

NUDE IN YOUR HOT TUB, FACING THE ABYSS (A  
LITERARY MANIFESTO AFTER THE END OF  
LITERATURE AND MANIFESTOS)

*Lars Iyer*



**DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN**

ONCE UPON A TIME, WRITERS WERE LIKE GODS, AND LIVED IN THE MOUNTAINS. THEY WERE EITHER DESTITUTE HERMITS OR ARISTOCRATIC LUNATICS, AND THEY WROTE ONLY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE ALREADY DEAD OR THE UNBORN, OR FOR NO ONE AT ALL. THEY HAD NEVER HEARD OF THE MARKETPLACE, THEY WERE ARCANE AND ANTISOCIAL. THOUGH THEY MIGHT HAVE LAMENTED THEIR LIVES—WHICH WERE MARKED BY SOLITUDE AND SADNESS—THEY LIVED AND BREATHED IN THE SACRED REALM OF LITERATURE. THEY WROTE DRAMA AND POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY AND TRAGEDY, AND EACH FORM WAS MORE DEVASTATING THAN THE LAST. THEIR BOOKS, WHEN THEY WROTE THEM, REACHED THEIR AUDIENCE POSTHUMOUSLY AND BY THE MOST TORTUOUS OF ROUTES. THEIR THOUGHTS AND STORIES WERE TERRIBLE TO LOOK UPON, LIKE THE BONES OF ANIMALS THAT HAD CEASED TO EXIST.

Later, there came another wave of writers, who lived in the forests below the mountains, and while they still dreamt of

the heights, they needed to live closer to the towns at the edge of the forest, into which they ventured every now and again to do a turn in the public square. They gathered crowds and excited minds and caused scandals and partook in politics and engaged in duels and instigated revolutions. At times, they left for prolonged trips back to the mountains, and when they returned, the people trembled at their new pronouncements. The writers had become heroes, gilded, bold and pompous. And some of the loiterers around the public square started to think: I quite like that! I have half a notion to try that myself.

Soon, writers began to take flats in the town, and took jobs—indeed, whole cities were settled and occupied by writers. They pontificated on every subject under the sun, granted interviews, and published in the local press, *St Mountain Books*. Some even made a living from their sales, and, when those sales dwindled, they taught about writing at *Olympia City College*, and when the college stopped hiring in the humanities, they wrote memoirs about ‘mountain living’. They became savvy in publicity, because it became evident that the publishing industry was an arm of the publicity industry, and the smart ones worked first in advertising, which was a good place to hone the craft. And the writers began to outnumber their public, and, it became apparent, the public was only a hallucination after all, just as the importance of writing was mostly a hallucination.

Now you sit at your desk, dreaming of Literature, skimming the Wikipedia page about the ‘Novel’ as you snack on salty treats and watch cat and dog videos on your phone. You post to your blog, and you tweet the most profound things you can think to tweet, you labour over a comment about a trending topic, trying to make it meaningful. You whisper the names like a devotional, *Kafka*, *Lautréamont*, *Bataille*, *Duras*, hoping to conjure the ghost of something you scarcely understand, something preposterous and obsolete that nevertheless preoccupies your every living day. And you find

yourself laughing in spite of yourself, laughing helplessly at yourself, laughing to the verge of tears. You click 'new document' and sit there, shaking, staring at your computer screen, and you wonder what in the world you can possibly write now.

## THE PUPPET CORPSE

To say that Literature is dead is both empirically false and intuitively true. By most statistical indicators, the prognosis is good. There are more readers and writers than ever before. The rise of the internet marks the rise, in some senses, of a deeply literate culture. We are more likely to text each other than to talk. More than ever before, we are likely to comment or write than to watch or listen. The oft quoted fact: there are more graduates of writing programmes than there were people alive in Shakespeare's London. As Gabriel Zaid writes in *So Many Books*, the exponential proliferation of authorship means that the number of published books will soon eclipse the human population, soon there will be more books than people who have ever lived. We have libraries on our phones, books (in or out of print) available at a touch of the finger. The mighty Amazon, the infinite Feed, the endless Aggregation, the Wikiwisdom, the Recommendations, Likes, Lists, Criticism, Commentary. We live in an unprecedented age of words.

