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## PERIPHERY

Tom brought soda and a loaf of bread over to Kate's house. Will brought two mixtures of fruit. The mixtures were dark red, or glowing green. They sat in separate pans. Kate admired both of them under a shade tree.

There were small, furious bubbles that churned up from the bottom of one mixture. Tom noticed this. Then he pointed to a cluster of small, furious seeds.

Will dipped a slice of bread. Kate gave him a jelly comb. He made wavy lines with it.

Kate got an ironing board out of the house. She set it on a large flagstone. A picnic table stood nearby. There was also a hammock that needed pruning on the side—the side that was frayed—and photinia bushes.

The lilacs in the next yard were slightly infested. The girl who lived there sometimes came over. She and Kate were friends.

Though the sun had been setting for a while, there was still too much temperature in the house to iron. The moon had not appeared yet, either.

Kate squeaked the legs open like a rusty X. She pulled up the flap on the outdoor socket and plugged her iron in. She waited a bit, then attacked the curled-up hem of her sleeveless shirt without taking it all the way off.

Tom opened a soda. Everywhere. He had shaken it up first.

Jets of steam jetted out. Aphids landed minutely. Kate ironed them in by accident.

Tom glimpsed, between sips, the neighbor girl. She walked past the unpruned hammock and the picnic table. She introduced herself as Cheryl. Will ran a hand over his crewcut and thought: She has a figure. And nice nails.

Kate finished her shirt. The hem was stippled with small, furious beads. Tom noticed they were two different colors. Then he put his bread on the ironing board and pressed out the wrinkles, the crust.

Tom was husky, not thin. Cheryl liked this and drank a soda. She liked Tom's smile, too.

Kate watched Will. He had a close-cropped face: his ears and cheekbones, his sharp chin—the shape of his whole head resembled the iron, which in turn was a smaller version of the ironing board.

Kate told herself it was just a coincidence. She was amused by Will, but not in love with him. Of course, he knew what to do with a jelly comb.

Will glanced at Cheryl with interest. However, she was only interested in Tom. Will saw this in her small, curious eyes. So he glanced at Kate. Her hair made wavy lines in the twilight.

Before she went home, Cheryl wrote her phone number on a slice of bread. She told Tom to call her later. He looked at the two mixtures, what was left of them, and said he would. Then he checked to see if the moon was out, if there was anything around the edges.

MARC KIPNISS grew up in Connecticut but continued his education on the other side of the country, to the nth degree. A woman agreed to marry him along the way and together they had children of either gender who are now more than half raised. The family pets include a turtle and a gecko and a toaster oven that dings when it's done.

## SHARP OBJECTS

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I watch the rain turn to hail that whites-out the beauty bark around the fruit trees and think, Tomorrow, after the storm has passed, I'll put my gardening sneakers on and go into the yard with a pair of shears and a step ladder and lop off three or four branches, those with tent caterpillars on them.

In the evening, however, I would see a mental picture of a needle and thread.

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The shoeboxes have labels on them that are neatly printed. One of the labels says, "Tacks and Brads." Another says, "Wood Screws." And so on.

This is the next morning, in the garage, over the work bench, where tools hang on hooks on a sheet of pegboard on the wall. One of the tools is aluminum, about two feet long. It has a small tube of green fluid in either end, as well as in the middle. The color of the liquid is the color of anti-freeze, or a certain brand of soda that my son is fond of. There is also a small air bubble in each tube of green fluid, like this:



This lets you know if you're off balance or not.

•

Two days ago we had sun. It didn't get very warm but at one point the bag ripped. I was dumping the garbage from under the kitchen sink—a chore I had repeatedly put off—when something poked through the bag and it ripped. It may have been the thorny stem of a rose. My wife's birthday was last week. We celebrated with a couple of bottles of Lambrusco. I dropped the third bottle, which was almost empty, on the floor with an explosion. There were pieces of it in the bag. There were other sharp objects, too, and evil spirits that leaked out. My wife tried to catch them with a flower pot. It had a hole in the bottom, though, and she failed to catch anything.

