



dM

Awful Revelation
A Testimony
[And The First Ache of Hunger]

What's terrifying
is not that I anticipated
an ogre,
resting in the space between the refrigerator and the wall,
it's that
it wasn't there
in the morning.

April 29

Dear Therese,

If ever before our nightly meetings I'd had the presentiment of this misunderstanding, I'd have cinched the mnemonic string so tightly around my wrist, that if I had even dared to commit such injury as this, my hands would've hardened blue before the very first dash. Those quick pen strokes to that virgin page. Careless.

If only we could have had the moment of our first hazarded glance contain us for several lifetimes. Even before the pocket-light meetings in the hollows of your backyard, when we were yet chaste of each other, and lying in the simple conveniences of our easy marriages; even before whispering through the logistics of ridding ourselves of our simple spouses; and even before conjoining each our children under one house. And certainly before that night I choked on your ribs, and the day after that I hastened through the writing of my last will.

But I resign myself to the understanding that life is a series. That no matter if we build on sand, that simply by the weight we bestow upon it by consequence, that it at last should compress to stone. Therese, we can yet build on this, together.

Yes, I do understand both your anger and your leaving upon seeing that I had so allotted such a meager portion to your son versus what is yet to be bequeathed to my daughter. And I apologize in echoes that it was so...unequal. It is only a figure counting the love for my child, my liege and my legacy; it was by no means intended to discount my love for yours.

But you by now know all this. You've heard as much through our telephone conversations. And, truly, the school boy hope for your return steepens with real anticipation by the softening of your voice.

The real purpose, then, of this letter, has less to do with my known desire for your homecoming, than for us, all together, to leave this home. I know, shocking I know -- the house that bore you, and the bosom of your growth, a home that twitted the follies of the rabble outside by holding you between its windows, as if framed for the taking, but as remote as art; innocence enameled by the opiate home. Yes, I know the stories well, how you hid in the dark of the pantry because Christmas came too soon to pass, how you looped price tags and labels about your stuffed animals and dolls to make them permissible in a high school girl's room, how you'd elude the lava in the back lot by balancing careful steps on the rock walls, and how one time you caught and crushed a rat snake in the rocks. Undeniably, the memories and nostalgia attending this house must hold you still -- and as fast as

when you were young. So very set and strong must your emotions be, that for me to convince you to leave this house -- for the good of us all -- I must oppose emotion with the cold, unblinking face of fact; that your sentiment for this house might be tucked away and tightly packed under the unyielding severity of a vile and optionless circumstance.

To that end, first a definition. And then an example. The way textbooks sing. Since I cannot now assume that in your life you've cared to learn about such a thing. *The definition* -- of an ogre, offered and contained by old tales so as not to alarm the food supply, is that of a most dreaded beast among the dire cast of the dark -- the very last period in the litany of the food chain -- and strong, inhumanly strong, such as we cannot possibly measure or even begin to realize until the very last meeting. And, of course, inversely proportional to its prodigious strength is its intelligence: the ogre is famously dumb, as dumb and as exquisitely simple as bared teeth. However, the greatest distinction, the quiddity of the ogre, is its appetite, as they are insatiable eaters who'll consume all creation if it cowers in sight, but favors us, humans, as much as there are humans crowding its grounds; and at least one source I've read clearly asserts that ogres assume the identity of their quarry upon consumption.

As for an example: our neighbor is one.

Though inept.

You'll remember Benny, that fat, funny kid in grade seven, on the day that had us catalogue all his jokes among all other flitting utterances that pass a day: quips, threats and promises -- *you'll remember Benny, Therese*, that hushed, fleshy kid who sliced his leg open to the core on field day.

He was sliding into second on a foul ball, and the vulgar metal rod that should have anchored the base, hidden from children enjoying field day, was left undone and ready. I'll never understand how the stake cut a perfect door in his shin. It would have seemed to me that three perpendicular cuts would have been necessary. But there it was, a thick waffle of nearly unmolested flesh, with nary a spit of crimson, the starring blood kept from us by the machination of perfect cuts and stubborn skin; but, to our horror, as he ran back to us seemingly dumb to both the wound and the game, we could see the gray bone glowing intermittently between the flapping, in step with his stride. I remember some wit assured him it was just a scrape, as if looking down to see the bared bone and the flapping door of skin would, in an awful flash, make him cognizant of the pith of himself and have him break down his whole being into cell blocks and carbon compounds.

