

Soliloquy (for Dr C)

It is 3:10 am. This chill night air really makes my skin crawl. It's so quiet here that it gives me the creeps. I ought to be in bed, I guess, catching a few Zs. But the twitches and tics just keep me awake and these meds I'm strung out on won't let me sleep.

I haven't slept in three days. But hey! I'm not complaining. At least I'm out of rehab and I can get back to my writing; my cryptic transsexual writing. My creepy secret wet dreams—my perplexity, my perversity—*The Secret Sex Diaries of Benjamin J Schreiber*.

Yeah, that's me. Benjamin J Schreiber. Or at least I think that's me. (But does Dr C think that's me? That's what I want to know.) See, Dr C? I'm writing again just like you told me to. Writing therapy, shite! Does this feel like therapy—does it look like therapy? Does it read like therapy? Tell it to the doc! Not me. I'm not buying it.

But the doc buys it. Dr C that is. She's the latest psycho brain-picker in a long, long line of shrinks my dear old dad and stepmom have hired to try to make me cop to the crazy rap. Yeah, dear old dad and mom—they slap me into rehab and expect me to come out as some kind of wholesome, normal, healthy human being—or something. Huh! Just think. Me! Benjamin J Schreiber? Like I ever was some kind of wholesome, healthy, normal human being—or something. Imagine that if you can. (I know I can't. And if I can't, it'll never happen.)

It's like I tried to tell the doc. "Doc," I said, "it's like I have these sleazy snuff flicks, these schizophrenic sex-and-drug skits, these skuzzy blue movies playing in my mind all of the time. Sleeping or waking, on the street or at home, whatever, wherever, it doesn't matter. I have these schizophrenic sex fantasies and psychotic porn movies playing in my mind—and Georgie Gust. He's in them. And Claudia Nesbitt, she's in them. And sometimes I'm in them. Sometimes that Dr C, she's in them too. And sometimes, creepy people I don't even know are in my dreams and somehow I just can't make them stop. (You know

what I mean, doc?)

Yeah, right. That Doc C—she knows, doesn't she? She sees those schizophrenic porn flicks and psycho blue movies playing in my mind, or somebody's mind anyway, somebody just like me. But she isn't talking. She just keeps asking me these sneaky questions trying to poke around in my mind and pick my brains. Trying to get inside my brain and see what makes me twitch and tic like I do—like she's trying to cure me. I don't even know if I want to be cured. (You've got to want to be cured, Ben, Dr C tells me. Otherwise, it just won't work.)

But I'm not buying that, either. Believe me. I know these psychos—I know these shrinks. They're crazier than me, and that's saying something. They're a bunch of loonies and freaks, creeps and perverts. And I'm not letting any shrink poke around in my secret sex fantasies and stick her fingers into my sleazy pornographic dreams and try to take them away from me—or maybe get me stuck back in rehab again. For life. So I keep that Dr C at a safe distance. You know what I mean? I keep her at arm's length, and I don't tell her anything that isn't good for her, don't say anything that she doesn't need to know. Which is nothing at all, if you ask me.

But at least that Dr C got me over my writing block. I've got to give her that. She cured me of my writer's block. If you can call it cured. So now I can write, write, and write. I can write my brains out (or my crap out, whatever). I can finally write whatever shite I want straight from the schizophrenic subconscious, from the psycho-porno underworld. Just me and my psycho sidekick and schizophrenic alter ego, Georgie Gust (that's me)—and, of course, Georgie's lifelong porno-chic obsession and freaky cheeky perplexity, Claudia Nesbitt. Claudia Nesbitt; my kinky sex goddess; my creepy, peeping nemesis; the number one love-and-hate object of my whole twisted love and sex life. (Keep writing, Ben, Dr C says. Just keep writing.)