You have never seen two people rush around opening the windows so.

•

Something happened at the gym this morning. One of the machines had an attachment that I wanted to change. The handle I wanted to use was shaped this way:



But while hooking the handle on I didn't notice a jagged edge. I nicked my finger on it incisively. I also was distracted because of a firefighter who had once been a marine. He was telling me a story about when he went to boot camp in San Diego.

"It's the beginning of our second week," he said, "we're running the obstacle course. We're all just chugging along. We're all tired. But at the end of the course this one guy keeps going, he sprints for the fence, he doesn't seem the least bit tired.

"There was an airport on the other side," he explained. "It was a chain-link fence with barbed wire at the top." Then, while hanging from a bar and doing pull-ups, he added, "This guy makes it halfway up, halfway over the last obstacle before the drill sergeant hauls him down crying."

"Jeez," I said. "Only halfway?"

"Yeah," he replied, dropping off the bar. "An airport."

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## THE DASEIN OF CLOCKS

It doesn't feel good if it's schmutzig, if there's schmutz on the brain stem, though there's nothing wrong with zaftig, if she is a little überly in the hips, or if we put on eine kleine rock musik—or if, after that, we light the other end, light it mit nicotine, nicht wahr, a field trip to the nic bar, the last one in town, alas and a lack—of paranoia?—no, but fines double in die schüle zone, du weißt, the filters are evidence, or they are tampons, we all get on die schüle bus together, with yellow stains on our fingers, or else it's last call, the glasses are dry, the ashes fly right out of them, they hair up the air, the hairy air, every nacht und every day, the play's the ding, or dong—the collars rise at dawn, there are phallic astral projections, a cosmic looping, animals without backbones, or front bones, or any bones, then something comes crawling out the lake, a black hole, the birth of consciousness, of irony, du weißt, the basilisk in my pants, it cracks open my crotch, my belly, there is an out-of-body sexperience, then a plötzlich reversal—ach, I'm back in my skin again, my pelt, with these ill-gotten grains, this filthy pelf, lucre or lycra, or spandex, it's all the same, I say, peel 'em off, liebchen, and make it schnell—in the background there are schwa sounds, an outline of penumbral vowels, of vowels without backbones, without clothes, from blousy to blouseless, the coils of her wheaten hair, her attentive nipples like an umlaut, diacritically alert and—my diphthong at the ready, I'm prepared for punctuation, but not for a sudden question mark: why is the big hand for the minutes, she asks, and the little hand for the hours—it should be the other way around, nicht wahr?

arrived in time to watch his train as it disappeared down the tracks. Then he watched the tracks disappear into the distance. They converged far away from him, from where he was standing. He felt the last vibrations fading under his heels. He also felt a wad of gum, which was stuck to one of his shoes. He went up and down with it. It stretched and stretched. He raised his leg farther and farther. He did a few high kicks. And a few more. He started to enjoy himself. The twanging sound the gum made was pleasant and soothing. He liked the sound of it very much.

Then there was another sound. It was the sound of another train, which rumbled up the tracks and screeched slowly to a stop. He saw people's faces in the windows. The gaping faces of men and women. The faces looked like shovels. The shovels seemed to scoop into him, into the depths of him. He held his briefcase in front of his chest, for protection. Then he held it over his face. He pressed his forehead against the cool leather. His fingertips gripped the stitching tightly. But after the train pulled away he put his briefcase down and just felt all scooped out.

"Do you think he'll need stitches?"

This is what the woman asked me tonight about my son. The woman seemed young, about twenty, and she was concerned, not distraught.

She looked again at my son's chin. It was noisy. It always is here. The music is always loud and you hear a continuous burring of roller skates. And blades.

My son had fallen forward. There wasn't too much blood, or many tears. I told the woman I didn't think it would be necessary.

