

Black Cradle

by u.v.ray

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time lost all cohesion nearly 30 years ago now but even at the time everything happened in such a blur i had no idea about the sequence in which events had taken place when i opened my eyes i saw a lot of blurry bodies moving around me dressed in white and i remember uttering that i thought i was fucking toast and i heard one of the bodies say piteously he's alive

during the next few weeks of recovery in the queen elizabeth hospital i was alone and without any visitors except for when a nurse came in and said there's a couple of policeman here to see you the 2 plain clothed CID officers one older one and one younger they came swaggering in like regan and carter out of the sweeney and the older one said they just need to ask me a few questions and i replied quite sincerely that i didn't even know where to begin the police officer smiled weakly and said we know it wasn't you who killed brigitte golding son so i should assure you you're not under any suspicion of anything but we do need your help in nailing the bastard who did

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they acted informally i could only see through a kind of soft focus haze and he said look i'll ask you some questions and why don't you just start at the beginning as you see fit? he said his name was paul and the younger officer's name was martin and the nurse carried in two plastic chairs and they dragged them up to the side of the bed the metal feet screeching along the tiled floor they sat down and paul spoke while martin checked his watch and pulled out a notebook touched his pen nib against his tongue and prepared himself to begin scribbling stuff down whilst staring at me invasively like police officers do with his vacant wooden eyes

for as long as i could feel anything i answered his questions and he scribbled stuff down but i don't remember much about it since i was totally medicated up to the eyeballs and it was like i was just staring into a blinding white light everything blanked out of my mind like i was sitting alone in a movie theatre in silence just staring at a clear white screen blanking it all out like nothing had happened at all and i could hear my own voice speaking but i was so spaced out it was like it was coming from somewhere else like emanating from the television or the chest of drawers or the vase of flowers and i have no idea what i said at all and just like they do in the old films the copper eventually said well don't go too far away we'll need to speak to you again just before they left he turned in the doorway and said you've been lucky the nurse told me she wouldn't have foreseen anyone coming back from what you did to yourself my constitution's not like anyone else's i told him i'm like fucking superman

after my release from the hospital they shifted me to the highcroft

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asylum mental facility where i stayed for the next 3 months and when you're in those places you're just in the middle of nowhere a place with no more sunrise and no more sunsets you just drift in and out of timeless days all memories and feelings medicated away it's like they detune you leaving only the comforting sound of radio static running through your head blocking everything else out

the stitches were out and the bandages were off but the scars still present across my wrists when they deemed me fit for discharge it's all mostly a blur to me but i recall at some point during my residence there they wheeled me into a room where some shrink called doctor mitchell asked me a whole string of meaningless pissy questions that he appeared to be reading from some pre prepared list or other and i was feeling pretty spaced out from the meds in any case and i heard myself laugh because the plants in his office were all dead it's the little everyday things in life i want to avoid i told him when he asked me about in my own words how i felt i dealt with life and the big things too for that matter i added i don't give a fuck about any of it i said there's nothing left in this world to love and nothing even to hate for that matter the doctor sat for a moment and then said what is it you fear the most? well i said there are certain inevitabilities in life i mean you get hit around the back of the swede with a house brick it aint never gonna feel like a marshmallow you know what i'm saying? dr mitchell gave a fatigued smile and said yes he knew what i was getting at

doctor mitchell's movements were slow and austere yet strange

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he was large and bony and his joints moved mechanically like he was made out of a meccano set he was like an automaton that knew all about the workings of the human brain like he looked at it as if it were the same as the machinations of a clock but he knew nothing of the real elements of life itself everything was like springs and hammers and pulleys to him i imagined what his wife must look like in her middle years now just like him i would have thought with shiny steel grey hair and an intelligent piercing green eyed gaze still so obviously once a great beauty when in her prime they lived in a grand house in a country setting with casement windows that open onto splendidly manicured gardens and in the summer the smell of flowers comes through into the house she probably plays the piano or a violin and they go to the theatre together once a week life is very beautiful

i reached out and absent mindedly spun the globe around that was decorating dr mitchell's desk and stabbed my finger at it and peered at where it had stopped guatemala i said the doctor closed his eyes for a moment and then they flicked back open and he stared at me and said with a smile is that where you'd like to go? guatemala? i shook my head and said no

dr mitchell took a deep weary breath and resumed firing his barrage of questions at me and i don't know what i said i just said anything that came into my head really and at the end of our session he took a bic biro from the breast pocket of his white coat and in black letters scrawled down on a form that i suffered from a personality disorder i found that funny but i'd no idea what it

