never forgotten, having lived here as a student.

“And it was through my beloved friend Carl that I was introduced to the present owner of that infamous church - one Stefan Lowely, a thoroughly pernicious creature, as it turned out - a man altogether quite deserving of the curse the ‘deconsecrated’ suffers from.”

(I will explain to you, my own, who this man Carl was to me. It was an unusual Love - wrought from the cool heart of a dying man. It led me to this stony desert - whose arid, intellectual beauty held me here, with him. And it is his memory, I fear, that has kept me here...

For to love Carl was at that time my Highest Act of Magic! In the Holy Cause of Art, under which I still labour... and not lately in vain, thanks to thine eyes... I am sorry, yes I will go on, I know how Hermes-like you are, how swift and impatient...)

“So I began to live in that church during the summer of 1988 - the same year that a generous collector purchased for Carl another house in that town. A minimal sum was paid for the old haunted mining-offices - where it was rumoured 35 miners lay buried beneath the parlour, after the cave-in of 1910. It was a huge, ramshackle structure, where Carl enjoyed an enormous painting studio. We soon affectionately dubbed this wreck ‘The Hell Hotel’.

“I had bought my property, was set on building a house... I was thirty-five years of age, prosperous, free, and my beloved was himself as well-determined to have a new life in the country. We would devote ourselves to Art, and in the times between would enjoy one another’s inestimable company.”

(I admit I was very much in love... was certain I would never again... don’t look at me like that, Hermes! Forgive me for ever having loved another... and I did not, until I set eyes upon you, adorable - )

(... hmmm ...you are the distracting interlocutor. But let me go on, I shall, to win in your eyes the accolade of ‘good storyteller’... if nothing else today.)

“It’s just that what makes a good story, dearest, is in truth for me a remembrance very painful. I was then of the happiest disposition - but Fated, in one year’s time, to be crushed by horror, devastated in soul, the bitterness nearly trampling out that glorious year I spent with him, when I could see him every day...

“I shall begin again, with the most awful of my betrayers.

“This man, Stefan Lowely, began as my friend - acceding to me many favours. He helped me find places to stay - usually one of his numerous properties - went with me to buy a car, and even taught me to drive (admittedly by a verbally humiliating method, which I however used to good purpose.)

“He seemed thrilled that someone interesting, a writer and artist, was coming into his sphere, which was, I see now, rather uninteresting. He went out of his way to aid me, in fact, and I was very grateful.

“He wanted to be a writer, but said he had not worked in years .... and I imagined, and for quite a while, that he approached an equality with me as an artist. But I was naive, for Lowely was no artist, but one of the dread Wannabes.

“From this man did I learn the dismal separative lesson - that no artist can long live in the company of ordinary humanity, without insisting upon the essential differences between himself and the Masses! Which are?

“A heightened Sensitivity, close to Mediumship...imperviousness to conventional morality ...a tendency to Excess, in the cause of Knowledge ... complete submission to Symbol... (I need not go on...for you quite understand, my genius.) To lower oneself in pretending at Equality - which was not, in this case, a proper Ideal - as I did with this infernal, jealous creature - is to render oneself up for denigration, even attack. And if one is unlucky enough to remain too long in their jealous reprobation, one will be eventually destroyed.”

(This is one more reason why I love you so, my Hermes - you are a very Genius, like you there is no-one. Freely I can adore your distinction - as I know you render up to me the same incense.)

“Before I ever haunted the precincts of that church, I stayed, as Stefan’s guest, in a remote location in the northernmost part of the state - near where I live now (my love, too far from thee!) There I found a holy, perfect solitude, most conducive to artistic production. My dear Carl and I on one occasion remained there in perfect communion for five days - writing, drawing - and doing ‘magicky stuff’, as he liked to term it.

“But one time there, when I was alone, I received from Stefan a kind of warning which I would have done well to heed.

“The three-week Sabbatical I had granted myself was up; and in that short amount of time, thanks to solitude, I had reworked over five hundred pages of an incipient novel. Stefan had come to fetch me down from the mesa-house, where I had stayed without a car, twelve miles from human habitation of any kind. We would laugh about my trusting adherence to the ‘cargo cult’; that I thus believed he would come each week with provisions. I grant that he treated me very well - for a time. But his wretched little selfish soul had to come to the fore in the end.

“I was so happy and excited about my accomplishment, that I showed him the imposing bulk of the manuscript. I did not immediately understand - I thought he would have to be as delighted as I, at the realization of the Artistic Process - but the sight of this manuscript rendered him utterly furious. For he was just a Wannabe, full of excuses - for which I have never had any use!

“So I stood before this ‘friend’, who remained unalteringly in livid state, cold and speechless, staring at me with perfect hate.

“Because I had realized what his house was meant for! Used the solitude, for good purpose - and thus to his mind had subverted HIS would-be power there. Because I had able to be creative, he was now ‘shut out’... and I guess he was right, poor idiot! Because he’s never written a thing ... whatever the puny Wannabe mind can dream up to avoid the Discipline! (Beware of them oh my love, beware the flattering parasite!)