"The cut isn't very wide," I told her. "Or deep."

Then the woman opened a large portfolio that had dozens of plastic slots inside for all the different bandages you could imagine and she gave me one, a butterfly, which looked like this:



"I can't put it on," she said, alluding to the issue of liability. But she told me how to do it, that I should tape one end under my son's chin and pull on it, draw the wound closed.

"The other end," she said, "goes on the front of his chin, beneath his lower lip."

"There," I said. "Good as new."

But neither the woman nor my son believed me because the butterfly had already started to take wing.

## POST-COLONIAL

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A man and a woman from a civilized society went to a primitive village to visit a tribe that had a shaman as well as many strange customs and rituals concerning the weather and fertility and human sacrifices. All of this seemed very exotic to the civilized man and woman, who had never made love to each other before because they were anthropologists. But then one day a storm tore through the village and there was a power failure and the shaman blamed the civilized man and woman. He told them that they would have to restore the power or die. They said they couldn't, they didn't know how. He said for them to use their magic. They asked him what kind of magic he meant. He said the mating kind.

Faced with a classic double bind—sex or death—the civilized man and woman chose the former, even though they were anthropologists, and so, with the whole tribe looking on—the shaman said the mating had to be public, that everybody had to witness it or the magic wouldn't work—the power was soon restored.

Though the civilized man and woman were relieved, they did not think they had magic, only dumb luck. Thus they decided to depart from the village in the morning, before another storm hit. That night, however, when they were in their hut packing, the civilized man and woman had an overwhelming desire to make love again. This time they thought they had magic, too—until afterwards, when they emerged from their hut and saw how dark it was, that another power failure had occurred.

The shaman suddenly appeared. He told the civilized man and woman that they'd really done it now, hadn't they? Then he said there would be an emergency human sacrifice and let loose a warbling cry. The whole tribe suddenly appeared—this had to be done in public, as well—and the weather soon improved.

## FALLEN ARCHES

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He planted his foot. He dug a hole and planted his foot. He dug a hole and planted his foot and watered it with the watering can. He dug a hole and filled up the watering can at the spigot, then planted his foot and watered it. He got a shovel out of the tool shed, then dug a hole and filled the watering can at the spigot. He unlocked the door to the tool shed and opened it, then got a shovel out and dug a hole. He put his foot in the hole and covered it up with the dirt he'd dug out of it, then watered his foot with the watering can that he'd filled at the spigot.

He waited for a while but nothing happened, so he waited a while longer. But still nothing happened. So he dug up his foot and put the shovel back in the tool shed and closed and locked the door, then kicked the empty watering can and went to bed.

The first dream he had was about a woman. The woman came from France. The woman was no longer his woman. She had broken up with him and moved back to France.

The second dream he had was about a man. The man wore an overcoat. Under the overcoat he wore a suit and tie. The tie had a design on it of many shields.

In his third dream he didn't have to go to work in the morning. He didn't have to commute into the city in the morning and spend the whole day poring over legal documents that all looked the same or anything.

The fourth dream was like the first, except the French woman didn't break up with him. Instead she met him in the city. He didn't go to work in the city. He met her there instead. At her *pied-à-terre*.

He woke up late and hurried to the station with his briefcase. He hurried to the station with his briefcase but did not arrive in time. He only

smudge, a furry blob of ink.

I place the kitten in the shopping cart, to play with the baby.

I'll have to get some milk for both of you, I say.

But suddenly the kitten scratches the baby and there is a line of bright red dots on the baby's wrist.

I scowl at the kitten. You shouldn't have done that, I say.

Then I look at the baby and whisper, Here, let Daddy lick your little bracelet.

At the counter, I pay for my copies and fold them lengthwise and tuck them in my back pocket. I also buy a stapler. The baby likes the stapler, likes chewing on it. But when the kitten comes close, the baby whaps it on the nose.

