I have many times witnessed some of the most fantastic incidences of self-mutilation. I have seen convicts swallow huge numbers of nails and quantities of barbed wire; I have seen them swallow mercury thermometers, pewter tureens (after first breaking them up into edible portions), chess pieces, dominoes, needles, ground glass, spoons, knives, and many other similar objects; I have seen convicts sew up their mouths and eyes with thread or wire, sew rows of buttons to their bodies, or nail their testicles to a bed, swallow a nail bent like a hook, and then attach this hook to the door by way of a thread so that the door cannot be opened without pulling the 'fish' inside out. I have seen convicts cut open the skin on their arms and legs and peel it off as if it were a stocking, or cut out lumps of flesh (from their stomach or their legs), roast them and eat them, or let the blood drip from a slit vein into a tureen, crumble bread crumbs into it, and then gulp it down like a bowl of soup, or cover themselves with paper and set fire to themselves, or cut off their fingers, or their nose, or ears, or penis... Having tried all other forms of protest against the lawlessness and caprice of the prison and all other authorities, they have finally resorted to self-mutilation.

Prison Diaries, by Edward Kuznetsov

The subject is unpleasant. Suicide can be romantic, but not self-mutilation, except for those occasions of the few who set fire to themselves to attract attention, to be reckoned with, to change the world.

For the others, there is no such dissimulation. The goal of self-disemberment has no other purpose, and the methods are wretched, but what would we poor prisoners do if we could not destroy ourselves, and we were left utterly in the hands of the enemy. It is because of this self-awareness that self-destruction is possible. It is because of awareness of the all that self-destruction is necessary.

At Columbia University as many as a thousand blows on each leg of dogs
were administered by a rawhide mallet to induce shock. Nervous depression, gasping, thirst, and vomiting—not to mention the agonizing pain of crushed muscles, nerves, and bones—were some of the effects of the beatings. The researcher who performed this experiment stated that three dogs who survived shock resulting from the beating suddenly expired the following day when they were again placed on the animal board.

The Park Face of Science
by John Vyvyan

How is this possible without memory, without foreknowledge, and without judgment on the all? Is it not like the slave who swallows his tongue? All flesh is equal in pain.

So, my sister, I contemplate an identity with you, trapped as we both are in this messy secret. Formerly we knew God, but now we know the adversary. Formerly we were distracted by Job’s refutation, whose wounds were imposed upon him, but now we have absorbed the adversary’s position and do his work for him. For this reason, I love your soul and prefer your cage to chambers of learning and reflections of civilization. I prefer your cage to a museum, to a clergyman’s office, to the Pope’s study. Everything that is holy in this century is in this cage, and it is holy without God, he has kept His promise not to destroy the world again, and we could not imagine, as in the myth about human desire where we get everything we wish for, that that would be our undoing. We could not imagine that. So consumed we were in our circumstances of belief and unbelief, our denials, our refutations, our proofs, our progress, we could not imagine that the thread of sufferance by which we held our lives would snap, and leave us in this cage.

Thus, Stanley Kalibin, technician at Ana-Human Laboratories found his chimpanzee, B-306A, one morning with her front paw gnawed to the bone and blood scattered on the floor of the cage where she had paced through the night. Not back and forth in her usual way but in a patternless fashion.

There was nothing in her cage that could cut a thread, there was not even a bowl of water because it had been policy for some time to leave nothing with B-306A, dubbed “Wanda the Witch,” and when Stanley arrived this morning, Wanda was sitting in a back corner, still as a stone. The cessation of her pacing was the first thing he noticed that alerted him to the end of a disagreeable orientation around which his day began: the methodical monotony of her pacing back and forth over the concrete floor hour after hour, the everlasting pat, pat, pat of her footsteps, as precise as a metronome which erected a rhythmic prison around his day and set the pace of his pulse and nerves. Pat, pat, pat, pat. Every morning, as soon as the elevator door opened on the basement level where his laboratory was, and he stepped out, the padded fall of her paws seeped into his hearing. She had not ceased pacing for six months, not even to eat or to sleep, except if they sedated her or when she was taken upstairs. The sound of her pacing had been with him for one hundred and eighty days, eight hours a day, as punctual as a drop of water falling on a stone, until it wore through the normal fabric of other noises in the laboratory that interrupted the otherwise common day: telephones, typewriters, computer printers, elevator buzzers, monitoring beeps. Pat, pat, pat, pat. Her pacing penetrated everything. Back and forth, back and forth, eight hours a day in his office. Her eyes gleamed at him constantly, except when her gaze was directed toward the ringing of the telephone or the buzz of the intercom or the elevator, because she knew what these sounds meant, and when it suited her, she fabricated or arranged her responses accordingly. Otherwise, she looked at him with an intensity he tried to ignore. He trained himself not to look back at her except when he had to, but he could not prevent himself from hearing her incessant step.