And yet... in another sense, by a different standard, Literature is a corpse and cold at that. Intuitively we know this to be the case, we sense, suspect, fear, and acknowledge it. The *dream* has faded, our *faith* and *awe* have fled, our *belief* in Literature has collapsed. Sometime in the 1960s, the great river of Culture, the Literary Tradition, the Canon of Lofty works began to braid and break into a myriad distributaries, turning sluggish on the plains of the cultural delta. In a culture without verticality, Literature survives as a reference primer on the

*reality effect*, or as a minor degree in the newly privatised university. What *was* Literature? It was the literature of Diderot, Rimbaud, Walser, Gogol, Hamsun, Bataille and most of all Kafka: revolutionary and tragic, prophetic and solitary, posthumous, incompatible, radical and paradoxical, a dwelling for oracles and outsiders, it was defiant and pathetic, it sought to break and alter, to describe, yes, but in describing, shatter, it was outside the culture looking in, and inside the culture looking out. Works of this nature, works in this *spirit*, no longer exist. Or rather, they still exist, but only as a parody of past forms. Literature has become a pantomime of itself, and cultural significance has undergone a hyperinflation, its infinitesimal units bought and sold like penny stocks.

What caused this great decline? We can point to the disappearances of older class and power structures. The decline of the church, the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie—those great foils of Modernist energies—have dissolved. Like Kant's dove in free flight cutting through the air, the writer needs to feel a kind of *resistance* on the part of Literature, needs to work *against* something even as it struggles *for* something. And what is there to work against when there's no one left to antagonise? We could speak of *globalisation*, of the incorporation of the whole planet into the world market, which has the effect of weakening of past cultural forms and national literatures. We notice the ascension of the *individual* to a place where idiosyncrasy itself becomes commonplace, where the self, the soul, the heart, and the mind are demographic jargon. There is little sense of a tradition to wrestle with—no *agon* of authorship that we associate with the writers of the past. We could point to the *populism* of contemporary culture, to the dissolution of older boundaries between high and low art, and to a weakening of our suspicions about the market. Writers now work in concert with capitalism, rather than setting themselves against it. You're nothing unless you sell, unless your name is known, unless scores of admirers turn up at your book signings. We could also point to the banality of liberal democracies: by tolerating

everything, by incorporating everything, our political system licenses nothing. Art was once oppositional, but now it is consumed by the cultural apparatus, and seriousness itself reduces itself into a kind of kitsch for generations X, Y and Z. We have not run out of things to be serious about—our atmosphere boils, our reservoirs of water go dry, our political dynamic dares our ingenuity to permit catastrophe—but the literary means to *register* tragedy have exhausted themselves. Globalisation has flattened Literature into a million niche markets, and prose has become another product: pleasurable, notable, exquisite, laborious, respected, but always small. No poem will ferment revolution, no novel challenges reality, not anymore.

The history of Literature is like a sound in an echo-chamber, growing fainter with each reiteration. Or, to use another metaphor, it could be said that Literature was, after all, a finite resource—like oil, like water—that was tapped and burned away by each explosive new manifestation. If the history of Literature is a history of new ideas about what Literature can be, then we have reached a place where modernism and postmodernism have drunk the well dry. Postmodernism, which was surely just modernism by a more desperate name, brought us to our endgame: everything is available and nothing is surprising. In the past, each great sentence contained a manifesto and every literary life proposed an unorthodoxy, but now all is Xerox, footnote, playacting. Even originality itself no longer has the ability to surprise us. We have witnessed so many stylistic and formal gambits that even something original in all its constituent parts contains the meta-quality of newness, and so, paradoxically, is instantly recognisable.

Some sound the old clarion, call for a return to the old ways, demanding that Culture return on its chariot and restore the significance of literary authorship, but their grandiose demands are noted with doubt, derision, or not at all. The

'classics', from antiquity to the present, are all repertory routines, like *The Nutcracker* at Christmas. Literary prestige exists only in a liturgical fashion, as quaint as a nun on the metro. Who but the most pompous of the *third* wave of writers can take themselves seriously as an Author? Who could dream of archiving their emails and tweets for a grateful posterity? The seclusion of Blanchot has become impossible, as has the exile of Rimbaud, the youthful death of Radiguet. No one is rejected or ignored anymore, not when everyone is published instantly, without effort or forethought. Authorship has evaporated, replaced by a legion of keystroke labourers, shoulder to shoulder with the admen and app developers.

