

burning man

here, she said, *i've got this*, she was smiling.

it was just like this: we were in her living room, a nice living room, a little cluttered, a little dark, but a nice view of the view and a big round coffee table, cluttered.

she had hashish. she said, *i've got hashish, this hashish*, and she was smiling. she was sitting on the other side of the coffee table, maybe on the floor or maybe on a chair or a stool, something low, hard to tell, it was a little dark though the view was nice.

she had the hashish in a little bag, a plastic bag, and she had papers, rolling papers to roll the hashish into cigarettes if that was what we wanted to do and it was. she was smiling. she pinched a pinch of the hashish out of the plastic bag, rolled it between her fingers, the view was nice, she put the little rolled-up pinch of hashish on the coffee table, said, *look at this*, she was smiling.

her smile, did i mention, was beautiful, always is.

to my right was the sliding glass door, nice view, to my left was the interior, doors and chairs and small knick-knack tables, other rooms, behind me was the sofa, in front of me was her, blonde and what a smile!, chair behind her, coffee table between us, little bag of hashish and small pinch of same, and now rolling papers, white upon the table.

the pinch: close-up: now i'm smiling, too. the little pinch of hashish is an amber bead upon the table, i touch it, it is sticky, i wax pompous. *that's pure resin*, i say, *that's why it's so yellow and clear, so golden, so amber, so sticky like honey congealed— it's not brown like other, presumably lesser, forms of hashish, those forms with which i am better acquainted, would be, presumably due to their being mixed with more leaves and seeds and stems and insect parts*. all that said and examined, she rolled a joint. we smoked it. time

passed

but not much. we had barely finished smoking this joint of wonderful amber sticky hashish, hashish in a dark room with a smile and a view and a sofa, when unexpected guests arrived. why, it was her aunt, and three cousins, dropping by on their way from the station or the airport or the dock. just arrived. *we've just arrived*, they said. the aunt—wait: descriptions: the aunt was in her forties, still looking good about the face and figure, in a blue blouse and with coppery hair brushed back and wavy, an office style, para-professional or even real estate; of the three cousins, one was a young man of maybe lower-twenty-something, round face, short blonde hair like the dutch boy of old, tight tee-shirt due to weight gain; the other two cousins was goils, a teen and a pre, dey wasn't so much to look at one way ur dee udder and anyways, da younger one was too young to be looked at. the older one, she'd do in a pinch, her momma, too, but the hashish angel, she was the one to whom i was bound, bag, bundle, and budget. wonderful smile, previously noted.

there was some concern on my part that there might be . . . a problem about us having just finished smoking a joint of delightful sticky golden hashish, smoke still in the air, roach in the ashtray on the coffee table, but nothing was said. about that.

i wanted that roach. that was the goal. my goal. the aunt and cousins had their own, and they told us all about it. the aunt sat in a chair off my port bow, by a knick-knack table, she looked harried, distressed by travel and circumstance, etc. the girls flanked me on the sofa, teen on the view side, pre on the other, the side with a lamp, which she reached up and switched on. the young man outgrowing his tee-shirt sat in a comfortable, not to say slouching, fashion in a stuffed chair across from me.

it was not a big room, i don't think i mentioned that, though it had a great view. my hashish angel sat on the rug near the sliding glass door, smile beatific.

a quick summation of what they told us—not to be shortchanging or hurrying or prodding one to order dessert before the entree has been polished off—but as must have been expected, there was a small amount of small talk, family chatter, that sort of thing, off point and functioning here as no more than

one hesitates to call it color or fluff or even characterization. one could call it—no, one couldn't call it that, that's too harsh and crass—one could call it twaddle, if one knew what that word meant, so i asked my hashish angel, *sweetie, what does twaddle*

mean, do you know? she said, *i'll have to look that up*, and she did, in a slim red volume drawn from the bookcase behind her, which furnishing was there all along, unmentioned, unneeded until now. meanwhile, she was looking up twaddle and i was looking at the roach, trying to figure how i was going to sneak it into my plastic film canister of other roaches, into which i was peeking. i saw that, although i had enough roaches for a joint, the addition of the golden or amber or yellow hashish roach would make for an even nicer joint, providing i didn't get caught stealing it and providing i didn't excoriate myself over same later.

but what does twaddle mean? my hashish angel looked up from her slim red volume and said, *twaddle, noun, silly talk or writing*.

not the word i was looking for, i said, *and striking uncomfortably close to home, but thank you, sweetie, nonetheless, the exercise has served me well*.

now to what the aunt and cousins were about, in a simulacrum of their voices and words (and not to forget the oranges, which i almost did):

he was such a son of a bitch, drunk all the time, mean, too, wouldn't get a job, just lay around the house all (fucking (young man's word)) day, drinking beer and watching (the goddamn (young man again)) television, then the last straw was the day oh the day you shoulda seen it that day oh fuck (all talking at once) he tried to burn the place down, that's what we're in town for, we have to go to court and get a bunch of the documents in the case, there's a bunch of pictures, you should see them, would you like to see them?

sure.

young man cousin then held as to how he would like to shoot this drunken burning man, but did not wish to go to prison for it. i volunteered, saying, among other things, that i no longer cared if i went to prison or not, it was time i shot somebody, which i would be happy to do with my .22-caliber bolt action rifle, which fired magnum rounds that had the best hitting-power-to-cost ratio in the bullet business. i allowed as to how two in the torso at close range should do the trick right nice and proper.

that's a nice view, the teen beside me on the sofa said, *would you like an orange, i brought a bunch of oranges, would anyone like one?* she held up an orange, a yorick's skull yet filled with citric meat, and offered it around from the beatific hashish angel

mine to her

right—off her starboard bow, more precisely—clean past demurring family hers around to me on her immediate left.

sure. i took the orange.

we've been having some trouble with these oranges, she said, they're hard to peel. she was right, as we shall shortly see.

it was time to leave. they had to go to court, i had to go i know not where. my hashish angel remained, as did her roach, which i had not anyhow managed to kipe, even though i asked her to look that up, which she did, telling me, *kipe, noun or verb depending, meaning among other things snatching something, which you're not going to do to my amber hashish roach, because you're too scared to show me that low-down side of yourself.*

right again. before i knew it, i was out on the street, crossing it, actually, and terribly engrossed by the orange gifted me by teen, who was as correct as her cousin. i couldn't get the damn thing peeled. try as i might, all i managed to do was squeeze all the juice out of it

while almost getting hit by a passing car, finally tearing it open and chewing on the mostly juiceless now innards, my hands all sticky.

down the street i saw three young persons, two males and a female, sitting on the curb. they were smoking a joint! i approached them.

we can't, they said, your hands are too sticky, we'd like to but we can't.