In some countries, he knew, prisoners were tortured with the mechanical repetition of a sound, until it produced hypnosis, amnesia, and finally meaninglessness. The world decomposed into a flailing of nerves. It was forgotten, everything about the self was forgotten, why it was there, what the cause of its captivity was, whether it had existed at all. The self became absorbed into the sound. Like a sponge, the sonorous treadmill sucked everything out from the world, so that when he left his laboratory down in the
basement at the end of the day, with its isolated sounds of monitoring boards and bleepers recording messages, the padded step of her paws, the scurrying noises of the mice and whining of the other animals, and went upstairs into the world of crashing noises, honking cars and buses, he felt like a miner of her paws, the scurrying noises of the mice and whining of the other animals, and went upstairs into the world of crashing noises, never found a way to stop her from pacing perhaps it was finally right, because he had its own rules of life and death which he must not forget.

Something was wrong this morning, or perhaps it was finally right, because he had never found a way to stop her from pacing unless they sedated her. The cessation was neither pleasant nor unpleasant. It aroused suspicion, as if a predictable mechanism had failed, or a natural phenomenon such as the wind. Who could say whether this would be good or bad? The generation that comes after.

She was still this morning, though there had been no orders to sedate her. He surprised she was awake. She always was unless they sedated her, and there was a limit to how often they could do that, which Wanda knew. She had learned the rhythms of their coming and going, their clocks, their buzzers, their voices, their footsteps, and what each sound meant. Formerly, she paid attention to these sounds and calculated her safety by them. She had learned when to pretend to be asleep to avoid being sedated. She had learned how to pretend to be sick to avoid being sent upstairs, how to appear listless and unalert, comatose, but he knew these things about her and only rarely did she surprise him. Sometimes he even let her get away with a pretense and run a risk on her behalf, small risks that would not be picked up by the monitor. She did not know it and could not develop a strategy to take advantage of this, nothing to bribe him with. He knew that she viewed him as her jailor. That was unjust. Things could be worse for her. She did not know this, but he did. She was his special animal because he had taken care of her from the beginning and had become expert in handling her. No one else had wanted the job. She was perceived as troublesome from the moment they got her, more than a year ago. He had not wanted it, either, but he got sucked down into this quicksand of compliments. "Ataboy," Lew said, "I know you can do it," and he found himself unable to say when he had had enough.

Lew had already arrived, Stanley noted, hanging his coat next to his in the closet. He glanced at the clock above the elevator door, a habit when he arrived and periodically throughout the day. Five, six, eight glances a day, mostly unconscious, not even noting the time. The clock itself was a large, round, white, faceless clock, solidly unpretentious, shatteringly bereft of character, except for a bar of sunlight from the space above the window shed on the opposite wall which was reflected on its glass, blotting out the 6, the 8, the 10, depending on the hour, and making it more useful as a sundial. Otherwise, it had no pretentions of belonging to an era, not even modernity.

There was already a set of instructions on his desk, pinned beneath the company's paperweight, Ana-Human Laboratories: Knowledge is Power and Profits, the note written in Lew's breezy style that went against the grain of his tight handwriting, painfully legible like a buzzer: "Bascher due at ten. Need guillotine and three disposal units, get lead lined baggies, a dozen brain probes and microprobes, a chill table--get a good sized one this time!--and a large incinerator. Also need a new set of alarms, and a whole bunch of stuff to clean the place with--back cages leaking all night--half the mice boiled. Big day ahead. Wanda has found a new trick. Better get a straight-jacket."