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means i suppose it means i've just got a mind that by their estimation don't work right personally i never did understand why everyone on earth don't just kill themselves to escape the futility of it all because in the end the only things of beauty are the oceans and the mountains and the stars and mankind is surely nothing but a blight upon it all it was all a little bit like when i was a kid was always getting sent to the school shrink or at least that's what they said these people were they asked a load of bullshit questions sent me down good hope hospital once where they wired me up to machines scanned my brain with something or other measured the electrical impulses in my brain and on my skin all manner of wires going to all manner of machines clattering off printouts on graph paper did all these stress tests and shit like that all to discover the meaning of billy zero but it never amounted to much and all the time i was thinking to myself why don't they just dip me in acid see if i change color or something i was an enigma to them i've got mental illnesses they've never heard of

it was a saturday morning when i walked out of the nuthouse with my meager belongings in a small rucksack and a further month's supply of the slow release valium they'd given me in capsule form that they'd been dosing me up on caught the bus into town and went straight to the bar st martin for the rest of day where i ran into shark and managed to score a couple of purple ohms to swill down with the drink and by late afternoon i was shitfaced on a cocktail of acid and lager and whisky on top of the prescription valium and the last thing i remember clearly was the blood pouring from my nose and my mouth channeling out onto the

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gravel beautiful in its own way it made a snowflake pattern trickling between the little pieces of grit and soil and it made me think of a bowl of cherries but i didn't really feel any pain since i'd been medicated insensible for the last few months

piecing it all together i worked out that i sat smoking a cigarette for a while on a bench next to the queers toilets in the little park between the bull ring and the rotunda when these 3 teenage pakistani kids who'd sadly either lost or flatly rejected all sense of their own identity came walking up all dressed like they thought they were run dmc or something all wearing adidas tacks trilby hats and big fake gold chains clunking around their necks and they comes right up to me and one of them made some weird hand gesture and trying to talk like a black commanded yo ya white motherfucker give it up and i started laughing are you fuckin kidding? i said pakis only weigh about 7 stone and i told them to fuck off or i'd get up and kick their skinny legs from under all 3 of them

when i came to i was lying in the flower beds and i was all scratched up from the rose thorns the soil had been turned into a swamp of mud from all the rain so i was covered in shit my black jeans were wet with my own blood but thank fuck i still had my money in my pocket so they weren't really after that they just wanted to kick the fuck out of some white guy and apparently none of them was carrying a knife otherwise i'd have been a gonner as i pulled myself up onto my feet i ran my hand across my swollen face and discovered a mixture of blood and sludge of course i know there's no such thing as english blood or

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pakistani blood or irish blood or scottish blood or any other kind of such blood there is only social engineering the tactical creation of a man to become an exponent a government's political ideology the absorption of the individual into a wider social organism

i was alone in the dark down there and i staggered over to the cottages and went in to try and wash the dried blood and shit of my face as i stood at the basin this skinny rent boy no more than about 17 years old with short spiked blonde hair comes out one of the cubicles that he hadn't actually been using but just lying in wait he was wearing faded tight levis and snakeskin cowboy boots and he started washing his hands in the next basin but i knew there was something dodgy about him because he wasn't really washing his hands just pretending to as he eyeballed me out the corners of his eyes trying to suss me out the place was bad you felt like you needed to watch over your shoulder in there or you'd get raped and i am sure numerous people had been in the cottages and it stank of piss and you could hear little drops of water dripping miserably from the graffitied ceiling onto the tiled floor and then in this really low conspiratorial voice the kid said you know if you wanna i'll suck your cock for 20 quid and like a stupid cunt i went really enthusiastically yeah yeah alright then because what i'd thought he said was he'd sell me some coke for 20 quid and after a bit of confusion we both laughed about it the kid was alright and i asked him if he made a living doing that and he said yeah he did an' it wuz betta thun workin' on a factory production line churnin' out hemorrhoid cream or somethin' he crashed me a cigarette and we ended up standing outside chatting