At least this way, if Dr C catches me writing this crap and busts me to my ex-wife for alimony or something, I can always say, "Hey, that isn't really me! It's just Georgie and Claudia,

see?” Georgie Gust and Claudia Nesbitt, who keep stalking me and haunting me and making me write this crap. Who keep acting out these schizophrenic blue movie skits and creepy porno-flick wet dreams that keep running through my mind. Because, see, I was supposed to be cured. I was supposed to be clean. I was supposed to be off this sex, drugs, and porn obsession I picked up somewhere along the way. And I swore (honest to God!) that I wouldn’t go back again. (Of course I’d say anything, just so they’d let me out of rehab.)

Well, now, here I am. Sure as shite! Benjamin J Schreiber! I’m back for another schizophrenic blue movie and sleazy sex-and-drugs flick. Along with Georgie Gust—my creepy schizo-sidekick, and kinky sex partner in Perplexity and perversity—and Claudia Nesbitt, our freaky sex goddess and sado-bondage mistress. Yeah, and all these other freaks and loonies too—all these other creeps and pervs, those other schizophrenic bitches and ho-ho-ho’s. They’re real. Or aren’t they? Don’t ask me. (And don’t search me, either.)

All I know is that I keep on having these schizo-fantasies, these psycho-porno interludes or whatever. So I write them down in my secret sex diaries and let Dr C try to figure out what they’re all about: what’s real and what not—what’s me and what’s Georgie. And what is this thing we have (Georgie and me) with that Claudia Nesbitt?

What a freaky threesome we’d be now, wouldn’t we, Dr C? What a kinky hook-up for the creeps and pervs’ wet dreams, you see—just Georgie Gust, Claudia Nesbitt, and me.

Benjamin J Schreiber and a cast of millions out there in the invisible studio audience—we’re all ready for another freaky blue movie skit and schizo-psycho episode in: *The Secret Sex Diaries of Benjamin J Schreiber*.

Dear Diary:

I am confined but only by the walls I build myself.

Part I: A Day in the Life of Georgie Gust

A screaming alarm clock on the nightstand reads 9:00 am.

Georgie lies in bed under the sleep-rumpled covers, his bare feet sticking out the bottom. He's wearing long pajama pants without a shirt. He rolls over, slapping the snooze button, and the alarm clock stops squawking—for the moment, anyway.

Several hours later, the squawking alarm clock on the nightstand now reads 2:00 pm. Georgie finally rolls over and cuts off the alarm. Groggily, strung out and hung over, he struggles out of bed.

Georgie waddles into the kitchen in his old worn-out bathrobe. He rubs his eyes. He looks around the kitchen. It's a wreck. Dirty dishes are piled high in the sink, trash is scattered across the counters and on the floor. In other words, it's a typical morning in a typical day in the secret life of Georgie Gust.

He looks down at the stove and sees a cold leftover grilled cheese sandwich in a frying pan with only one bite taken. Georgie takes a big shaky bite of last night's reality-sandwich and tries to gag it down.

Georgie has a marker board up on the refrigerator with a "To Do List" stuck to it. The only thing the list says is: "GET CIGARETTES." The scribbled note has a checkmark by it.

(Parenthetical Pet Peeve) Pens that run out of ink when writing down something important.

Georgie glances at the telephone and answering machine. The red light is blinking. Georgie lifts a pack of cigarettes from the counter and reluctantly presses the "Play Message" button. He takes a step back to listen.

The first voice is feminine but firm. "Good morning, Georgie. It's Patty at the bank. Your account is overdrawn again. Can you plea—"

Georgie hits the delete button. The machine moves on.

"This is a courtesy call from Visa. You have an overdue balance of four thousand, nine—"

Georgie hits the delete button again. The machine continues to play.

“This is a message from Publisher’s Clearing House letting you know that you are now out of the running for the ten million doll—”

Georgie hits the delete button. The machine keeps playing.

“Hey, Georgie. It’s your moth—”

Georgie hits delete. The machine starts to play another message but Georgie hits the delete button again and again until there are no messages left.

