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631

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Well, I heard of this convict who has allowed science to slice his lethally injected corpse into single millimeter-wide strips, every organ scanned, muscle upon muscle, his body parceled into innumerable fillets thin as Kleenex for the examiners, a CAT scan of his entire disinherited body. Rape won't show. Homicide won't run along the molecules. Childhood trauma won't be seen crouching behind boulders, crying. But meat will glisten, like freshly sliced veal, a Hubble scan of grain and ganglia, calcium and tissue, the ultimate visible man. You could make a board game of this, a card game of concentration, what strip follows strip, what strip pulls for strip, you could award points for being close on a geographical-anatomical map: the Country of Pulmonaria, the Cardiac Republic, the Reproductive Beach, your strip draped over your arm, like pasta. The man died for his sins—rape, dismemberment—but lives inside the instruments. Well, it just caught my eye, something I heard from a friend in passing, embedded in a wider conversation about competitiveness, superiority, publicity, etc, the criminal lurking in my mind after escaping her lips. Grotesquerie curls in the routines. If time were a wave rolling forward ground-to-sky, while you in your circumscribed space were down-shifting into first, elsewhere some technological saw was subdividing a man, who they froze first. Now, I am a literary agent in the basement of my home with a bone-white phone, a flickering computer, pens in a cup, like bottle rockets, crammed book cases, and, dare I admit it, a stuffed Beagle pup. I rub my eyes. I feel the thickness of my hands. I see my thighs aswirl with hair sweeping to my knees, and knee caps like helmets. I sit in a chair or wander up the hundred boards and beams hammered into steps by carpenters to feel the sun, my fingers through my hair. And you, my love are. . . somewhere. . . browsing, eating, day-dreaming, most likely working, drawn around yourself, like a bedsheet full of treasure, and tied at the top, one beautiful piece. It's not enough to say, "And round and round she whirls in space," referring to Earth, as if I were a giant unfolding,

head in the sky, a stock response. We must return to this: a criminal who willed his heft to science, the science itself, electronic saws, weird obsessions, the immortality-drive, rape and dismemberment, the mackerel thrashing of too-tight lives, the infinite capacity of the human mind to escape prison walls and mundanity, the beauty of minutiae and the machinery to enter it, God, galoshes and slickers in which to slip as we examine the blood-sherbet which was man.