

## After Lunch

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He'd needed complete rest for twenty four hours in order to be well enough to meet friends for a café lunch. The only way to achieve this was to take medication for a day and a night. And so to do nothing. Nothing, yet again, but to continue living in the hope of an eventual end to this imprisonment of illness.

Lunch achieved. The conversation had led a winding trail from our polluting agro-economy and the lie of our '100% Pure NZ' slogan, to the echoes of Magritte found in the work of Chema Madoz ... then home: several hours pissed away in a graduated attempt to become restful once again, after the second social outing in a year. More hours lost, as time's sinewy vapours stole through the window panes, robbing the day of light; and from one life, another day.

Gerald Garcia's classical guitar was more than enough company; only several hours of lying motionless would restore R's limited functioning ability. And guitar music was as good a companion as any in those indeterminate hours; better than any, in fact: Villa Lobos was tender company indeed. Could he have chosen any companion as he lay still, the afternoon fading away, he would have elected solitude, spellbound before the majesty of the Five Preludes. Breathing the thoughts of this noble spirit, his mind grew as large and as small as the universe, not confined by the darkness.

The familiar smells of dusk were not found in this house: without the energy for dinner, time – sliding slowly and inevitably by like a ship on the horizon – did not betray herself with evidence of cooking.

Basking unseen in the gloom with him and the spirit of Villa Lobos, would be the black and white cat, Lazybones. It was what she did best and was very nearly all she did. As such, she was an inspiration for her insomniac house-mate.

Tonight it was back to the minimal medication regime, to stop drug reliance escalating. Over-the-counter supplements Tryptophan and Vitamin B3 had helped him to wind down and start to rest. Two hours after those, he might just have the energy to face dinner, after all. Or maybe not. Then he'd go outside, under the tarpaulin, for another winter's night. Or maybe not: could he at last get some sleep in a bed? Sadly, B3 had aggravated his tinnitus, leaving him with a choice between twice the noise in his head or use of heavy drugs. Pins and needles clawed deep into his muscles as he tried to rest.

For now, he'd stay under the covers, absorb the music, caring not that time's arrow flew on at her usual speed: for this ongoing moment, he was in the presence of greatness. Time could fly past, for all he cared. She would fly on from this room, through the course of human history and far beyond, an impartial observer. An observer or a destroyer? An observer, he thought, for, by flying to the end of the universe – be it a big chill or a big rip – the arrow would find her end. It was nice to know that time's arrow passing through this room would one day see the end of the universe. If she had been conscious, with all she'd witnessed, would she remember Villa Lobos before the final apocalypse? Would she care? He thought not; but for himself, he was profoundly grateful for the Brazilian composer's life.

Day gone. He'd met friends for lunch (the unlit fireplace had been rather cheerless), lain in bed listening to the guitar music of South America. As good a day as the past year had brought; as good as there would be for a many months, maybe years, yet.

One finds happiness where one can and savours it in the smallest of morsels, when necessary.

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