Georgie takes a cigarette out of the pack and puts it in his mouth. He doesn’t light it yet. The cigarette dangles loosely from his lips as he walks over to the constantly heating coffee pot that is still half-filled with old coffee. He takes a dirty coffee mug out of the sink and inspects it.

It doesn’t look too bad, he thinks, just a little scraggy around the edges.

He shrugs his shoulders.

Fuck it, he thinks. Just give me the coffee and I’m out of here.

Georgie pours the two-day-old coffee into the mug. He takes a sip. It’s so hot it burns his tongue. Georgie drops the mug on the kitchen floor and coffee spills everywhere as it shatters.

Georgie just stares at the spilt coffee and walks into the bathroom.

On the can, Georgie looks at the silver toilet paper dispenser. The roll is empty. His bleary worn-out face is also blank and empty.

(Parenthetical Pet Peeve) Unknowingly dragging toilet paper stuck to your shoe.

He steps in the shower, talking to himself.

The soap drops, thudding as it strikes the porcelain tub.

Georgie bends. He slips and falls.

“God damn,” he moans.

What a way to start the day, eh?

Georgie tries to start anew in the kitchen. He lines up 10

espresso cups on the counter, each filled with black tar. He pours a sugar shaker along the line of cups, running back and forth between them, an unlit cigarette dangling from his lips.

Georgie pours each cup into a large thermos. Then he walks out of the kitchen, stepping right into the spilled coffee and porcelain shards. Coffee splashes up over his feet, but Georgie doesn't notice.

After downing half the thermos, Georgie steps into the bathroom. He turns on the hot water in the shower and just lets it run. Steam fills the air, moistening his lungs.

After a few minutes, Georgie lights his cigarette and sits down on the toilet. He picks up a three-month-old copy of *Newsweek*. He thumbs through it, scans a few words, scopes a few pictures, and then throws it down.

The radio plays "A Day in the Life," by the Beatles.

Eventually, Georgie gets dressed and walks out the front door into the white sunlit street. He stands out on the front patio, smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer. A couple of his neighbors are outside their houses too. It's a ritzy suburban subdivision somewhere in Los Angeles County.

A well-dressed woman is walking, pushing a baby carriage. She waves to Georgie's neighbor. The well-groomed neighbor casually waves back.

The well-dressed woman walks by Georgie. Georgie sheepishly raises his hand and waves. The well-dressed woman walks right past him like he doesn't exist. A few minutes later, another well-groomed couple comes walking up the street. They, too, march right past Georgie like he doesn't exist. (Like, maybe, he doesn't, even?)

Georgie takes another pull off his beer.

Although superficially nobody notices Georgie, the neighbors are really watching everything that happens at Georgie's place. There are quite a few of them actually, snooping and peeping behind the closed blinds and shuttered windows. Mostly they're the housewives stuck at home with their toddlers while their husbands are at work.

And then there's Deb and Kristen, Plain Jane lesbian lovers, both 35 years old, who live across the street. Deb is the butch dike. Kristen is the feminine balancer. They walk, hand in hand, to the front yard of their next-door neighbor, Robyn, chatting about their neighbors. (We wonder [Don't we?]: whom are they talking about? Could they be talking about Georgie and Claudia?)

"She's the perfect housewife," Deb sniffs. "She does the shopping, she does the laundry, and she does the dishes. All she does is wait on him."

"Don't underestimate her, Deb," Kristen snipes. "All she really wants is his money, his inheritance. He's worth millions."

"What about the sex?" Deb asks. "Do they still have sex, do you think? After all these years, it's got to be good."

"After all those years, it better be good," Kristen jokes.

They snicker.

The two approach Robyn's yard. She's sunbathing with her three-year-old toddler, who plays with squeaky toys in a playpen.

Robyn, who's pregnant and in her 30s, reads a tabloid on a chaise longue; she's a blondish, girl-next-door type, with a deep voice and frizzy red hair underneath her blonde highlights. While sunbathing, she covers herself against the sun in any way that she can.

Kristen and Deb scope her out, saying hello.

