

CUPBEARER TO THE GODS

Veau is a thousand miles away. Veau is daydreaming in a tiny garden exposed through a hole in the ceiling. The walls are high and stone. Bamboo struggles to escape, bending toward the light and suffocating it in their desperation. There is an artificial pond, small and poorly filtered, with black tarp at the edges.

He steps closer, bare feet uncertain and coltish on the slippery tarp. His reflection shows him a smudged white shirt that barely covers his thighs. Blond hair fills the pond, floating in the dirty liquid.

He touches his head. Half-shaved. The rest is scratchy like dry summer grass. It must have been bleached recently.

There is a taste of lard in his mouth, coating his tongue and teeth. There is a stone next to the pond. He picks it up and is surprised by how heavy it is.

WOMAN I arranged those stones exactly.

(VEAU puts the stone down and apologizes indistinctly)

(a man enters the garden)

WOMAN The clippers broke.

(the man and the woman talk in low tones)

A bell jingles in the foliage. He wanders around the garden in search of it. It takes longer than he thought, because the small space is very dense. He keeps folding behind the bamboo and reemerging. He finds a meditation fountain that gurgles and spurts as if clogged. Other pieces of gardening kitsch are sunk into the mud, rims of plastic and figurine. He goes through the thickest part of the foliage, giant burdock leaves making him feel even smaller. Spiked balls grow from the burdock, purple and alien and webbed, scratching his arms with burrs. He pushes through a wall of grass and his feet sink into the mud. Pigs squirm past, brushing his naked legs and leaving streaks on the skin.

There is a steel hatch in the ground. He walks around it and the soil is warm under his feet as if he stood on top of a furnace.

He comes face to face with himself. He's back where he started. He pulls the shirt down because it keeps riding up. He picks a burr from his rear thigh. His legs seem very long and thin. His face is boiled to gelatin, rippling as pigs slurp his reflection.

A spretz of Retz spits sprezzatura.

VEAU Is that a TV?

WOMAN Do you want to watch a movie?

They go into a small, badly cluttered room. He sits on a mangled couch in front of a small portable TV wrapped in duct tape. Her big white hands clutch the VHS tape like a black brick. She slides it in. The meditation fountain trickles loudly.

The tape hasn't been rewound, so it starts somewhere near the end.

TV You're under arrest. And they're going to put you in a pit so black you'll never taste daylight.

(another voice)

Fuck you, pig. You'll never understand love. Love is a sacrifice. Squeal, piggy. Squeal without love.

(original voice)

Take him away. Lock him up and melt the key down. Give it to him. A ring for his wedding day.

The woman works at a tiny table covered in green felt. She is counting a large quantity of cash, 100 xeraphim at a time.

He was sitting at this couch before. There is a plate of congealed bacon, gelatinous and gray. Some of it is inside him now, cold, inert.

In this position he can see his knees framing the television, credits too small to read on the tiny screen. His knees are like rotten fruit. It doesn't matter.

Allow yourself to be disappointed by the bruises. You need to be attached to your body. Your heart needs to beat. Your lungs need to swell. And so on. In that vein.

His cheeks scrunch up, crushing his eyes.

But not too disappointed. You might run out of tears.

He looks around the room, trying to clear his eyes. The wall is mounted with a stainless steel rod, sharpened at the tip. Below, rotund objects like blocks of packed sand:

PIG MAG BLOCK

*LICKING BLOCK
COMPLIMENTARY SOURCE OF MAGNESIUM*

Orange plastic crates full of protein jars.
A bucket with a pink label. *Pig Feminizer*.

NUTRIENTS

*Crude protein
Crude fiber
Crude fat
L-Lysine
Calcium
DL-Methionine
Phosphorous
...*

INGREDIENTS

Beet pulp, flaxseed, molasses (dry), ground limestone, soybean meal, glandular meal (anterior pituitary substance, adrenal substance, ovarian substance)...

*You agree that metabolic fat burn is essential to the attractive and feminine figure of a pig. You agree that the intensive diet of show pigs can reduce the feminine **FRONTAL** characteristics of your pig. YOU AGREE...*

His skull aches, dull and pinioned behind the ears.

See see.

See see.

Three see see.

He looks at the television but the screen is black. The couch sags as someone sits next to him.

His shirt crawls up his thighs, traffic cones of pink rubber. The sweltering air of a suckling pig being spitroasted comes through the vents, smoking his thighs with sweet pork flavor. His legs start moving, the undulations of a dream. Pockets of sweat spray from hidden compartments. Spritzed like supermarket produce. His head starts rocking back and forth. Swinging limply.

VEAU Did I make you happy?

MAN Yes. Very much.

WOMAN Shh.

Get a recording of him.

He has a strange feeling watching the black lens. As if he should be the one holding the camera.

