

Spilled

For the things in our lives that have been spilled can never be picked back up again— can never be put back together. Instead, they must be spread thin— thinner, and thinner, and thinner— until they no longer exist. Yet their residue will always remain...

For my entire life, or as long as I can possibly remember, I have been deeply infatuated and affected by The Natural Human Instinct: the absolute biological yearning for food and water, the body's immediate, and oftentimes subconscious, physiological-fear response to the terrors of the World, the gravitational pull that slides my tongue down his throat... The things that do not have to be taught, but are woven into our very essence and state of being. The basic, rudimentary drive in life that we all share and seek, but that we satisfy in very contrasting ways; some sacred, some obtuse...

This infatuation, or obsession, or lifestyle, or however you would like to classify it, has no doubt spilled over into my art. That is, when I step into my studio, close and lock the door, dim the lights to an acceptable shadow and approach the large 60x108 inch canvas already positioned on the ground, I am not thinking or planning or structuring anything. Rather, I let my body fulfill these natural instincts however they see fit. Wherever my gut wants me to direct my arm then bend my elbow then fling my wrist and thus the paint onto canvas, that is where I will do it. I fill the rough, white canvas beneath me in any way that satisfies that unnamable, indescribable thirst that resides within me. This is my artistic expression.

I understand that being able to work from the gut and not the brain— off of feeling and not logic— is the dream of every aspiring artist. But what am I to do if the soul is unignited? This has been my dilemma of late. I walk into my studio, wholly uninspired by the shadows and the white walls and the predicaments within the fabric of my being, and am unable to create. I

stand there, towering over the lifeless canvas— my shadow ruining and manipulating its blankness— and feeling nothing: no desire to satisfy, no lust to quench, no internal life-or-death obligation that I need to complete. I stand there for hours on end, ruminating in the nothingness — ruminating in *my* nothingness, rather — until I decide that perhaps ‘nothing’ is all I will be on that day, and then I go home.

This has been going on for months. *I enter, I stare, I leave / I enter, I stare, I leave / I enter, I stare, I leave*. My inability to feel that innate instinct, and thus my inability to create and make use of this body, at first emptied me so wholly to the point that I was a walking carcass, a mere accumulation of atoms, atoms that add up to matter and nothing else. But then, as the months went on, this emptiness began to turn me into something else. That is, I was stuffed with such an uncomfortable sensation of self-loathing, one that eventually began to tear at the seams of my skin, filling my bloodstream with liquified cement, cement that eventually reached my brain, where it then hardened, leaving me with an intolerable and incurable cloudiness and obstruction. It was impossible to live with.

I am only telling you this because yesterday evening I finally felt some relief, which I will trace and detail as it occurred to me in that moment. I wish to accurately convey the exact state of my sentiments, and how they unfolded, in this wonderful moment of climactic repose:

It was just after sundown when I decided that it was time for me to leave my studio for the day. Only a few minutes prior, the blazing sunset traveled through the singular window of my studio, washing the front wall and half of my face with an orange hue so golden that a past version of myself would have felt some sort of calm, some sort of serenity. But I felt no joy. My eyes, half blinded by the glow, stared down at the blank canvas, which was surrounded by crusted and dried up paint brushes and full, unopened paint cans. The canvas was similarly

lonely and collecting pounds of dust, as I haven't felt anything within me that can be translated onto the canvas in any way. I looked out the window as the sun slid further down the sky, a sky now painted a murky red, and I thought to myself, *I wish I could just fucking do it.*

That was when I decided to go home. However, as I walked out of my studio, (which exists at the end of a hall filled with different studios, different people, different lives of varying importance), I saw a man that I have never seen before in the hallway, looking around as if he had a direct purpose but had no idea where he was, or any idea of what to do. He wasn't facing me, however I believe that the sudden sound of my feet startled him, because at once he turned, and we, being of similar heights, came eye to eye, his green meeting my gray.