You'll remember Benny's flesh.

Yet, Therese, before my harassed eyes, I've seen such a thing again.

While sweeping leaves into the road, Miss Dooley, the recluse in the duplex three doors down, had rushed out before me from Mr. Delorm's house. Delorm, you know, lives in the beige stoop with the small shrubbery. He is -- or he was -- the mousy English fellow whose eyes occupy the lower half of his face, with lady's legs -- you know, the tart that lets the crows and robins rip through his trash bags and spread his magazines and other filth nearly down to our plot. He once grew a spine to walk over and solicit us for a subscription to some petty literary journal that is his job to edit.

She didn't run, she walked cutting across the lawns directly before me. Her gown -- it was morning, the leaves already aching under the hard eye of the day afoot -- was torn where her shoulder should have been. She had Benny's face -- vapid, unmolested, carefree, but with a simple determination in her step as one who's fallen hard suddenly leaps up to attest to herself that, yes, all will be, and all is, right. She passed me close enough to gape, which I did obscenely, which anyone would do with such a breached body before them, perhaps because it piques our solipsistic minds to see that others are only made of mealy parts.

As if on a hinge again, a chunk of skin above her shoulder flapped open as she was nearest me, and as any mortal vision locks its coarse tendrils into the memory, I'll never forget what may still rest embedded in her shoulder blade: three rounded teeth wedged in a bone fissure, as neatly ordered about a gentle arc as when they had been attached on their other side, the roots angular and swaying by her gait. As ordinarily as throwing a loose scarf back about the neck, she draped the flesh over her shoulder again, as simply as to bless herself upon sneezing, and to cap her soul. I said, "Miss Dooley" (what is her first name?) but she couldn't be bothered, she walked straight home as she always does at night, but without her dog.

I leapt into my house for an ambulance and was repulsed to hear the calm in the operator as I began to tell her why an ambulance was needed. She stopped me to ask for the address. I told her the street, and while I was in the floundering complexity of counting off houses for the number, she told me that an ambulance had already been requested. I hung up, with duty satisfied, and busied myself with chores that'd have us forget all things, and think no more of mortality, the Chores of Ascension or the Chutes into Hell. I upgraded some software; I arranged a television schedule and cleaned the lint from the dryer; I pondered why all lint is gray; and then I filed receipts, cut my finger nails, and shut the chill from entering the house by closing a window -- only to see that the ambulance I thought I had confirmed was parked outside of Mr. Delorm's, instead of Miss Dooley's.

April 30

Now Therese, as I awake this morning early before work, and read over the verses I wrote last night, I'll have you not now consider the implications; don't yet like a wet acolyte summarily assume that the heat of the candle is Him or that the letters of the text are in His hand; don't now muster all the details and your own recollections to support such a fantastic assertion -- Don't permit yourself even to begin to think that since Miss Dooley came traipsing from Mr. Delorm's with a good chunk of her shoulder off and three teeth in her bone that he had anything to do with it, much less that she was to be eaten. Likewise, Therese, I'll have you not now stop and somehow catalogue this letter as further evidence of some sort of flipping lunacy, or perhaps some phrenetic return of a child's imagination. Don't now recall the afternoon you realized your dolls were but eyelets and coffee grounds, and all the old world fantasia had at once settled into confounding archaic prose, and what's left is real and explainable. Don't bother yourself with explanations, as I did for days subsequent to the surreal sight, ringing glass eyes and assembling such gems as:

Miss Dooley, fresh and inspired by the treadmill and stepping apparatus that so often comprises her half of the conversation, did the weakly Mr. Delorm his favor; she goes ahead and climbs for a particularly unpolished manuscript atop one of the magnificent bookcases I've spied in his house since. Now, despite all of herself that must drip onto her favorite apparati, you know that Miss Dooley is no fly, and upon imposing the bulk of herself on one of the lower shelves, the bookcase yields a quick inch, prompting her to look back in a panic as the same shelf cracks and, arching and unbalanced, she flips back into an agape Mr. Delorm, shoulder first into his screaming mouth.

It's plausible, I supposed, but too quickly -- it's remarkable how quickly we sully or transform a thing by trying to explain it. So Therese, instead, stop the quickening of reason, and let me continue.

