

The Music-Makers

By: Casey Dahlin

“It is logical,” said the Doctor, “that such beings as are first gifted with what we might call sentience would need these superfluous drives.” He began slowly, letting his hand roll at the wrist to make small circles with his fingertips, as if to say “see how each thought follows the next? Now you follow as well.” He was a tall man, about thirty-two perhaps, but young looking for his age. He had about him the sort of refined masculinity that came with having transcended his twenties, and had lost all hints of boyishness in his face, but retained a sort of taught, aerodynamic look about his features. His eyes were a sharp blue, and stood out from his face with what seemed almost a faint glow. People often shuddered slightly when first making eye contact with him, and over time he had grown used to the impression his eyes made on a room. When addressing the entire room, which he often did, he would sweep his gaze slowly and deliberately over the crowd, never showing in it any emotion beyond mild interest, and in doing so felt that he made the point that he was to be understood. The words he uttered, in a soft, un-agitated voice and at a slow, measured pace, were to be understood as making up the most exhaustively logical of statements. Each word depended only on the word before it for perfect validation of its absolute truth, and had you only been there since he began at breakfast, you would have seen clearly the chain of incandescent reason which had then commenced and continued now, and would soon link his morning coffee to his after dinner mint.

For further effect he rose to his feet, straightened his suit, and started off toward a plate of raspberry tarts conveniently placed on the other side of the living room. His steps were slow and almost thoughtless, and drummed out a rhythm that his speech followed, while his gaze pressed the guests back into their couch cushions and relocated dining room chairs.

“They serve, first, to assist the re-organization of society into civilization. The mother of social order must inevitably be social anxiety, and the anguish of the outcast keeps the populous in line. Mind you we are talking of infantile consciousness, that which has only begun to answer the most basic questions of self. This primitive ego, still lacking many higher faculties of reason, would not necessarily be capable of analyzing the necessity of social structure, thus making the far more immediate motivations sent screaming from the id desirable.” At this he reached the tarts. He took one as a gesturing aid, then turned to retrace his path back to the vacant step where he had been sitting.

“It is only then the past thousand years of human existence that makes what we propose possible. The evolution of thought as much as of the species has prepared us to transcend these impulses. Speciation could not have done it alone, which is to say it could not have done it without us. Man is the only species on the planet that can say it is master of its own evolution. We have been placed in the sole charge of the future of our species. Natural selection has left us to our own devices. The new evolution of mankind will be the product of his own reason. Future generations are what we build them to be. It is thus foreseeable that educational forces might soon superannuate the need for emotional suffering.” He reached his step, turned, and sat, leaning back lazily on the steps above it. He adjusted his gaze slightly upward, so that he appeared then to address no one in particular. “War, economic strife, depression, crime, all symptoms of correctable flaws in the general human psyche, most notably the experience of emotional suffering. The only infectious genetic disease, one person having it inevitably gives it to another. Common street fights, international conflicts, perhaps even the

penal system itself. Revenge, loathing, xenophobia, we can see quickly their hurt but do not want to admit that these are curable conditions. What good is the man in mourning for his lost lover? No amount of his tears bring her back, and meanwhile he has missed work, his bills are overdue, he hasn't touched his painting or instruments, he has ceased to be a productive member of society. If we can suppress these emotions through chemical or genetic means, we can reclaim ourselves from misery." And with that he finished the tart in one blow.



Ms. Maisie Thompson's house was a typically southern construction, whitewashed and dominated by a front porch that wrapped all the way around the side. It stood in one corner of a cotton field, but the farmland was owned by some other neighbor at the distant end of the speckled white terrain. When her husband had been alive they had often visited the farmer, an old southern boy with dirt under his fingernails and always a story to tell. His wife was a busy, no-nonsense sort of person, but always pleasant, and perpetually baking. It may have been her from whom Ms. Maisie Thompson had gotten the recipe for the tarts the Doctor so enjoyed punctuating his sentences with. Or perhaps it was Ms. Perkins from the home owner's committee. Ms. Maisie didn't bother to remember these things really. It wasn't important.