“Had I made a serious error? Perhaps not - but as an Artist I should have taken a powder right then - for Stefan was a stone-cold Wannabe and as dangerous as ever that race can be.

“But he couldn’t completely reject me - yet. We had friends in common. I had a certain ornamental value ... so he kept me hypocritically in his company. What seemed a friendship continued.

“When Carl moved permanently to that town out of Hell - wafting in on a scandal of some proportion - we two New York ex-patriates prepared to settle down to Work, clueless as to the mayhem our Presences evoked.

“Yes, two New York artists ... and Satanists?

“For it seemed we were viewed by some in the town with that kind of horror. Certainly both of us were guilty of somewhat playing up our decadent roles. Carl loved embodying the glowering ‘Beast’, made jokes about ‘his boys’, and of course, as per our identity as artists, we at all times wore black - if not Full Black.

“When the Beast’s consort, the Scarlet Woman (yours truly) moved into the Church ... well every crank in town had their synapses light up. Demonology!

“Meanwhile Carl joked in the General Store. ‘She’s just flown into town - on her broom.’ The paradigm was complete.”

(Later we would discover that certain specious occultists in the town measured the angles between the church, his Hell Hotel, and that of another of our friends who moved in, briefly, from New York. The angles of this supposed figure created for the delectation of their superstition a ‘Triangle of Death’.)

“These few despisers were only one coterie in a town made up of half-wits, hicks, idiot-morons, incest-degenerates, and chronic drug-abusers (we are talking about twenty years spent on amphetamines, yes such was the fate of some of those old hippies!) In short, a town full of crackpots. You name it, there the dregs had settled. At the time I had no idea how truly awful humanity could be.

“But Carl actually loved them all, despite their desuetude. For here was a REAL society of outcasts! As a Traveller in High Dregdom, he felt rather fatherly towards them. But dregs will be dregs - that is, ignorant, jealous and irredeemable. Carl tried to hire a few of them as maids - one stayed on as a cook of sorts - and all who came to know him soon loved him - even if it was only for his role as former Heroin-Degenerate turned Visionary...

“But, case in point - one of these women perused his library, and therein discovered, and reported to the world, that he read mostly books on Magick - especially remarking on the plethora of Aleister Crowley texts. Meanwhile, I had set up my own altar, where the Christian one had been wont to stand.” (And I admit I was engaged steadily in working a love-magic ... which did not fail me, despite my subsequent loss...)

“I’d really rather not descend to the severe darkness characterizing that town’s collective mentality. Malign intent was being directed towards us... perhaps I sound perfectly crazy ... but I

think I only need say that a melange of ill-studied ideas concerning things occult; conjoined to a fantasy of Great Magery; coupled to amphetamine abuse, all concatenated to the level of violence.

“And for a time we diverted that force. We looked it in the eye and snorted. I suppose we even loved the Battle - because we understood what it really meant - that these folk perceived, and believed in our Power. Which was real! It just had not much to do with them.

“We inhabited a real fantasy - as free beings, allowed everything, creative, surviving! - which looked to the folk as a thing Demonically Inspired. Through the lens of their intimidated fear, our Symbology - which was, and is, Black - was thus interpreted as Evil...

“But we were rarely inspired by Malice.

“Both Carl and I, each in our own way, became a focus for psychic violence. He was branded Pederast, whilst I was Witchy Whore. And I have to admit that our strolling down Main Street every afternoon, regaled in Black and what jewels we had left, sunglasses firmly affixed - usually boisterous, snorting in derision, or whining - probably did send mothers scurrying for their children.

“But we were innocent, really. With his little terrier Scruffie scuttling along beside, we each evening made a circuit round the town. For Carl had this mania for ‘patrolling’, as I do - though I call it ‘Making the Marquisate’ - which is, I admit, a form of Magick Circle.

(Let me explain a bit, beloved - when you own such celestial property as is in New Mexico, one develops a certain tendency to Grandeur. I believed I had returned to my proper Estate - that of ‘The Marquesa’ - a Marquisate being originally a martial and aristocratic function, of holding secure the borders of the Realm. Which I hold still against the outside world - however tenuously.)

“I had no actual idea of the whispers against us... or rather, I did not care, because I was most royally in love. Carl was my focus and source of strength - all things around him were brilliant with that real Light - joyousness was in every sight and sound - because I could spend each day with him - for a while.

“In converse deep, prolonged and complex - in the many reminiscences we shared of our life in New York - in constructing elaborate High Teas - in trawling the malls - in speeding over dirt roads, and trying the hump of Devil’s Throne - all those things that make up a real life, as we know it -”

(Again I regret to mention, my love, that anyone enlivened my heart before Thee. I hope I am not making a serious error...invoking the curse of Excess Knowledge. I cannot blame your averted face...but you did ask for the story, love, so hear it, to the end - judge my guilt then ...and understand I am that same Lady, who can love passionately -)

“Yes I was so happy I could not have possibly imagined - that even Love and perfect Happiness

could not protect him from...

“Why did they hate us so? Who were, in the end, most awfully vulnerable?”

“Didn’t they see we barely considered them?”

