

THE HOUSE THAT SHADOWS BUILT.

PART THREE: THE HERD

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It was the great chasm that motivated me. The unassailable gap between the bombed out villages and thriving city centres. That abscess of white noise and polished floors between the churchyards and dirty backrooms, spaces with no greater purpose than to provide a spot in which to try and meet oblivion at a low price. Everything was set up to sparkle and catch our eye. We were magpies and vultures, scared by the shadows - the great fucking 'what if?' of death and pain.

My whole idea was to abolish the chasm, destroy the dam and let shopping centres be washed in blood. To break one hallucination and replace it with another. Reconfigure our brains to at least see where the two worlds crossed over; to see the overlaps between comfy Sunday afternoons, hot soup and suburban fences and the spontaneous suicides of smartphone assembly line workers and office block cleaners, tumbling through the air from the great physical heights that they had looked down on their own lives from every day. Skyscrapers and immense factories; great manifestations of the mythical career ladder, the falling figures rushing towards null, on their way to become one with the cracks in the pavement, the cracks that children hop-scotched over playing their imaginative games and which the grazing homeless scanned for dropped

coins and cigarette butts.

After a stolen fry up we set about plastering the ticket office in tragic headlines from older newspapers, building ourselves an altar. The centrepiece was a clipping I'd found in the very back of the staff room, a front page from the day of John Lennon's murder. Me and The Kid both agreed it was a most historical event, crucial in our personal philosophy: the death of the high priest of faux sentiment.

The Kid was adamant that to gather people we needed propaganda, so we took to cutting apart my scrapbook and reforming it as a sort of magazine; part pamphlet, part manifesto. We photocopied a hundred black and white out of focus copies using the photocopier in the cinema managers office and took to the streets.

We intended to cover the city, to invade the space of everyone we passed and force feed them our ideas. We hit the chicken shops and off-licences. The Kid targeted teenage girls drinking cider in church graveyards and introduced himself as Ted Kaczynski, The Unabomber.

We ran out of copies of the pamphlet after a few hours and The Kid provoked a fight with radical Islamists outside a supermarkets by folding our last copy into a paper airplane and hitting one straight in the eye. In the ensuing melee an elbow

split my eyebrow open and my face was quickly covered in blood. While I went to the hospital and got myself stitched up, The Kid was busy 'fundraising'.

When I found him again he'd hustled up more than enough cash to print more copies. While fingering the money he told me about an idea he'd had.

"It would be our own distribution network"

"What would?" He looked at me as if it was my fault I didn't know what he was talking about.

"What I'm suggesting. We'll buy up all those magazines the homeless sell and get them to stock out stuff instead" I liked the idea, so I told him.

"Yeah I like that"

"You're not the only one with ideas you know" I didn't know I'd said I was.

He was so excited by his new role as agent provocateur and controller of a homeless propagandising network that he painted a stencil on the back of his jacket that read "commissar of the fall" and took to rollerskating down the middle of the street throwing the pamphlets at anyone and everyone. While he was off causing a scene, but one that would no doubt draw people in I was taking more targeted approach.

I was looking for people with a need in their eyes, wide open for a filling,

desperate for something, ignorant and hungry. The children of parents with numb tongues, empty heads, emptied by lifetimes of being pushed around by snake-oil salesmen dressed in uniforms and malicious philanthropists.

We had our first session with a couple of teenagers I met this way, the type of acne scarred excess that gather in the cracks of every large city. I knew we needed a name for our group and while reading up on vaccination and herd immunity landed on 'The Herd'. We would be the vanguard of a new kind of society, the growing block that would lead to herd immunity.

The first members of The Herd were my empty headed hungry kids, the kind that every movement always has an always will start with, uncharged batteries waiting to be used to power a war or a revolution or a booming business.

The Kid and me got them going. He was the orator but the words were mine. As a competent performer he knew that positioning the audience was half the battle and before he started he passed around a bottle of rum and cola spiked with speed and just enough mandy to get them feeling sentimental.