He crumpled the note and threw it in the waste basket. Except for the reference to Wanda, he knew all the rest, had it down on his own notepad. It was the last thing he had written the day before: "Bascher at ten," anticipating an unpleasant morning. Like Lew, the salesman brought out an unaccountable streak in him. He only saw him four times a year, but the encounters had come to punctuate his life like that of a stranger in an elevator or a bus whose path we cross rhythmically and whom we unwillingly dislike, and will never know whether the stranger is innocent or sinister, whether it is we or the stranger who is at fault. The salesman, an old type, though his business card credited him with a modern posture: M.S. Apparatus in Bioscience Applications, mobilized a moral itch in Stanley. He made him buy things he wasn't sure he wanted, made him feel he had been taken in. His strategy was to let the salesman have his spiel and then tell him to send a provisional bill of sale. It always needed Lew's O.K., anyway. Stanley did not have the final say in these
matters, something about which he felt both good and bad, a conflict between status and conscience. Commenting about Bascher to Lew, after his last visit, Stanley said, "Wonder what it's like to sell electric chairs. How do you figure the salesman does the pitch?"

Lew said it was a bad analogy, but added, "Reckon he can't get too many testimonials."

Stanley accepted the fact that Lew was witty by what others said about him, but in his own territory, he was not so conciliatory. Once, when his mother had commented about Lew, after she had met him and as she was entitled to say, "That it must be wonderful to work with such an agreeable person," he said, "Shut up."

Something amiss, she sensed, and wishing to make the claim that she was not to blame for it, she responded with motherly pique, "You're not the son I raised."

"So what," he said, "I'm not the me I was planning on being. Guess we both have something to get used to."

Her remark about Lew was innocent and resplendent of goodwill and optimism, though most civilizations, as she should know, have a lot of dirty work that needs to be done. His father had been a garbage collector; his uncle cleaned sewers; a great uncle had done the housekeeping in a prison, which he described as "not a bad job, feed the inmates, keep the cells clean, empty the slop pails, fill up the water bowls, disinfect the area, keep the noise level down, and don't let anything develop that will cause a scandal." On his mother's side, a cousin cleaned the animals' cages in a circus. An ancestor had had the job of collecting the bones from the auto da fes and sweeping away the ashes. Their lineage was an old one, and all the family were closely knit. All lived in the same neighborhood, beyond the city limits, where the graveyards and the dumps are kept. They were their own community, living on a bypath like circus people or gypsies, with their own gossip and their own perspective on "the world out there." It was difficult for them to cross over to that world. Too much was demanded of them: they had to disembowel the past and replace it with other states of significance, philosophical ventures that allowed them to walk upon the earth without thinking of what was beneath it.

Stanley only partly succeeded, which accounted for his lack of humor and lapses. It is a difficult fate to undergo a partially successful operation of plastic surgery, so that one does not have the face one expected to have and has lost the face one had, to stand in two different places simultaneously, possessing and dispossessing, like owning a grand sand castle. One part of him lived on the frontier of history, where trails into the future were marked out. Demanding ascetic restraints and extraordinary acrobatics of mind and will, the life bred a philosophy of triage, the sense of desperate choices over where and where and who and when, for the sake of the future. But it was a place of undoubted preference to what had been and to what is. The other part of him lived at home, in a small, two-bedroom house with a den, a lawn, and a cat, the only son of parents who alternated between being proud and loving and viewing him quizzically, as if he had turned into something foreign to their species. They looked at him through two sets of eyes, alternately worshipful and suspicious, as parents usually view successful sons who have become what they wanted them to be and what they themselves are not, and then do not recognize them for what they are.

He, in turn, looked at the world through two sets of eyes. One set of eyes saw himself as his parents saw him, saw the building he worked in, the industrial park it was set in, the manicured lawns that surrounded it, the azalea bushes in the spring that made him glad. He read the morning newspapers and the professional journals left in the magazine rack next to the elevator door under the faceless clock; it read the mail from across the world delivered to his desk; and it read the superfluous notes in Lew's incised script.

The other set of eyes was equipped with olfactory bulbs and smelled foul odors in cages and pipes and dumpsites, and the rot beneath the city streets. That was his native air, the smell from the crater-like pit where the city's refuse was thrown. He used to go there with his father, to the city dump and explore the garbage heap with him. He always found something he wanted there, like a scooter, surprised that someone else had thrown it away. There was a mountain of...
stuff to explore: old rockers, photographs, car parts, fish tanks, hiking boots, fishing gear, sleds, skis, broken equipment of all kinds, couches torn apart, old mattresses. The incinerator burned night and day. He could see it from his bedroom window, the tail of flame spouting like a comet from the chimney throughout the night. It burned garbage lasciviously and industriously, its red tongue licking the black sky until only a spent trail of smoke was left in the dawn.