"Hi, Robyn," Kristen chirps. She turns to the toddler and starts babbling baby talk. "Hiya, baby boy. Wugga wugga wugga." She pinches the boy's cheeks.

(Parenthetical Pet Peeve) People who speak in a high-pitched tone.

"You know, Kristen, Deb," Robyn says. "You're probably right." It's immediately clear that she's been following their conversation. "But I do bet it gets boring after a while," she concludes.

"I think she's one of those 'quiet criminals'," Deb whispers. "I

think she's a real freak."

"How so?" Kristen wants to know.

"I don't know. It's just the two of them." Deb smirks. "They bring the weirdest people over; one leaves and then the other leaves. They never go out together. And besides, they're so anti-social."

"So what's wrong with that?" Kristen asks. "He comes home one day like he's just won the lottery. He's got a new car, he re-does the house, and she picks out the colors. What more can a woman want? Nobody's perfect, you know."

"They're probably swingers," Robyn guesses. "They're probably wife-swappers."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Kristen asks nervously. "So what?"

"I think she swings both ways," Deb snickers.

"So what, Deb?" Kristen asks.

"Yeah, so what?" Robyn snickers. "So do I."

Kristen rolls her eyes. "Yeah, right," she says.

(Parenthetical Pet Peeve) That anyone thinks the President's sex life is any of his or her business.

Georgie walks through the house, drinking the last of the espresso from his thermos. He lights a cigarette and gulps down of the final, cold shot for fast, Fast, FAST relief.

And Georgie sees that the day is nice. There are white, pillowing, slow-moving clouds, blue sky, and bright sun.

"Shite," Georgie grunts. "Not another beautiful day."

He twitches and tics his discomfort.

Georgie walks out onto the second-floor patio. He looks down below. The hardworking landscapers have their power-blowers on high.

A police helicopter flies overhead, loud, Loud, LOUD—a cigarette boat screams by in the distance.

Fire truck sirens whine.

Georgie's face shudders. His arms jerk up from his sides. In a moment of panic, Georgie escapes downstairs. He climbs into

his car and blasts out of the driveway.

Georgie arrives at his office around 3:15 pm. He's only 6 or so hours late. In the messy trashed-out office there's a desk, with a computer and papers strewn everywhere. His inbox is piled as high with papers as the sink in Georgie's kitchen is piled with dishes.

Georgie stares at the landscape of his desk for a long time. Finally, he glances at an empty picture frame on the wall. There's nothing in it except the blank wall. Georgie alternates his attention between the desk and the wall.

This goes on for some time.

Finally, Georgie reaches for another cigarette. He notices it's his last one.

When Georgie gets home, he looks at the marker board and erases the check mark by "GET CIGARETTES." Then he picks up a marker and rechecks it.

[Smoke Break]

The next day, Georgie walks down the street singing "A Day in the Life," by the Beatles.

At the same time, an anonymous New Age-type woman, about 40, professionally dressed and wearing open-toed high-heeled shoes, also walks down the street. She's singing the same song as Georgie: The Beatles' "A Day in the Life."

The New Age woman sings the verses only just after Georgie does, like she's imitating him, only with some slight time-lapse delay. After the New Age woman has finished the first verse, Georgie starts in on the chorus. After Georgie's finished, the New Age woman starts in on the chorus.

Georgie and the New Age woman both turn the same corner at the same time, singing the same song. They run right into each other. Georgie hears that she's singing and immediately stops, like he's embarrassed or something. Somehow he just knows (we just know) that the New Age woman is Claudia Nesbitt.

But he's not going to admit he knows, is he? (Of course he

isn't, and neither am I.)

"Were you just singing that Beatles song, too?" the woman asks.

"I, I'm not sure," Georgie stammers.

"Yeah, you were," Claudia says. "I just know it, that Beatles song, from the *White Album*. Or, I mean, *Sgt Pepper*."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." Georgie sounds excited. "It's . . ."

Georgie searches his memory for the name of the song, but still draws a blank.

"A Day in the Life," Claudia smiles.

