

## Release

The cause has been lost for days. We fight on, but heartlessly. The air rings with the sound of incoming missiles; like Christmas chimes they suggest an uplifting of spirits—on this occasion from our bodies themselves. The idea makes us happy. We welcome it. When the will to fight leaves, the instinct to self-preservation, although overpowering, is quickly a bore.

How exactly to overcome it? That question has plagued us for weeks now. We have racked our battle weary brains over it. But to no avail. I do not know the answer. The other commanding officers do not know the answer; they defer always to me, as trained. Here again the military chain of command is an easy convenience.

Yet these soldiers need ingenuity of me. It will not be enough to shrug as they do; to say the answer is not forthcoming because the answer is not possible. No, we need a solution, and toward that necessary end—our necessary end—I have crafted several dubious plots.

There is first the plot to lead us to ground zero of an enemy bomb. There the gleeful blast would take us as if it were God himself arriving: a great flash of light that obliterates all pain, all irresolution. On the other side, only calm.

Yet that plan is improbable. Were we to analyze our motives these last weeks, we could frankly pronounce every slightest action an expression of that yearning. And in that sense, we have already tried the first plan beyond tenability. We are simply unconscious of that fact collectively.

Because I recognize it, I lean toward an approach that departs from it in method, and therefore, hopefully, attains it in goal. We shall feast and enjoy ourselves. In this crippled bunker, rations exist for two years of survival—longer should some of us not survive the whole span. Therefore, the remaining souls will linger on indefinitely in dwindling company.

I say we eat that possibility into oblivion; we grow fat on dehydrated, unrecognizable nourishment; we drain off our water and bask in full satisfaction before wasting away. Yes, let us push the plan further: constant, starry-eyed sex to expend energy; child-rearing if necessary—to multiply the mouths to feed! There is no end to the creative initiatives we might find as we burn this community (our single, flaring star, imploring the heavens) into the ground.

In the morning I will solicit the anticipated vote. The company is sleeping now. My companions huddle around me for a warmth that the hopeless never feel. Their teeth chatter skeletal rhythms, which work apart the fabric of their scattered dreams. Tomorrow we shall live as kings. We shall die that way too. I will not let us down.