"Are you tired of the beautiful bullshit?" That particular phrase was one of his, his English was getting better, getting so good in fact it was losing some of it's charm, it's rough edges, and he was falling in love with the basics of rhetoric.

“The oh so civilised world of overstocked shops and the oh so fuckable glow of the new young hedonists?”

He paused for effect and to scan the room for signs of the the mandy aking effect, redirecting that fight or flight adrenaline into buzzing spine of epiphany.

“But it’s hard isn’t it? We’re under attack, under siege from their aesthetic, victims of the sheen!”

He reached inside his jacket and took out a printed sheet of paper. It was a manifesto I’d written earlier, or rather the sketch of a manifesto.

“The world is sick and it’s sickness takes the form of illusion, the world can’t see itself for what it really is but there is a solution. A system for dismantling the illusion and getting at the truth”

His words were having an effect and with big disc pupils the group hung on his every word.

“We cannot, will not and do not hide from the nature of the world! We refuse give up control of our internal world and we will take it back! We believe in the power of mutation, the power of evolution! We believe in the logic of inoculation and the power of vaccination! We will be cured and will will cure!”

Despite not having had any of the concoction in the bottle I found myself effected by his theatrics. When he stepped off the make shift stage it was my turn. I'd been up all night preparing it, the very first 'dose' of the medicine we were offering. I turned off the light and let the projector light up the screen.

Terrible violence emerged from the flickering light on the wall. A restaurant or a club, there were tables that were quickly overturned by gangs of men wearing balaclavas. They wielded bats and machetes at the patrons of the restaurant or club who stumbled over each other with fearful disregard for each other's safety. An old man was trampled, a young child who'd lost track of her parents was struck by a blade and the top of her small head opened and hung to one side, the look of pain was still visible on her face as she was drenched in her own fluids.

Some of the audience looked away in disgust. Arms were crossed and fists clenched, empathy and fear washed across their faces but they kept watching. The patrons raised their arms in defence and their digits were mangled or removed by the urgent blows of their assailants. One by one they fell and lost their human form and structure to become part of something less than it's parts, a clump of broken flesh and extinguished consciousness.

When this sequence ended people began to shift in their seats and look over at each other, sharing anxious looks. The next video started with a camera moving passed around a party. It was a hot night, wherever it was and the guests were

gathered around a pool, they ate grilled meat from paper plates and danced with cocktails in their hands. Guest after guest greeted the camera, blowing smoke or a kiss or raising a glass. After looping around the pool the camera moves away from the party, in to the darkness of a garden. The music and voices quieter, then a flame, a burning torch. Two figures, barely more than teens were bound to posts at the end of the garden. Their mouths gagged but their eyes left uncovered. The figure with the torch wore beach shorts and flip flops and a bandanna over his face and as the camera approached he lifted up a canister of petrol and splashed the bound figures. Without mouths to scream their eyes did all the work. The camera took extra care to capture this. Once the canister has been emptied the man in the beach shorts set the pair alight.

Involuntary groans and gasps filled the room. Someone shouted out that we stop it, turn it off, but I didn't. The camera didn't stray from the sight of the toasting skin and dripping fat, the outraged audience member ran out of the room, but the rest stayed. When the video ended the only sound to be heard was heavy breathing and the occasional sob. The room smelled of sweat and relief.

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Now that people had started listening to me, I couldn't help but feel uncertain of myself.

When I was a kid I liked to pick my scabs, and I rejoiced when the dinner lady applying a plaster to yet another scraped knee or elbow referred to the pus as poison. I'd sit with my back against my bedroom wall and peel away the layers of hard crusted skin and dried blood, like cheese on a burnt pizza.

After school I'd go home and mutilate my action figures, removing limbs and scorching plastic muscles so that they looked like they had lived through the wars and battles I acted out with them. It seemed clear, or clearly unclear, that the world had decided suffering meant earning; pain meant reality. Blood meant something, that was for sure. I wanted in. I wanted some of that raw cosmic shit unfiltered, an anomaly in a world of pleasant terraced houses and mowed lawns and jumble sales.