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idly for like about a 100 years about how fantastic the jesus & mary chain's psycho candy lp is

afterwards i dragged myself up the steps onto new street and i headed off to the hummingbird down dale end dropped another acid tab just before i went in and felt like i got palsy or something i got a drink at the bar and staggered around on my own in there stepping over the sea of bodies sprawled all over the floor bombed out their heads the dj was spinning sigue sigue sputnik's love missile fl-11 and i watched it all through a haze as everyone went absolutely mental on the packed dancefloor just a heaving mass of bodies shifting before my eyes in thrilling staccato images in the strobe lights and drifting clouds of white smoke pumping out the smoke machines i ran into an old girlfriend of mine called claudine she was wearing a miniscule black dress and red leather gloves and she was pretty drunk and she looked at my bruised and bloody face and went jesus christ what the fuck happened to you? and i don't even know what i told her but she laughed and leaned into me spilling her drink over me shouted something in my ear about us having to get together and catch up sometime soon yeah yeah yeah definitely i shouted back over the music and she nodded too and went yeah yeah ok superman and then i watched her fiery dyed red hair and luminous white skin vanish into the darkness of the club somewhere i couldn't even remember when i used to see claudine and i'm like jesus christ we're stuck in a paradox we're stuck in a paradox they can call it quantum theory or whatever but what about if it's all quantum bullshit what about if the past don't exist and the future don't exist or anything? what about if it's all bullshit and

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all we have is the present we're stuck in and it's like nothing else exists? it's all in our heads man and even if there are other dimensions it don't matter a jot because they have no bearing on your life right here you're just riding a one way train heading towards death and you can't go back and change a thing not a single thing and the train's going clickety clack clickety clack clickety clack

heading towards death

heading towards death

heading towards death

but all you can see is the flashing lights

not as it really mattered much to me my blood was spilled all over this steel grey city filling the cracks in the cement this whole city was diseased to the core rot ingrained in every putrid alley my blood was in this city but more of the city's blood was in me running through my veins like a slow acting toxin destroying me from the inside out we are all soulless shapes shifting in a trance through an irrelevant vortex with still hearts and dead eyed stares

i jumped on a bus back to moseley and walked slowly down the high street back to my flat above the launderette on st mary's row the night air was cool and i felt tranquil as the traffic flashed along the carriageways with its familiar reassuring hiss in the flat i crashed straight out and the next day i didn't awake until 1pm i was on the sofa and the sun was streaming through the window warm on my throbbing scabbed up face the place was still smashed up in disarray and i slumped down in the

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armchair the flat had been left empty while i'd been away and the sitting room had that devoid of life cold unlived air about it although the landlord had boarded up the broken window during my absence but hadn't replaced the glass and now i also owed him a shitload of back rent

i haven't yet come to a conclusion as to whether i'll try and kill myself again but i'm thinking with a detached logic about the multitude of ways one could do it but for now i looked at my reflection in a shard of broken mirror lying scattered on the floor and told myself billy zero is back from the dead i sat doing nothing but staring blankly at the wall i could hear the faint drone of washing machines from the launderette downstairs beneath my flat with the exception of mrs wajinski probably nobody had even noticed my absence people never notice anything outside their own microcosm

i sat down and looked at the mess around me i was trapped in all this didn't even have any food in the place not a scrap no bread no milk nothing but then i remembered the last tenant who lived here left behind half a box of dog biscuits in the cupboard under the sink so i sat and ate those and i can laugh because this is what it had all finally and pitifully come down to on my own stuffing my face with 12 month old dog biscuits i felt as far away and detached as some distant dying sun the other side of the galaxy and everything was done and dusted now no one could change nothing and i knew that i was going to have to learn everything all over again

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it was approaching 11.30 there was never any closing bell at number 19s but they were obviously making moves to close up for the night and i came out staggering drunk onto stafford street brigitte and me had been to see jimmy triffid and the fat ginger kids play 19s was a dive of a place where they served everyone this super strong punch they concocted themselves out of merrydown cider in the back room that drove everyone batshit crazy the front door was propped open with a chair and we stood outside in the street as kev the yorkshire ripper lookalike barman swept the usual load of broken glass out the front door onto the pavement brigitte's stiletto heels clipped along the floor as she paced up and down hand on hip impatiently waiting for me to flag a taxi down so we could get back to my place come on she said slapping her hand impatiently against her hip i only come out with you because you're a good fuck at the end of the night if i want one

the april showers had taken a pause and the wind had died down and i was peering up and down the dismal wet street traffic flowed up and down sending spray onto the pavements but there was no sign of a cab that was when the silver xj6 with blacked out windows came screaming like a banshee from the direction of bloxwich with its full headlights blasting it screeched to a halt right by us and one big bald bastard with a neck thick as a bulldog in a black suit got out the passenger seat and another big bald

