

Mr. B

Mr. B was picking his nose.

We begin here, at no precise moment except to say one that falls somewhere between Mr. B's insertion of right forefinger into left nostril (for he always cross-picked, whether right to left or left to right) and his subsequent removal of the crust-carrying digit, because it is during this brief period of time that Mr. B had a thought relevant to, if not responsible for, our story. We could just as easily, if not more easily, have begun at some other time, say perhaps while Mr. B was spitting, or pissing, or belching, or farting, for he did all of these, and many others; and it is true that Mr. B, whether by his own initiative or nature's constant compulsion, could very well have performed one, if not two, if not three, if not all (though that would be something!) of these actions while picking his nose also, but this is not how it happened (much to Mr. B's satisfaction, as we was sitting at a desk, and all, whether by smell, or feel, or appearance, or some combination thereof, would no doubt have posed considerable discomfort, while nose-picking had no side-effects to mention) , nor do we feel an opening sentence such as "Mr. B was vomiting," or "Mr. B was gassing," or "Mr. B was shitting" even (though this last one is subject to much debate), would create the pensive atmosphere desired at the start.. No, Mr. B was picking his nose, no one else's but his own, and thinking as he did so: "I've never been in love."

We are quite lucky, actually, to have caught him so deep in his thought, so deep in his pick, for there are, without doubt, equally many, if not exceedingly many, periods in the life of Mr. B when he is neither thinking nor picking. Or if thinking, not picking. Or if picking, not thinking. And while we pay special attention now to his thinking, we

must also give happy notice, here, to his picking, which, whether attractive or ugly, appealing or revolting, we are in fact lucky to behold. As we are also lucky, or further lucky, to catch so complete a thought coming from the mind of Mr. B. For incomplete as it may be, it is nonetheless quite complete when compared to others, such as "in the back", or just "in back", or just plain "back", or "in", or "the", or "back", (?) , all of which, with the possible exception of "in", have at one time or another, or one time and another, crossed the mind of Mr. B, as have "sprint" and "pickle". And while "in" may be excluded, "out" we must keep, for he often thought that, whether taking his leave or leaving his mess. So we see, when we look, that we are lucky indeed, and far luckier still, for now looking back (did someone say "back", (?)), we see Mr. B yawn, and then he stands up, and walks to the window, and we are amazed, both here by our luck, and by so much activity coming from so inactive a man. For though he couldn't stand sitting (as he couldn't sit, standing, (?)), he far more despised moving, and here he's done both, and will do again. And we are in luck

What need have we then for a middle to our story? It is true, we may say, that we would like a middle, as Mr. B would like, too; but should we follow him now, as he walks from his office, with his hands in his mittens and his hunch in his coat, as he moves away from his desk and his job and his colleagues, and into the elevator (which we cannot call his), and down to the lobby (which again isn't his), and out the glass door (which again isn't his), and past a young lady (which again isn't his), (which he'd like to call his) (which he cannot call his), (which we cannot call his), we will see in no time that so little is his in this world he inhabits, not even the things that he wants and desires. Where he stands, he has nothing, not the earth, nor the sky, and his

destination, too, is only his in a sense.

It is his apartment to which we have trailed him, in hope as we were he'd find love on the way; but there won't be a middle, not now, not today. Mr. B is too shy, or too human, perhaps; he's also exhausted: it's time to collapse. We must leave him now, then, (?) , as he climbs into bed,

both unloved and unloving
unconscious instead