I grew up near a hospital that served as one of the main military hospitals for soldiers coming back from war. Sometimes on the bus I'd see soldiers with missing limbs or skin gone shiny and soft like it does when it's been heated to military grade temperature. Sometime around then I chopped off my action man's arm and bodged wire into the stump. I twisted this into a kind of ersatz hand and thought it made him cooler and tougher, realer.

But it wasn't enough. I couldn't stop thinking about how people would react if I had a stump for an arm. My mind frenzied with all the fantastical lies and self-indulgent imaginings. I could be a war hero, the survivor of a terrorist attack

or any number of 90s action movie inspired scenarios. I imagined all the attachments; claws and hooks, guns and rocket launchers, shiny metallic fists and lock picking devices. I imagined the healed stump and the white of the bone almost visible in bright light through the skin. I imagined looking at it and knowing that I'd experienced something that not everyone had. Being special because I'd experienced a horror.

The next step was of course that I began to fantasise about cutting off my own arm. Self amputation. I took a knife out of the kitchen drawer and lay it across my wrist. I pressed down with all the weight my child's body could muster. A thin red line appeared, the beginning of a cut. I stopped. I wouldn't be able to do it myself. And anyway that would be fake, stolen valour. I'd have to have a proper accident, unscripted.

During lessons I stared out of the classroom window and visualised falling out of it, my arm severed on the ice shard edges of the broken glass, cut clean like a paper cut. I sucked at the straw on my milk carton waiting for my dad by the school gates and thought about a car hurtling out of control, up onto the pavement and pinning me to the fence, arm crushed into a ketchup jelly and bone coloured mush. But I was holding my little brother's hand. I'd have to throw him out the way of course. Two times the hero.

Once my mum told me that she had become so convinced during her pregnancy

that I was going to be born blind or crippled or deaf or dumb or with some kind of terrible disease, that when she woke up from the cesarean, her mind fogged with medication, and looked down at me, she thought I was missing a leg but felt relief after all, you can live with that, it's only a leg.

I stole blue-tac from the teachers drawer and spent a maths lessons covering my whole hand it it, using blue, black and red biro's to colour and mould it into a grotesque open wound. I saw it moving in my mind, oozing bile and streams of pus and every shade of claret. After the lesson I peeled off the blue-tack and stuck it to my desk, quickly colouring the edges so it looked genuine, like a mould or growth of jagged coagulated skin and plasma. A sculpted haemoglobin. I was called into the headmaster's offices after lunch. The maths teacher was in tears and clutching a half empty box of tissues. She'd discovered my creation and taken it to heart. Some kind of mould, textured with the colour and form of violent human pain. They asked me why I had done it and I just shrugged and giggled nervously in that way kids do when being told off. What could I tell them? Why do people stare into fires?

Because fire is enticing, dramatic and dangerous. Like an open wound. So was I still just that child or did I really believe the things I was saying? Whatever the answer, it was too late now. I had already taken action.

The Kid said we needed a name for the cinema and a name came to me in an

instant, it was now known as The House That Shadows Built or The House for short.

I had a sign made of large letters produced and hung over the main entrance.

The House itself was an intense space of darkened corridors, the air thick with the smell of sweat and dust, the outside still maintained the illusion of an abandoned and boarded up cinema. To the people who drove past it on the way to work it probably just looked like it had always looked in the years since it had closed down; a landmark left over from an earlier time.

As we attracted more members, The House was transformed from within, without any direction the built up of collective energy spilled over into improving and extending the space. Unlocking locked doors and clearing blocked corridors, windows were uncovered and quickly re-covered after short debate on the virtues of darkness, the artificial night being in both mine and the Kid's opinion, a necessary foundation of free hallucination and 'reality fever' as we'd come to call the shivering state of uncertainty that followed a particularly successful intoxication.