I trundle the shopping cart out the door, head up the sidewalk. Pausing in front of a telephone pole, I separate the baby from the stapler, wipe the slobber off it with my shirt. The baby screams as I load the stapler. The kitten keeps its distance, doesn't purr or anything.

I pull one of my copies out of my back pocket and staple it to the telephone pole. I return the stapler to the baby, who chews on it and quiets down.

Until we stop at the next telephone pole. And the next one. And the one after that.

I resisted the temptation to call this story "Post-Coital" because I did not want to blunt my pointed critique of imperialism. I also resisted the temptation to call the civilized man and woman missionaries, rather than anthropologists, which would have put me in an equally untenable position.

## JOON 14, 1972-3

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I am very excited because it is Flag Day, because I love to see the flags out everywhere with their stars and stripes flapping happily in the wind and snapping and popping like a pop gun I use to have with a cork at the end of it that I one day decided to stick a nail in, with the point of the nail sticking out, so that when I shot the cork it would stick in a tree, or in a fence, or in whoever I aimed it at and hit, even the boy who lives in the house next door, who was always bothering me and teasing me and calling me names like idiot or stupid head or retard, and so it even stuck in him and went right through his shirt sleeve, which was loose and blue and white, then wet and red under the cork as he stood there crying and not knowing what to do until his mother came tearing out of their house hollering and calling me a dim wit and a imbecile, so I reloaded from the bag of extra corks I had prepared with nails in case I needed them and shot her in one of her breasts, which were big and bouncing around like water balloons, like the water balloons her boy threw at me last week over the fence, which soaked and ruined the magazine I was looking at, which was a National Geographic that had half-naked native women in it, but his mother was so surprised that I had shot her like that that she grabbed her boy by the arm without realizing which arm it was, which was the injured one, and when she did this he screamed so loud I thought she had pulled his whole arm out and that all that was left was his empty sleeve flapping in the wind and snapping and popping like the sound of my pop gun as I fearfully reloaded and fired and reloaded and fired, again and again, until I ran out of corks and dropped my gun and took off down the street to the Civic Center, which had a row of flag poles in front and a gazebo, where I hid and watched the flags and ate a partly eaten apple I found and rocked back and forth until the sky was dark and I could sneak home, where my parents were mad but glad to see me, though they

## BRIGHT DOTS OF COLOR

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I'm at the copy store. The machine I'm using sounds as if there's a kitten inside it. The kitten sounds hungry.

I'm making copies and staring out the window. There's a shopping cart hanging off the curb and a woman walking away from it. She has oven mitts on that are the yellowest I have ever seen.

There's a baby in the shopping cart, which is slipping off the curb and rolling into traffic. I run out after it. It feels as if I'm moving too slowly, though, as if I'm running in water, or in heavy cream...

The oven mitts dwindle to bright yellow dots. This is what I see in one direction. The baby's screams are drowned out by the noise of all the cars, which are starting to have their lights on because it is starting to grow dark. This is what I see in the other direction.

I'm closing in on the shopping cart. There are tires screeching and horns blowing. The baby's face looks bunched up, livid with fear. A speeding delivery truck misses me by inches. I reach out and grab the handle of the shopping cart, pull it off the street and onto the sidewalk...

Wheeling the baby into the copy store, I return to the machine I was using. The machine feels hot. There is still a kitten inside it. The kitten still sounds hungry.

