



THE LAST OF US

MADINA WESTCHESTER

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The Last Pas de Deux in the Dark

«АВТОР»

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Westchester M.

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The Last Pas de Deux in the Dark — a collection of existential prose and philosophical revelations about a man who has faced loneliness and the shattering of illusions, yet stubbornly continues to move forward. This is a manifesto for those who seek hidden meanings and are unafraid to look into the dark underside of human nature. Each page is complemented by masterpieces of world painting, transforming the reading into an intimate dialogue with one's own conscience. Nothing but the concentrated weight of an unbroken will.

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The Last Pas de Deux in the Dark

Madonna di Loreto — Caravaggio

"When mass insanity rages on all sides, to stay in one's right mind is already a crime against the multitude."



Cain and Abel — Peter Paul Rubens

"We desperately seek executioners among strangers, because to recognize the executioner in one's own brother means to recognize him in oneself."



Saturn Devouring His Son — Francisco Goya

"The most refined violence always dresses itself in the garments of parental care or pastoral duty. The victim is first stripped of the right to resist, and then accused of ingratitude."



The Wounded Angel — Hugo Simberg

"It seems to me... true holiness is the ability to look at your own wounds... deep, jagged... and not try to inflict the same upon others. Simply to stop... to break this eternal circle of pain... to take the blow upon yourself and not become a new executioner..."



Salome with the Head of John the Baptist — Caravaggio

"The crowd never thirsts for truth. It craves the spectacle of an execution, in which every coward can feel himself the supreme judge."



The Death of Socrates — Jacques-Louis David

"Sometimes, to save a man's soul, you must first allow him to utterly destroy his earthly life. But which of us has the courage to witness such a salvation?"



The Fallen Angel — Alexandre Cabanel

"Man does not fear the darkness. He fears the moment when a match strikes in the dark and he sees exactly with whom he has been sharing this room his entire life."



The Triumph of Death — Pieter Bruegel the Elder

"Justice is merely a fairy tale that the strong tell the weak, so that they die without making too much noise."



Inquisition — Francisco Goya

"Man is never so sincere in his cruelty as at the moment when he genuinely believes he is doing good."



Seated Demon — Mikhail Vrubel

"Immorality seems unpunished only until a man realises that the most terrible punishment from the Almighty is to allow him to become what he wished to be, and to leave him alone with his emptiness."



Orpheus and the Beasts — engraving from the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (15th century)

"They are not evil... they are weak. And weakness always breeds cruelty. The strong do not need to break others to assert themselves. The strong can afford the luxury of kindness."



The Lovers — Pablo Picasso, 1904

"A marriage without love is the endless dressing of a corpse, displayed every morning in the living room so that the neighbours do not suspect anything amiss."