A locksmith. A strange adept with a listing who we trust to foil the same bars and bolts we trust to thwart all wickedness from dropping in. A locksmith. A common journeyman who'll by a single phoning come and submit himself to all wickedness within.

A locksmith a week later came out of Mr. Delorm's.

Now I suppose that since I installed our latest latch that you wouldn't be so bothered that I rushed to break it. It's all I could do to call on this same locksmith

and attempt to cull what was left of Delorm from what the locksmith saw at our good neighbor's.

He was a block of a man, evidently the hasty produce of creation roustabouts under the impression that the sole criterion of man is that he be erect. He had tattoos that traced the veins on the tops of his hands, and when I inquired about the tattoo in the design of a clover on his temple, he told me it was a scar.

"Oh but it looks like a clover."

"It's a scar," he recited two more times during his eyeball inspection of the broken lock.

"You know," he said, "this looks like someone's gone ahead and spiked the lock from this side."

"Hmm."

"From the inside," he said.

"Stranger things have happened I suppose."

"I s'pose, strange, but your neighbor there had the same problem."

"Hmm. My neighbor Mr. Delorm you mean?"

"Yup, the same break."

"That's really strange -- he's a character isn't he?"

"Yup, I'd say."

"Yes, yes, he's quite a character that one, small little man."

"Sure is."

"He's a funny one, don't you think?"

"Yup, a funny character, that one."

"That Mr. Delorm."

"Yup."

"But what did you think of him?"

"Well I can tell you he had the same break, like he popped it with a screwdriver."

"Yes, a screwdriver, yes...I think he's a dentist of sorts."

"A dentist, eh? That's funny?"

"Why? Why funny?"

"Doesn't look like one."

"Yes, of course. He doesn't look like a dentist."

"Nope. Didn't strike me as a dentist."

"Yes, well, I had only heard he was one. A dentist. Maybe not."

"Look, this knob is gone and beyond. You're going to need a whole new one."

"Wait, that's all? You can't fix it?"

“Well, first, sir, I’ll have to part the Maneoke River, then I’ll fix your door knob,” he said in the reassuring tone of a tourist visiting squalor, before parting to his van.

“Wait, please,” I grabbed his arm and said, “it’s a charade, fine, but the reason I called you is because I must know what happened in Mr. Delorm’s. You were there.”

“He put a screwdriver through his door knob.”

“Yes, but understand, the strangest things have been happening over there.”

He stopped and measured me. “The snakes?”

“What?”

“Are you talking about the snakes?”

“The snakes?”

“His pois’nous snakes.”

“He has snakes?”

“A good bunch, I’m saying. Maybe three or four or more--”

“Will you come in for a moment?”

“Look, I can get you the door knob--”

“I’ll pay you for the time it takes to tell me about those snakes.”

But only silence, in my driveway, in full view of Delorm’s.

“Including a drink and make it triple time.”

“Fine.” He climbed into the front of his van, and pulled out a wrench that’d turn the crypt off a church. “But I’ll drink nothing but faucet water.” I let him pour us two glasses and it didn’t suffice that I sipped mine first; I had to sip from his, upon which he took back the glass, poured it into the sink and cleaned the brim with the tail of his shirt before filling it again.

“Tell me of the snakes.”

“Well, I was looking at the door knob when I turned around to tell him that someone broke it from the inside, like yours,” he gestured.

“And?”

“That’s when he put his snake in my face, right there in front of me.”

“What happened?”

“I told him I used to have a Red Whipper Halliback too.”

“A Red Whipper Halliback? What did he say?”

“All this mumbling crap about holding dangerous beasts to dress in or something. It was hard to understand him.”

“To dress in?”

“Yup, and I said that thing’s as dangerous as a cold hose, but he went on about it being pois’nous and what not, and I said no it’s not pois’nous, his head’s round, and besides, it’s a Red Whipper Halliback.”

“He’s lost it!”

"I thought he was weird when he first opened the door, with all that disgusting gauze stuck in his mouth."

"His mouth?"

"Yup."

"He had gauze in his mouth?"

"Under his lip; he couldn't have changed it at all, it was a dark brown, with all these little red--"

"Could you see his top teeth?"

"No, he had this gauze in his mouth."

"In his mouth?"

"Should I continue?" he said.

"Sure."

"Well, I'm thinking I can fix it, the locking mechanism was all jammed into itself, and I was thinking that if I could bend out just some of it, I could get it turning-like."