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bastard with a neck thick as a bulldog in a blue suit and a black patch over his left eye got out the back seat and i'm thinking what the fuck is going on here and one of the big bald bastards grabbed brigitte and the other big bald bastard grabbed hold of me his massive hand circling my whole neck and they manhandled us into the back of the jaguar and they got in and sat either side of us on the pinkish pigskin colored leather seats and there was another big hard looking bastard with a scar across his face driving the fucking thing except he had a shock of steel grey spiky hair like razor wire and the skin on his brown face looked as tough and dead and hard as buffalo leather the scar across it was the only thing that lended him a semblance of life and he floored the jag and we accelerated away so fast it felt like taking off in a jet plane

i wondered about how you can't see into blacked out windows but you can see out i remembered reading somewhere it's something to do with slats like the glass is made with these invisible slats in it angled in such a way that you can see out but not in my mind was wandering and no one said a word except for when brigitte stared at me with these frightened questioning eyes and i shrugged like what the fuck i dunno and i shook my head and said don't ask me and the one in the black suit grabbed my jaw hard and told me to shut my fucking mouth and when i heard his eastern european accent i knew very well who they were and then we all sat there shifting along in this morbid leaden silence we could have been heading in the direction of willenhall or wolverhampton i wasn't sure of anything

the armenians drove us in the jag over to this all but empty

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warehouse place with no name on the building the driver waited in the car while the other two dragged us inside to a small box room the one in the black suit opened up the trunk and reached in to dig out a length of blue tow rope and i thought for a minute the bastards were gonna drag me in there and hang me or something it was dark and damp inside the warehouse and one of them switched on the light just a bare low watt grey light bulb hanging from the ceiling there was a featureless mdf office desk with fake wood grain on the top in there and some wooden crates containing unmarked vhs tapes and a load of other stuff i couldn't see stacked against the wall the one in the blue suit held onto brigitte and the black suited one dragged a chair around from the back of the desk and sat me down in the middle of the room and rolled up my sleeve and stabbed me in the arm with a syringe backjacked me full of something something powerful hit me right in the guts and then spread out from there right through my tissues debilitating me like it was probably an overdose of barbs or something blood welled up from the hole ripped into my skin and ran down my arm he pulled the spike out my skin and almost immediately i felt my lips swell up and go numb like i'd been punched in the mouth

i was totally zonked out barely able to move everything turning into black shapes before my eyes or like i could see outlines but no central detail in anything and they tied my arms behind the chair with the blue rope where iz he? the big bald fucker in the black suit kept saying where iz he? his voice resounding like an echo all far away in my ears fading in and out where iz he? where iz he? and i kept repeating kept telling him i don't know i don't

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know i don't know where the fuck he is i don't know what the fuck you're talking about and then out of his pocket he pulled out this shiny chrome 38 snubnose with a pretty blue metallic pearl grip that glittered in the light he pointed the gun at my mouth and said i will blow your fuckin brainz out and he nodded to eye patch who unzipped his trousers and got his cock out brigitte shot her eyes to the ground in panic looking at her boots looking at the cold concrete floor looking at me not really knowing where to look cuz she sure as shit pretty much knew what was gonna happen now and he grabbed her by the hair and forced her down to her knees and yanked her head back and the geezer puts his cock in her mouth and he thrusts into her going szuck szuck szuck szuck bitch and i struggled against the ropes tying me to the chair shouting get your hands the fuck off her you stinking fucking pig she don't know nothing either and that was of course the truth

there was an open small window in an aluminium frame and a cool night breeze blowing through i looked out and saw stars against the black sky the armenian with the snubnose put it to brigitte's left temple while the other one kept smiling and thrusting his cock into her mouth going szuck szuck szuck szuck and he ripped down her white dress and he laughed as he roughly grabbed hold of her breasts and brigitte had tears in her eyes now black mascara all streaked down her face and the one with the gun turned to me with a grin maybe you think we just play around? maybe you don't think we zerious? and i just couldn't think and i was kind of drifting in and out of reality from the effects of whatever it was they backjacked me with and nothing felt real as if i was moving in slow motion but everything else around me was

