

The Magenta Cap of the Whipping Cream, the Orange Cap of the Half and Half



There's something I need to tell you before we go any further, and it's something I probably could have avoided.

In what is to come, *I* could refer to any one of the three possible *I*'s:

First: *I*, the *I* we're most familiar with, The Voice of the Narrator. The neutral *I*, without strong political convictions, ineffectual but nice. This *I* is not to be confused with me, Maxwell Paparella, The Poet.

Second: *I.*, the Roman numeral, rendered sans-serif—unorthodox—at the beginning of certain sections, indicating a mulligan. I seldom get past Part *I*, and I thought many times about abandoning even these few *I*'s, but I thought it best to plow on, to clear the road at the expense of the curbs and gutters.

Third: "*I.*" was at one time the first initial of my antagonist. "*I.*" was as malicious as "*I.*" was motive-less. This villain has since been removed from this writing for the most part, but "*I.*" may still crop up here and there, or you'll hear about something "*I.*" had done.

I—me, just this once—I will make an effort to distinguish between these characters with differences in inflection and emphasis.

There are also a good number of you's, but each of these is a closed set which will be defined on a case by case basis.

To set the scene, it was spring and we were still looking forward to it:

I.

The Peak Cherry Blossom Bloom will be *just like* a druggy blush of the eyes having been removed from the heels of the hands. **The Lips Of The Tidal Basin** will gape open and closed *just like* that incidental dialogue in a silent film which requires no intertitle.

Only these first two sentences take place
in D.C. The rest is in New York or similar.

You, passenger, rub circles into the top of your head while conducting vertical scratching motions about your nose, not on some dare—it would seem—but as a matter of physical urgency. “I.” came to power by the usual means.

The Good Building will be better seen from afar. It will, of course, look blurry up close. Delightful, at Easter, it will light itself up in painted egg color cascades *just like* a trick of audio in which a tone seems always to be rising.

I take pause at the diamond windows of the many-green’d construction wall.

[Rattling of coins in the style of chains.]

I.

The View Out The Windshield will involve the shadows of smudges on the rear window cast by the headlights of the car behind.

[Every other syllable of a conversation miles away delivered by wind, however improbably.]

You, difficult customer, even though there is pleasure waiting for you everywhere, were there for me only *just like* Death and just as impatient. I retrace my footsteps in exact sequence so as not to be tracked in the departure, though I may have carried you or vice-versa.

The Lobby will be lit *just like* amber, so that one feels oneself to be *just like* **The Bugs** rescued from obscurity, made singular, and kept whole. **The Stillness Of The Room** will be bad for **The Conversation**, good for **The Dust**.

[Several quick movements in the periphery seem to signal an emergency.]

[But no, it is service.]

You, smart mammal, never did stop grinding your teeth. It was you whose attention events sought to attract. **The Leisure** will go to waste here, in the crotch of your jaw. One puts the edge

on and later takes it off. On your lap lies the recorder with the president's speech and the ruffles of wrinkled ridges of the articles of your clothing amidst your papers.

"I." became selfish, foolishly committed to living in the world of the real. **The Paint** will regret its life on the canvas, in such an unfortunate composition. You, model object, got to decompose and were reborn.

I look over my notes for our dinner conversation. (The person I'm meeting is the *you* of the last sentence.)

I.

The Candle's Flame will only burn red in certain bars. In each of them, one flexes one's hand beside one's face to make one's point. By virtue of its own weight, **The Necklace's Clasp** will be one of its charms. Likewise, **The Lime** will mix its juices into its drink with the force of its drop. One must be held responsible for the sounds made in the glass by the ice, but not for the ring of condensation which rots the veneer of **The Table**. **The Rings** will date The Table. I check the consistency of the grain again as it wraps around the side.

"I." created a personality and policy alternative to what was on the menu. One wears one's jacket around one's elbows in this warm room.

[Rasping of a body crawling through the HVAC duct]

I.

