

BOOK THIRTEEN

Silence is the greatest persecution; the saints were never silent.

Pascal, *Pensees*

919

METAPHORS By now, everything happens that's going to hap-
FRACTURE pen. The door that opened is closed and the

closed door's about to be opened. My story about Helena and I, such as it is, is now ready to acquire the constitution of closure—that popular concept, as if any human other than a sociopath has the ability to ever move on beyond what's happened—which is the god-given right of any story, good, bad, or otherwise.

The tremendous loss of Teradact, followed by the break with Helena, has left me with so little of my own that I've realized, at long last and with a protracted struggle, that I really need very little to live on. And that it's my god-given right to do nothing. Now I don't think about what to do; that's all in the past. I do nothing, as I live in a place that's been through all this before. Finding myself doing something I stop and instead of being in the action I'm in, whether it be walking or drinking wine or thinking or writing, I withdraw, re-think, and do something else or do nothing.

By doing nothing, I seem to be losing everything. Almost everywhere I look in France something's falling apart.

AND HELENA Yes, Helena's gone home. My heart for her is no
LEAVES ME longer the heart she has for me; it's a separate

heart, and quite distant. Either she's taken the yellow notebooks or she hasn't, but I've not found them.

I watch her walk down the stairs of the petit maison slowly, careful not to slip as the stairs are steep and the tiles slick, and shut the door of the petit maison neither with deliberation or force but firmly so that she is completely on the other side. I hear her footsteps in the lane. She's taking the long way down, hoping Marionette might be walking up the hill, if she is walking, with her bread, hoping Marionette might be the last person in the village she sees, unbeknownst to me.

She walks out of the petit maison without me, with or without the yellow notebooks, for they're not under the bed, not under either bed I should

say, as I have been sleeping downstairs in the pull-out sofa bed, keeping the now lost yellow notebooks submerged for safekeeping under Helena's bed during our time in France. This is not how I imagined her leaving, though I have imagined many times what it would be like to live without her, and she me, but never from so far away, never from the standpoint of her leaving the place where she knows the language and me staying in the place where I not cannot speak.

ONCE AGAIN, A
QUESTION THAT
WON'T BE ANSWERED

The question, as I phrase it in English to Helena moments before she walks out of the petit maison, is not whether to go home, but where is home?

She opposes me, saying, *home is where you know the language.*

I say to Helena, *you're a hero to me for knowing two languages. Besides, you're more at home in France than I am.*

She says nothing. I say:

*Helena I can't leave now, I'm only beginning to become a philosopher. And things are unresolved amongst us, not to mention Jean-Claude and Simone, and Antonio the artist. Furthermore, I'm just learning to live in a way where no one can find fault with me. There are issues, it's true, they may not like this or that about me, that I can't speak French for instance, but I'm beginning to learn how to live correctly. **I'm thinking 'am I doing the right thing with my life, I'm living the way Teradact and Pascal might want me to live...?***

SHOULD A DOOR
REMAIN OPEN OR
CLOSED?

The last straw, the final disagreement, is the disagreement we have about leaving the door to the petit maison open or not leaving it open. I'm on one side and Helena's on the other.

A DOOR HAS (ME)
TWO SIDES

The door should be open. It shouldn't be a question, there should be no question at all that the door's meant to be open. If you were to ask the door, the door would say it preferred being open to being closed. Being open is what the door is made for the door would say, to let the light in, the air. Not completely open perhaps and not at night,

at night the door's purpose changes, the door is to be closed. The door itself concedes that. At night the door's to be closed and locked, locked tight for the peace of mind only a locked door can provide. But open in the day, open enough for at least a little fresh air, unless it's winter. In winter of course it's closed, but open at least a little if it's warm enough. Ajar a crack perhaps. And open for others in the day and in the daylight, not locked, open a little even if it's cold, so that a neighbor could come in out of the cold.

(SHE)

The door is a door for one reason—to be closed—to be closed in the door's answer if the door could talk. Every door has this in common with every other door, it's what makes a door a door, that it should be closed for the most part. Why can't you see this? Is something wrong? If a door was made to be left open there would be no need for it! The door would be denying its doorness in the same way you would deny your humanity if you did not breathe! If a door is not closed it is not a door. Doesn't matter if it's made of wood or steel or plastic. A door with a window is another case, I admit, an entirely different problem. But let's stick to the old wooden doors of France! I don't deny that doors were meant to be open and closed, no doubt, hence the hinges. But the closing's the door's most salient attribute, whether it's hot or cold, the door's designed to be closed...