Although there was a routine to the morning and evening intoxication sessions, the daily lives of The Herd didn't follow one. Having left their jobs and homes behind them, the confines of the House - it's corridors and screens and depleted

popcorn machines - became a sub world. A world away from the world. Free from the tyranny of daylight, with only two hands on the clock - the morning and the evening intoxication sessions - they were free to make their own days. Everyone always seemed to be working with a rabid intensity. Perhaps they felt what I felt; the century on my back of my neck like the nuzzle of a commissar's pistol.

Sid had the kind of thick lens glasses I thought they didn't make anymore and wore friendship bracelets and beads from wrist to elbow. She carried a low hanging backpack full of books that completed the impression of a school kid, but Sid was no school kid, she was in her late thirties and spoke with an authority that cut against her image. She was introduced to me as Sid the Librarian and was happy to tell me why. Sid spoke so fast it often sounded like she was racing to get her thoughts out before they spontaneously combusted in her grey matter.

"I'm a librarian by birth, predisposed to cataloguing, to systems of organisation. As a child I collected and catalogued the sediments of my own body in the form of nail trimmings and usurped teeth and stored them under my bed"

"Childhood obsessions make a good foundation for adult passion"

"My parents were horrified, when they found my stash they made me throw it all away. I remember crying for days on end"

Sid smiled at the memory and then her mouth started racing again.

“When I found books I was instantly addicted, but to words. As much as any novel I loved the dictionary and read it cover to cover and then back again. I still think there is something perfect about a dictionary, it’s the perfect book, a catalogue of all human ideals and the toolbox for all possible manifestations of those ideas. So linear yet so complex.”

She took a bottle of water out of her bag and drank half of it and then on second thought emptied the bottle.

“There was never any question of me becoming anything other than a librarian, the actual tasks the job demanded of me could be achieved most days before lunch and with time to kill I began a private project”

Sid stopped for a moment to make sure I’m was listening. I imagine normally people stop listening at this point, or start just pretending to listen, intimated and numbed by her bulging river of thought.

“I’m listening”

“It’s common or at least I believed it to be commonly understood that words are born to describe things that already exist but that just need to be described. That the words themselves are cold, numb sounds that merely describe”

She took off her glasses and chewed on the frame.

“I don’t think his is not the case. Words create, words enable and what’s more words have a reproductive cycle! Words create situations in order to create new words. This is how they reproduce. An infection to which we are the host. A plague of language!”

Sid was sweating and ran her hand across her brow.

“I felt like I had to control the spread, or at least catalogue the evolution of the English strain of the virus. The English language is a terrible thing; a pirate, a mongrel, a rapist. No other tongue is so culpable in the smuggling of word, of spreading this living illness that feeds on our brains and reduces the world around us to fantastical hallucination in service of language and it’s own need to exist”

Sid was pacing up and down, squeezing the glasses in her hand.

“I had more to do than I could keep track of and I lost sight of myself. They closed the library and when I tried to break in, to get back to get access to my database, the only one of it’s kind, a catalogue of every word and it’s parent word and it’s offspring, it’s first appearance, sometimes it’s disappearance, it’s culpability in human history -”

The lens cracked and blood dripped over the contorted frame and onto the queasily patterned blue and red speckled carpet of the foyer. Undeterred by the broken glasses or the wound Sid continued, her eyes locked on mine with startling intensity.

“Every day new words are born, new ideas or old ones reconstituted. Some beneficial, some dangerous, all unnervingly powerful. A word can be immortal, supernatural. To re define a world is no easy feat but it happens every day. The cogs of spin re mash words daily, pulling them apart like nuclear scientists splitting the atom, tearing the initial seed, the undiluted idea apart and re-forming it. A political Frankenstein, an ideological golem let loose on the tongues of the unsuspecting public through linguistic necromancy. Spell-ing at it’s most modern and terrifyingly potent”

Sid collapses into me and I was surprised how much strength it took to keep her on her feet. She apologised, maybe for losing her balance or maybe for the rant, it’s wasn’t quite clear.