"That's it!" Georgie gushes.

Georgie smiles for the first time all day.

Claudia lights a cigarette.

"Do you happen to have another of those?" Georgie asks. "By any chance?"

Claudia hands Georgie one of her Virginia Slims.

Georgie looks sheepishly at the woman's face. He notices her frizzy red hair, her bright green eyes. Almost immediately, his shy eyes dart from her face to the brightly painted toes in her open-toed shoes.

Georgie can't take his eyes off of her stunningly painted toenails and stylish feet. He looks at Claudia like a guy who's having a one-way conversation with a pair of huge tits. Georgie tries to look Claudia in the eyes, but he just keeps looking down at her feet.

Claudia looks down to see what Georgie's looking at and finally notices she's stepped in something sticky.

"Ah, damn it!" Claudia curses politely. "I stepped in somebody's gum."

"I think it's a Lifesaver," Georgie says helpfully.

Georgie playfully knocks the Lifesaver off her heel with his foot. He gives a shy grin as the New Age woman with frizzy red hair and green eyes inspects her brightly painted toes and open-toed high-heeled shoes. Georgie notices a wedding band on her finger, but that just excites him even more.

"So, do you . . . ?" Georgie begins excitedly. "Or don't you . . ."

?”

Georgie and Claudia carry on a conversation, their lips moving and smiling.

They are both obviously into each other. They keep laughing and talking excitedly. A few times, Georgie points to Claudia's brightly painted feet, and she giggles girlishly in response.

Claudia lights Georgie's cigarette.

They decide to check into a motel.

[Smoke Break]

In the motel, Claudia sits on the couch while Georgie's sitting on the coffee table. He licks the stylish arch of Claudia's right foot while she croons to Moby's "Everloving," which plays over the tinny radio.

Suddenly, in the entrancing midst of this passionate, romantic seduction scene and delirious foot-fetishist's fantasy, reality blinks out.

The whole scene changes.

Dear Diary:

Fuck it, as for my being happy? I can only be happy now, and that there will never be a time when it is not now. So, el-blam-o!

Part II: Another Day in the Secret Life of Georgie Gust

The motel room is empty. In the bathroom, a towel has been thrown out on the floor; it's crumpled up from wet feet. There are wet footprints on the bathroom floor and empty single-serving soap bottles on the corner shelf.

The housekeeper, Mary, gets the room ready for the next guests.

The telephone sits on the unmade bed. There's a half-used box of tissues beside it.

Georgie stands in the corner of his well-groomed yard, watering the closely clipped grass with a green garden hose. He smiles and waves to a neighbor passing by on the street.

The neighbor, well dressed, ignores Georgie—of course.

From inside the house, the phone rings twice. Claudia's voice echoes quietly from the answering machine:

"Hey there, Georgie," she says. "I was just thinking of you."

[Smoke Break]

The blue moonshine lights up the white sand beach and the white-capped breakers. The tide is low. The whispering wave-rollers are quiet and gentle.

Walking alone near the water's edge is a party of one, cigarette in mouth—a slightly disheveled, paunchy, middle-aged man. (Who is this guy?)

It's Georgie, of course. But he looks slightly out of shape. Why does he look so bedraggled, so downtrodden? What's happened to change the Georgie Gust we know and love (don't we?) into this disheveled, haggard stranger we scarcely know?

Still, even though Georgie looks pretty scruffy, like he's been slacking, maybe drinking and doping, sinking into a dissolute life of drunkenness and dissipation—he still has that drug-addict sexiness some girls really go nuts for.

Although he's lost in thought, he's still taking in everything around him. The whitecaps crash louder and the screaming gulls come storming in for a meal.

Early the next morning, the white sand beach is empty. The sky is gray, flat, and still. The screaming gulls fly low in flocks.

The Pacific rollers wash in and out, whispering with a mysterious voice.

Out of nowhere, Claudia's voice appears on Georgie's voicemail.