"But what was he doing?"

"Hold on -- so I'm going over in my head the cost of door knob -- you've got these brass door knobs out here -- versus the cost of labor, when I turn around again to see the guy walking with a Mombalag Cream Spitter, and those *are* pois'nous."

"In his hands? Free?"

"Well, in his hands, but he was holdin' the poor thing wrong, so I got up and told him that he'd need a whole new door knob."

"That's it?"

"Oh no, the thing bit him."

"It bit him."

"Well, he was grabbing the thing like he was fearin' it. They can sense that -- they know when you're scared, and that scares them, and gets them pissed and writhing-like."

"So what then?"

"Well that's the funny thing. He says 'it's never done that before' and then he says it's really a, well, he said a 'polite snake,' and that I should hold it."

"Did you?"

"Oh no, but right after he said that, it bit him again."

"It bit him twice?"

"And a few times more, it was getting worse, he was really scared of it now, but still holding onto the thing and repeating over and over again for me to take it from him."

"And the snake is poisonous?"

“Oh yeah, his arms getting all hard and blue, he dropped right in front of me.”

“He passed out?”

“No, just sort of fell and let go of the snake, so I walked over him and called an ambulance.”

“And then what?”

“Well, I saw another Mombalag Cream Spitter in a cage in the kitchen -- the whole thing was getting too strange, you know -- and since I did what was expected of me and called the ambulance, I made to leave.”

“And he was just lying there?”

“Yup, never forget it, him laying there, getting all cushy and blue, and slobbering-like through that old crusty gauze, and the whole time begging me to get the snake.”

He finished his water.

“That’s everything?”

“That’s it.”

Silence.

“Can you send me a bill?”

“Listen, I’ll bill you just for the door knob -- I’ll send it with the bill. They are real easy to put in. Smart man like yourself will have no troubles.”

Things getting bitten Therese.

April 30, Evening

How should we allow our intellect to order our visions obeisant to normalcy? And how long do we indulge our inclinations to tint strange deeds so maliciously red? An unwilling witness, I still could not play agnostic to the signs; to feign that Mr. Delorm is only behind some idiot conception of a viperous petting zoo would be dangerous and heretical -- ignorance, the Pharaoh himself. And with the electricity suddenly afflicker and dead, and the television blackened, I certainly can not rest under your favorite duvet, mind-clapping the details into a fury with the shade of an afflicted neighbor hanging in the doorway.

But there's something else to consider.

I remember a month ago nearly clipping the life of a rash child with the bumper of my car. It had been a freakish spring snow, and obliging affinity, comes a child and his saucer spinning into Margolis road. Mechanically, with a tot of adrenaline, I worked the pedals and steering wheel into such a chorus that I was able to avert collision completely. And it wasn't until many yards later that my hands began quivering and beads of an icy sweat clung to my brow. It seems that gripping panic, if only to reduce the chores of panic's term, permits sure reaction its turn uninhibited. And perhaps that is why I could handle finding Mr. Barnfodder in our front yard, standing next to the azaleas in the most horrific shape.

Facing the street, the back and seat of his clothes were pitted with holes the glow of eclipsed suns; he stood there still and awful like resignation at Pompeii. Still, sulfurous, I approached the cairn of flesh, knowing it was old Mr. Barnfodder only by his thick pinstripes. I went widely around to his face and spoke a few banal, even stupid salutations, only to probe for some vital sign, without admitting more terror into his terrible condition. "How are you doing Mr. Barnfodder? Out on a walk this evening? Are you doing all right? Can I get you anything?" But he only stood silent, eyes fixed on some fading star, perhaps waiting for the pull of heaven's flow or the final yank from under. "Mr. Barnfodder, are you all right?" To which he replied, quite unaffected, "my dog was from here, he was a border collie, he had the mind of a kid."

I asked if I could get him some water and he told me "no, that was before my time," but allowed me to lead him inside by his arm, twitching like a road sign in a gale. At our kitchen table I could see that his face was of an inhuman hue and a swelling had rather nicely smoothed out his wrinkles. He watched each finger with great determination wrap around the mug and finally he showed concern over his fingers being burnt, "something very terrible has happened, maybe I should go."

“What happened, Mr. Barnfodder, who did this to you?”

“Do you have my coat? I thought I brought a coat. What’d you say?”