“You probably think I’m mad, most people do”

“And what if you are mad?”

“Well one’s isn’t meant to be mad, is one?”

“Maybe, but if you hang around here you’ll see that I think about things a little differently”

“So I’ve heard”

“I think we might need someone with of your predisposition, if you’re interested”

“What do you have in mind?”

I was overwhelmed by the amount of material, every new member seemed to bring something with them and it all had to be looked at, worked with and put to best use. I’d also been playing with the idea of personal intoxications to replace or complement the daily group sessions. The Kid didn’t play any role in this and I needed someone. Sid agreed and she immediately joined me in the editing suites and within a few days had established a system of classifying the material and had streamlined the editing process, she quickly became the head of the editors and took over from me as the force behind the construction of the videos.

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When not taking part in the intoxication sessions and the day to day task of continuing working on the cinema - converting the abandoned stock rooms and offices into editing suites and dormitories - people met in the screens and told each other their life stories in spontaneous confessional group sessions.

The intoxications left you thin skinned, on edge, pricked and ready to spill. All of the natural anxieties and fears rose to the surface. You wanted to tell someone your name and your story. It was a thirst to tell everyone that you were more than

just another human. The human psyche is protected by a kind of skin, a film.

The intoxications rubbed this raw, made you delicate. Your mind was flooded with thoughts; superimposed with images and motifs of tragedy. It was hard not to feel the cruelty and violence as innately human as a piece of psychic anatomy - a limb, an organ. That was of course the point. Something that defined us as human. Perhaps the thing that defined us. People wanted to say their name and reveal themselves as people, not just as humans. Working on their humanity.

Often this manifested itself in short fuse romances, sexual trysts that lasted just long enough to make you know you still had the essential human functions to connect with each other. The catharsis of bodies rubbing as a counter balance to the psychological effects of the intoxications.

When the market stumbled, bits of society broke off and found themselves left to rot. Either that or deliberately suffocated or starved. People treated just like the boarded up shopping streets and abandoned leisure centres, empty cinemas and burnt down bingo halls, the shrapnel and debris of a violent crumbling, a sudden radical decay.

As word of The House spread through the city, carried by members of The Herd on their propaganda expeditions, taking with them usb sticks loaded with previous intoxications and copies of manifestos written by me and printed by us

using printers salvaged from abandoned office blocks and schools.

They returned with new members; former political activists and civil servants, ex-ravers and no longer needed shift workers, all of them searching for something new, something to grab onto in this world of collapsing markets and crumbling institutions.

All were welcome, all except a psychology professor from the local University. He asked someone who was in charge and was directed to me and The Kid. He launched straight into a spiel about “psycho-sexuality and latent eroticism of violent imagery. He said he was writing a paper called ‘Society and Pornography or The Society of Pornography, or the Pornographic Society’ he hadn’t quite decided yet. Every syllable that came out of his mouth seemed to effect The Kid like a bee sting.

“Go list your fetishes elsewhere” he snarled.

“What he’s trying to say is that we’re not interested in analysis. What we’re doing here is the antidote to the what’s out there, we don’t need it described to us, we’ve seen it, we feel it”

“I just want to observe”

“No wanking”

I saw the professor once again, later that night during the intoxication. He

scribbled notes in the dark. The Kid and his gang sat around him and watched him scrawl.

The Kid leaned in close.

“I said no wanking” He could be menacing when he wanted to be.

Among the people who wandered in off the streets and did stay were a middle aged couple, Gary and Gemma were both made redundant and left to twiddle their thumbs while everything they'd ever been part of and worked for was suddenly cancelled. They found God, then hobbies, then lost God and got into getting stoned and a bit tipsy all day and rewatching old TV daytime series they'd missed out on during the decades of their working lives.

