



IN BED WITH THE DOG

Chapter One

1.

In bed with the dog. I just gave her a shower because she was with my friend all weekend and the poor thing came home smelling like piss and shit. I was in LA. I went there to see my sister and to see an art fair and to get the hell out of the Midwest. I left Detroit on Thursday afternoon wearing my black winter coat and cap. Had a layover in Denver so I finished reading *On The Road* in the airport. I enjoyed it as much as I did the last time I read it back when I was twenty and had no idea what I was doing with my life or anything else for that matter.

2.

Anyway my sister met me at baggage claim in sunglasses and patterned shorts. I had a smile on my face as big as the Hollywood Sign. My bag came around on the baggage carousel and I took it. Then we went outside into the pouring rain to find her boyfriend who was waiting for us in the front seat of his car, the wipers on for what was probably the first time in a long time because it never rains in LA. We got in and he took us to a hotel that nobody has ever heard of. The house where he lives with two roommates is leaking from all the unexpected rain. He also told us he hates his roommates so it was no big deal to skip going there. After a short rest at the hotel that nobody has ever heard of the boyfriend drove us to a good place to eat. We ate fish tacos and looked out the window at an unrecognizable city wet as a cigarette in a puddle.

3.

The next day we went over to Santa Monica to see the art fair. I saw some artsy friends and they saw me too and we spent time talking about who knows what. That's how artsy people are – they say things in English but it doesn't sound like English so you smile and nod and hope it all ends as soon as possible. There was a lot to look at inside the art fair but it was also nice to walk around outside and look at the ocean and listen to the crashing waves. The crashing waves sounded like music. I looked out at the horizon and thought about all the invisible fish swimming around below the surface. I'd like to be invisible like the fish down there I thought. Then I went back inside the art fair. An old friend immediately began telling me about LA and how great it is because it's always warm and sunny and there are so many palm trees and places to go hiking and things like that. She said she thinks it would be a good idea for me to move there after I finish up with whatever it is I'm doing in Detroit.



4.

In bed with the dog. I spent the day home alone stretching canvases chatting with various friends online and cooking fish. To tell you the truth I wasn't cooking fish. Everything I eat comes out of a can but I like the idea of cooking fish and it's easy to imagine the smell of seasoned fish sizzling in a pan on the stovetop as if it really did happen. Anyhow in the afternoon after I ate the imaginary fish I stared at the computer screen like a zombie looking up occasionally to peer at a few trees and the gazebo out back.

5.

Friday night I went to a cocktail party at 10:30 by myself. It was appropriate to be in a good mood so I had on my good mood outfit which was stuffed in the back of my closet under old sweaters. I talked to a tall girl who looked about twenty-three years old. A photographer. She asked me if I would like to have my picture taken. "Of course," I said. So we walked over to her photography studio around midnight. On the way over she told me she married an older guy who isn't too exciting. She said, "He's not around much." And then she said, "I don't feel like talking about him anymore." Later on when the sun was coming up and I was putting my pants back on and leaving her photography studio I noticed a text message waiting for me from Good Morning. It said, "I'm drunk and I miss you." I was surprised to hear from Good Morning because she never and I mean never gets in touch.

6.

Sore throat and a cough and a dog that needs a bath like nobody's business. I've been sick four or five days now and it's driving me crazy. All I do is watch television. And I stretch canvases in my pajamas and drink mint tea and think about Good Morning who's back in New York. I enjoy it here but at the same time I get lonesome. Empty Midwestern space has replaced Good Morning and her red summer dress. I haven't been riding the stationary bike at the YMCA lately. But I'm planning on going again soon because it's important to stay in shape.

7.

It's just before Midnight on Wednesday. I shaved off my beard this morning. It took almost an hour to cut off all the hairs – scissors first and then razor and shaving cream. I looked in the mirror and saw the reflection of a man with no chin.

8.