I lean over and take the kitten out. It is like a squirming black

## WHAT'S IN A NAME

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Do you want to have fun? Do you like guessing games? Can you guess the name of the person I'm thinking of? Would you like a hint? Would you like to know if it's a man or a woman? What about you? Are you a man or a woman? If so, how does it feel? Are you satisfied? Or frustrated? Do you need another hint? The first one wasn't enough? How many do you expect? What else do you expect? That you will marry for love? Or for money? Or for children? Do you want to have children? Do you already have children? Are they little or big? Have they already moved out? Do they still call you on the phone? Have they written you letters? Do they sound sincere? Have you guessed yet? Are you still waiting for another hint? Are you still hung up on the question of gender? Do you often get hung up on this question? Are you a feminist? Or a masculinist? Or somewhere in the middle? Are you a hermaphroditist? What about your children? What are they? And your parents? Are they living? Are they in a home for the aged? Did you put them there? Do you feel guilty? What else do you feel guilty about? Cheating on a test? Breaking the law? Have you committed a crime? Was there a crime that you pretended not to see? A drug deal? A mugging? Was there a hit-and-run accident that you failed to report? Did the victim die? How did you find out? From a news report on TV? Do you watch a lot of TV? Game shows and such? Would you like to buy a vowel? Are you still waiting for that hint? Aren't you ever satisfied? Can you say "insatiable"? Are you like this in bed? Do you mind if I watch? If I take notes? What about pictures? Do you mind the camera? What about your partner? Can I use the flash? Can you say "cheese"? Do you mind if I join you? Am I getting too personal? Would you prefer more narratorial distance? For the narrator to be a third person? Didn't he just make that offer?

were also afraid of what would happen to me becuz I had hurt the boy and his mother pretty bad, so I would have to go away for awhile to a fussility in the city for a special treatment, only when I got there I was miserable becuz the treatment was a terrable punishment in which they zapped me with alectricity twice a day and tied me up in a backwards jacket if I broke any of the rules, which there were alot of and hard to remember, so one day when nobody was looking I climbed a tree by the wall behind the fussility and jumped over it and ran off on a twisted ankle and hobbled around the city until I came to a park and started to live there, and on the streets, where I begged for mony from strangers and got barfed on by drunks and went to soup kitchens for food and shelters in the winter to keep warm and hid in dumsters from the gangs that liked to beat me up, but after a long time passed, when it was Flag Day again, I went to a pawn shop that I noticed something in the window of, which was a pop gun for a dollar, which was more than I had, which made me almost cry, only the man behind the counter saw me and asked me what my problem was, and when I told him he held his nose becuz I smelled bad, then said it was ok if I just gave him what I had, so I did this and thanked him and left the pawn shop happuly and started looking on the sidewalk for nails and for corks from the bottles the drunks drank from before they barfed on me, and I thot to myself, now I can keep them from barfing on me and also protect myself against the gangs that like to beat me up, and if anybody tries to bring me back to the fussility to zap me twice a day with alectricity and tie me up in a backwards jacket I can shoot them as well as anybody who teazes me and calls me names like dim wit or retard or stupid head or anything else.

# AN OFFICIAL THANK-YOU

Dear Killer:

Thank you for your recently completed service as a killer. The right to an execution by a fellow citizen is one of our most important rights, and is a cornerstone of the Constitution. By serving as a killer, or even by being an unselected member of the killer pool, you are helping to guarantee one of our most fundamental freedoms.

Your sacrifice of time with your family and at work, and your loss of any employment income during your term as killer, are greatly appreciated. Furthermore, though certain inconveniences and inefficiencies must be acknowledged (including “dead time” and the parking problem), be assured that improvements continue to be made wherever possible. Your comments and suggestions in this regard are welcome.

We hope you have found your experience as a killer to be interesting and rewarding. The vitality of the judicial system, like other branches of our government, depends upon public understanding, acceptance, and active participation. Please continue to stay informed and involved.

Very truly yours,  
Lee Gull  
Presiding Judge

## *The View*

The man got into an elevator and rode it to the top, to the observation deck. It took a long time and when he arrived he was the only one there. He thought about climbing over the railing, if he could manage it with his cast on. Then, looking down, he saw something shiny between his feet: a shiny quarter. He picked it up and put it in a telescope—there were three of them mounted like guns on the parapet—and gazed at the lights of the city, the sky.

Everything was perfectly clear.

All too clear, he thought.

The man was now gazing inward. He had swivelled the telescope around, and with his good hand reaching toward the other end he searched for the focus, some sort of lever or knob, or trigger.