“Perhaps that’s what they couldn’t stand.

“Meanwhile we inhabited in all blitheness the ‘Triangle of Death’ - which had been bestowed upon us by Jeffrey, head ‘Magus’ of the Dragon-Crystal-Lair Headshop. The local folk repeated this ‘finding’, diabolicizing our only rare friendship.

“Maybe the town’s terrible water was partly to blame for such insanity. I didn’t mention the water? Yes - adding to the satanic zeitgeist - the water stank so vilely of sulphur (beloved element of Beelzebub) that one could barely stomach a bath. As well, from time to time, gushers of liquid black coal-dust further polluted the faucets. No doubt some of the worst scavenging dirt-hippies had been reduced to drinking it - further inundating their brains with poisonous confection.

“I had to return to New York for a time to attend to my business. While I was gone, Carl used my car, though he kept it parked in front of the church. He had to drive to town one morning to the doctor’s ... and arrived to find that not one, but two of my tires had been deliberately slashed.

“When he exclaimed in the General Store over this debacle, he was taken aside by someone relatively friendly and told, ‘It would be better - if you weren’t seen talking to any of the children in this town.’ Carl called me in New York in hysterics - we were both appalled. Could it be real - did they really believe we were Evil?”

“What if a child went missing - would they burn us out?”

“But anyway Carl could cackle, ‘They’ll come for YOU first - because of the Church... they’ll drag you out by your long, red hair, pour gazzoline over your long, white body... and throw the match.’ I really could barely laugh. But he drawled on in his inimitable way,

‘Then, when they come for me, I’ll shoot ‘em all down on sight.’

“I asked him if he wouldn’t stay just one night with me, when I returned - ‘Just in case the maniacs are laying for me!’ But being always very properly the homosexual gentleman, he had to refuse.

‘I’ll know if they’re comin’ for ye. Hurry on home now - your throne’s bein’ kept dusted!’

“I knew he would protect me... and really, what did I have to be afraid of?”

“But there was more than just venomous gossip flying about. Carl became convinced that he

was the object of an actual psychic attack, based on electrical energy. There were a series of freak accidents: a near-miss with electrocution, when a live wire fell out of the ceiling into a bath he was about to get into. A log rolled out of the fireplace, and set flammable paint materials ablaze... yes, all seemingly able to be explained, but to his always negatively suggestible brain, these occurrences proved ....

‘What?’

‘Someone wants us dead.’

“Somehow I could not feel he was exaggerating.

“When I returned to town I made what palliative orisons I knew, to cleanse the atmosphere around us. Carl even stopped wearing Black. That, however, I would not concede.

“One afternoon I went shopping at the General Store. I could not help but notice how the folk stopped talking and watched me, as I walked through the place. I took my items to the cashier, who added them up, with tax - to a total of \$6.66.

“The cashieress looked me right in the face. I avoided her gaze, giving a great sigh. Tedious fantasy! I counted out exact change and slid it across the counter. There were now a few spectators... the woman picked up all the change, except for one penny.

‘Keep it.’

“I do love to tease ... I suppose I just cannot be cowed ... perversely I pushed it back at her -

‘That’s okay.’

“She stared at me - I stared in her eyes, an irrepressible laugh on my lips. She shoved the penny back -

‘Take it!’

“There was that sick urgency in her voice that even now makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck.

“I turned and started walking out of the store.

‘TAKE IT!’ she screamed and threw the penny violently. I kept going as if I hadn’t heard.

“Carl and I laughed about it - but it was not funny.

“The electrically-based phenomenon began to effect me as well. Metaphor for hatred and fear, fire seemingly out of control - as when I drew into the vacuum-cleaner an errant spark, causing the machine to catch fire and be destroyed. (Further endearing me to Stefan, whose

machine it was.)

“Another electrically-based phenomenon began to plague us. On a near-daily basis, the telephone service in either one or the other of our dwellings would go out. He was forever coming to my house to use the phone, and I in turn once had to trek over quite late... After numerous inquiries, we discerned that only OUR phones were going out. We especially had trouble, in the middle of the afternoon, trying to call one another.

“Carl was convinced it was the Work of the local evil shaman, who, it was rumored, had been enlisted by the speed-freak occultists of the Crystal-Dragon-Lair to torment us. Indeed, Carl lost a commission when a client, in nearby Santa Fe for the day, was unable to get through on the ‘phone to make an appointment.

“Who else could have been using the astral vulnerability of the telephone lines to interfere with our lives, but some Adeptus Major...?”

(I see you looking at me skeptically, dear. Well I must explain - you see, if the telephone-lines hadn't been buried, Carl and I might have easily walked along them - at midnight of course - to pick off the interfering windigos, as the Indians call those evil thought-forms sent on the wind. But yes of course we called the phone company, it was our only outlet of dissent, to burn up their wires with the most baroque threats...

But this had nothing to do with the telephone company.)