One could argue that we ought to be grateful for this new order. Isn't it nice, after all, to emerge from your hobby shed as a fledgling novelist? So others might read you: what a surprise! That people read fiction at all any more: likewise, a surprise. Your friends and family think it's nice, too. So you've published a novel! Do people still read them? Well, fancy that! For your circle of friends, the fact of having published a novel trumps anything it might contain. The fact that your name will come up on a Google search with something more than nude pictures of you in a hot tub is already something. And so the prestige of authorship gives way to the prestige of an ephemeral kind of literary careerism, one which is quickly forgotten.

What, then, is so terrible? The stalls of the marketplace provide a fascinating babble, a white noise for a well-adjusted lifetime. Let a thousand flowers bloom, etc. Perhaps the demise of Literature marks the end of a certain need. Perhaps we should give up the ghost. To what end do we *require* the pantomimic wraith of the *poète maudit*, the leering shade of Rimbaud or Lautréamont with its bottle of absinthe and its bloodshot eyes? For the pragmatic among us, the end of Literature is merely the end of a melodramatic model, a false hope that has gone the way of psychoanalysis, Marxism, punk

rock and philosophy. But for the less pragmatic among us, we realise— we experience—what has been lost. Without Literature we lose Tragedy and Revolution both, and these are the two last best modalities of Hope. And when Tragedy disappears, we sink down into a gloom, a life whose vast sadness is that it is less than tragic. We crave tragedy, but where can we get it when tragedy has given way to farce? Shame and scorn are the only response now at literary readings to literary manifestos. All effort are belated now, all attempts are impostures. We know what we want to say and to hear, but our new instruments cannot hold the tune. We cannot *do it again* nor *make it new* since both of those actions have telescoped to equivalence—we are like circus clowns who cannot squeeze into their car. The words of Pessoa ring in our ears: ‘Since we are unable to extract beauty from life, we attempt at least to extract it from our incapacity to extract beauty from life.’ This is the task given us, our last, best chance.

## SICK OF LITERATURE

‘Whoever writes is exiled from writing, which is the country—  
his own—where he is not a prophet.’

—Maurice Blanchot

As in any death, any calamity, our first, perverse reaction is denial. We loved our literary geniuses too much to admit their days are done. We dance around the Bloomsday maypole and taste the word Camus on our tongues like the Eucharist. With pomp and circumstance, the award ceremonies vainly bestow medals of greatness on novels that vaguely mime our fading memory of masterpiece. The prestige, the debris, the body of Literature remains even as the spirit has fled. Only a very few writers have grasped the dire nature of our current literary

moment. Only a few writers write truthfully about the state we are in and the obstacles set against us. Their work is sickly and cannibalistic, preposterous and desperate, but it is also, paradoxically, joyous and rings with truth. There is a terrible honesty in this work that sets us free. These are the writers who show us how, perhaps, we can proceed.

Before we can be healed, we must begin with the diagnosis. The narrator of Enrique Vila-Matas's *Montano's Malady* suffers from a kind of 'literary sickness', wherein he experiences the world only in terms of the books he has read by the great names of literary history. He is condemned to understand himself and everything around him in terms of the lives and works of the authors who obsess him. His motive for writing *Montano's Malady*, is to find a cure – to leave Literature by way of literature.

In the first section of the book, a freestanding novella, Montano visits Nantes to free himself of his literary sickness, but finds himself more deeply mired in it. The city itself can only remind him of Jacques Vaché, the legendary proto-surrealist known only through his letters to Breton, who was born there and took his life there – as well as of Breton himself, for whom Nantes was second only to his beloved Paris as a source of inspiration. And when Montano visits his son in that same city, he can only see himself as the ghostly father of a Hamlet who, like Shakespeare's character, pretends to be stark raving mad.

Montano is trapped by literature. Deciding to leave the city in desperation, catching the first train out of the city, Montano admits 'this is a very literary thing to do, I also know that trains are very literary' – modes of transport, too, have become infested with his sickness. A subsequent trip to Chile provides no relief – flying in a small plane, he can think only of Antoine Saint-Exupéry, who delivered mail over the same mountains. Montano evokes countless other authors on the



way: Danilo Kiš, Pablo Neruda, Alejandra Pizarnik and so on.