"I was downstairs at one of the lectures," Claudia's voice murmurs. "It's so boring, but I got several compliments on my new pedicure."

We're revisiting the past again, aren't we? We're back in The Early Days of Claudia Nesbitt and Georgie Gust. (Right?)

Can't we ever escape the past?

Claudia's raspy, husky voice echoes on Georgie's voicemail:

"So I thought maybe you might like to know what a great job you did. And on such short notice, too. What a swell guy you are."

[Smoke Break]

The old wooden pier juts out into the immense blue ocean. A middle-aged couple walks hand-in-hand toward the end of the pier. They stare quietly out at the barges coming in. There's a snack-and-bait stand to their left; it is still closed at this early morning hour. The receiver of an old black payphone dangles off its hook. Scrap litter blows in the wind.

Out of nowhere, Claudia's husky, sexy voice appears on Georgie's voicemail:

"I'm meeting some cool people here," she tells him. "But a lot of them are really lame. This whole convention is really boring."

Only a few fishermen are out with their fishing gear. It's still very early in the morning.

An Asian man pulls up a small fish that dangles on fishing line. His small son grabs the white bait bucket.

Out of nowhere, Claudia's smoky, sexy voice appears on Georgie's voicemail:

"So, you see, some of my new friends wanted to hang out by

the bar and talk medicine. But I was hoping we could finish our conversation?"

A delivery van drives past. Somebody tosses a newspaper on Georgie's well-groomed front lawn. There's a big pile of old rolled-up newspapers on the closely clipped lawn.

Out of nowhere, Claudia's chirpy, worn-out voice appears on Georgie's voicemail:

"The weather's so much nicer out here. We should at least get together before I leave tomorrow."

[Smoke Break]

Bright red sunlight bleeds through the closed window blinds. Georgie's sprawled on the bed with his eyes squeezed shut, passed out, sound asleep.

Out of nowhere, Claudia's cheerful encouraging voice appears on Georgie's voicemail:

"I was thinking about how brilliant you are," she says. "And, yikes, you have so much talent. People look at you and they see big things."

The silent alarm clock on the nightstand reads 10:30 am.

Out on the beach that afternoon, the sky has cleared up a bit. The white sand beach is packed with kite-fliers. A dozen kites glide along the windy coastline full of living color and wonderful beauty. On the old wooden pier there are dozens of fishermen. In fact, there are more men than fish.

At the hotel across the road, a professional healthcare conference is just letting out. Conference guests come swarming out of the emptying motel lobby. The checkout line is backed up out the door. The professional conference guests still wearing official nametags check out of the hotel, one by one, two by two, and three by three.

The well-dressed bellboys are busy trying to handle two or four bags each. The flustered guests press tips into the bellboys' hands and hop into waiting cabs.

[Smoke Break]

Georgie's three-story suburban penthouse is really quite modest. So are most of the three-story houses in this suburban neighborhood.

Out of nowhere, Claudia's boisterous, challenging voice appears on Georgie's voicemail:

"What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?" she asks. "What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?" she repeats. "I just love that question."

In this modest suburban neighborhood, the neighbors wear light jackets when they walk their dogs. A few stray house cats prowl the sidewalks. A small crowd of early-morning walkers chat and gossip on the sunny corner near lines of sporty new cars parked on the white sunlit street. It seems like a friendly neighborhood. (Doesn't it?)

Out of nowhere, Claudia's gritty, deep-throated voice appears on Georgie's voicemail:

"Grab hold of just one project and get in there with your teeth and see what happens," she challenges him. "Even if you don't really have to, to make a living. Why not? What have you got to lose?"

Georgie's slightly pretentious suburban house is on a sunny street corner. It's the biggest house on the whole block. It's also got an ocean view. It takes up two full lots, what with the three-story house and the modest guesthouse over the three-car garage.

Out of nowhere, Claudia's shrilling, encouraging voice appears on Georgie's voicemail:

"Somebody wants to tell a story about you and you're the only one who knows it well enough!" she cheers him on. "Go for it!" she says.