VEAU (*whispering*) My eyes are the black eyes of an insect.

MAN What we're looking for is a big smile.
No, don't wipe your face off.
Just smile.

WOMAN You'll really feel better if you smile. Everyone does.

(distant commercial jingle)

This is the powerful man to who you have been promised.
He tries to place the commercial. It was for a type of candy, he thinks. Or ice cream.

Jingle jingle.

The curtain flutters, showing him outside. There is another boy on his knees with a distended belly and stretch marks. He can't see where the bell is until the boy rolls over to catch the sun on his swollen stomach. The bell glints between his legs.

(VEAU covers his genitals)

VEAU Why?

(The woman picks up a book. He carefully parses the title in his head. Encyclopedia of Agriculture and Food Systems.)

WOMAN (*reading from book*)

Castration causes acute pain-induced distress that can reduce nursing and increase vocalizations and pain-like behaviors making it an animal well-being concern.

(laughter)
Pain-like behaviors.

(movement, sound of boots scraping)
(indeterminate squealing)

WOMAN Boar taint. Boy taint. A bad smell. A bad taste. The result of uncastrated males. The intestines break apart tryptophan, an amino acid, soaking the fat of males with skatole and 5-alpha-androstenone. Females and those of certain ethnic backgrounds are more sensitive to the taste of 5-alpha-androstenone.

(the woman makes a face)

WOMAN Skatole is the smell of flowers and...

MAN Feces.

WOMAN The meat will taste like shit.

(VEAU picks at the flaking paint of his shirt. It's a chubby cartoon pig, smiling and advertising a BBQ restaurant.)

VEAU It's not real, right?

WOMAN Oh, no. It's just a metaphor.

(the shirt is the logo of a sports team on white fabric.)

(the man goes to the TV room and comes back)

WOMAN Meat can be...

WOMAN Dark, firm, dry.

WOMAN Pale, soft, exudative.

MAN Love when she reads poetry.

(the other boy crawls through the weeds, bell ringing)

MAN Close your eyes.

MAN You trust me, don't you?

Don't you?

Yes. I trust you.

He closes his eyes.

The smell of a dusty car window rolled up.

Dirty honey and hot dogs.

The smell of white paint in the dark. His head thrust forward. Bones in his mouth. Giving birth to a skeleton.

The woman has stopped reading. A drop of mud hits his ankle. A shadow between the sun.

Something cold touches his neck and he tucks his chin reflexively. The thing he remembers most is the tickling. Then a bad smell in his sinuses, a metallic tang, and his voice falling out of him as his ears start to ring.

(The woman covers her mouth.)

WOMAN Look what you did.

(the man drops the knife, stricken by shame)

WOMAN *(crying)* You cut into the muscle.
He's spoilt.

The man grabs him by the shirt and he struggles. The shirt rips and the man grabs another fistful of it and the rags pull up, exposing the boy's belly. He crosses his legs and his fingers dance in the air, held erect by the pulled-up sleeves.

The man punches him in the back of the head and he goes limp. The man relaxes as he knew he would. Veau grabs the knife and it shears through his nerves. A ball of static explodes in his palm. Blood falls from his fingers in five crimson lances and hits the mud and the pigs sniff it, getting their snouts shitty and red.

The man steps back, taken by surprise, the knife held behind him. Veau covers his bleeding throat with his remaining hand, which does nothing to stop the generous lubrication of his chest and downward.

He looks around the unreal bamboo stage. That door leads outside. He runs and yanks it open. The floor is smooth and hard, and through a hallway, as if glimpsed through a portal, the door of a living room, peeling white paint and a glass triangle, and the man grabs his leg and yanks it into the air. He falls on his face and his upper teeth and nose crunch like a swollen tomato on the concrete and the pulp of his face bursts through, blood hawking from his nostrils, lip sucking at the floor like a slug as the man drags him. The smooth floor turns to slick mud with rocks licking through.

The woman opens the steel hatch. The black hole is hot like an oven, if you filled an oven with feces and fat.

WOMAN Take his shirt.

MAN *(ripping the rest of the shirt from the boy)*
We like to keep the shirt.

WOMAN We love to keep the shirt.

MAN Why do we love it?

WOMAN So the next boy can smell it.

Pigs sniff at his naked back, vertebrae hopping like raindrops. A boot slams between his shoulder blades. He pushes back against it like he's taking a cock. But no more air is entering him, and his blood turns black. The boot stomps again and launches him into the hole. The steel rim hits him in the forehead and a dry bolt of lightning cracks between his eyes. Loose teeth dangle and drop into the pit.

He grabs the edge of the hole with both hands and kicks the man's leg. It's like kicking a tree.

Blood drips from his peripheral vision where his fingers squeeze the unsanded rim of the hatch. It feels like a square of razor. Carrots snap and pop. He looks at his hand and a rusty metal bird looks back, stupid as a parrot. The woman snips the pruning shears again and another finger falls into the hole.