He was the first to speak. He said, Hello, my name is Tomas, I am looking to rent a studio in this building long-term — I am a portrait artist. Then a pause, and then Tomas asked, And what is your name, do you work here and do you by any chance know who I should speak to? I am Silas, I said, and Yes, I do my work here, just there in that studio down the hall, but I do not know the owner, I pay my rent to a friend of mine who knows the owner. There is then a longer pause, probably eight times the length of the first, where I was looking at first to the side and then to my feet, however I could tell that he was studying my face, wondering what to say next. And then, he said, What work do you do? And I said, I am a painter as well, I do splatter paint. And then I looked up, and something ignited in Tomas' eyes. He said — a bit too excitedly — Really, that is amazing, a load of creativity and a great eye you need for that. And then, If I may, I mean, I would love to see one of your paintings, if you have the time? I then went cold, as he was then asking me to confront and announce my failures, my failure as a person to feel and translate my instincts, my failure as an artist, as a conglomerate of matter. I looked down, then back up at him, and then to the wall, and back into his eyes, and said, I mean, I don't really have

much in my studio at all, all of my completes are at my apartment and I've been in a bit of a dry spell in here (I point to my heart) lately, so I haven't been producing much. He shifted — his whole demeanor changed — and he said, Oh, I'm sorry, I get it, I know how hard it can be to work when the heart's not in it (except for, he doesn't, he's a portrait artist). And it's like he could sense that I was about to tell him that it's okay and that everything will work out so that I can leave the conversation for good, because he cut me off before I could even inhale, and said You know what, I mean, I've been looking everywhere for a studio and this is my last option, what if I were to pay you double your rent for a few months and I could use your studio while you clear your head and, you know, find that artistic passion within yourself again?

And that's when it hit me: that feeling I have been pining for for months on end. I looked back up at him with his too-innocent eyes and weak smile, the corners of his lips shaking so much it looked like they were about to break. Something started to fester and bubble in my gut, something unignorable and unshakeable. I then, for the first time in ages, began to feel my existence so sharply, as if I could have folded into myself fifty times with neat and sharply smoothed corners; corners that need to cut, that need to draw, that need to avenge. I smiled back at him, and said, I actually think I have a complete or two in my studio, how about I show you them and we can talk about it there?

As we entered my studio, the feeling within me came to a head, a feeling that I can in no way explicitly describe but one that I am all too familiar with, however never in this degree or in this capacity. It as if it had existed dormant within me all of this time, little by little building and building and building, all in anticipation of this final moment of release, this moment that I have been waiting for all along, the instinct that was born within me— the reason that my atoms come together to form the matter that is me.

So when we entered the studio, I didn't even bother to turn the light on, but let my gut and my soul guide me as it had many times before, as *they* picked up the nearest paint can (amber) and, walking into the studio behind Tomas, hit him with all the force they have been building up for months, right in the base of the skull, over and over and over, until he swiftly crumbled onto the canvas. However, they still continued, fulfilling their very duty until fully satisfied. And it is in this moment that I no longer exist, I am just the vessel that my gut uses to carry out those actions, actions that I thirst to carry out and fulfill in climactic resolve.

When they are done, and I come to, the world is no longer shaded crimson, and I no longer feel that uncomfortable weight on my chest and in my stomach, and I feel calm— calm, but oh so tired, oh so weak. When I turn the lights on, I do so in full brightness, so that I may wholly survey my studio. And when I do, I see red again, shades of wine and currant everywhere, seemingly misplaced around my studio but in perfect harmony on the canvas, in patterns and groups and angles that are perfect, that all make sense to me. And then I have an idea. After moving the thing off my canvas and taking in the full scale of the blank section right in the middle, I have the idea to press my hands into the paint leftover on the wall until they are fully saturated before using my fingers to draw spirals in this section, one after another for hours, until my fingers are cramping and the new day is breaking. As the orange slice travels up the sky and into my studio, I stop, slide back, still on the ground, and take in the full scope of my new painting. I cannot believe what I have just accomplished. *I did it*, I think. *It's perfect*.