But when he came down the next day, the mountain was as high as the day before: medicine cabinets, pipes, porcelain sinks, toilet bowls, pictures, discarded animals, cats partly ground up or with their necks broken, flung among the used up tires and bicycle tubes, all manner of dislocated household equipment, vacuum cleaners, dishwashers without motors, twisted garbage disposal units, empty television sets, gas ranges with their wires exposed, refrigerator motors.

In the summer, when he went to the beach with his uncle, his uncle would show him the place where the sewerage emptied into the ocean, a small, round hole in a pipe in the breakwall, so small no one would know it was there, except someone who worked for the sewer department. It looked like a secret part of the body he was not to name. In fact, it had no existence. Except for his uncle, everyone else walked past it, but his uncle was proud of the little hole and told him that if it wasn't for people like himself, civilization would come to a halt in a week's time. He laughed curiously, as if he had a conspiracy in mind, and each time they came down to the beach, he plugged the hole up with small rocks with the air of a whimsical antichrist. But whenever Stanley came down to the beach again, the rocks had been pushed out and the sludge was flowing freely from the hole.

He poured himself a cup of coffee. It was fresh, one of the benefits of Lew's early arrival. Stanley almost never had breakfast before he left for work in the morning, and he cherished this cup of coffee, which he sipped meditatively every morning as he glanced through the day's memos, instructing his mind about the day's work. "What've you been up to?" he called to Wanda from his desk across the room. He did not expect a response, because Wanda could not give one. He spoke randomly as he went through his notes, not as he would have spoken had she not been there, because that would have been madness, but neither as if she were there. The question was directed indeterminately to magical forces that make things go right or wrong, make the morning coffee good or bad, bring friendly or unfriendly messengers to the door and help start the day right with the right combination of mood and fact, because fetching her from her cage each morning was a bad way to start anybody's day. He had the history of her trickiness to consider and could not rule out a sly move on her part to avoid going upstairs to the rack. Once she had played dead, and when he thoughtlessly put his unprotected hand inside the cage to reach for her, she bit him.
She used to throw her water at him, her regurgitated food, her feces, or anything else that was in the cage. So, they left her with nothing at night, no water, no food, not a bar to swing from, nothing she could take apart, swallow, or do anything with. That's when she started screeching. She screeched right around the clock, right through the day and the night and right through the weekend. She screeched at everything. Every time a light went on or off. Every time the elevator came down or went up. Every time he came near her, even when he brought her her food, which she would not eat. They sedated her and fed her intravenously, and when she woke, she shrieked again, without stop, except when they came to take her upstairs for her shocks, and her shrieks became harsher. He could hear her all the way up the elevator shaft. When she came down again, she provoked the other animals into screeching. They were forced finally to cut her vocal cords, but she found other ways to make trouble. She banged her head against the bars until she provoked the other animals, and they began to screech and scratch until the room sounded like a pent-up jungle. They were forced to move her from that room altogether. They put her in a mobile cage and moved it into his office, where she could not disturb anyone, except him. Back and forth, back and forth, all day and all night, pat, pat, pat, pat, so that he hated the sound of his own cat at home. His office smelled from her cage. It was wheeled away each weekend for a cleaning, but the cleaning was not always efficient, and by week's end, his office smelled of excrement, matted fur, and bandaged wounds.

"Lew!" he called out, standing in front of the cage and surveying the scene.

"Yeah?" The response was bedraggled with the feeling of an unpleasant task ahead of them, like that of a beleaguered housewife whose washing machine has overflowed.

"What the hell's going on around here?" Stanley said. His voice registered defensiveness against forces that might implicate his integrity: barbarisms of the night shift, the irresponsibility of cheap help, though he felt a variety of other things, chiefly puzzle as he tried to assemble what he saw into the trials of the day and the questions they would not be able to answer.

