

Entropy

Alan Mills

To begin, it is necessary to name the three boys in this room. They are Scratch, Adam and Joe. They aren't necessarily boys because in fact they are men, but they are men who are still trying to be boys or rather boys who have been aged into men, but either way, they are young men fighting time and can just as easily be called boys which is probably what they'd prefer anyway. We had to start by naming them to keep things simple. Otherwise we wouldn't know who we were talking about because they would never say their names to us or to each other.

The room is painted black, completely black except for a mural on one wall. The mural is reminiscent of the art of Tom of Finland and depicts one cowboy fucking another from behind. Completely naked, the bottom is bent over a hitching post and has a bit in his mouth while the partially clothed top holds the reins. It is intentionally like the drawings of Tom of Finland because their muscles are exaggerated and their phalluses are abnormally large.

Adam is reclined on the faded and worn down orange couch. His head is propped up on the couch's arm which is closest to the mural: probably not the best idea considering where this couch has been, or more importantly, who has been on this couch and where they have been. His clothing is fairly simple and basic: red flannel, white T, denim and hiking boots. Still, he isn't comfortable because the couch is old and lumpy as if its owner never intended for someone to actually sit or sleep on it, but he pretends to himself and the other two boys that he isn't bothered or even inconvenienced. He came to this club with a friend and now he's stuck waiting for the boy to finish up. So, he just passively stares at the images of MTV radiating from a silent television and wonders about the point of such an activity when the only sound he can hear is the clanking and pounding of industrial music coming from the speakers in the club. It all seems meaningless to him: the random images he doesn't understand and the inconsistent clanging he understands even less.

On the other arm of the couch sits Scratch with a Marlboro loosely hanging from his mouth and a Styrofoam cup of coffee in his left hand. For the most part, Adam ignores the boy sitting at his feet, or at least he pretends to. In fact, Scratch is a bit of a disruptive presence in torn jeans and a leather jacket over his naked chest. His hair is the white reflecting black of his jacket and harness boots. Every time Adam looks at him, he can only think about the smell

of all that leather and his own disappointment that he hadn't found this boy in one of this club's many dark corners and halls. Doubling over and pressing his nose and tongue to the dark surface of those soiled boots is Adam's perfect fantasy. Scratch acts as if he doesn't notice.

In the opposite corner of the room, between the television and the mural is Joe, sitting in a brown plastic chair. He is large and athletic, with short blond hair. Khaki shorts and a blue tank top show off most of his assets which only come into Adam's view each time Joe turns a page in his magazine. Joe sits right next to the screen that Adam stares at and causes Adam to nervously look away each time Joe looks up from his reading. Scratch, however, never shifts his eyes.

Awkwardly, Adam looks at his watch. He sees the second hand click just three spaces away from four in the morning. He begins to count the hours he's been here but is instantly interrupted.

"Do you know what would happen if an astronaut fell into a black hole?" asks Scratch while still staring at Joe.

Somewhat shocked, Joe looks up from his magazine. "What?"

"Do you know what would happen if an astronaut fell in a black hole?"

Both Joe and Adam watch him silently. Adam can't help but feel that something strange is going on. This new occurrence makes Scratch seem somewhat frightening to him, but that feeling is turning him on even more.

Finally Joe asks, "Well what happens?"

"It's the coolest thing," says Scratch. "I saw it on this movie about that guy, Stephen Hawking, you know, who's stuck in a wheelchair and has to talk with a computer and stuff and is like this total genius, you know, the smartest man in the world. Anyway, all these theory guys were talking about black holes, you know like collapsed stars, and they said that if an astronaut fell in one like just before midnight and from outside the hole you could see his watch, you'd see the second hand start slowing down. Really! As he got closer to the event horizon, that point from which light can no longer escape, the laws of physics would become altered for him and time would start to slow down. That last second before he hit the event horizon would seem like it would last forever, or like a really long time, and his image would be frozen... immortal."

"Really," says Joe.

"But man, here's the cool part, on the way to the black hole, the astronaut wouldn't notice anything different. His watch would count seconds normally, but as he looked out at the universe, everything would seem to be getting faster and faster, of course until he hit the event horizon. Then he'd be stretched into a long like noodle thing until he hit the singularity itself when he'd be compacted into nothing. Cool huh?"