## SERENDIPITY

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### *The Arm*

It was a full cast that hung in a sling that went around the man's neck. This happened in a casino.

The man had been playing the slots and losing. He'd changed his last ten, his last five, his last dollar. He was down to his last nickel. Then he pulled too hard.

It was an accident, he told the casino people. I didn't mean to, I swear.

But the casino people knew a bluff when they saw one and escorted the man into a private office, made him pay for the damage commensurately.

### *The Vase*

There were particles of pollen on the glass table top. They swirled into a semblance of the Milky Way when a woman walked by. The woman's dress was midnight blue, loose and breezy. It tended to cling in places, too.

The man followed the woman to the door with his eyes. She turned and glanced at him. He sneezed. She opened the door and left. So much for the galaxy.

## REPTILE APPLIANCE

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Gripping the arms of the chair, which are padded and have a vaguely familiar texture, he shuts his eyes.

"Okay," she tells him, "don't move."

His bloodless knuckles stand out sharp and bony. Droplets of perspiration spring to his upper lip. He remembers the first time he was bitten by a snake, how fast it happened, the two tiny holes in his hand that—

There is a loud pop next to his head that sounds like the uncorking of a bottle. He opens his eyes and, looking in the mirror, says, "That hardly hurt at all." But he's still clutching the chair, the slick, padded, scaly arms of the chair.

"I told you it wouldn't." Her voice is low and raspy and she's holding up a vial with some sort of clear fluid inside. "Use this solution for a couple of weeks," she says. "Dab a little on in the morning, and in the evening, before you go to bed. So it won't get infected."

To demonstrate, she reaches into a jar on the counter and pulls a cotton ball out that she dabs at his ear lobe with. But in the mirror he sees her long, auburn hair, her retroussé nose and breasts. He also sees her dabbing at his other ear lobe, that she's smiling at him.

•

Later, over coffee, he asks to pick the lint off her sweater. She smokes a cigarette and lets him, her eyes half closed. Other provocations follow—he comments on her cuticles, she moves closer to him, he flicks his tongue—and soon they both express a desire to leave.

Huddling together against a harsh winter wind, they hurry to his apartment, which is only a few blocks away but messy—books and

clothes are scattered everywhere, none of the clocks show the right time, he has a pet iguana—and when they sit down the couch cushions sigh, candles are lit, her voice sounds even lower and raspier than before, he tells her what else he had in mind.

He finds a device in a drawer in the kitchen that he turns on. It purrs in his hand as he walks over to her, as he shaves her with it, the nubs of her, her nubbles, her nubbly sweater. Then she pulls his shirt off, blows out the candles, makes him writhe and tremble for her, finds another device that..

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He does not own a calendar. The next three months go right by. He hardly notices. She even moves in with him.

“Your apartment is in a better location,” she explains. “It’s closer to my shop, and to the supermarket.”

She embarks on a few changes of décor—frilly curtains for the kitchen window, a rug in the entryway, some throw pillows with tassels on them—then suggests they get rid of the iguana.

“This is too much,” he tells her. “You’re trying to destroy my natural habitat.”

“Well,” she replies, “you never clean anything up.”

“What about your cosmetics?” he asks.

“What about them?”

“They’re all over the bathroom.”

“Yeah, and I do the laundry.”

“But not the cooking,” he hisses.

“Oh, you’re never on time.”

And so on, until they eventually work things out, set a date for the wedding.

•

It is a humid, summer afternoon, an outdoor ceremony. The guests, about thirty of them, have long since arrived. The bride’s gown is damp and low-cut. The harp music, like the thick scent of the lilacs, has begun to cloy. The groom finally shows up, though, wiping his forehead with a silky green handkerchief that has teeth marks in one corner of it.

This wasn’t his usual problem of punctuality but nervousness, second thoughts.