There was a pause, long enough for Stan-ley to hope that Lew would have an explanation, but Lew responded in a voice a shade declaratory, as if his conscience was off limits: "How the hell should I know! Just clean it up," he added in a conciliatory tone, as befits the partner in an enterprise who shirks the dirty part of the business but wants to avoid a grudge. He kept the door open a crack with his toe, feeling justified in not allowing the mishap to interfere with his morning ritual.

"For God's sake, keep your crap to yourself," Stanley said. Though this morning his voice was acidic, the familiarity of the remark, usually said semi-jocularly, softened the insult. It was a remark he made often, and not necessarily meant to wound. Even if he had meant to wound, Lew would not have been wounded. He had an attitude, worn like armor, that repelled insult. Where others found Lew agreeable, Stanley found him dense, and unless he was willing to resort to violent assault—something he felt that was alien to his character—his words blew away like feathers. The speech that flowed between them was often this way, never meant as seriously as it was said, or meant more seriously than it was said, but not accepted seriously. Calling down the corridor to Lew in the lavatory, he made the same speech every morning: "For God's sake, keep your crap to yourself." It was Stanley's way of saying that he had standards of his own, things Lew did that he wouldn't do, a position they both accepted, that Stanley had the right not to do anything he found really objectionable if he could give adequate reasons and justify his position, prove that an atrocity that was required to save the world was repugnant to him; if he could establish it as a fact that moral inflammation threatened him, his objection would be considered. But Stanley wanted to know how to get Lew to cooperate with him, since Lew cooperated with everyone else, and was agreeably industrious with others, as a public servant should be.

Taking further stock of the situation in the cage, Stanley felt beleaguered, like Lew, like a housewife whose equipment has broken down: no way to bridge the distance between himself and a dirty task that has to be done, vomit to be mopped up, the dog's mess to be cleaned from the rug. No way to clean the toilet bowl but to stick your hand into it. Wanda was wedged into a corner beyond his reach. Her paw looked infected, the bone was
chewed badly, but her body was stone still. She looked obstinate, and he braced himself for her. Her eyes did not focus on him or on anything else. She could be really sick, but she was so clever at pretending. He had no choice but to go in after her, and past experience in doing this was unpleasant—poking her out with a pole—not hard enough to cause damage but hard enough to make her want to avoid his thrusts and cane out. If he could reach her by hand, a pinch on her windpipe brought her to her senses. He could protect himself against her scratches and bites but not against her making him feel unpleasantly deadly.

He poured himself another cup of coffee and thought about his strategy and whether he should bother until after the salesman's visit. Most likely, she would struggle, and he'd have to knock her about a bit, though she might really be sick this morning and compliant. Probably not. Most likely, she would struggle. "Why do you want to make things difficult?" he asked her. His speech was for no practical purpose. He did not expect an answer. He wanted her, or the universe, to know that this was not his fault: it was an assignment from outer space. He called out to Lew, "I just remembered she's not needed today until later. Lucky us. I'm going to let her go until after Bascher."

"O.K. with me," Lew called back, as if a successful resolution had been reached.

It was the right decision. The light above the elevator indicated that someone had buzzed for it upstairs and that someone was coming down to the basement. Undoubtedly Bascher. He always came on time, like a servant for his task, never earlier or later. Where goods come from and how they come to be where they are no one knows. One day a salesman shows up with snake oil for skin rashes or a trunk full of stilettoes, and everyone needs some.

Bascher himself gave Stanley his business card—gestures set a tone—he was not a circus Barker, but the gesture rubbed Stanley's moral itch the wrong way. It was not that he didn't appreciate professionalism, and there was no other formula in his head for how to go about this business. Bascher was not a stranger in town, like the door-to-door peddler, exhausted and dirty with ten miles of unpaved road, startling a housewife in her yard. He came by appointment, well-dressed and shaven, invited to have coffee. Stanley's dislike was insoluble, and like most disaffections that are not felt to be serious, he explained it in a usual way: it was something about the way Bascher dressed or spoke or moved his hands, or always came on time with suave inevitability. But Bascher was dressed no differently than he was, in a business suit, summery glen plaid, casual, democratic, accessible, friendly, sober but light. He made the usual polite inquiries of any civilized person, reviving a detail from his last visit: "I'm glad to see the mobile cage is working out. It's quite an advance over the stationary kind, gives you freedom and even provides some stimulation for the animal, if you wheel her to another part of the room." He glanced into Wanda's cage like a neighbor into the carriage of a newborn baby, praise on his lips, though he registered the disagreeable sight and tucked his comment about it into his mental filing cabinet.