Montano suffers. He is pressed up too close to literature. The world itself seems to be a system of literary tropes, literary associations. Montano can't even dream of suicide, about putting it all to an end, since death is 'precisely what literature talks about most'. There is no way out – there's no course of action he can follow that does not risk becoming thereby some kind of literary cliché, literary kitsch. For Montano's predicament is not only that is trapped in Literature, it is that Literature itself appears like a tawdry stage set.

Montano's infection has its roots in Kafka (indeed, what problems of the last hundred years have *not* been anticipated by Kafka?). Montano writes that there's no one more 'literature-sick' than the Prague-born author. 'I am made of literature', Kafka says, but Kafka managed to make a literature out of this sickness. *The Castle* might, as the narrator of *Montano's Malady* suggests, allegorise the impossibility of exchanging exegesis for reality, of escaping sickness for health. But the very act of creating allegory out his illness becomes a kind of literature. Kafka, in other words, can still write Literature, and so his literary sickness is, for a time, assuaged.

Vila-Matas' narrator has even fewer options available to him than Kafka. The structures of religion had collapsed for Kafka, leaving him in the realm of allegory, but for Vila-Matas, even the structures of allegory have collapsed, even the structure of narrative itself have fallen into ruin. Even Kafka could tell a *story*, but this is beyond Vila-Mata's narrator. Whereas Kafka was born too late for religion, we are all born too late for Literature. As the narrator of *Montano* replays the lives and works of literary legends, he shows only how remote these figures have become for us, these writers who Literature itself already seemed to keep at a distance. Literature is moving away from us just as it was moving away from our literary predecessors—from diarists like Gide, who, as described in

*Montano's Malady*, is forever dreaming of writing a Masterpiece. For the idea of a Masterpiece—or even *dreaming of writing a Masterpiece*—is itself part of literary kitsch. This is what the narrator means when he claims that *literature itself* suffers from Montano's malady: Montano's sickness—seeing the world in terms of Literature—is also Literature's, a mirror that can no longer reflect the world.

'Don Quixote represents a civilisation's youth: he *made up* events; and we don't know how to escape those besetting us', writes E. M. Cioran. To make up events, even to allegorise them, doesn't seem possible anymore. As when we spit into the wind, our slightest literary gesture flies back to stick to us. This, as in the virtuosic brilliance of the first part of *Montano's Malady*, can be funny. But in the end, it's exhausting: as one reviewer claims 'the jokes start wearing thin' and the book becomes 'tortured'. It is difficult not to agree that the narrator seems 'to have lost the plot – not that there ever was one – entirely'. And yet, and yet, despite the awful impasse, Vila-Matas ends on a note of surprising defiance, even hope: the narrator and Robert Musil kneel before a great abyss, surrounded by the pompous, self-satisfied writers ('enemies of the literary') who congratulate each other at a grotesque literary festival. 'It is the air of the time,' says the narrator with regret, 'the spirit is threatened.' But Musil contradicts him: 'Prague is untouchable... it's a magic circle. Prague has always been too much for them. And it always will be.' For a book whose purpose is to identify the terminal sickness of Literature, *Montano's Malady* ends by insisting that something yet remains, that there is some resolute, secret quality that cannot be undone even by times like ours.

We turn to Thomas Bernhard, another sufferer from Montano's malady. Nothing to be done, no way out, nothing left to do except to mark the fact that there is nothing to be done, and no way out. The same story told over and again—the attempt to find time and space to complete a *summa*, some

great compendious saying-it-all work on a particular topic, be it the nature of hearing, or the music of Mendelssohn, in which the narrator's report of the insurmountable problems facing this project become the story itself. Bernhard develops his topics—the resentments and frustrated desires of would-be intellectual life, the guilt and suffering of living after the total compromise of Austrian authority, the moral abomination and aftermath of Nazism —through a cacophonous theme and variation of prose. His great iterative loops of consciousness stretch to the breaking point, spiral into a hurricane of rage and frustration. His books turn like whirlwinds, gathering all and everything in their path: hyperbolic profundities fly alongside pitiful mundanities, Old World aphorisms collide with scatterbrained peevishness, grand denunciations fold into banal distractions. The value of a suitcase, the value of a life, how pet dogs sabotage all intellectual thought, how breakfast is a kind of assault. His sentences, always on the brink of falling apart, seek not simply to represent life—the ordinary, tedious life of failed philosophers, failed scientists, failed musicians, and failed literary writers living under tainted regimes—but to enact the forces that comprise it.