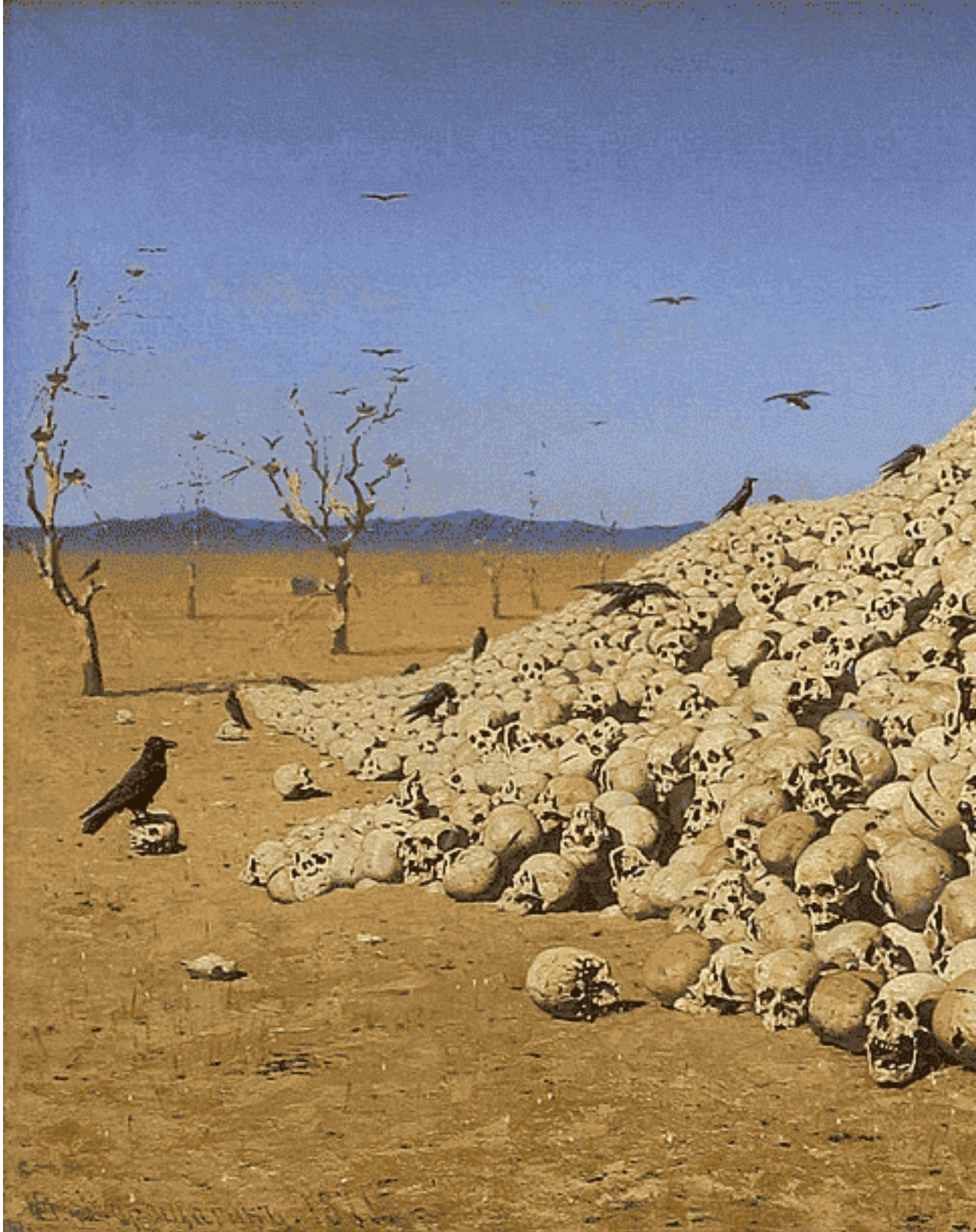
The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things — Hieronymus Bosch

"Evil never breaks in with force. It quietly sits beside you and silently sympathises with your loss. And you yourself always initiate the fateful dialogue."



The Raft of the Medusa — Théodore Géricault

"Man is stronger than death. He knows the end, yet stubbornly keeps moving his feet. The meaning lies in the very motion. One must simply go forward. Even when the tracks break off at the edge of the grave."



The Apotheosis of War — Vasily Vereshchagin

"I have taken in too many deaths of others to hope for a happy ending. But I have also seen the struggle for life, so I will not give up."