Bascher was accustomed to public speaking. He lectured at conferences and demonstrated technical equipment at science fairs, suits and boots and bouffant caps to be worn in radioactive rooms, how to operate shield barriers or use biodegradable bags to dispose of diseases, spinal probes and brain tissue separators, nerve splicers and electric implants, decapitators and incinerators. In deference to this material, his voice had become unctuous—the occupational hazard of undertakers. Reality sucked out his vocal cords and left him a bell-like tone, reverently concerned but never enthusiastic, a voice like a set of chimes where one inflection rang against the other.

The customers came and looked and listened and streamed through the conference corridors in comfortable couples and triplets, glancing at the equipment like healthy people ordering their coffins for an unlikely event. If death comes, it will not be their doing.

As he perceived it, there was small difference between himself and them. Perhaps his lineage was not as old as Stanley's, having come along at a further stage in civilization, when trade routes and paths had been opened, but old enough to earn respect. In his heart of hearts, in the gut of his
soul, where judgments on civilizations are made and swallowed like poison, he would like to know what the difference was between the seller and the buyer. The difference he ascribed to an accidental pathology in the social fabric, but it re-arranged matters between them and constrained him into the deferential posture of the seducer. They dispose of unused diseases, bodies to a gilded carriage. To be a gilded carriage.

"Is that Bascher?" Lew called from the bathroom. "Give him my list."

Stanley unpinned Lew's note from under the Ana-Human Laboratories paperweight and gave it to Bascher, who read it with modest signs of his knowledge. The list, as usual, was inadequate. Bascher opened catalogues and discussed improved models over those Lew had indicated. There always were newer models. There was nothing that could not be improved upon. Strait jackets were passe. Tethering swivel harnesses were more practical, and also humane, and also came equipped with as many as ten electrical circuits. "A normally active animal can be restrained for months at a time and monitored both for fluids and electrical currents." But he did not give Stanley time to consider this at all, as if it had been a blunder to show him a picture of equipment which became outdated as he spoke. He referred to other improvements, confessionally, and took out another catalogue, which dexterously fell open to the proper page. Stanley brazed himself for the voodoo influence of the mortician who, with a voice hollowed by practice, explained the benefits of his company's newest Universal Do-All Stereotaxic Device, a model developed for multiple types of research on multiple sized animals and which could replace the endless reduplication of devices and instruments. "The Universal Do-All revolves and turns an animal in any position or direction, up-side down, inside out, for genitalia or head research, for stimulation or sedation, it can be immersed in a tank of water with a drowning animal strapped to it and prevent it from struggling, it can adjust to the size of a rabbit or a baboon, it automatically feeds the animal and automatically monitors its metabolism, it automatically disposes of its waste and automatically eliminates odor, it can prevent the animal from sleeping, swallowing or breathing, it can interfere with any bodily function, halt it and restore it according to a timer, it can exhalate fumes, tobacco smoke, noxious gases, and dyes, strip Leviathan of skin and bones in thirty seconds and emulsify his parts. Equipped with leg straps and head holder, penal elevator and vaginal spreader, skull drilling equipment and bone crusher, it allows for genitalia, brain or spinal penetration, and contains a humane cervical vertebrae decapitator. If the animal dies naturally, it flushes away the remains."

Bascher spread the literature out across Stanley's desk like a croupier with a deck of cards. Stanley looked at it with polished pretensions. He just wanted things to work. He knew he should be more interested than that. He should want them to work very well, but his ambitions remained suspended, like Macbeth wanting success holily. He needed the prophecy of witches. Bascher sipped the coffee Stanley had offered him and waited. Stanley's eyes glanced about on the polished pages of the catalogues, arrested by a smiling face, a woman who looked domestic in a large bouffant cap, like his mother when she was going for a shower, coyly holding a rat on her open palm.

Parentally, Bascher turned the page back to the picture of the Universal Do-All. "You won't have to own any other equipment," he said, as if Stanley's daydream were sinful. "The Universal makes everything else look like a Model-T Ford. It will do for your laboratory what the computer is doing for the office." He glanced in Wanda's direction. "Nasty business," he said feelingly. "But this is not the only laboratory with this kind of problem, and I can tell you now there isn't any other solution. The Universal Do-All may seem like a big investment, but it's a pittance compared to what it would cost you"
to replace an expensive animal like her. Think about that."