•

I got in bed with my wife with the lights already out. I couldn’t see if her lips were puckered into a fish face, or if this was just my eyes playing a trick on me. At the same time, she didn’t know I had cold hands.

## IX

After lunch the four of us—my wife and I and the couple we had eaten with—walked to a nearby mall. It got cold along the way. The sky darkened cloudily. Hail the size of marbles started falling. We ran for cover into a clothing store. One of us, my wife, even tried something on.

## X

The text of the clipping describes an incident during which a bird crashed into the Italian model's face during the inauguration of a roller coaster in New Mexico. While he suffered only minor injuries, there was a great deal of tragic potential. As a spokeswoman for the model put it: "Oh, my God! Think if his mouth had been open!"

## XI

Before I went to bed that night with my wife—I'm jumping ahead a bit here—I tore the cover off the catalog and put it in the freezer. It stuck against a carton of ice cream like anything. Then I pulled the clipping out from under the banana. It didn't taste very good, though.

## XII

At the end of the ceremony our daughter received a certificate. So did a lot of other children. This was supposed to give them a sense of achievement.

There were people in the audience who threw confetti. It looked like snow. Some of it landed in the punch bowls. I saw a girl drinking some punch. I saw her pick a little white square off her tongue, too.

This reminded me of when I was a schoolboy, except that, back then, if I had a little white square on my tongue it was because it had a dot in the center and was blotter acid. I wouldn't have spit it out, either. I would have—

I once swallowed blotter acid on the bus in the morning and went to all my classes tripping, even Spanish. The Spanish teacher was bald, and his large shiny head began to glow with chartreuse rays, which made me afraid that it would break open, that some sort of hungry pod creature from another planet was hatching inside his *cabeza* and—

Their first child is born at the tail end of November. She grows up to become a beautician, to inherit her mother's shop. Their next child, a boy, takes after his father, whose line of business is selling small appliances. Then they have a third child, which has a peculiar coloration, is something of a surprise.

# COVERS

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## I

Something happened today. My wife and I were both there. We were at a Japanese restaurant, for the lunch buffet. Another couple was with us. One of them, the man, suddenly had eyes that dilated.

## II

There's a newspaper clipping on our fridge. It's held up by a banana. The banana is magnetic. This corresponds perfectly to the clipping, which concerns an attractive man.

## III

After dinner my wife and I attended a school function. Our daughter was directly involved in it. Our son, who is younger and goes to a different school, sat with us in the audience playing an electronic game with the sound off. The game had blinking spaceships in it, and explosions.

## IV

A catalog came this afternoon in the mail. I noticed the cover because of what was on it. What was on it was an ad that was like a painting by Dali.

## V

Some of the lunch buffet consisted of fish that had been dipped in batter and deep-fried. The couple we were eating with, one of them, the man—he suddenly took a big bite of the fish. Then he said there was a bone inside. He used his chopsticks to pull on the end—the head—of the fish. A whole skeleton slipped out. Most of the deep-fried batter and flesh of the fish disappeared into the man's mouth.

This reminded me of an alien in one of those movies, in one of those scenes where they show you how the alien eats, what happens to its eyes.

## VI

The newspaper clipping features a picture of the face of an Italian man who is a model with long hair and a fabulous body. You can't see his fabulous body in this picture, but you know it's there because he's famous for having posed half-naked for the covers of many romance novels. Plus, the picture is in black and white.

## VII

We—my wife and son and I—sat in the audience near a long table. Daffodils stood on it in a vase, as well as large slabs of cake and towers of stacked paper cups. There were also two punch bowls with blocks of sherbet melting in them that I wanted to spike. Unfortunately, I didn't have a bottle with me of hard liquor.

## VIII

Three partially frozen garments appear on the cover of the catalog. The middle one looks like a flowery dressicle. The other two look like solid popsishirts. The reason for this is that there are flat sticks sticking out of the bottoms of these garments, which is exactly how you would expect to hold such a dessert on a hot day.