They first came to The House in an attempt to understand what had drawn not one but both of their daughters into living here and becoming so active in our street activity. Both daughters were amongst the first to join The Herd and were now two of the fastest editors and sourcers of footage for the vaccinations, their parents found another role and it was under their guidance that the post intoxication sessions took on a new role.

I'd become more convinced that the group intoxications were a clumsy tool and sometimes I even got the worrying feeling that they might even be becoming a spectacle and I noticed a kind of crowd energy rising in them that made me uncomfortable. I needed to personalise the intoxications for individuals to make

them more effective.

Not only that but I wanted to try and measure the effect, to make sure it was doing it's job. Gemma and Gary were going to help me by preparing profiles of each individual's gut reactions. They repurposed an old work questionnaire and using one of my early videos as a sample asked the individuals to describe their reactions to the different material.

The profile they worked up was then passed on to me and in turn to Sid and the editors. Personalised videos were produced and trialled in hidden stock rooms. When I told The Kid about my experiments he got agitated.

"Personalised, what's that shit?"

"The next step"

"Fuck that, we're meant to be working on the collective gut remember, group catharsis, herd immunity, remember?"

"Of course I remember, but this is the same thing"

"It's not the same thing"

He got right up in my face, so close I could see the strings of tobacco in the gaps between his teeth.

"It's not the same thing. This isn't about your anxieties this is about something

bigger”

So I didn't bring it up with him again, I just kept on trying it in the backrooms, out of sight of The Kid and his gang.

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It was during the third week of propagandising The Kid introduced me to Dave the Barman. I was sitting outside a corner pub trying to escape the questions of a group of art students who drooled over the magazine with puppy-like-enthusiasm, when The Kid came bounding down the street half cracked with excitement.

He was accompanied by a middle aged white guy wearing a white polo shirt with large yellow patches around the arm pits and the neck. Dave had a grey pink puddle face like the manager of bottom rung football team. He smelled like stale beer and saveloy sausages, his fingers fat and shiny with chip grease. He carried a plastic bag weighed down by the shape of cans. When he approached the table the skeletons of the art students shrunk a little bit, their bones compressed by his presence, like he had increased the intensity of gravity. Their tongues contracted. I liked Dave straight away. He sat down with The Kid and took a can of beer from his plastic bag. The Kid spoke first, he couldn't control himself.

“This is Dave the Barman”

“Nice to meet you Dave”

“Dave the Barman”

“Sorry, Dave the Barman”

Dave opened his beer and took a long gulp. Beer, like frogspawn frothed out the corners of his mouth. The Kid took out his tobacco and rolled a thick cigarette, the type he smoked when he was excited. On the edge of a warp, as he rolled it between his fingers it looked like a small bone, from a hand or a foot.

“You have to see what Dave’s got on his phone. The grail, the serum, the righteous shit - straight from the source”

Dave took out a phone and put it on the table. He turned the screen so that I could see it and then pressed play, leaving a shiny thumbprint.

On the screen a point of view video showed the barrel of an assault rifle moving through a sandy looking building. Two men with beards are crouched in a corner. The barrel of the gun spits fire. There is the laughter of men and the screaming of women. The barrel of the gun and the hands holding it poke at a body.

“My cousin was in the forces. Got a whole hard drive full of this stuff”

The Kid’s teeth were buzzing. Spittle and tar dripped down his chin in thin streaks. We finished the beers in the bag and then crossed the road to the carry

out where Dave buys us some more beer that we finish back outside the pub. The Kid was starting to get drunk and was planning a heist behind the bar. As many bottles as possible. Dave waved at a passing barman.

“Is Dave here?”

“He’s sick today, why?”

“Ah he’s a mate of mine and he promised if I came down he’d sort me a few drinks that’s all”

“ You a good friend of his?”

“Oh yeah we go back man. It’s a real shame he’s not here”

The barman makes a face of acceptance and returns with a round of drinks.

“Hows that work?”

