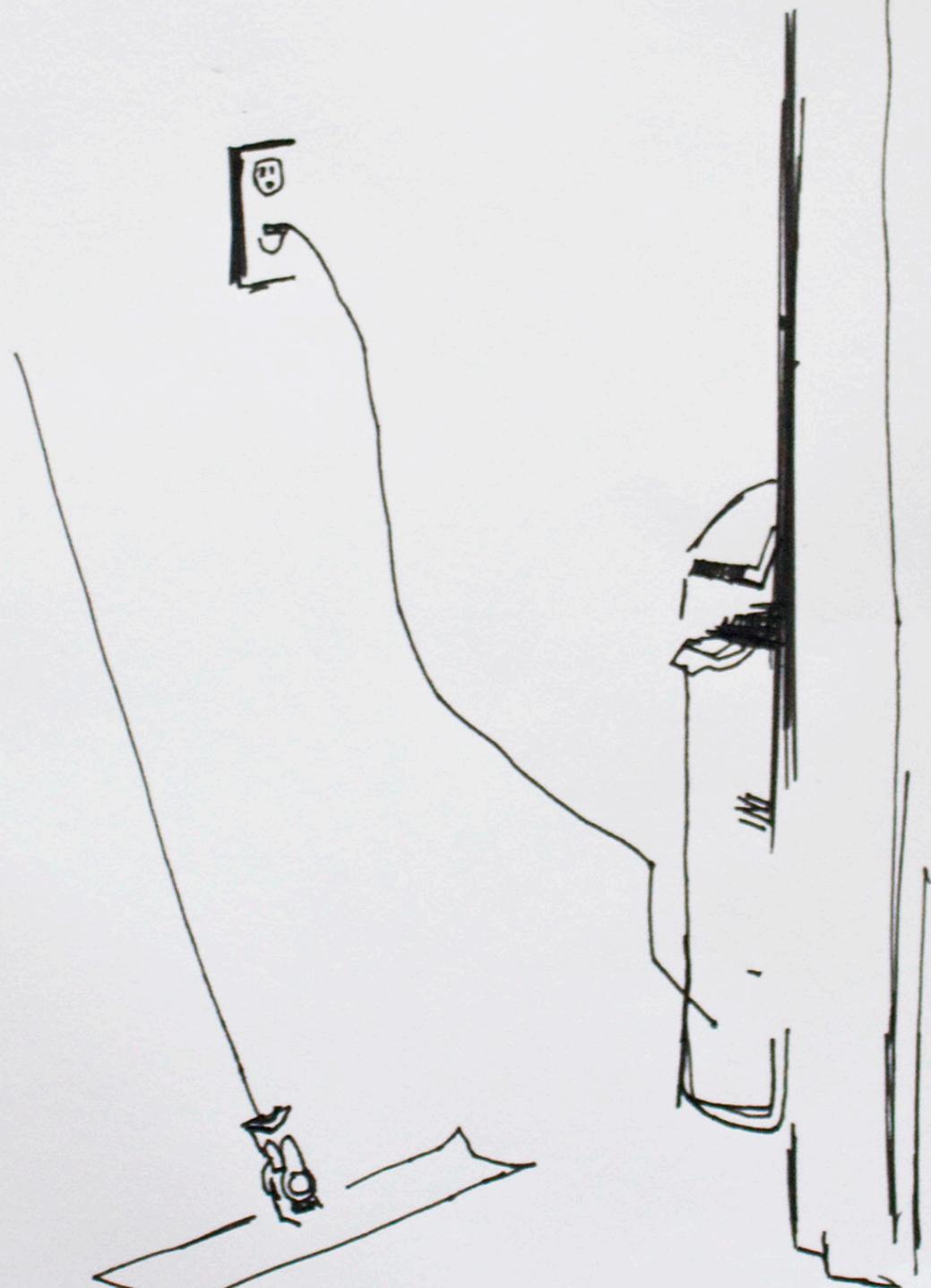


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MUSH/MUM III
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Some Mechanism

George Salis

On the third day her eyes feathered open and the glass on the ground, in her lids, made her see only the constituents of light. She scrambled up from the glittering void. Leaf upon leaf. Flash upon flash. She was a human born in a crow's nest, her own blood as amniotic fluid, now dried. She felt her shard-embedded face and began to squeeze the diamond-bits of glass like they were carbuncles. Sections of her flesh were missing, revealing the bright red muscle, anatomy in the open air. Her left arm, which she hadn't attempted to use until now, was broken backward, beyond the range of extension that her elbow provided, a useless anchor of skin and bone. With her functioning right arm, she collected the flakes of glass and put them in her shredded pocket. She remembered falling. Not down, but forward, in a manner fit for a tipped earth.