Listening to this, Adam is grateful he hadn't fooled around with this guy. Of course it still might have been better than what did happen. A major part of him is still upset over what occurred when he first walked in here. He made the mistake of going to the very back room without his friend and allowing one guy to open his jeans and go down on him. Too quickly, strange men surrounded him. In the total darkness he couldn't count them, but he felt them restraining him and blocking his escape. They seemed like rats on their knees fighting to get his dick in their mouths, and he fought as the ones behind him pulled his jeans to his ankles and pushed their dry fingers into his crack. Shadows touched his chest and his face as unknown lips snapped at his mouth. Teeth scraped up and down his scrotum and rude fingers pinched and snagged the sensitive skin of his anus and pushed inside. The closer he came to orgasm, the more he fought to get away. Adam didn't want to cum: not this fast, not this early, not this way. But, when he shot on the invisible floor his body convulsed in anger and his breath pushed out loud and hoarsely into the surrounding void. Enraged, he pushed his way past the nameless men and went searching for his friend.

"What else did you see in this movie?" asks Joe, seemingly more interested in what Scratch has to say.

"Well, that guy, Hawkings, talked a lot about time and the way the universe began and how it will end."

"How will it end?" asks Joe.

"Well, I think he created a theory that stated that the universe operates according to the same laws that stars do and that it is slowing expanding and will one day begin to collapse until it too is a singularity, a dense nothingness."

"How long do we have?"

"Oh about fifteen or nineteen billion years, or something like that. Which reminds me of something else that was kinda' interesting. Hawkings questioned what would happen to time when the universe collapses. He wondered if time would reverse itself but decided that it wouldn't. He said something like that time is the process of the universe becoming increasingly disorganized."

"Like entropy?"

"Yeah, those physic guys said that. What's entropy?" asks Scratch.

Adam looks up at Scratch and says, "it's the degree of disorder; the tendency of an energy system to run down; the increase of disorder in the universe as available energy is diminished."

Joe and Scratch stare at him when he answers. Their attention makes him feel even more uncomfortable. This really isn't his kind of place. He was drunk when he first walked in here three hours ago and spent almost two hours walking around aimlessly, watching various

men fuck, waiting for his friend to cruise, score, and get the hell out of there. After a while his interest in sex returned but he stayed away from the large and crowded rooms.

He ended up with a young guy with curly black hair. They huddled together in a small booth, kissing and stroking each other while their pants bunched up around their calves. Occasionally one would go down on the other until they both got close. Then while breathing into each other's mouth, they jacked off violently until they shot all over each other's stomachs and shoes. The moment contained the level of tenderness that Adam was looking for, but it was defiled when the boy said his name: "Ely." For some reason, it seemed like a rule that people should never say their names in here or have normal conversations. But, Adam gave the boy his name in return and said "maybe" when the boy asked if he could see him again. Then Adam came here, alone, to wait for his friend.

But here isn't a very comfortable place, not with two good looking guys staring at him because he interrupted their discussion of physics. Fortunately, Scratch and Joe look back at each other.

"Hawkings said the whole point was to one day know the mind of God," says Scratch as if Adam's answer had no effect.

The room stays silent. Even the industrial music is cut off because the tape had run out.

"I think it would be cool if you could just ask him," says Scratch.

"What would you ask him?" asks Joe. "You know, what is he thinking. It would be hot if God would just sit right across from you, maybe the Devil too, and you could just look at them and say, 'Hey, what are you thinking?'"

Adam sits up on the couch. He's beginning to feel increasingly agitated. Theoretical physics was tolerable, but theology too: the mixing of them is unbearable. He fears that soon the conversation will shift again and take the form of parables or worst yet, allegories and cover such worn out topics like Hell and sin or maybe Armageddon. By now, the point of that is beyond Adam. To him the world will never end in fire or in ice but rather the world is destroyed every day and every second falls apart a little more. It doesn't matter what God thinks because no slice of knowledge will halt the chaos. All Adam cares about is retrieving his friend and telling him to cum and get it over with so he can go home and dream about things that are nicer or more pleasant than reality... maybe butterflies.

It's late and Adam's tired, exhausted and sexually spent, and the conversation has just outlived itself, but Joe stops him with an empty stare. Perceiving himself as somehow trapped by Joe's blank attention, Adam focuses on Joe's eyes which seem even and expansive like the light blue dome over Death Valley.

"What do you think about all this?" asks Joe.

Backing up to the door and hearing the reborn industrial pounding getting louder as

he nears the club itself, Adam concentrates on his breath and blinks the fatigue from his eyes three times before he answers, "I think that if there is a God, and if I have a soul, then I am a soul that is slowly expanding and will one day collapse in on itself."

Adam turns and walks back into the club. Scratch and Joe make no movements or sounds behind him. Their memory is a dream-like blur which only hints at itself in Adam's present state of exhaustion. The black walls of the inner maze disappear in three directions. Waiting for inspiration to tell him which hall to take, he looks at his watch and sees the thinnest hand holding at one second before four A.M.