He did not wait for Stanley to do that. The issue would not be forced to conclusion the first time around. He put his half-finished cup of coffee in the waste paper basket and collected his catalogues together, sweeping them from the desk like a fortune teller with a deck of cards who has dealt a generous hand freely. "Think about it," he said again and zipped the catalogues closed into his briefcase. He rang for the elevator as if he were indifferent to the matter, aristocratically. "The equipment speaks for itself. Like a Cadillac." Nothing further to be said. "Let me just leave you this." He slipped the Universal Do-All catalogue into the magazine rack. "Don't make your mind up in too hurry. You can let me know the next time I come by," as the elevator door opened, "but if you want to discuss the matter a little earlier, give me a ring. You have my number. It's on the inside cover of the catalogue." The door opened, and he stepped inside. "But I wouldn't wait, if I were you. Things may just be too late." The door closed. The elevator button registered the lobby floor a few seconds later. Stanley glanced at the clock on the wall. A shaft of light, sharp as a stiletto, devoured the numbers, but he surmised that it was close to eleven.

"Lew called from the john, "Did you give him my list?"

"Why don't you keep your crap to yourself," Stanley said, "and why don't you keep that goddamned door closed?"

"You know I have claustrophobia."

"Are you going to get out of there and help me with Wanda?"

"I also have constipation."

"Then why the hell don't you get down here and do it yourself?" Stanley called back.

"For God's sake, you've been handling her from the day she got here! Who do you think is likely to have an easier time of it?"

"Fuck off!" Stanley said ruefully, because the argument was convincing. He'd prefer to let Lew do it, but he'd hate to see him do it. There are big-bang evils like bombs and war and falling stock markets, and there are evils which go unheard, no-bang evils that one cannot hear, cannot see, cannot know about unless you walk out of your life pattern and look into sewers and beneath the grassy quadrangles with their students scattered like daisies across the lawns.

Stanley put on a see-through, acrylic mask that covered his head, face and throat, a mesh cape over his shoulders and elbow-length gloves made of leather encased in mesh and opened the door to the cage. Wanda's eyes did not move. Of course, she was used to his coming into her cage like this, and his appearance did not startle her as it might startle us, he waited for attack, but she made none. He tried to coax her out with words and a little light probing with the pole, but he knew it would be futile. She was playing dead. There was no light in her eyes, not a speck of life, not a clue to her whereabouts. He poked her a little harder, but her eyes did not shift their focus. Her obstinacy enraged him. She sat stone still, like a taxidermist's creation. She had discovered the trap door to indifference. He poked at her harder, furious with restraint and the necessity to get the job done, but she was indifferent to her fate. The last shudder to be felt had left her body, the last electrical spasm had run its course along her vaginal tract, the last electrical shock had died in her brain cells. Only her paw betrayed her. It trembled involuntarily, and he saw that the wound had continued to page 158.
eral rights groups, the MfA’s main talent seemed to lie in using local organizations to increase the income flowing into the central office.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew M. Rowan
Director, Center for Animals
Tufts University

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life in it. "You know I’m going to get you," he said grimly and whacked at her paw as if it were evidence of her trickiness. "I know you know what I’m doing. Why don’t you just come out and make things easier for both of us?" he smelled her damp, stiff fur and fetid blood, the foul diseases inside her body. The smells victimized him. They claimed half his brain. They reminded him of everything about himself, of dark holes unknown to sun and air, of slime and the swelling furies of his own body. "I’m going to get you," he said with grim conviction. The overwhelming certainty goaded him even further. His was one of the oldest jobs in the world. Maybe not as old as the age of cave dwellers but soon after, when houses were built above the caves and civilization became a two-story affair or multi-leveled, with living and working quarters above the basements. Excrement slipped loose from her body, as if an organ had disintegrated and turned into sludge. She did not attempt to move away from it. The dissolution of her body was invincible.

Behold, death was good.

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group of sentient beings is the kind of mentality and emotional state that breeds our own destruction to the point of making ground fertile for more knowledge at any price, for more control at any cost, for the needs of "our own kind" being placed far above the needs of others, and even for making ground fertile for the kind of nuclear mistakes that most of us fear.