“There’s always a Dave so it always works”

“Is Dave your real name?”

He gave me a lazy eyed glance and The Kid screeched laughter. I took a long swig of beer and thought that was probably just it. He’s an archetype. A piece of human fungus that grows naturally given the right circumstances. Dave the Barman followed us home that night and pissed out all the lager in his guts in a corner of the cinema. One of the The Herd hooked up the hard drive and while we waited Dave told dirty stories about threesomes on the traffic island with the concrete pagoda, his tongue wet with saliva. Then the room lit up with light.

Male voices, male voices having a laugh. The camera shakes as it is passed from one hand to another. Now we see the original person who was holding the camera; it's a soldier in desert camouflage. He's laughing and looking at the camera. An unlit spliff hangs from his lip. He reaches up with a lighter and just as the flame appears the young soldier's temple emits a puff of red and his body crumples. The other men's laughter stops and the falling camera hits sand. Bullets crack under the hot sun.

A bearded man has his hands tied. He's blindfolded and kneeling in tall grass. Laughter from off screen, laughter and then the sound of a single gunshot. A soldier walks into shot carrying a knife. He stands behind the bearded man and tugs his hair up, flashing throat at the camera before dragging the blade of the knife across it. Blood gushes from the slit. Men laugh again, more men, more laughter.

There was a silence in the room only interrupted by The Kid's coughing. Dave's stomach churned out video after video of murder and pain. The walls of the room seemed to both contract and expand with the flickering of the projector and the shattering of lives. I felt my brain tingling, thickening up, tensing and relaxing as new thoughts are burnt into it, new pathways aching like new muscles. The Kid spat and I could see the start of the quaking and rattling of his bone marrow. Dave's pinky, watery alcoholic's eyes seemed focused on the area just on the space in front of the wall on which the images play, rather than images

themselves. Everyone was still, no one wanted to stop and felt that any move could signal the end to this moment. People began to fall asleep where they sat, but the videos didn't stop, they kept playing whether anyone was watching or not, it didn't matter to them, they just kept on going.

I woke up alone, the aisles of seats abandoned, the screen dark. I got up and walked along the aisles. In the darkness my foot knocked against something and I realised I wasn't alone. A girl was curled up on the floor. I stepped over her carefully.

I found The Kid with Dave and some of his gang in one of the smaller screens that The Kid had claimed as his own. The sight set me on edge straight away. The Kid had constructed a platform from pallets and was sat on it in a manner that made me think of a throne or an altar. On the floor The Herd were sat cross legged looking up at him while Dave was napping in the corner, his skin glistening with sweated-booze.

The Kid was reciting word for word something I'd come up with the other day, a sketch of an imagined future, I called it;

THE LIMBO OF EVIL HAS-BEENS.

In the future scientists have mastered a techniques allowing them to resurrect

historical figures. This has led to the founding of a chain of special museums that house these resurrected criminals and tyrants.

Among others, Judas Iscariot, Ghengis Khan, Vlad The Impaler, Ivan The Terrible, Leopold and Jacques Of Haiti, Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot...the list goes on.

This museum, which is in fact less of a museum and more a kind of fun house for kids is often located at motorway service stations or near out of town shopping centres. Children on school trips are encouraged to queue up and have photos taken of them kicking these historical devils in the testicles. Parents and teachers applaud.

When every once in a while one of these historical figures suddenly dies, the result perhaps of a particularly hard swing or just atrophy or starvation (these evil has-beens live on a strict diet of one hamburger a day, some of the Hitler's refuse to eat theirs but not all of them) another is resurrected and takes its place.

In this possible future there are at any given something like a thousand Hitlers across the country with balls screaming from childish clumsy swings and that's what I call;

THE LIMBO OF EVIL HAS-BEENS.

Dave began clapping ravenously and so did some of the others. The Kid's body was shaking and his fist slammed on an imaginary table, taking on the form of a gavel in my kino eye as I watched him change.