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Meditation On Suicide

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MEDITATION ON SUICIDE

I believe Kundera when he says, "If rejection and privilege are one in the same, if there is no difference between the sublime and the paltry, if the Son of God can undergo judgment for shit, then human existence loses its dimensions and becomes unbearably light." But still, I don't know.

Listening to Brubeck's "Take Five" doesn't take long, relatively speaking, and it never gets above the level of a quiet conversation, like those held in confessionals or movie theaters right after the lights dim. It's just piano, bass, and drums shuffling unvertiginously, and Desmond avoids the root all he can, his lines slipping like sunlight on a butterfly. Every time I put it on, I wait for the solos that take off, not like a wren, but a Harley or Mustang, a drunk Marine—something so American objects on shelves shiver, and then fall off. But it never happens. Maybe they were on to something with this resignation from their lives that were trying to go everywhere on four chords and five beats. But then, they didn't resign; all they did was reject the fundamental union of improvisation, which was their lives, because they could. Like I said, I don't know. Don't trouble me with what I want.

We want to look at each other sometimes, the kind of look that's uneasiness laced with desire, or the other way around. Around here, they're unidentical twins, so it doesn't much matter. Right now, for instance, I'm looking at Andrew Wyeth's nude Helga, *On Her Knees.* After a while, I'm almost convinced she's been looking down at a pillow all this time and her face is as flushed as bruised peaches. Her hands are behind her. The more I look at it, the more I see that she's never been comfortable with this. So without ever touching the skin behind the ear, or kissing all the way down the inner forearm, we've turned each other down. And all this "passion," which is how Wyeth described it, is timeless. No wonder she was looking away.

I think it's all about becoming attainable, and being unattainable because there was a time when I was a part of God. I was provisionally eternal, back then. I can't say for sure whether or not I liked it, but why wouldn't I? When I was seven, I told Father Kehoe how my week was going. After a cough, he gave me ten Hail Marys and ten Our Fathers. I kneeled there for 45 minutes. My back ached. This was my privi-

lege, to be cleansed as such. I was the last to leave chapel that day, and Sister Amadeus kept me after that to clap out the erasers, punishment for us destined to fail in small towns. I found out that taking the Lord's name in vain also involved singing "fuck-shit-damn, fuck-shit-damn" to the tune of "Three Blind Mice" to no one in particular. My friend B. told me this. We were taught that God was in the details, that we were made in God's image.

So when B. shot himself in front of St. Joe's, where he was baptized, the pigeons in the eaves flew off in every direction, like veins and arteries, or the lines on a map. The sky held still behind all this. That was his way out, and I'll love him for it. I'd better because I'm scared to death for him. It is God's nature to reject what was once a part of Him. Every single morning, at 6:30, pigeons fly out of those eaves when Mrs. McMurtry presses the bass pedals on the organ with her feet, as if she were walking through mud. Every blessed morning, and, occasionally, when I hear that unseemly shudder of surprise in their clutter of wings, I feel closer to the truth than anyone.