The front yard is a small grassy area with exotic landscaping, a patio, and a white board fence. The house is made of brick, of course.

Out of nowhere, Claudia's hard-bitten, satiric voice appears on Georgie's voicemail:

"You'd do the world a favor. Hell—do it for me!" she barks.

“I’d love to hear about all the shite you’ve been through.”

A small gate leads to the front door of his charming and desirable home. The house is a little big for just one person—especially a lonely guy like Georgie.

Out of nowhere, Claudia’s mawkish, jeering voice appears on Georgie’s voicemail:

“So what if your dad is some big well-to-do public figure or whatever?” she mocks. “This is your chance to shine.” she applauds. “Just go for it!”

She pauses.

“Oh, just . . . wait a minute”

At Georgie’s plush suburban home, the Mexican housekeeping staff arrives in a black Ford Excursion. The boss, a fortyish Hispanic male hipster named Sanchez, wears a ponytail—his son, Rueben, who’s about 21 years old, is dressed as a Mexican gangster. The female assistant is an Anglo who’s sweet and polite and wears glasses. But, oddly enough, she speaks no English at all.

Out of nowhere, Claudia’s saccharine, girlish voice appears on Georgie’s voicemail:

“I have a sweet little gift I found in the gift shop down here,” she purrs. “It’s the perfect little gift. Just for you, Georgie.”

The Excursion Park is on the shady side of the house near the three-car garage.

Out of nowhere, Claudia’s middle-aged, tired voice appears on Georgie’s voicemail:

“Anyway, my number should’ve popped up on your phone,” she says, ringing off. “Just let me know what happens.”

The crew unloads the cleaning supplies.

[Smoke Break]

The silent alarm clock on the nightstand reads: 12:00 pm.

Georgie’s a little bit heavier and maybe too tall. Otherwise, he’s a handsome young man (we think.) He lies in the sleep-rumpled bed, looking beat.

Crumpled-up piles of slick pornographic magazines, and a

tiny video player that rolls a Triple-X show, surround Georgie. But Georgie's not really watching. (Is he?)

Georgie's feet hang out of the slightly yellowish sheets. His socks dangle limply over the nightstand. Georgie wears long pajama pants without a shirt, revealing his stressed-out little jelly-belly.

He sits up in bed and leans over. He peeks out the bedroom window through the shuttered venetian blinds and sees the cleaning crew unlocking the back door, about to come inside. He starts to panic.

"Shite." Georgie says. "They're here."

He gets up out of bed, agitated. He finds his wire-rimmed glasses on the nightstand and puts them on, but immediately he notices they're smudged. He wipes them clean as best he can with his pajama pants.

Georgie spots the clock and turns its face away, mumbling jumbled pseudo-garble to himself. He rechecks the time with his watch and two other alarm clocks in out-of-reach places.

He decides that it's officially afternoon.

He twists open the blinds. White sunlight beams through the horizontal bars.

Behind the closet door, an old white hotel bathrobe hangs.

Georgie wraps himself up in the robe and folds his arms, wishing he could find the waist tie.

He opens his bedroom door but the Mexican housekeeper beats him to it.

Georgie has no choice but to say something. "Hi," Georgie says.

The woman smiles at him. "Hola," she says, and steps into the bedroom.

She's only slightly embarrassed. The woman has obviously run into Georgie before on other occasions, when he was in even worse shape than now. She speaks in Spanish and signs to Georgie that she'll come back at a better time. She sashays away down the living room hallway.

Mary, the Mexican housekeeper, returns to the kitchen

where Rueben is prepping the dishes and unloading the dishwasher. Without taking orders, Mary swipes up a mop and starts scrubbing the tile floors.

(Parenthetical Pet Peeve) Having to wash the dishes before putting them in the dishwasher.

The boss, Sanchez, starts the coffee machine.

The three talk to each other in Spanish. Rueben switches on the small clock radio that's mounted by the kitchen sink. Mariachi music swarms through the air, thick with the scent of soap.