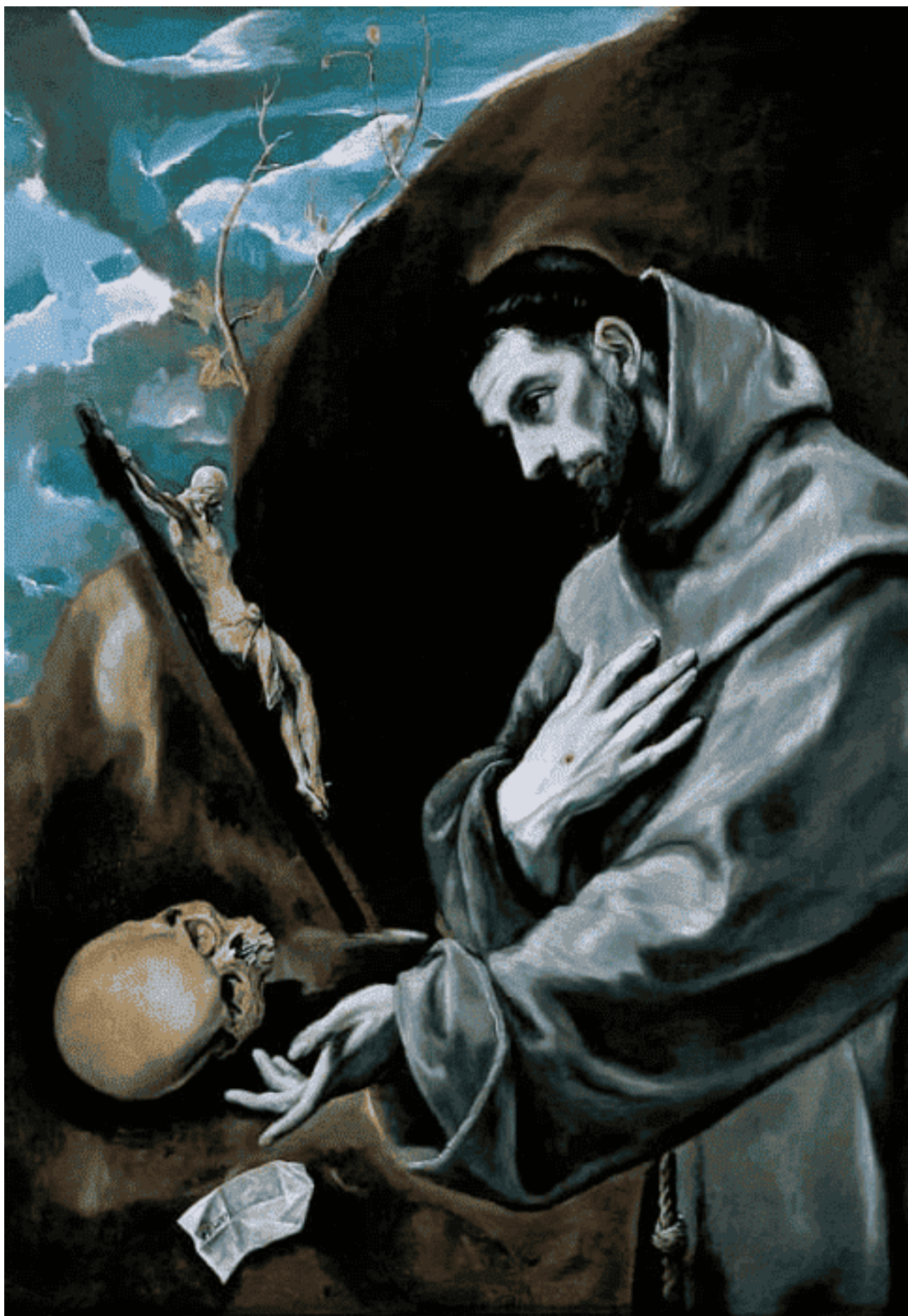
The Death of Marat — Jacques-Louis David

"People call mercy plain cowardice, when they simply lack the nerve to carry their cruelty to its logical conclusion."



Salome — Gustave Moreau

"When the whole city seeks the devil in reflections, the hardest thing is not to begin seeing him in the mirror."



The Praying Saint — El Greco

"We are more willing to forgive a monster his sins than a righteous man his one human weakness."



Death and the Maiden — Egon Schiele

"You so maniacally hide rotting skeletons in the corners, and then sincerely recoil when someone casually opens the closet door."



The Flagellation of Christ — Caravaggio, 1607

"Man breaks precisely at the moment he realises that no one hears him. He is ready to endure any pain, as long as he believes."



The Battle of Issus — Albrecht Altdorfer

"Earthly laws were devised by the well-fed to protect their property from the fury of the hungry. True justice will begin only when all judges are stripped of their pristine robes and forced to listen to those they have condemned to silence."



Madame Récamier — Jacques-Louis David

"One may change hundreds of cities, names, and backdrops, but in the end you still wake up in the same bed — alone with your inescapable past."



Ecce Homo (Christ before the People) — Caravaggio

"The hardest choice is not made between good and evil. It is made when both paths lead straight to hell."



The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp — Rembrandt

"The true depth of a man's fall is measured not by the weight of his deeds, but by the icy composure with which he justifies them."



The Fiery Abyss — Hieronymus Bosch (fragment of The Garden of Earthly Delights, Hell)

"You call us a gang, shepherd?"

"I call you madmen."

"Perhaps you're right. But you know what? Sometimes, to put out a fire, you have to start another."



The Fall of Icarus — Pieter Bruegel the Elder

"In free fall, the mind is for a moment freed from the weight of conscience."



The Agony in the Garden — El Greco

"It is more honest to remain in darkness forever than to accept bliss paid for with another's blood."