But I had said nothing, I was in the rattling, vicarious anguish of seeing him rise under our lamp, when I could make out the deep, violet grooves carved through his neck, down vertically into and throughout his holed shirt. Only now after quelling the nerves by counting the breaths accounting the proximity of my life, the breathing corroborating my living, the refrains of prayer -- of many sorts of prayer -- and the soft, affirming sway of a low and deliberate humming, can I now couple the bloodlessness of those creases in his flesh with the charring of his hands: the blood must’ve been cauterized.

“What happened, Mr. Barnfodder?”

He stood above me, in the awful silence of an affronted gargoyle. “We had dinner.”

“With whom did you have dinner?”

“I have to go.”

“With my neighbor? Mr. Delorm?”

He turned to find himself in the mirror, only to face something else.

“I felt sorry for him,” he said in the detached stupor of a rape victim filing a report.

“What happened?”

“The most terrible thing.”

“A fire -- did he burn you?”

“No. A car battery. In the middle of the table. Like a flower box. But with wires instead of flowers. Two metal stems. The table was metal too. And the chairs were metal. I asked him if he was a mechanic. By hobby, you know. And why were the wires connected to bolts on the table. And I told him that once I saw a battery explode in a woman’s face. But she was all right. Just shaken up mostly. She was my son’s school gym teacher and she hadn’t grounded it right. Then I saw that the wires were connected to the chairs. And now I’m here... Somehow I’m here and talking at your table instead of his.”

“Shall I call an ambulance?”

“There is a line around my neck.”

“Yes, I know, I’m calling an ambulance.”

“There was a gold chain there.”

“Please, Mr. Barnfodder, have a seat.”

“Why, I can’t feel anything. I’m going home,” and he stepped out.

I told the operator that he was walking to his house, and I hope that I counted down the number of houses correctly.

But now Therese, it's getting late. And looking over, I fear that this transcription, all this recounting, this writing, and recreating, all this revising, and rereading has perhaps affected my perceptions, this conception entirely. And still I wonder if by the details I've chosen and the details I've chosen to neglect, and by the ordering of events, and the patterning of words, their connotations, and suggestions, I've rather dropped unto this litter of pages a molested and deformed heir to reality.

Which wondering, even now through the sting of weary eyes, is enough to animate me to scuttle out and peer through some windows.

April 31

I found your glasses again this morning.

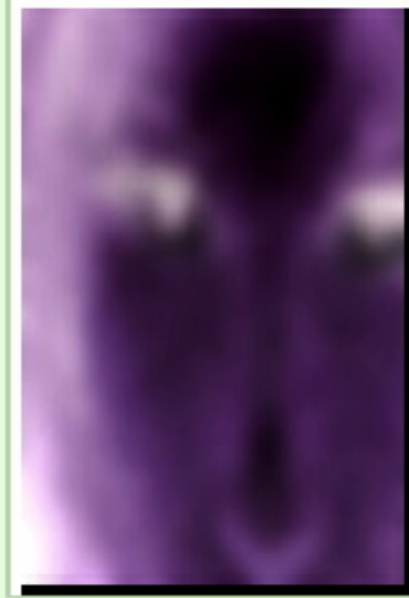
Calipers,
I can still imagine your head in them, that vessel for all our memories.

Does it yet contain our walks along Barker's Creek,
or the late nights when I'd mark your visage in the creams at Alibain's Diner,
or the burrs I'd nightly pick off your blouses? I can remember,
now sifting through my own stores, your angelic face,
your marble-white skin illuminating the woods like settled snow,
the sweet scent of your neck in the last short embraces
between rushing you home.

I had been trying on your glasses before the foyer mirror,
as if a fixed consummation of our souls could be had
through these glass eyes, when the cops arrived,
pounding the door. Of course,
they were asking after the cooking of Barnfodder --
they called it a terrible incident, maybe even an accident --
and that they had come because of all the ambulance calls. I told them
of my inept ogre theory, but perhaps too quickly and without sequence
or this proper frame,
because upon leaving they said they'd be watching
me, along with some odious and unnecessary quip about me
taking care to make a speedy recovery.

I am still very tired, though. I will send this letter off now,
and hope that when I fully awake from a most transformative rest,
you'll both have returned.