“Then one night, while we were at the movies, someone broke into the Hell Hotel. Not that that was any feat. The old house was a collection of broken window-frames, unkempt door-jambs... there was even a tunnel dug from the street, to a trap-door beneath his studio-floor. But we found the front door wide open, and his silver-headed cane missing. Nothing... except a little statue of the Virgin Mary had been left in a corner of his room...

“And then they broke into the church.

“After spending the afternoon with Carl, observing him paint, and making him my captive audience as I dissected Proust...I got home to see the door of the church wide open. I raced back to Carl, and together we returned to proceed investigations ...

“The gun was still there - no-one had gone into my bedroom. The altar was disarranged, but only slightly so. As far as I could immediately tell, nothing had been taken. Then Carl picked up a book from the cocktail table -

“This isn't yours, I think.’

“It was a dirty old well-thumbed copy of Crowley's ‘Magick in Theory and Practice’. We both looked in the direction of the Dragon-Crystal-Lair, ‘Jeffrey!’

“The next day, a Lady friend of mine came to call. Bolstered by her innocence, I asked her if she

would care to accompany me, to do some gift-shopping at the Dragon-Crystal-Lair. We went arm and arm into Jeffrey's little domain, this 'head-shop' that sold the usual incense, pretty rocks, amulets and related snake-oileries.

"Jeffrey's eyes bugged out when he saw us come in... because his weakness was for a blonde young Lady. So while he was dazzled, I whipped out the book that he had left in my house.

'Is This Yours?' Right upside his head... making him leap back a good foot.

He stared at me, horrified. Oh HOW in the world had I figured it out? It HAD to have been by some supernatural means! When it was only the simplest of deductions... oh why is it that Magick is so often indulged in by the most fatuous minds?

'No it's not.'

"I stared at him. What an idiot! He was worse than I thought.

"He counterplayed, 'You know, that's not a cool book. Have you read it?'

'Have you?' I slammed it down on the counter.

"By now my Lady-friend understood that something odd was up. I turned to her, 'Find anything you'd like?' We piddled about the shop without buying anything, then started to leave -

'Your book -' Jeffrey indicated it on the counter.

'Oh - it's NOT a 'cool book' - would YOU mind throwing it away for me?' I looked him in the eye -

'Now, can you IMAGINE? SOMEBODY broke into the Church - and LEFT it there!'

"His mouth fell open, he looked nervous and crazy... So then I took pity on him, and asked him to show me his horse - which was very big and very wild. Of course he offered to saddle it up for me, because the thing could easily kill me - so I had to graciously decline.

"Too early one morning, Carl telephoned me in his usual hysterical state. Yes - there had been another attack!

"Aman known as Bruce, one of the town's more notable degenerates - a former physicist, mind you, out of the Los Alamos Laboratory - had leapt stark naked into Carl's studio - to hail Carl as -

'DARK BROTHER! I COME TO DO BATTLE !!!' swinging before his wretched scrawny nudity a home-made scepter - topped with a sharp-edged crystal.

'And you know crystals are ELECTRO-magnetic!' Carl shrieked, 'He's still in there, talking to

my paintings!’

“Over the line I could hear the schizophrenic chanting some dirge of doom - ‘Heya, hoya, heya hoya hey! DARK BROTHER!’

‘He’s having a psychotic break as we speak! Call the Sheriff!’ he yelled, and the line went dead.

“I knew the Sheriff probably would, as per usual, pretend he couldn’t find the house, breeze through town, and get out as fast as he possibly could. But fortunately for my friend, the manic ran off to leap through another townspeople’s window - before being rounded up and medicated by his long-suffering wife.

“As if this weren’t bad ENOUGH, that very afternoon, when he and I went to peruse some Art in one of the town’s little artsy-craftsy shoppes - for the naive work often amused Carl - imagine our shock when we saw that three of the paintings displayed were rough, ill-made COPIES of three canvasses currently in his studio!

“And which of the busy little folk of the town had taken it upon themselves to copy his Work?

“Bruce - his ‘White Brother’ - the psychotic physicist! There was the Tree of Life, which Bruce had once discussed with Carl ... there the twelve-pointed star, the sign of the Quintessence - and too the figure swathed in a helix -

“The creep even used the same palette!

“This was close to being the very last straw for Carl...he began to talk about moving back to New York...but then we hadn’t had the party yet.

“Don’t ask me WHY we imagined we could get away clean in having a Halloween Party in the church of St. Ann! To this day I don’t understand our rebelliousness - how we even LOVED whipping up those idiots into a frenzy of expectation - that they might actually get to witness something ‘Satanic’! We couldn’t let them down, could we?

“Our exhibitionistic, over-the-top, I-don’t-give-a-fuck behaviour on that fabled evening PROVED we didn’t even CARE anymore if they thought we were Satanists! We would put them on, display ourselves before the eyes of the entire town - whom Carl HAD taken care to invite!

“To crank up the metaphoric mind-fuck to even more ridiculous heights, Carl dressed as the Beast Himself - Crowley, the Prince of Darkness, whilst I donned the eighteenth-century costume of a certain gentleman I favoured - of course the Marquis de Sade.