Outside, **The Evergreens** will crop up from the empty planter plots. Talking weather has become actually very political, you think—you, the drummer, the painter, the mummy, the nude. **The 5-Day** will amble about under a shroud of undelivered highs.

"I." came to prominence as a blemish, aided by the very prodding which hoped to suppress it.

You, my caught mouse, finally died at home. **The Trap** will be cruel, you knew, will depend on a correlation between ease of use and difficulty of understanding *just like* any simple machine. **The Spreadsheet** will perceive well the quantity "more than one knows what to do with" of money, of time, of ice. **The Ice** will, under the right conditions, survive for some time in the wild.

[Dripping finally stops.]

The Ice will melt, beyond the curb, actually the many-yellow'd caution area, before the barricade indication of a sidewalk café outer limit. The track it will truck down the path of least resistance will be dark to the gutter. As it dries, it will leave signs of dirt out of place.

I.

The Moist Folded Paper Towel, which is sometimes **The Cut Piece Of Wet Sponge**, which is sometimes **The Cotton Ball Having Been Run Through Water**, will be kept in a condiment to-go container above the *VOID* button on the register or even within the register in an unused coin section and will be fingered before the handling of bills. I ask about the bouncy balls, which I assume are where they are as a condition of a compromise with the physical, somehow. Now I know they are kept in candy bar boxes behind glass simply so kids will see and want them.

One wonders what kind of world it is on a coin for a germ. You, near-genius, had **The Bag** say *thank you* in every language and every font. **The Sign** will be every color, but not all at once.

“We are all in arrears to the font of wisdom.”

[Bottles vibrate at the top of the fridge for the footsteps on loose tile nearby.]

The Potential Energy is more interesting to most because it can stand still to be sold.

In exhibition design and in sentence construction, one must either embrace mathematics arbitrarily or allow oneself to venture into spirituality and intuition in exactly the way one might elsewhere dismiss, to lay down on the gallery floor and listen for the approach of the sculptures (and where they must stop)—to provide comfortable and even gourmet routes for the tongue throughout the mouth and the eye across the page.

Broken—as a stride, not as a record—“I.” couldn’t think of anything to say about these new photos of the mind.

I.

The Platform will ache with the recent departure of a train. You, rider looking bored as a way of being lost, stood inspecting the loose knot of transit lines, imagined untangling them or pulling them taut.

“Yes, I remember you,” you said, acquaintance, “mostly your name.”
And for my part, I remember mostly your face.

[The small bell of a wink.]

“I.” lipsynched the conductor announcements and whistled counterpoint complements to the train’s screeching along familiar sections of track.

I.

The Key will be a little better traveled than **The Lock**. One resists the temptation to hold it in one’s mouth to save a hand. You, features of beauty collaborating on excess, might have imagined yourself as someone who always will have gone to something, but what if you showed up late and couldn’t get in? “I.” sat in the hardware store until it became a café, sat in the café until it became a bar.

[Street noise continues.]

You, reader, have in the past pretended your cold was some other emotion. Overcompensating, performing *faire la bise*, one has a narrow sense of drowning in the cheek and not knowing anyone well. Until then, one’s life moves to the rhythm of one’s lease.

I.

The Two Dollar Spring Strawberries from Florida will hide mold between their middle-most members. Laying there eating them by touch, in the only state of undress we know, one must remind oneself that the many-blues in which one is washed are not moonlight—in fact—but only that extra light which is spilled out and onto air at night, having been noisily collected in objects all day.

I envied you, houseguest, the semi-erotics of sleeping in another’s bed with their oils still in the linens.

[Tuneless humming, as if along to something.]

“I.” broke something earlier and everyone should take home a piece of it.

“Mine’s already in my hand.”

Everything will be named after something else in an informal lottery. Again, **The Music** will be the only thing preventing the situation from dissolving completely. It will even be piped into the restrooms.