Edited for



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May 2

Dear Therese,

{note to self: cut in parts, for the lustre and the implicit thrust of arranged verse.}

If ever before [those sylvan] meetings
[where love was lost and made do with us,]
I'd had [some tip] of this [raw transgression],
[truly,] I'd have [looped a wire] so tight
[about] my wrist that if I had even dared
to commit such [a rogue] injury as this,
my hands would've [blown] blue before the very first dash.

[Oh,] those quick pen strokes, [those black toxin skin tracks,
unto those coy pages.] Careless, [Love, believe me, I'm a brute].

If only we could [have kept... no,
if only we could *keep* twice] the moments
of our first hazarded glances, [when in each
our souls began to snare and steep...

sweet Therese...

let's do relapse to] even before the [pen] light meetings
in the [cosmic] hollows of your backyard;
when we were yet chaste of each [other's parts],
and [living rote by] the [attendant wares]
of our [white brick and tile] marriages;
and [long] before [those nights of our] whispering through
the logistics of ridding ourselves of
our [title-christened and nameless] spouses;
and [long] before conjoining each our children
under [this now suppliant and ready] house.
[Therese, return and let's relapse and shred
through the slighting pages] of my last will.

[Of course] I [sympathize without dry eyes
and with this fitful knot in my aching gut]
both your [acerb] anger and your leaving

upon seeing that I had so allotted
such a [paltry dollop] to [our full son]
versus what [I had so mistakenly]
bequeathed to the [plump coffers of our] daughter.
[Read aloud, and hear between desperate sobs
me, groveling, starved for your mercies,]
[Oh,] I [lament] in [clarion pangs
for the great, dastardly inequity;
believe me,
I'm fit to be parceled out to paupers.]

{note to self: edit to assimilate next paragraph, to keep in the precious softening of her larynx, but make the invocation of the 'ogre' more metaphorical of the urgency of this note, and her homecoming}

But [by an odd scintilla yet lingering
in the soft folds of your pastry ears]
you [may] by now [sense my desperate despair]
through [the wafting buzz of the] telephone.
And truly, the [once hollow] hope for your [quick] return
[rolls] with real anticipation by [your kind crumbling.]

May 3

[*It can't* be too soon, don't bother with bugles, drop
unannounced, and even in the domal dark of our woods,
you'll hardly alarm a man all ready
harkening ghostly steps of one long missed.

I live on you, I have nothing save you,
you are my whole sustenance, and as such,
how can I affect you to understand
the precipitating need for your return?
More lines of bloated verse?
More declarations of want?
More groveling by metered words?
Or by some measure seemingly perverse___

some epic, drastic dreamed metaphor
to convey the fantastical proportions
of my living need for your quickening --
something lifted from the wells of our youth,
an application of fairy tales, knights,
queens, their daughters, and ogres, the whole lot?]

[Fine,] to that end, first a definition,
and then an example, [as] textbooks sing,
since I cannot assume that in your life
you've [ventured] to learn about such a thing.
The definition -- of an ogre, [told
by raffish tellers of farcical tales,
and inked by boys to dizzy the girls]
is that of a most [puckish] beast among
the [pixie, nix, and wizard slate of night,
the vital snag, the umbilical knife
the syncopation of the beat of life,]
and [unnaturally] strong, [divinely] strong,
such as we cannot possibly [portend]
or even begin to realize until
[an occasioned] meeting. And, of course,
proportional to its prodigious strength
is its [will and hallmark perseverance]:
the ogre [can near cunning, as cunning
as the resolution of time and need.]
However, the [distinguishing mark]
the [core] of the ogre, is its appetite,
as they are [ever passionate farers]
who'll [taste] all [the particulants of Eve;
the absolute lovers of morsels of mortality.]

As for an example: [I am one.]

Though [particular].
[I starve until you.]

May 4

Now [flushed] Therese, as I read [these] verses
[by the fitful eyes and assembly mind
of a reader navigating the tides
of perplexity and inference,
I quickly beg of you some latitude;
I'm a lover not a syllogism,
not a retort to affirm the listen;
and since hunger and fancy will try all arts,
a busker will shadow Franz Liszt for tarts --
I'm desperate, anxious, but not deranged,
so please] Therese, [so please do] not now stop
and somehow catalogue this letter as further evidence of some sort of
flipping lunacy, or perhaps some phrenetic return of a child's imagination.
Don't now recall the afternoon you realized your dolls were but eyelets and
coffee grounds, and all the old world fantasia had at once settled into
confounding archaic prose, and what's left is real and explainable.