“Friends from New York came to stay - one beautiful Lady Sylvia, of my association, arrived to terrorize all with her otherworldly charms. (Very Other - another Genius lost to the virus.) Our cultural superiority, our evident grandeur, our appalling aplomb, and the admittedly malign sophistication of our actions set off venom-alarums amongst the town idiots - that is, in

everybody.

“Two days before the party, I was moving things around on the altar-head - wisely putting certain books away, wrapping up and hiding favoured amulets and ikons - when a sudden movement to my right made me look up -

“The enormous crucifix that usually hung some ten feet above the altar was hurtling full speed right at me! One second’s less attention and I would have been crushed by its ten-foot solid pine arms -

“I’ve always had good reflexes.

“Despite my asking her not to, Sylvia related this adventure to the Company that evening...one of whom then unwisely told the tale of my escape, ‘from the attack of Jesus’, in all the wrong places in town - that is, anywhere. Unfazed by the further warnings of Carl (whom all tended to view as histrionic) they gigglingly repeated the story... so that in its final version I had apparently thrust the cross from me, and by infernal means.

“By Halloween night, attendant upon other parties, gallery openings, dinners in town... I had worn my costume for nigh on four days. A long black tail-coat of leather, black lace cravat and cuffs, black knee-pants, white stockings, with my hair pulled back, greased and powdered - I so well-inhabited my role as Marquis/Marquesa, I was utterly loathe to go back to rude modernity!

“And so the church was prepared by Sylvia and I, with drapings of black, numerous candles, and artificial cobwebs. We purchased new, enormous speakers, expensive alcohol, and loads of marijuana. Sylvia was herself dressed as The Queen of Darkness - in a transparent black gown that made the males’ jaws drop, and sent the granola lesbians into ecstatic swivets...

“Wasted, elated, twisted, jaded, we leapt and partied through the night. Many were hallucinating on mushrooms ...and between falling out a window into the shrubbery, dancing vehemently up and down the old aisles, and tying up two of Sylvia’s willing lesbians in the basement, I was quite the boisterous host. I didn’t really notice who might have been observing me work at my ‘trade’ - of Dominatrix, that is to say - but I might have been a bit more circumspect. Especially as one lesbian, forever after and to this day, swears that I hypnotized her to do awful things. (As such it could not have been that awful, my love, as I have absolutely no memory of her or hers...)

“And things were not further aided by Carl’s sudden inspiration (being edified no doubt by the demonstration of my talent) that I should tie up his boyfriend Rossy. But he didn’t want anyone to watch. Thus he, I and the boy descended to the basement, and locked the door behind us.

“To me, that moment was the Reconsecration of the church! For in that basement, the Rites of Power in fervent Exchange transsubstantiated to a thing Holy...

“So I gratified then my Love - and with painstaking care.

“Rossy was too inebriated to really know what was happening to him... not that that mattered. I kept my eyes upon my Beloved's, as I worked in his Honour - and so by means of the Eyes received the most intense Sensation.

“Even dead drunk I can weave a pretty web.

“Folk began to bang on the door upstairs... so, with a nod from Carl, I left the two alone, ascending to stave off the unruly and curious.

“But it was too late. Certain of our 'guests' were whispering, nervously affected by the tailspin of our Decadence. We had been vauntingly exhibitionistic ... just very So-What... which now made them loathe us ever more extravagantly.

“What had possessed Carl, in some moment of unkempt conviviality (and why did I allow him?) to invite the entire town to our distinguished soiree? Not that they all came, most being too affrighted for the eyes of their spawn... we did have the denizens of the local bar - just more than half the town - stomping in on the look-out for free alcohol.

“Our Company was not enhanced by that gang of ruffians, who with feet on the furniture and loud guffaws drained every last bottle of every last drop. So there I stood in the Grand Salon (so to speak) in full aristocratic regalia - forced to face down these loathesome 'guests', whilst Carl unfetteredly enjoyed his boy in the 'dungeon' below.

(On my part, my love, I know I was swept up in the Eighteenth so utterly ... deeply identified with that particular Superior Aplomb... so insufferable to the Uninitiate! Exercising that Mind that might have an unruly peasant whipped to death - or that would shoot the nasty dog that snaps - not the most highfaluten use of Grandeur, but hadn't I only dregs as minions that night?

I admit our prideful Exhibition was Grandiosity in error. But - can you blame me for giving myself completely to the challenge? To act as I must - as my temperament insists - As I Will?

You follow me in this - don't you, my own?

Justice WAS sweet and swift in the Eighteenth. But then again, if the townfolk had decided there and then to hang ME, as the louts have been modernly wont to do - well, I suppose I'd be immortal by now.)

“I stood there, filled with disgust - and it came to my Visionary Eye - that it would have been this very Mob that would have destroyed Us in the Eighteenth! At least now they were grown more indolent and sure of themselves - and so more open to becoming Our Victims - but the only violence I felt capable of was a complete Contempt.

“I cursed my Esteemed Consort, in libertine bliss below, for forcing me to Host the idiot rabble...