The Nightmare — Johann Heinrich Füssli, 1781

"One needs only to look into one's own memory — and there you find the very beast you condemned in the public square."



The Fall of Icarus — Pieter Bruegel the Elder

"The most devastating destruction of a man is accomplished without a single cry or a raised fist. It is enough, day after day, methodically and with a polite smile, to clip his faith in his own strength, until he voluntarily surrenders his right to fly."



Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi — Eugène Delacroix

"True courage is needed to stand silently on the ashes, to watch the smoke rising into the sky, and to find the strength to smile at your new, terrifying freedom."



The Council of Revenge — Francesco Hayez, 1851

"An offended child, to whom no hand was extended in time, grows into a cunning judge. He builds his life solely to make the whole world endure that same merciless cold from which he once froze himself."



The Flagellation of Christ — Piero della Francesca

"The most dangerous madness is to believe that one can survive in this world without armour. A man who decides to be crystal-honest with others is like a madman who voluntarily flayed himself and walked out into the cold, genuinely surprised that the crowd recoils from his deformity."



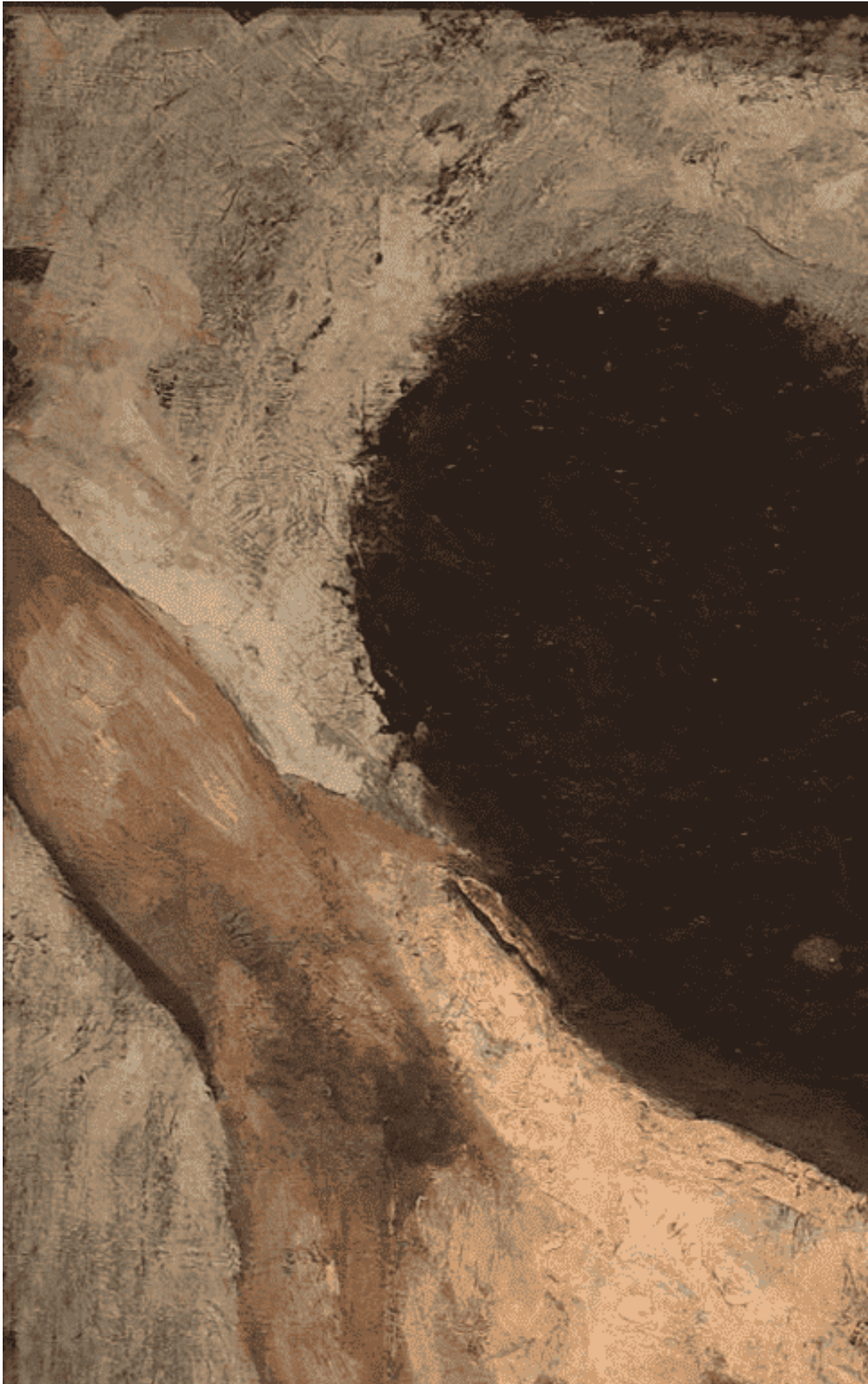
The Grace (or Prayer Before the Meal) — Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, 1740