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going at a million miles an hour it felt like i was outside of myself my body immobile watching it all from the outside from an obtuse camera angle up in the corner of the room just like i was watching some shit on television but every time i drifted out of consciousness every time my head rolled forwards with my eyes closing the armenian cracked me hard on the forehead with the butt of the gun and i felt the warm blood running down my face tasted it in my mouth

he clicked back the hammer on the gun and said tell me where he iz or i'll blow your brainz out my eyes rolled up in my head staring at the bright white light bulb glowing hazy and opaque a beautiful aura serene like the halo of an angel that i knew was not really there and from the corner of the room i watched myself laugh and say do it you faggot pull the fuckin trigger you fat fuckin prick he hit me again with the butt of the gun across the side of the head knocking me to the floor but i couldn't feel a thing just the hard thud against my head no real pain and only the hot ensuing blood on my skin and i laughed and the huge muscular bastard grabbed hold of me by the arm and with one hand he lifted me still attached to the chair and set me down upright and i laughed again and said you faggot you big fat fucking faggot and i recall him raising his arm and then everything went black

and when i wake eye patch is stood there with his cock in brigitte's mouth making a theatrical show of it smiling and laughing and looking at me with his one glassy blue eye going oh yeah baby szuck szuck szuck szuck szuck bitch and i'm screaming let her go you filthy fucking animal bastard cunt and brigitte is fighting him

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but he's just too big and strong and he keeps slapping her over the head holding her arms laughing like a jackal as he drags her about violently by the hair until he shot his bolt in her mouth and she bit down on his cock and he screamed and punched her to the ground and when he pulled away from her and fumbled about gritting his teeth in pain putting his bleeding cock back in his trousers brigitte struggled to her feet her knees all cut to shreds and she made a feeble leap for the gun trying to yank it out of black suit's hand but he grabbed her and bodyslammed her down and kicked her in the stomach and by now she's coughing and spitting ejaculate out her mouth and sobbing and shaking uncontrollably and she rolls onto her side curled up into a ball holding her stomach and vomited on the damp grey concrete methodical as a surgeon he puts the gun to her head and a hard white flash of light momentarily spears the room and the massive boom hits me like i've been thumped brigitte's rib cage heaved and her blue eyes blinked twice her limbs twitched and then she lay motionless then no sound at all just the purest flat silence i have ever heard only the hard ringing in my deadened eardrums and the whole world just stopped cut dead and the world is empty and i want to change everything but can't and the one in the blue suit laughs and tells me thiz iz az good az it getz

i can't get my words out my tongue won't work it's swollen and numb like i'm biting down on a chunk of hard rubber in my mouth and i'm trying to mumble the words and the armenian leans down and puts his ear near my mouth he smells of stale tobacco and what i perceive to be nauseating as something akin to ether and i manage to slur in a whisper he's in australia he told me he's gone

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to his cousins in adelaide i don't know anything else the armenian nods satisfied and smiles and says thaz alright we don't need any more information you told me everything i need to know

he opened the barrel of the revolver and showed me there's just the one empty chamber he snapped it shut and it went clickclickclickclickclick as he spun the barrel at random and he stuck the gun to my forehead digging it hard into my skull he said you like playin roulette? yez i think maybe you do and i shut my eyes tight as the stinking armenian bastard pulled the trigger and the gun made a short sharp click and i vomited down the front of my shirt

i opened my eyes and the armenian sucked air in through his teeth patted me hard on the side of the face and said lucky boy and he stuffed the gun back in his jacket he rifled through my pockets and found the mixtape i'd made for brigittie the armenian looked at it carefully and leered at me as he tossed it on the ground and stamped on it when he reached into the breast pocket of my denim jacket and pulled out the baggy with my cadillac in it his face brightened up and he didn't say anything except hmm he stuffed the caddy in his suit pocket and then the two armenians walked out the room laughing throaty laughs a few moments later from outside i heard two car doors slam shut and the jaguar's tires peeling away in the gravel and all that was left was the terrible cutting stillness of death permeating the room and only the sound of raindrops going drip drip drip drip down from the corrugated roof onto the window sill and brigittie lying there on the floor pool of blood slowly forming around her staining her

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beautiful white dress

i don't know how much time passed i struggled until i freed myself of the rope tying me to the chair and managed to scramble my way outside where i vomited again i found my way out of the industrial estate and onto the road and i stumbled along the pavement until i saw a taxi and flagged it down when i clambered into the back seat the pakistani driver looked at me in total shock he turned and stared at me through the glass security panel and said in a high nervous voice hooo boy you look in bad way my friend he pointed to his own face and said you have de blood all on de face you want me call am-blance? take you hospeetal? he had a thick black beard and had on a white skull cap and stared at me blinking his black eyes i said no no no and i thrust my hand through the gap and handed him all the notes i had no idea how much was there but i gave him the lot and told him my address and asked him to please just take me home and don't ask any questions

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