The unceasing forward momentum of his prose speaks to a complete intolerance of failure, of compromise, and of a hatred of the strutting imposture of those who do not understand their own failure and compromise. By declaring war on themselves, Bernhard's frustrated narrators, never able to find time and space in which, finally, to write—in which to imitate their masters, be it Schopenhauer or Novalis, Kleist or Goethe—declare war on a culture in which such imitation has become impossible. Bernhard is a name for a plughole around which all of older Culture, all of Literature and Philosophy, seems to swirl and drain away. He mourns, aghast, the suicide of Culture even as he spews bile upon the remaining 'enemies of the literary': the state-sponsored artists, actors, writers and composers of the insufferable dinner party of *Woodcutters*. He is caught in a kind of hateful reverie of the non-literary life, as

embodied in the socialite businesswoman sister in *Concrete*, even as, in *The Loser*, he postulates that the only possible outcomes of an artistic endeavour are suicide, madness, and abject failure.

Of course, the irony of Bernhard is that while his narrators fail again and again even to begin, Bernhard himself *has* found a form and a way to speak. His musicians may have forsaken music and his musical scholars cannot write a single sentence about music, but Bernhard has made a music for himself. It is a grotesque symphony perhaps, a farcical, laughable, ludicrous, black hearted waltz, but there is something thrilling, dare we say beautiful, in its song of abnegation. Once again, as in the work of Vila-Matas, only at the very edge of the abyss can we remember what is untouchable.

A final example of literature that faces its own demise and survives: Bolaño's *The Savage Detectives* is a book about an attempt to create a literary vanguard in 1975, written after the conditions for vanguardist practice had collapsed. It is a book about political revolution written in a period after the inevitable failures of such revolutions have revealed themselves. It is a novel about a literary avant-garde and yet the novel itself resists the conceptualization and stylization that a literary avant-garde requires. It is an ecstatic, passionate novel—Bolaño himself describes it as a 'love letter to my generation'—that plays out as a parody of the desires for Literature and Revolution. It is a novel, like all recent novels, that comes too late, but unlike most others it finds a way to address this lateness. In doing so, *The Savage Detectives* provides another model for how all would-be authors can appropriately speak about our anachronistic dreams.

The supposed heroes of the book, Ulises Lima and Arturo Belano, leaders of the literary 'gang' called the Visceral Realists, are rarely on stage in the novel for very long. For the

most part, we hear of them only at a remove, through the disparate narrators Bolaño calls forward to tell their tale. And the verdict on them is mixed – they have an admirer in gauche and excitable law student Madero, whose brilliantly funny diaries bookend *The Savage Detectives*, but they have their detractors, too. ‘Belano and Lima weren’t revolutionaries. They weren’t writers. Sometimes they wrote poetry, but I don’t think they were poets, either. They sold drugs,’ says one of Bolano’s narrators. ‘The whole visceral realism thing was... the demented strutting of a dumb bird in the moonlight, something essentially cheap and meaningless,’ says another. In the end they head towards ‘catastrophe or the abyss’, as they wander the world, still attempting to strike literary and political poses when the time for Literature and Politics has gone. ‘We fought for parties that, had they emerged victorious, would have immediately sent us into a forced labour camp’, Bolaño writes of his generation. ‘We fought and poured all our generosity into an ideal that had been dead for over fifty years’.

To knowingly pour yourself into a dead ideal—this is the quality that permeates *The Savage Detectives*. Bolaño’s insight, and it is both unsettling and unshackling, is that the only subject left to write about is the *epilogue* of Literature: the story of the people who pursue Literature, scratching on their knees for the traces of its passing. This is no mere meta-gamesmanship or solipsism; this is looking things in the face. We live in a culture where a million writers mimic the great literary forms they adore, only vaguely aware how they regurgitate kitsch. We all know *Freedom* cannot be Flaubert, and yet we cannot quite comprehend why that door is closed to us. On a yearly basis we see dead styles—realisms, modernisms, new-journalisms, playful postmodernisms—presented as the latest fad, as retro as the plague. It’s time for literature to acknowledge its own demise rather than playing puppet with the corpse. We must talk directly about the farce of a culture that dreams of things it cannot possibly create, because this farce *is* our tragedy. We must face the gloom and bitter humour