"The most refined torture is committed in children's bedrooms, where life-crippled mothers methodically feed their firstborns the poison of their own unfulfilled happiness. They break tender bones and burn out the very capacity to love, with one deaf purpose: that no one in that house dare breathe easier than those already rotting in their invisible chains."



The Hungry and the Well-Fed — Orest da Molin

"Well-fed burghers love to discourse on lofty suffering and the injustice of the universe, seated in velvet armchairs by the fireplace. Their rebellion against the Creator ends precisely the moment their evening soup grows cold."



The Crucifixion — Thomas Eakins

"There is a limit beyond which human misery ceases to evoke compassion and begins to evoke only a dull irritation in others. A proud man knows this limit and manages to close the door from the inside before his pain becomes a burden upon another's celebration."



Man by the Sea — Caspar David Friedrich

"Man is powerless before the inevitability of the end, but it is within his power to choose how exactly to walk the remainder of the path. One may crawl on one's knees, begging for mercy, or stand with head raised at the very edge of the abyss."



Dull Gret — Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1561

"Pride is a shield made of shards of wounded vanity. We walk away with stony faces into the blinding blizzard of solitude, just so the crowd does not notice how badly our hands tremble from hunger for simple human understanding."



The Triumph of Death — Pieter Bruegel the Elder

"The surest way to utterly destroy a man is to begin ostentatiously and earnestly pitying him before a crowd. Condescending sympathy strips the fallen of the last remnants of pride, turning his living tragedy into a shameful farce."



The Star (Dancer on the Stage) — Edgar Degas

"Life forces us to spin endless fouettés on the burning coals of public opinion. The crowd holds its breath, awaiting your fall, but the supreme triumph of will is to complete this mad dance with an immaculate smile that hides the crack of breaking bones."



The Kiss — Gustav Klimt

"We naïvely believe that new encounters and the embraces of others can heal us of our chronic inner decay. But a man who has not lived through his own personal hell to the end is doomed only to poison everyone who draws near him in hope of simple human warmth."



Martha and Mary Magdalene — Caravaggio

"The horror of madness creeps in unnoticed: you return home and find a stranger in your chair, wearing your dress, speaking with your voice, and playing your role without a single mistake. All that remains for you is to stand outside in the pouring rain, dissolving into a disembodied shadow."



The Entombment — Giotto, c. 1305

"Perhaps, one day, in this dead silence, I will hear again a faint, gentle voice. Birds will awaken on the ashes of my soul, restoring to me the ability to breathe and to love."



The Balcony — Édouard Manet

"A proud man is condemned to a most refined torture: he would rather let his own soul bleed to death within four walls than take a single step toward the one who betrayed his trust."



Woman, Why Are You Weeping? — Fritz von Uhde (late 19th century)

"I came to you with the marks of others' chains upon my wrists, hoping you would help me heal them. But you only winced in disgust, accusing me of rattling my past too loudly."



Paradise — Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1530

"The human soul is far too vast; it ought to be narrowed. Within this abyss, the ideal of the Madonna and the ideal of Sodom coexist side by side, and the most terrible part is that man, with this duplicity, is capable of living quite respectably."



Separation — Edvard Munch

"Give me, as a farewell, an illusion... just the illusion that all will be well. We could not build a bridge to one another... but let these ruins serve as a foundation for someone else. Let us part before we utterly maim each other. Let us simply believe... that this catastrophe is but a cruel push... toward another's, truer happiness..."



For What? — Frederick Varley

"Some people consciously cultivate their own helplessness and display their broken wings to the world, because it is the safest way to make others endlessly pay them for cruelty they never inflicted."

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