

Interior Title Page

The Dis-condition of Ease



Owen Patterson

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Break my bones

I crawl faster

Cleave my heart

I love twice

Stone my head

I know better



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Rorschach

Thaddaeus Thomas, the resident junior class slacker, has once again been called to the office. He sits patiently, waiting to hear his name. His calm could easily be mistaken for indifference. Of course, it's not often so simple.

Brother Judah is the school counselor. He is a Christian Brother nearing the end of his tenure. His pure white beard and aching knees beg for retirement. But he has one last mission to complete.

Brother Judah opens the door to his office, “Thaddaeus, come in. Have a seat.”

Thaddaeus walks in and smiles as he sits. He is very familiar with this space and with Brother Judah. He likes the aging brother.

“Thaddaeus...”

“Rorschach... I told you Brother, my friends call me Rorschach.”

“I’m not going to call you Rorschach.”

“Hmm, OK.”

Brother Judah sits back in his chair and sighs. He knows this young man well and sees what others can’t or won’t. Thaddaeus hides his intellect and sensitivity so not to be vulnerable.

“Thaddaeus, you’re failing or nearly failing every class. The administration is not going to let

you waste your parents' money. They're going to put you out."

"They should do whatever they have to."

"Stop acting like you don't care. I know you do. You have a lot of potential. You're so smart."

Brother Judah may never know how much Thaddaeus appreciates these talks. He'll never know because Thaddaeus will never say. He doesn't speak in explicit terms. He speaks from the heart, but everything he says is like a riddle or ancient parable.

"Brother, don't misunderstand. OK, I can see how you *could* misunderstand." Thaddaeus pauses for a moment before continuing, "Brother, there's a reason my friends call me Rorschach. I'm not intelligent. I'm creative."

"Thaddaeus, you can be both."

"I'm a donkey's anus."

“What?” Brother Judah is accustomed to Thaddaeus’ roundabout way of talking, but this surprises the veteran counselor. “What are you talking about?”

“All donkeys are asses, but not all asses are donkeys.”

Brother Judah is speechless.

Thaddaeus continues, “Sometimes words have meaning. Sometimes they are just beauty. Sometimes you see a butterfly. Sometimes, it’s just gum on pavement.”

Brother Judah can’t help but think that he has somehow failed his mission.

Thaddaeus can’t help but think that he has succeeded in his.



The Clown

Jacob Segan Lévy left his home that evening without sitting for dinner. He simply needed some time. He was on a quest. Though, not knowing for what he searched, he wandered.

A man of simple means, Jacob dressed not to impress, but to blend. He was usually neat and casual. This night he wore pleated grey slacks, a pressed white shirt, and polished black leather shoes. A fairly ordinary man walked the streets.

Lost in thought, Jacob found himself on a street of artisan shops. He knew of the place, but

had not ventured there. He knew little of arts and crafts, but was curious.

Jacob came upon one shop that from the outside appeared not dissimilar to the others. But when he peered inside, he saw that it was an art gallery. His gaze was immediately captured by an absurd painting in the farthest corner. Jacob entered the gallery and gave not even the slightest glance to the other canvasses. He headed directly for that absurd painting in the rear.

Jacob stared fixedly at that absurd painting. A woman, at least half Jacob's age, gingerly approached. She stood beside him. She was clearly young and clearly attractive, but dressed well beyond her years. She was downright frumpy. She wore a collarless long-sleeved white blouse, buttoned to the top. Her ankle length skirt was dark brown and pleated. Her flats were plain brown. The two of them, side by side, could have been framed and placed on a gallery wall.

Jacob did not notice her.

The young woman observed Jacob making faces at the painting. He jugged his head forward and back again. He tilted his head far to the right and then to the left. Anyone might have wondered at his sanity. Anyone might have inquired as to his intent. The young woman merely asked, "Do you like it?"

Without looking at her he responded, "I don't know about art. This painting confuses me." Jacob did not answer her question. She thought it to be odd, but was still intrigued.

"Why is this painting the only one that you've looked at?"

"I told my wife that I was going out to find someone to have sex with."

Again, she found his response odd. "That's cruel!" she said.

"Well, tit for tat."

“Did you really say that to your wife?”

“Well, no, not really.”

“You are a real clown.”

Jacob did not respond to her comment. He began to ponder aloud about the absurd painting. The setting was a park with green grass, trees, and colorful flowers. There was a clown performing. His audience was just a few feet away. The clown stood on his left leg with his right leg lifted and bent at the knee. On his right foot, he balanced a stick with a spinning plate. On his knee was perched a parrot. The clown wore a cap made from a burlap sack. Atop the cap sat a tiny Chihuahua. The clown did all of this while juggling three red balls.

The clown’s head was slightly tilted to the right. He smiled, but it wasn’t real. It was a false half smile. His eyebrows were raised high into his forehead and his eyes were sad.

The audience, on the other hand, was hysterical with laughter.

The boys wore little sailor suits. The girls wore ankle length dresses tied at the waists with ribbons. They wore brimmed straw hats with flowers. Little fingers pointed. Their heads flung back with mouths agape. Men in suits, vests, and derby hats, clutched their fat bellies. The women, in their lovely dresses, fancy hats, and with tiny parasols, were doubled over in some exquisite joy. All eyes were tightly shut and tearing. None were actually looking at the clown. The artist's depiction was so impressive that Jacob could actually hear the exuberant laughter.

The clown's face was the source of Jacob's confusion. The false half smile was needy and appeared to ask, "Am I entertaining?" While the sad eyes asked, "Are you laughing at me?"

The young woman heard all of Jacob's musings and ruminations, and finally said, "You relate to this painting. Are *you* a *real* clown?"

Jacob turned to her for the first time and said, "Ah, I get it now. All that he is doing, they should be clapping, not laughing. He feels unappreciated." Jacob then contorted his face into a false half smile, arched his eyebrows high into his forehead, and projected sad eyes. The young woman was startled because Jacob had so completely morphed into the clown. She feared Jacob's obsession.

Jacob finally relaxed his face and said, "I'm not a clown. I'm an old-school parent. My children are very modern. And my wife dreams of something different; something not me."

Jacob said nothing more. He turned and walked away.

Exiting the gallery, Jacob gave not even the slightest glance to any other canvass. Walking down

the street, he heard the young woman call to him,
“Please, come again.”

Jacob Segan Lévy approached his small but comfortable home. He thought to himself, as always,
“Maybe it’ll be different this time.”

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