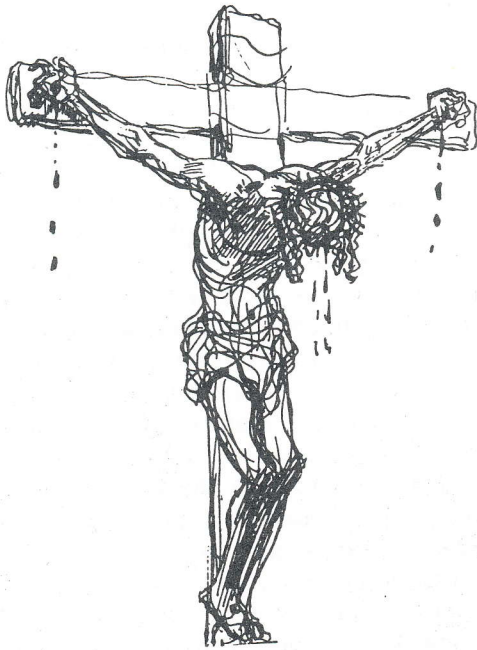


DROPLETS

by Phil Hine



Be patient with me, and I'll explain how it is. How it is for me. Imagine that you finally discover what gives you the most pleasure. One thing in the whole world that provides you with the most... so good, so intense. You don't even have to touch yourself any more. It's there, and the ecstasy thrills you in hot, sharp waves. So good, and all you have to do is be there. Relax and let it all flow out. There.

Can you imagine that? Good. Hold that thought, but gently. You must be gentle. And now, ah now you are told the truth. That one small thing that you desire so much, that one detail that sweeps you into ecstasy... you can't do it again. You can't do it because in doing it you might kill yourself. It has become a poison, for which there is no cure, and no reliable prognosis. Once you have tasted it, you can go down quickly, or slowly. It could take years, but die you surely will.

All that for a moment of pleasure. But not any moment of pleasure, remember. This is the best you've ever felt. Pure uncomplicated joy. Engulfed by a quiet torrent of feeling. So perfect, you just sit and drink it in with perhaps just a flicker of an eye. Is that moment worth the risk of slow death?

I've made my own choice on that one. Yes, I can't deny there is a certain sweetness in self-denial.

Withholding the pleasure sharpens my appetite, until the craving rises like bile in my throat. Yes of course, certain adaptations can be made, so that the danger of death can be avoided. I have learnt to savour my tastes through different senses. But you see, I can't hold off forever. One day I will take the risk, and the knowing of that hones the razor-blade of my joy. As confidently as the blade sinks through skin and into veins I know that each time I do it, each time, could be the time that I accept the stakes and trade my pleasure for the beginning of death. Increasingly, I am coming to see the necessity of this trade, and perhaps next time I will do it. Once I do, there will be no turning back.

Then again, my taste is a rare one. Sitting in a gloomy club I watch the jerking marionettes on the dance floor. They are all consumption and rotting lace; sick, vicious, and androgynous. Or so they think. Parodies of caricatures all. They whirl in their minds through Byzantine cathedrals and castles, shrouded in mist and mood-filtered floodlights. Yet they know me, and they keep their distance. I think that they are afraid of me. Or perhaps, afraid of my vice. It's too real for them, who play at being unreal. At first, they thought it was a pose until one who was curious accompanied me to my residence. He saw. He felt, but no, he did not understand. Very few can, I suppose. After that, some of the others called me 'vampire'. But they did not do so admiringly, and though I hear the whispers hissing between the music, aimed in my direction, not one of them will sit at my table.

I don't endanger others by bleeding them. I don't take too much, and if they demand money, I give them what they ask. Some seem to expect sex or comfort, in which I indulge them, but for their sake really. My thoughts are all red. Earlier in my life, I did think that the blood was just part of my sexual kicks. But as I grew to know myself with deeper and deeper clarity, I saw that it was the blood that mattered, and the sex was ephemeral. I had no wish to play games of power & submission; I just wanted to see blood trickle, and taste it. Blood itself was more important than penetration. The gender of the donor didn't come to matter either, as I realized that watching a thin scarlet thread wending its slow way across a woman's breast could be just as engrossing as slivers of red across a young man's shoulder.

At one time, I sought understanding. Not because I thought it was sick. I at no stage expressed a desire to be 'cured' of my taste, but I did very much want to know as much as possible about its origin. From where did this pale flower of rarefied desire bloom? Was it some childhood trauma, or some forbidden act which, suppressed perhaps, fermented, turning

guilt into secret pleasure. So I sought through epochs of my personal past lives, fragments hidden by my childish hands in secret places. I was no different from anyone else really. No secret abuse by parent or sibling; nothing really different. Except one thing. One incident which, when it was recovered from my mind, I knew was 'it' - the start of it all. The root of the flowers of my pleasure.

I was twelve. I had a friend, three years older than me. We were friends because... well I still don't really know. Perhaps I was precocious (that's what my relatives say anyway), and he was lonely. We hadn't messed around with each other, but I think that I was feeling the first stirrings of wanting to. I had for him a pure, innocent love uncomplicated by sexual desire or the need to possess another. One day, we were playing around, you know, like kids do, pretending to push each other off the pavement and into the road, snatching each other back at the last moment and gasping 'I've saved your life' We were playing, that's all, and everyone agreed that it wasn't my fault afterwards, that I hadn't pushed him that time. He just slipped and his foot twisted. He lost his balance and fell into the road. It was too quick. The lorry driver tried to swerve... but no good. I remember now, I saw his eyes, his eyes widening in his white face; he stared at me mutely. Silence. Red droplets misted across my face, and in the long, frozen moment that followed, I licked a bright bead of blood from the back of my hand.

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A SIMPLE SIGIL METHOD

by Mykeul Bates

This technique is a means whereby the magician's desire may be simply and easily reified with no preparation whatsoever beyond the need for a clear idea of the end result and a sentence which embodies that aim. Proceed as follows:

1. Take a plain piece of paper and draw a square border of preferred size on it.
2. Write out your desire in full, across the border as fast as possible.
3. Repeat the sentence as quickly as possible writing continuously until the bottom of the border is reached. One should write so fast that the sentence is no longer intelligible.
4. Turn the paper 90° and repeat from top to bottom.
5. Continue turning by 90° until the border is back to where you started.
6. Discard the sigil and do something different. During this time your subconscious will be 'absorbing' the sigilized desire.

NOTE: The end result should resemble an abstract Impressionist picture (see below). The act of speed-writing serves to charge the sigil in the same way as a mantra works.

THE FINISHED SIGIL