Strung out and hung over, Georgie stumbles in and grabs a pack of smokes. He ducks out, mumbling, and then strolls through the still-disorganized living room. It's a disaster.

Georgie turns to the front door to smoke on the porch. But before he gets there he stops for a moment, turning back to the disheveled bathroom. With the unlit cigarette still propped in his mouth, Georgie starts the shower water running on hot. Then he walks through the door and sits heavily on the porch steps.

Georgie tries to light his cigarette but the lighter only flashes and sparks without catching flame. He takes a fresh matchbook off the patio table and lights the whole matchbook. With the matchbook flaring wildly, he finally lights Claudia's Ultra-Slim 120.

On the white concrete sidewalk in front of Georgie's plush suburban home, Georgie's well-dressed neighbor walks a small baby. The man's dressed appropriately for the cool day, wearing a light windbreaker and thick jeans.

"Nice day, isn't it?" the neighbor says. "For something, anyway." He waves cheerfully to Georgie.

Georgie still isn't dressed yet. He's still wearing his old heavy bathrobe.

Georgie turns his back to the white concrete sidewalk and faces the house. His reflection in the front window stares back at him vacantly. He's a little embarrassed. He's really not the

social type.

A delivery boy enters through the small front gate. He pulls Georgie's paper from the stack and hands it to him, with a new delivery menu from Ling's China Garden.

Georgie nods. "Thanks."

While Georgie still stands smoking in the front yard, Deb and Kristen, holding hands, approach Georgie's corner yard with their dog.

One of them starts to wave hello, but Georgie has already put out his cigarette and headed back inside where the bathroom is bellowing steam.

Georgie powers up the DVD player that is mounted outside the bathroom door. The 1001 Living Dead Strings start playing their *Greatest Hits of Great Dead Teenage Vampire Lovers*. Now there's music, Georgie thinks.

(Parenthetical Pet Peeve) "Science projects" in the refrigerator: in other words, rotten leftovers.

The Mexican houseboy, Rueben, fits a stack of DVDs onto Georgie's CD tower shelves. He returns to the kitchen fridge, checking off the first item from the list:

Things That Need To Be Done:

#1) PUT DVDs AND CDs INTO PILES.

#2) SWITCH FURNITURE AROUND

#3) COLOR-COORDINATE CLOSETS

Georgie slouches through the crowded living room, staring at the lists of things to do written on little pieces of scrap paper that are stacked on his coffee table.

In Georgie's New Age living room there's a sheer overkill of every little-known fancy gizmo and cheap modernized gimmick, every cutting-edge electronic doodad and trendy entertainment gadget that could possibly fit into a single room. But somehow, the room's still neat and organized.

There are 8x10-inch glossy photos and brightly colored drawings framed and tacked up along the walls. And on the bookshelves there's certificates displaying Georgie's distant

past: awards, trophies, and graduation records. Pictures of old girlfriends.

There are piles and piles of hardcore intellectual books stacked in piles of three hardcover copies each. The video and music collection also exists in triplicate.

He has too many things, and too many copies of his things. Some of Georgie's sketches and notes, peeking out of folders and from behind books, are only half finished. His drawings and paintings are scattered randomly on the hard surfaces of the room. They're hardly done, but still brilliant.

Graph paper diagrams seem drawn with purpose but with no immediate implications—along with intricate patent designs and obscure blueprints.

It's obvious that Georgie has a strong, inventive mind—maybe even too strong for his own good. He has too many projects going on for one slothful slacker dude. Arbitrary projects; redundant and grandiose projects; stupid, trivial projects; but still, too many—way too many.

Compared to his present, Georgie's past seems distinctly rich and full to him now. Somehow he seems to have lost that richness and fullness (that living, colorful beauty). Now he finds comfort only in his troubled sleep. He has nothing to look forward to, now. Now, all his needs are taken care of.

The things in his house, although artistically placed, are almost mathematically arranged. Somehow everything corresponds to everything else.