There was more glass amongst the leaves and she followed the trail while picking them up. Glass as breadcrumbs. After a while she stopped, stricken. A trail of ichor, metallic and pearlescent, mazed over the ground. It seared her eyes to look at it for more than a few seconds. Then, knowing the truth of her fear, she came upon an inclined tree that held the face of Him, or He the tree. Did this God sacrifice Himself for her? No. That gift had passed. The Crash Test: Frontal-impact. Crown of Thorns. Small Overlap. Crucifixion. Side-impact. Lance of Longinus. Moderate Overlap. Rock-hewn Tomb. Roll-over. Thereafter, she had accepted the resurrected form of Him. No, this wasn't sacrifice. She had committed deicide.

34 She leaned over and kissed the crumpled hood, dusting her lips with dirt. Her mangled arm tenderly touching the rim of the gaping bumper as in propitiation. The single unshattered bulb of God's eye glowed, jaundiced with displeasure, with compact wrath. She was a follower turned wayward. She had swerved from the highway into the left hand path of the woods. The highway was in the distance now, chanting. But she wasn't always like this. She had studied the Word. 1-9: *If you are wearing your seat belt properly adjusted and you are sitting upright and well back in your seat with both feet on the floor, your chances of being injured or killed in a collision and/or the severity of injury may be greatly reduced.* 1-51: *A cracked windshield should be replaced immediately by a qualified repair facility.* The Commandments: *Obey traffic signals. Stay in proper lane. Follow at a safe distance. Observe right-of-way.* She could recite the Book line by line. But obeisance does not follow from lucubration.

The sin of apostasy was at the core of her guilt now, her repentance. She dragged herself up the foliage-covered hill, between the trees, and witnessed, once more, religion as it was meant to be. Sinuous. Synchronous. Unswerving. Demoted to hitchhiker, she simply stared, mesmerized, until headlights were necessary to reveal the path. Low beam. High beam. She followed them with her fogged eyes. Those lights, traversing the dark highway, dual stars moving in sync with the paved planet. $V=S/T$. Three-factored God. With the passing of each reverberating deity she reflexively lifted her right hand to her face.

Consciously completing the gesture, she brushed a strand of hair into the cleft between skull and ear. Roar of the accelerator. Screech of the brakes. Unforgiving and unappeasable. The trust one holds for the passing vehicle is the most unfathomable act of faith. All it requires is a minute turn toward the light for one's world to be punished. Roadkill creatures, gore exposed and limb-twisted, are familiar with this. Evidence of uncreation. Not far off, she smelled it, a follower of this logic. Once a cat, now a rib-caged bowl of blood. She approached. Dark maggots and darker flies scrambled to make it anew. Putrefaction as thurible's sanctifying incense. She knelt, her left hand's knuckles monkey-like on the grass. Several vultures, the black-cloaked and hunch-backed priests of this dominion, nodded in her direction. With her left hand she peeled a portion of the racoon's dehaired flesh, dipped it in the hemoglobin wine and placed it upon her tongue. Eucharist prepared by the elastomer hands of God. Transubstantiation unneeded.

But it was futile. She had been inside God's love, the leather upholstery, the AM/FM tuner with CD receiver, the multitudinous light-emitting diodes of the dashboard, the refrigerant-fueled A/C. At 60-70-80 miles-per-hour the highway hums, the wind its breath, a constant and simultaneous inhalation and exhalation. The Holy Spirit. But she had disobeyed, polyester-webbed seat belt undone, and had been cast out. Through the urethane-sealed safety glass, she was reborn in shards yet damned by the breaking of the molecular bond.