of our situation. Why else does one of Bolaño's narrators draw dwarves with giant cocks as he waits out his time in an Israeli prison cell, or Madero make his companions play guessing game over the cartoons reproduced on the last pages of *The Savage Detectives* as they near the end of their quest for Cesárea Tinajero? These are the behaviours of people living after Literature. Once again, as in Cervantes, the most compelling narrative is that of Literature's role in our lives, except in our contemporary setting, the role is of a will-o'-the-wisp above the quagmire, a ghost shaking its chains, a vanquished entity who hypnotises a legion of idiots: the would-be novelists, the would-be revolutionaries, the critics, philosophy lecturers, lit-blog editors, magazine subscribers, and would-be intellectuals—all of *us*.

## WHAT TO WRITE AT THE WAKE

'There is plenty of hope, infinite hope, but not for us'. —Kafka

So here we are, on this side of the mountain, nostalgic for the great storm-struck plateaus where our writer-ancestors once worked their magic, but knowing that we live on the lowlands. Here we are at the end of Literature and Culture, stripped, bereft, embarrassed. We are children tromping in old boots. Perhaps even Bernhard and Bolaño are too grand for us to imitate! We should study the perverse doodlers, David Shrigley and Ivan Brunetti. Their very choice of medium shows how they have embraced their doom. We should disconnect our computers and put the books out on the stoop and forget we ever learned to read or care. But for those of us who cannot escape the need to scribble and type, here are a few pointers.

Use an unliterary *plainness*. It knows the game is up, that it's all finished. The style of *The Savage Detectives* is notably *unliterary*, almost inelegant, for all the virtuosic restlessness of its narrative voices. It has "a choking directness." Even

Bernhard, for all his grammatical convolutions, writes, finally, with a kind of pathetic obviousness, he does not gussy or adorn, but spews instead the stuff of his complaint. The abyss needs the clear steadiness of a testimony, it needs the day-after sobriety of a witness-report to remember what went before. Literature is no longer the Thing Itself, but about the vanished Thing.

Resist closed forms, resist masterpieces. The urge to create masterpieces is a kind of necrophilia. Writing must be open on all sides so that the draft of real life—gloomy, farcical life — can pass through it, rifling its pages. Vila-Matas says that he feels it is necessary for whoever writes a fictional text to show his hand, to allow an image of himself to appear. But it is an image of *farcical life* that shows its hand in that literature which comes after Literature. The author must give up on aping genius. Rather show the author as ape, the author as idiot. Don't have the hubris of being the comedian. You are the straight man in this farce; the universe is the funny man. So don't be silly, cute, crack jokes, or play coy, but allow hilarity, a cleansing painful laughter that splits your sides and your heart. Follow your own foolishness like tracks upon the sand.

Write about *this* world, whatever else you're writing about, a world dominated by dead dreams. Mark the absence of Hope, of Belief, of Commitments, of high-flown Seriousness. Mark the past from which we are broken and the future that will destroy us. Write about a kind of hope that was once possible as Literature, as Politics, as Life, but that is no longer possible *for us*.

Mark your *sense of imposture*. You're not an Author, not in the old sense. You haven't really written a Book, not a Real Book. You're part of no tradition, no movement, no vanguard. There's nothing at stake for you in Literature, not really, for all your demented strutting. In addition, *very few people are actually reading*: mark that fact, too. *No one's reading, idiot!* There are

more novelists than readers. There are *so many books...*

Mark your gloom. Mark the fact that the end is nigh. The party's over. The stars are going out, and the black sky is indifferent to you and your stupidities. You're with Bolaño's characters at the end of the quest, lost in the Sonora Desert, and at the end of all quests. You're drawing stupid cartoons to pass the time in the desert. That's it, the whole of your oeuvre: the drawing of stupid cartoons to pass the time in the desert.

Don't be generous and don't be kind. Ridicule yourself and what you do. Savage art, like the cannibal you are. Remember, only when the thing is dead, picked at by a million years of crows, gnawed at by jackals, spat upon and forgotten, can we discover that last inviolate bit of bone.

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