Got back from New York on Monday. I was there to see my work in a group show and to meet my sister and drive to Binghamton, New York to attend a funeral. Our



grandmother got old and died. I remember when my grandmother would stop the car at McDonald's on the way to her aerobics class. I'd eat Chicken Nuggets and French fries on the floor of the gymnasium by myself. I didn't pay much attention to what the old ladies were doing. After the funeral my sister and I got drunk with our cousin who's in high school and must be about sixteen. He took us to a party in a part of town that was run down. Everybody was drinking beer and playing beer-drinking games.

9.

In bed with the dog again depressed and lonely. I miss Good Morning. Soon I will be forced to contend with a future that is unrecognizable. My future is as unrecognizable as my face after I shaved off the beard Wednesday morning revealing a chinless man. The only idea I have is to go to Northern California with my friend Lost Weekend. Lost Weekend and I will figure something out I tell myself and pet the dog.

10.

There are Midwestern people who have been saying they are offended by my "I MISS YOU BITCH" paintings. One person said the work has "no intellectual merit" and this person refuses to discuss the paintings as works of art. This particular person has been spiteful toward me for weeks and has a negative attitude toward people in general and I don't think this person would know a work of art if a work of art bit her in the face. I think this person should be checked into the Henry Ford Kingswood Hospital for an infinite sleepover.

11.

Good Morning and I haven't talked in about four months. I continue to think about her. I wonder how she's doing. I miss her clean smell like when she's just stepped out of the shower and her hair is still wet.

12.

The big Midwestern art exhibition opened two nights ago. I had eighty-four "DUMB & EASY" paintings on the wall in a giant grid going all the way up to the ceiling. The opening was crowded but the crowd wasn't too sophisticated and I doubt many people appreciated my work. The group show in New York came down yesterday. It got reviewed in *The Village Voice* but my work was not mentioned. And no sales. However I was informed that I did win 3rd place in an art competition down in Dallas. I put my cell phone number on the painting and nothing else. Apparently the Texans are sending me \$1,000 for my hard-won victory in telecommunications.



13.

Here I am in bed with the dog again. I'm driving to New York tomorrow with Lost Weekend for a short visit. Lost Weekend said she's looking forward to the open road. Lost Weekend and the open road are my best friends. The dog is coming too.

14.

I was in New York last week but now I'm back in Michigan with the dog. I wasn't planning on contacting Good Morning when I was in New York but every street reminded me of her and of things we used to do together like going out for Japanese Noodles. I saw a girl with blonde hair that looked an awful lot like Good Morning but it wasn't her. Fuck it I said to myself and I called her up.

15.

Good Morning and I spent an afternoon together in the East Village just wandering around. We found a nice bench to sit on in Tompkins Square Park under a shady tree. Good Morning told me all about her new boyfriend – an independent filmmaker with a fourteen-year-old son. Good Morning isn't much older than that.

16.

In bed with the dog tucked under my arm. It's cold. I have a black-hooded sweatshirt pulled up over my head to help keep warm. I took my "DUMB & EASY" paintings down today which means I'm officially done with this Michigan business. Whatever business is lurking around the corner is hidden like the color of Good Morning's eyeballs when she is sound asleep.

17.

I'm anxious to start making my "DOINGDEKOOONING" paintings but that's on hold because I'm taking a break from painting to go on a road trip to California with Lost Weekend. I have hundreds of paintings wrapped and stacked in neat rows like they are products for sale at the mall. Some of the malls I've frequented in Michigan are as big as the Great Lakes and the products are like schools of colorful fish.

18.

Sitting on the ground in the backyard next to the fire pit and a big stump of wood. The gazebo is forlorn in the corner looking like somebody is going to forget about it real soon. I'm holding a hot bowl of chicken noodle soup fresh out of the can. It's overcast – about 65 degrees or so. Everything is packed up. All my paintings will sit



like books on a shelf in an abandoned Midwestern library until I come back from California and check them out with my abandoned Midwestern library card.