He screams like a girl in a horse's skin.

The boot keeps stomping on his back and folding him into the pit and his knees scrape over the rough rim and his stumped hand slips and he falls inside.

The stench is so thick he can't breathe. Two fingers of lard hook his nose. Congeal in his lungs. His limbs jerk and slap into soft melting jellied masses.

He rolls onto his back. Above, a white circle.

His fingers rain from the sun. He resisted for two fingers.

The sun slams shut and the universe collapses into darkness. He sinks, and the furnace becomes a cauldron.

The pain is unbearable. His heart surges and shoots bullets of pulse from his poorly-cut neck from the muscles that have been contaminated with his boar taint, boy taint. The black cistern consumes the red bullets before they are born. It chokes him with the future of his decomposition. His heart is pulled inside out like a sea cucumber.

Sinking slowly due to fat content. His chest kicks, small, feminine gulps, constipated bubbles slowly rolling, massaging, crushing, expelling the last pockets of air in his body.

In each darkness a greater darkness. Cardiac bullion killing deeper hearts.

He can't tell if his eyes are open or shut. Embalmed in antediluvian lard. He tries opening them.

A circle of light. He flaps his arm toward it, thrusting weakly with his legs. He realizes he is swimming downward and dread blackens him. He keeps pushing, crawling, worming through the hot fat.

The bottom of the cistern opens. He falls through.



His limbs inflate, bones breaking and reforming. His teeth swell in his mouth. His nose juts like a wolf. He thrashes like a fish, something stuck between his teeth, big and rubbery like a pacifier. A hand pulls it out. His saliva forms a glistening bridge to the rubber gag.

The laundromat is dim. A machine sits on a table, oscilloscope pulsating.

Veau sits up and leans against the washing machine, foot jerking every time his heart beats.

The man touches his neck and Veau almost kills him. But the man is very slow and careful, waiting for their eyes to meet. The man has eyes like stolen diamonds cupped in black opera gloves. The man is holding the zipper to his wetsuit collar. The zipper lowers, tooth by tooth, until Veau's throat cartilage spills out.

See? Your neck is fine.

You can breathe.



The laundromat glass is painted black. He chipped it once, to see what was on the other side. There is a dark gap of cave floor. Barely enough to edge sideways along the perimeter of the laundromat.

Boys hang from hooks, blank as angels.



(Tape recorder on a checkerboard table, surrounded by plastic ferns.)

Y *(speaking into the recorder)* The mission took place out of country. The remote control body was shipped to the location and piloted for a period of 48 hours.

(There had been an uncomfortable spark between VEAU and Y the first day they met. The shock of pulling soft laundry from the dryer and being bitten. Then he had forgotten all about it.

Y has an aquiline nose. Was that the source of the spark? A nose can look down on you. Sniff at you. It amplifies the disdain of the lips. But Y is always very calm, careful to keep his face from alarming others.

Y has dark hair, because everyone has dark hair. He dresses like a man with great respect for sumptuary laws. Always the second nicest thing. Well-made, funereal, unauditable.)

VEAU Yes sir. I was targeted for the perceived age of my body and this is confirmed by the other boys on the premises.

(VEAU has dark hair, wet and dripping onto the checkerboard table like a game of chess at the nerve agent convention. His eyes rimmed with red. His nose is studded with a single cherry angioma, and another is folded into his eyelid, revealing itself when he's tired. He's very tired. They're both very serious and dull and tired. Alien death craft are sunk into their sockets of their eyes. You can draw these men from sharp bits of construction paper. Steel confetti.)

Y We lost visuals. I think...

VEAU When my. When his throat was cut.

Y Probably.

And the body is...?

VEAU It's in the cistern.

Y Good. It will preserve the evidence.

What else was in the cistern?

VEAU Hard to say.

Definitely meat.

Y Felony-grade, I suspect. But even if the rest are pigs. We can cash you in.

The boylikes have pain sensors for a few reasons.

- 1) A leper makes a poor spy. Boys must react to stimuli.
- 2) It provides legal weight to prosecution.

Veau is the soul that turns property damage into homicide.

(Closeup of tape reels, white and blurred. A wall of washing machines hypnotize in the background, used boys banging in the spin cycle.)

VEAU struggles to talk. Each word is like a brick of wet clay.)

VEAU 3cc of Retz was too much.

Y I'll tell you when it's too much.

Veau isn't stupid. He knows the only way to fight pederasts is by entering the bodies of young boys.

The washing machine is a cockpit. The tube in his mouth is a drug drip. It keeps him method. Time and spaced. Retz is a cocktail of lysergamides, benzos, and proprietary compounds.

(Y turns off the recorder.)

