You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. But you are here, and you cannot say that the terrain is entirely unfamiliar, although the details are a little fuzzy. You are at a nightclub talking to a girl with a shaved head. The club is either the Bimbo Box or the Lizard Lounge. It might all come a little clearer if you could slip into the bathroom and do a little more Bolivian Marching Powder. There is a small voice inside of you insisting that this epidemic lack of clarity is the result of too much of that already, but you are not yet willing to listen to that voice, the night has already turned on that imperceptible pivot where two A.M. changes to six A.M. You know that moment has come and gone, but you are not yet willing to concede that you have crossed the line beyond which all is gratuitous damage and the palsy’ of unravelled nerve endings. Somewhere back there it was possible to cut your losses, but you rode past that moment on a comet trail of white powder and now you are trying to bang onto that rush. Your brain at this moment is composed of brigades of tiny Bolivian soldiers. They are tired and muddy from their long march through the night. There are holes in their boots and they are hungry. They need to be fed. They need the Bolivian Marching Powder.

Something vaguely tribal about this scene—pendulous jewelry, face paint, ceremonial headgear and hairstyles. You feel that there is also a certain Latin theme, which is more than the fading buzz of marimbas in your brain.

You are leaning back against a post which may or may not be structural with regard to the building, but which feels essential for the maintenance of an upright position, the bald girl is saying this used to be a good place to come before the assholes dis-covered it. You do not want to be talking to this bald girl, or even listening to her, which is all you’re doing, but you don’t have your barge pole handy, and just at the moment you don’t want to test the powers of speech or locomotion.

How did you get here? It was your friend. Tad Allagash, who powered you in here, and now he has disappeared. Tad is the kind of guy who certainly would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. He is either your best self or your worst self, you’re not sure which. Earlier in the evening it seemed clear that he was your best self. You started on the Upper East Side with champagne and unlimited prospects, strictly observing the Allagash rule of perpetual motion: one drink per stop. Tad’s mission in life is to have more fun than anyone else in New York City, and this involves a lot of moving around, since there is always the likelihood that you are missing something, that where you aren’t is more fun than where you are. You are awed by this strict refusal to acknowledge any goal higher than the pursuit of pleasure. You want to be like that. You also think that he is shallow and dangerous. His friends are all rich and spoiled, like the cousin from Memphis you met earlier in the evening who would not accompany you below Fourteenth Street because he said he didn’t have a lowlife visa, this cousin bad a girlfriend with cheekbones to break your heart, and you knew she was the real thing when she absolutely refused to acknowledge your presence, She possessed secrets—about islands, about horses—which you would never know.

You have traveled from the meticulous to the slime. The girl with the shaved head has a scar tattooed on her scalp. It looks like a long, sutured gash. You tell her it is very realistic. She takes this as a compliment and thanks you. You meant as opposed to romantic. “I could use one of those right over my heart,” you say.

“You want I can give you the name of the guy did it. You’d be surprised bow cheap,” You don’t tell her that nothing would surprise you now. Her voice, for instance, which is like the New Jersey State Anthem played through an electric shaver.

The bald girl is emblematic of the problem. What the problem is is that for some reason you think you are going to meet the kind of girl who is not the kind of girl who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. When you meet her you are going to tell her that what you really want is a house in the country with a garden. New York, the club scene, bald women—you’re tired of all that. Your presence here is only a matter of conducting an experiment in limits, reminding your-self of what you aren’t. You see yourself as the kind of guy who wakes up early on Sunday morning and steps out to pick up The Times and croissants. You take a cue from the Arts and Leisure section and decide to check out
some exhibition—costumes of the Hapsburg Court at the Met, say, or Japanese lacquerware of the Muromachi period at
the Asia Society, Maybe you will call that woman you met at the publishing party Friday night, the party you did not get
sloppy drunk at, the woman who is an editor at a famous publishing house even though She looks like a fashion model.
See if she wants to check out the exhibition and maybe do an early dinner. You will wait until eleven A.M, to call her,
because She may not be an early riser, like you. She may have been out a little late, at a nightclub, say. It occurs to you
that There is time for a couple of sets of tennis before the museum. You wonder if She plays, but then, of course she
would.

When you meet the girl who wouldn't etcetera, you will tell her that you are slumming, visiting your own six A.M.
Lower East Side of the soul on a lark, stepping nimbly between the piles of garbage to the marimba rhythms in your
head.

On the other hand, any beautiful girl, specifically one with a full head of hair, would help you stave off this creeping
sense of mortality. You remember the Bolivian Marching Powder and realize you're not down yet. First you have to get
rid of this bald girl because she is doing bad things to your mood.

In the bathroom there are no doors on the stalls, which makes it tough to be discreet. But clearly, you are not the only
person here to take on fuel. Lots of sniffing going on. The windows in here are blacked over, and for this you are
profoundly grateful.

Hup, two. Three, four. The Bolivian soldiers are back on their feet. They are off and running in formation. Some of
them are dancing, and you must do the same.
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