“And it is strange to recall how I - as if I were actually in some danger - left the church and went out to ‘patrol’ the hill above. A moment of insecurity, resolved by ‘Making the Marquisate’ - that is, staking out my ‘rightful’ territory... I believed perhaps that I could thus secrete myself from their nasty gaze. Though no doubt my white-powdered head glowed in the gloom...

“From outdoors the music sounded out truly terrifyingly...through the peerless night, electric guitar in a tempest poured out of the Satanically-translated Church... forceful and triumphant as the stars blazing down.

“And I was in triumph as well - proud and happy in that pleasure of having done Service for my Beloved...however minute it was in his grander scheme of debauchery...”

(My own, you see how perfectly mad I can get - how deep into the Eighteenth I may go, in that imperious Submission - you may try me thus, my Hermes, put me to some Test of Thy Will!)

“But it was that Test I had passed with him that completely condemned us both.

“Hiding like that, crouching in the darkness, in alternating Panic and Ecstasy - I realized that we could never ‘Go Back’. Never be again innocent, or free, or start anything like a ‘New Life’. For we could not go against ourselves - or rather, against our Knowledge - however that condemned us to ever be the ‘depraved New Yorkers’ that we truly were.

“No... we would NOT be living amongst ‘the folk’...

“Yet still I could imagine my Remote Location, where the house would be set... imagined I could put all askance eyes behind me, shed triviality, work harder. To at last in all purity embrace that Isolation, so often wrongly railed against by the creative being - “

(Though with you now in my mind, Beloved, the Solitude wherefrom I write this account wears upon me dreadfully. I need some Genii such as Thee with me! Though I have worked well, and in thy Honour, I crave Thy Presence above Art!

... gentle Interlocutor, you say you would only be a distraction? My love I crave every Distraction of thy perfect Self.)

“It was going on towards three o’clock - the darkest of the night’s hours - I watched as people began to leave the Church. Still a few of the wastrels lingered on, and I was growing somewhat impatient when I noticed Carl emerge - with Rossy who was shrieking at the top of his lungs...

“Apparently the bondage had been a little too much for him.

“I dashed out from my hiding place... and when Rossy laid eyes on me, he ran away. Thus Carl stood there on the dirt road, looking at me with an ironic displeasure.

‘And what ARE you doing, scurrying around in the weeds out here - ?’

‘I tried to berate him, ‘Do you see what you left me with? What sort of guests are THOSE to entertain? Come back inside, help me get rid of them!’

‘Don’t worry. They’re going. There’s nothing left to drink,’ insisting then, ‘Come along now - accompany me home.’

“So to his house in silence we conveyed ourselves. He did not deign to complain of the Ritual we had wrought. (He had probably never before been able to secure his wild creature so well - and had taken full advantage, outraging Rossy...if sluts can be outraged.)

“Unfortunately this slut made loud complaint before the last of the ‘guests’. It was very like that fatal adventure of the Divine Marquis - with those wenches and the Spanish Fly. He neither had done anything out of HIS ordinary - except that the Publick heard of his Folly...

“Together we entered the Hell Hotel. Rossy was nowhere to be found. He conducted me to his room, and it was with a strange trepidation that I saw him lock the door. Then he turned to me with the most melancholy gaze...I went to embrace him, but he threw himself on his bed -

“Was he weeping? I could not see his face... Something had turned for him too - but unbeknownst to me, something more dire than whether or not to wear black leather, or red lipstick ...

“I stayed for about an hour, until it seemed he slept, then returned to the shambles of a church ...

“Both of us understood we could not live in Decadent Fantasy indefinitely. This Experiment, to ignore the brutal world, seemed to be a failure. Of course we would never anywhere belong, except in New York... but we didn’t want New York.

“I tried to carry on, however... forming the First Dimension into the Third. I often spoke to him of leaving that awful town. For when my house was built I imagined he could stay with me, in the Remote Location...

“For my happiness, as I had planned it, would not be complete without him. But he was not to be that One who would live with me in perfect dual solitude.”

(Please my love let me be melancholy for just a moment. You have no reason to be jealous. He and I never were - never came to be - and before this Refuge ever was constructed ...)

“Within a couple of days I received the phone-call from Stefan.

‘I DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU AND CARL THINK YOU’RE DOING, BUT I’VE GOTTEN QUITE A FEW PHONE CALLS ABOUT THAT PARTY ...’

'Stefan, would you please stop shouting...'

'YOU JUST WON'T UNDERSTAND, WILL YOU? YOU HAVEN'T LIVED HERE LONG ENOUGH ... YOU DON'T KNOW THESE PEOPLE!'

'Well what have they been saying?'

'THEY SAID YOU KILLED A CAT AS A SACRIFICE AND NAILED IT TO A CROSS, AND THEN CARL HAD SEX WITH ROSSY IN FRONT OF EVERYONE ON THE ALTAR!'

'Stefan, I wish you would defend us against this bullshit, nothing of the sort happened, do you think we are insane? As if I would hurt a cat?'

'DID YOU TIE DENISE UP IN THE BASEMENT AND PUT A SPELL ON HER?'

'Stefan, please!'