{All the lakes are in a lake,
all the lakes are in a lake,
all the lakes are in the lake,
all the locks are in the lake,
all the locks are in the lake,
all the lakes are in a lake,
all the lakes are in the lake,
all the locks are in the lake,
all the locks are in the lake }

[It's late and] ringing glass eyes,
assembling such [grotesque fabrications],
and [slumped over like slobbering praise
over this rucked,] unpolished manuscript,
[even I, author, sense direction] drip
[from this forced, verbose] apparat[us];
and upon imposing the bulk of [purpose]
on [any] one of [these desperate lines,]
[it would] yield [only the fattiest dross
of a love-starved dunce of tact.
But,] arching and unbalanced, [yet license

this epic, drastic dreamed metaphor
to loosen from strict plausibility,
stop the [paring] of Reason, and let me
continue.

[For you, I am an ogre.
Sudden sweet for the alone, what other?
A honeybee drone] with a [sole] listing
[to its sole thrust, the gold lust for living --
[beast] we trust to foil the same [cell] bars
and [boss's canes that keep us to task,
a start in the passage to your boudoir,
a pence or peach you find, or find one more,]
a locksmith [to unlock, and to unlatch
the ivied lid of your cobbled chest ---
oh,
apologies, I apologize,
am I as crude as stone, or do I dare
allude to the parts and portions of you
I've long and so coldly neglected?
Can I now promise to dearly engorge___
epic metaphor?]

{note to self: push_ on push the crank over the top to begin pulling her
back.}

[Now, the ogre will, for the chore and vestige
of rubber sustenance and carbon being,
enlist all within his stomach environs,
to meet that] criterion, [consumption.

Just as basic as snatching tolls to maintain
the mortar and the plates of the temple,
and as clever as the desert spider
using leaves to lid its reversible casket,
the ogre might well employ anything
from the first book to the first epilogue,
from] redressing serpents [for their native ways,
tethering a light soul to a torpid mass,
to interloping chthonic transmissions

and exploring shunt] electricity.

{note to self: Words. How do these worms persist to writhe in this hollow, but on me_ push }

~~{nearly clipping the life of a rash child
nearly [nipping] the life [from] a [small] child,
nearly nipping the life from [my one] child,
nearly [assuming] the life [of] my [inept] child,
[carefully ruining] the life of my inept child,
carefully [disposing] the life of my inept child,~~

~~carefully disposing the life of [her] inept child,
[woefully bereaving a life without your smile.]}~~

May

[Therese, you are my sustenance and as such
what means can I enlist for your return?
Pilfered meters of flinching dead poets,
old yarns that could hardly keep a fire,
implications of figurative serpents,
and school-boy descriptors of love?
when is the effort of pleading enough?
All] this transcription, all this recounting,
all this writing, [and prodding of imagination,]
and all this revising, and rereading
has perhaps affected [my ambition,]
this conception entirely. And still
I wonder if by the [tact] I've chosen
and the [rose clichés] I've chosen to neglect,
and by the ordering of [passages],
and patterning of words, and suggestions,
I've rather dropped unto [these coy] pages
a molested and deformed heir to [intent].

[Therese, my lovely, lost Therese, please cease
now to exhaust these wry words to symbol,
discount them as the lexicon of despair,
degrade them to but notches in the fiber,

and only count them to some telling sum,
a simple enumeration of want.

I'd count them as ticks of a sliding life,
I'd begin anew unspoilt by need
assimilating will into craving,
But,
weary,
I'll make do with what I have.]

It's all I can do [as illusions of you
now displace the pangs too hard to stomach.

Again, metaphor.]

Must

I found your glasses again this morning.

Calipers,
I can still imagine your head in them, that vessel for all our memories.

Does it yet contain our walks along Barker's Creek,
or the late nights when I'd mark your visage in the creams at Alibain's
Diner,
or the burrs I'd nightly pick off your blouse? I can remember,
now sifting through my own stores, your angelic face,
your marble-white skin illuminating the woods like settled snow,
the sweet scent of your neck in the last short embraces
between rushing you home.

I had been trying on your glasses before the foyer mirror,
as if a fixed consummation of our souls could be had
through these glass eyes.

I am very tired. I will send this letter off now,
and hope that when I fully awake from a most transformative rest,
you'll both have returned.