Y I know things got a bit fresh in there.

I'm sorry about that.

VEAU I'm just driving the truck. A little mud doesn't matter to me.

Y You seemed tense when you came out of the machine.

VEAU Just a reflex.

The program is an offshoot of an initiative to catch homosexuals.

We are vowed to destroy the shitpusher and the pervert and toward this end we are tireless in our manufacture of the most realistic and delicious semen and the most beautiful boy hips and thighs.



Theory: the funding is from a more civilized state who wants to mainstream the technology but have it tested in a state with fewer ethical regulations.

Theory: daddy would never hurt me



(dark shower, purple UV light)

He strips off the wetsuit and dark hair springs from his ankles. He shaves the back of his hands, shaves as much as he can to lessen the jolt of transition, but there is always the sensation of becoming a monster.



(VEAU goes outside in a fresh pair of clothes. He is shocked by the winter, coming from a hot region of the earth where his boylike is now rotting in a sweltering tropical cistern.)

Y If you don't dry off all the way, you'll lose heat faster.

...

Take my jacket.

VEAU *(shivering)* I couldn't possibly.

(Y hands him the jacket)

(the jacket is warm and instantly relieving)

Y Another successful mission.

VEAU Yes sir.

Y Has the Retz worn off yet?

(He still feels blunted, but his verbal acuity is back. The chemical shield is very important. To say, that was not me. Your masculinity is separate from what happened to that child.)

Both are in their thirties, but VEAU has to fall twenty stories to take a coffee break. He squats on the ground, winter coat dragging in the dirt. His red-rimmed eyes are like rejected orifices. Specks of stubble or sunspot or film grain appear at random on his face.)

VEAU *(confidently)* I could do with a smoke right now.

(beat)

Y That's the beauty of this municipality, Veau. You don't need to smoke.
Just inhale.

(they inhale the smog for a while)

It's very luxurious and efficient, really.

VEAU I like cigarettes.

Y Cigarettes are emasculating.

VEAU (*pregnant pause as he thinks about it*) I see what you mean.

(*silence*)

VEAU How was the recording quality?

Y Salvageable.

VEAU ...

Y When you're being penetrated, try to keep your head stable.

VEAU (*stands up*)

(*careful pause*)

I'm not being penetrated.

Y When the doll is being penetrated, try to keep your head stable.



Y had been transferred from another branch of the program. That branch specialized in the use of womanlikes as honeypots, and to catch female impersonators. He was said to be very good at his job. How could you trust women to accurately imitate themselves?

The boylike program had suffered a devastating failure. And Y was there to make sure it never happened again. Or was Y there as punishment, consigned to hell among the pederasts?



(They go out to eat in celebration.)

Y *(small smile)* We ordered already.

(VEAU sits down and there is a plate of pork in front of him.)

VEAU You guys.

(he laughs)
(everyone laughs)

(After a dive, you need to reassert your masculine space. Feel your chest thrust out. Your laugh crash through the room. Your teeth big. Need to feel others crowd back from you, just an ordinary amount. Need to look them in the eye and see them, know them, know what you are. Know they respect you.)

TECHNICIAN ...it's a job that gives insight. You know? A bit of sympathy for children.

Y Yes. It's very beautiful.

VEAU *(swallows his pork and gestures with his fork)* Were you not a child?

Y *(looking around, as if making a salacious admission)* Well, of course. But it was a long time ago.

(clatter of plates, fresh drinks served)

TECHNICIAN ...I'll tell you what rasts need. A punishment so bad they think twice.

Y That presumes they thought once.

VEAU What kind of punishment?

TECHNICIAN That's what prisons are for, right? So they know what it's like to be raped.

VEAU A lot of them do.

(silence)
(VEAU looks down at his pork. Smiles intermittently like a broken bulb.)

(silence)
(Y laughs charmingly, and the rest of the table laughs like magic.)

VEAU That's why we need to invent. A super-rape.

TECHNICIAN I'm listening.

VEAU We need to get the kids in on it too. A special committee where they can observe the pederasts.

So we can invent the most powerful, nasty form of penetration. And make it hurt *(whispering loudly)* very, very badly.

TECHNICIAN (*very drunk*) Give this man a promotion.
VEAU HA HA. HA HA.

(someone else makes a suggestion)

(VEAU laughs so hard he cries, looking like a boiled lobster, vaguely foreign in his laughter, smooth-shaven, eyebrows tortured and high, his hair still wet and slicked back from the shower.)

(another suggestion)

(VEAU can't catch his breath, eyes desperate and lips stretched. Someone says something and he laughs again, screams with laughter.)



A superior after having been a slave, new warder of female, childish or deviant humanity, he will be able to become that Father, owner and cop they'd promised he'd become if he first let himself be squashed for twenty years.

— Good Sex Illustrated