'WHY DID YOU HAVE TO PAINT THE CHOIR-LOFT PURPLE? I REALLY THINK YOU MIGHT BE A SATANIST! THE PEOPLE IN THE TOWN THINK YOU BOTH ARE, AND THEY'RE THREATENING TO BURN THE CHURCH DOWN!'

'Who? Who's threatened?'

'I DON'T KNOW, THE CALLS ARE ANONYMOUS, I DON'T KNOW WHO'S CALLING AND I DON'T CARE! YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE OUT!'

'I can't believe you won't defend Us! You're worse than any of them put together!'

"I realize now what real pleasure Stefan must have had - to be able to throw fuel on that fire - to understand I COULD actually be dragged by the hair, through the underbrush, into the arroyo, where the gasoline would flow - and Stefan at that point helping no doubt! To set me ablaze... God he must have really loved it!

"But things settled down - it seemed - when I told him I would be moving out by May. In defense, Carl and I decided to utterly loathe him, and plotted torments. That lent some small pleasure to our idle hours, and busied at least my hands."

(Two lizards, killed by my feral cat Tony, were tied down to a small weathered board and wrapt with threads of red, white and black. This creation, dried artistically in the sun, was then painted - and I understand that one afternoon, when Carl and I were elsewhere in town, someone tossed it into the cab of Stefan's parked truck.)

'I GUESS YOU TWO THINK YOU'RE PRETTY FUNNY! DON'T FUCKING FUCK WITH ME!'

'Stefan I haven't the faintest idea WHAT you're talking about! Why is it so bloody easy to scare you half to death?'

(Idiots, superstitious idiots, all of them! If only I HAD had the power to run them into Hell before their time!)

“Now Rossy had forgiven me, and being compelled by Carl to make a little money, he would come and tidy up the church a couple times a week. After a few complaints at his lackadaisical service, I came home one afternoon to see the place scrubbed and spotless. And more - being an aspiring interior decorator, and agreeing with me that the church was infested with tchotchkas, he had removed that swarm of cutesy crucifixes, little painted ikons, antique plaques with sayings on them, and had even deflated the horrible K.Haring rubber baby-dolls! I was thrilled. The place now attained to a certain austerity... certainly if I had stayed on, it would have been painted appropriately Black.

“But then I noticed that Stefan’s major Ikon (the focal point of his practice of Santeria), the Coconut of Ellegua, was missing from His Place on the altar step.

‘Rossy - what did you do with Ellegua?’

‘Huh?’           The child was clueless.

‘That Coconut, you know, covered in black wax ... with the cowrie shell face?’

‘Oh you know Carl always hated it! So I threw it away.’

“I stared at Rossy in horror - ‘You must never, NEVER tell Stefan what you’ve done! Now - where is the trash?’

“I retrieved the Orisha from the garbage-pail, washed him, made orisons, and put him in his favorite place Behind-The-Door. I continued to make all proper obeisances, to Rossy’s amusement and disbelief...he kept laughing and saying the thing was disgusting...

“But in a kind of panic I read through the story of Ellegua again. For I knew his venom of displeasure could be devastating! So I was relieved to note, in his history, that he had actually been thrown into the garbage by a King, who was jealous of another Orisha who wanted to marry his daughter! So it all made sense in a magicky kind of way.

“Again I don’t understand my perversity, what made me tell Stefan about it myself. I think I wanted to impress him with the synchronicity of the legend? So first I told the story of the Orisha, and his humiliating sojourn in the garbage. That seemed to amuse him... But when I told him how it had ACTUALLY manifested - that Rossy had thrown the Coconut in the garbage - the man went completely insane, screaming -

‘HE DID WHAT!?’

“He raced down from Santa Fe within the hour ... entered the church, and took in the altar I’d made Behind-The-Door. It didn’t matter to Stefan that I’d given Ellegua rum, cigars, and done

the orisons. He gathered up the Coconut, in that deadly cold and hateful way, and departed without saying a word to me.

“...though I breathed with a certain relief that his fury prevented him from noticing how the church had been stripped bare by our little ‘House of Rossy’ Interior Design.

“I knew then that he was a great Enemy - boring, ignorant and jealous - and he didn’t even seem to understand the Religion he professed to so revere!

“At last, Stefan received a letter - a letter that sent his paranoia careening off into outer space ... a paranoia, for which I and my doings became the locus, the ‘reason’ for all that was wrong in his tiny world.

“When I saw the note, I admit that I laughed... for all that was written on the page was:

ST. ANN

STAN

SATAN

“The church had formerly been St. Ann’s, which does sound alot like ‘Satan’. But what tickled me was - ‘Stan’. Stan! What an excellent code-name for the old Lord and Master! Now we could chat about Him anywhere, without making the hoi polloi freeze up in horror! Very convenient for We Satanists, who of course are always blandishing the Name upon Our lips... So it was from that date that I began to appeal to El Maestro Grande as simply - ‘STAN’.

“Now Stefan got crazier, threatening... I had to hire a lawyer - who did absolutely nothing. Carl tried to chastise Stefan, told him to leave me alone. But to Stefan that was only evidence of my infernal Powers...that somehow poor Carl was blinded by the Witch... who at this point was given to maniacally barking in the voice of ‘Stan’, as per that Voice in the film ‘The Exorcist’.

“Did I say there are some things that cannot die? Perhaps I am wrong...there was in that town a strong, uncanny force, dragging at us.. but never would I have imagined that he would succumb.

“As Xmas approached, the rumors and acts against us tapered off. Both Carl and I were becoming increasingly depressed...my diary of that time is full of references to self-immolation. We had no visitors planned... only had each other, it seemed.

“Carl’s intake of both alcohol and pot was growing abusive, chronic. If only I had known what was really the matter! His over-sensitive pride kept him Silent concerning the terrible Truth.

“Xmas Day found us lugubrious, swathed in Full Black, bored and growling at each other - our mood seemingly in concert with the Satanic point of view - that the birth of Christ was no god-

damned occasion for joy. We suffered one mild excitement - when a new Manifestation was heard walking up from the basement - a clear step, step, step in that mortally disturbed church. Pushing a chair up against the doorknob was exciting, if meaningless...

“Friends who did visit remarked on Carl’s strange new Indifference. One Lady said to me, ‘He seems like a man with a curse on him’ - and so had he - but I never would have imagined - that this Curse would be the general one, upon men of his kind - homosexual, promiscuous in the 70s - and infected with the virus of AIDS by the 80s.

“And now as it became known this Genius was ill, a new wave of whispering hatred tormented us. Smug assessments, sneering - that this was due punishment for a Satanic pederast.

“Thus did Ellegua close his Gate!

“So by May I had departed the infernal church, and went to live with Carl at the Hell Hotel... where I assumed the role of his caretaker. He remained mostly indoors through the summer... painting now and then in desultory fashion. But his Will to prosper was at an end.

“Meanwhile I worked like a madwoman, beginning the novel that would attempt to recreate his darkly glamorous life - a Task originally his idea - a Work he set for me - but as his Powers waned, my strength became an irritation to him, a focal point for his furious frustration -

‘And how would YOU feel if YOU were dying? And what if YOUR busy little artist-friend was painting, painting busily away ... portraits of YOU as YOU rotted away?’ That was one of the last things he ever said to me, at the Hell Hotel - we almost stopped speaking just before he left to go back to New York to die. But I accepted his violence, as I understood everything in life was to him intolerable.

“By October 1989 he collapsed into paralysis, and was hospitalized. He loathed the thought of dying within those walls, spoke often of the Gypsy tradition of being taken outside at the moment of Death ...

“On May 31st we received the news that he had breathed his last.”

(May 31st, 1990 - darling Hermes, I am appalled at myself - as I realize that in the course of this account - as I have been writing, over these few weeks - that the anniversary of his death came and went without my noticing it! And I admit I always observed that date religiously ...

Your request, my dearest Hermes, magically brought me to remember - and as well completely forget!

Again I apologise, my love. These are vain regrets...I am forgetting thy sensitive heart. Yes, we are coming to the end of this tale...)

“I lasted one more year in that stinking crevasse of a town, futilely attempting to get my Remote Location in order... beset by congenital degenerates and wayward ghosts... I suppose

you could say I fit in at last - I was a living corpse. So no-one cared if I lived or died? Neither did I.

“I returned to New York with a fantasy in mind that there, amongst his friends (some of whom I thought were mine), I might find some moral support. But - not at all. My bereavement was considered a kind of absurdity. Who was I, to love such as he?

“My sense of isolation became complete. All I wished for, and wanted to do was die. I prayed for Death - there I would go, and be with my Beloved.

“ ‘There’, though - where? There was a definite problem of Location ...Remote Location, indeed.

“I could posit, for certain, that Carl dwelt in my Mind. And so Mind must live, to make him continue to be -

“So I was not allowed to die.”

(And so my beloved, when anyone asks me of that time, a very wellspring ‘In Memoriam’ unstops... hence this verbiage, restless Hermes, which I fear has tired Thee.)

“Oh yes - the Refuge - it strangely created itself - the builders given carte blanche I was so mortally Indifferent - achieving its own Perfection, without my wanting it, or Willing... my one contribution being to wander the Marquisate, sniffing out the coziest spot to dig my own grave.”

(Well my own that is the end of the story, for the moment. I only wonder if ‘Life in a Church’ is something you’re still up for. You’d have to be a better Satanist than I. Not that I wouldn’t try again, to live in such Magnified Estate!

I am sorry about this lack of an exciting ending. No, nobody else died - oh - except that maid - the one who’d been so afraid of the library? My last year in that awful town, she wasted away - from liver disease, or something. Yes, SHE died. And there were some who attributed her death to me...but at that point I was pleased to let them think me so capable...

But if I had such Powers, it would have been me and ‘Stan’ against the whole wretched town, in revenge for...

But Hermes do not let me speak again of that old love - for I see a slight irritated wrinkle near those lovely eyes - those eyes whose gentle charm is such as has rescued Love from Death... and I would not displease Thee.)

FINI

Croix et Delice ...From Madame to Monsieur .... June 9,1998 ... At the Remote Location