

the wrong hospital - book 2

chapter 1: kerouac's ghost again

there were many wrong hospitals. parallel lines, parallel lives, parallel worlds. she had her lines and he had his. she had her notes and her lists and he had his. she was writing her book and he was writing his.

there were many wrong hospitals so it didn't matter what hospital you were in - you were always in the wrong hospital. and as the bishop said to the actress - yes you can check out any time you like but you can never leave.

this is an examination of a relationship that never was. they were connected but not connected. they could not turn left or right together. if he turned left she turned right. if he turned right she would go backwards or forwards but more often than not she simply wasn't there. he was like a general whose troops constantly disobeyed him and who would eventually shoot him in the back. and she was like a black cat who did not want to play with the cardboard box so generously provided for her by our glorious leaders.

she wrote her own lines and she had her own set of notes. he had started with a few notes in a cold garden shed but he quickly abandoned them and just wrote from the heart and the more he wrote the more he found that the writing pretty much wrote itself. and that which he wrote became his greater reality and pen and paper, garden shed and notes dissolved into nothingness. and he quickly found he couldn't stop. and he quickly found that writing and an inability to stop was his new disease. but he didn't want to stop.

they were the king and the queen of swords. and gold fell from his lips and entered her mouth when he kissed her and when she kissed him silver fell from her lips and entered his mouth. she denied this of course. harlequin on the rooftops. pierrette and pierrot on the stairs.

the number of wrong hospitals is endless. they are all over the fucking place. and one way or another most of us spend some time there. and some of us, gentle reader, spend more time there

than others. some of us were born in the wrong hospital and some of us will die here. and some of us will never leave. parallel lines. parallel worlds. and the queen of swords danced lightly on the rooftops of the wrong hospital with the ghost of sorrow.

the war was over. the rag dolls lost. the river gods lost. defeated by twelve silver monkeys. and rama and sita strolled happily arm in arm by the lake in the grounds of the wrong hospital and they watched the prince peacefully sail his paper boats and dream of galveston. yup he cleaned his gun and dreamed of galveston.

the prince had never left and she had not yet arrived. she still travelled as a shadow in the pockets of laughter and his travelling bag remained untouched underneath his bed. and all the leaves had returned to the trees in the grounds and gardens and in all the buildings of the wrong hospital. he combed his hair with a silver spoon, dreamed of wandering softly thru' the small hairs on the back of her neck, dreamed of the twelve silver monkeys who had saved the four worlds, tipped his hat to the hall of mirrors, winked as he passed the janitor's room, adjusted his wings then headed out to the bars of north beach in search of jack kerouac's ghost. jack's ghost would be easy to find. and a few days drinking and hanging with jack's ghost would do him a world of good.

he didn't give a damn for the protests of the authorities. screw you he said. and he flew up and over the high walls and tall gates of the wrong hospital and followed the signs for north beach. and the queen of swords danced lightly and sadly on the rooftops with the ghost of sorrow.

and the rain it raineth every day. rain rain go away, come again another day. and his dreams of her fell in her heart like a gentle rain. and jack's ghost and the prince ripped north beach apart. just for a few days and nights. then jack and the prince put north beach back together again, shook hands, then jack went to visit some old friends in the mountains and the prince returned by bus to his room at the wrong hospital. he was too tired and too wasted to fly. but fuck it - he'd had a good time...just him and kerouac's ghost.

and a few days later a postcard arrived from the mountains saying fuck it - that was good, let's do it again soon. and the prince sailed his boats and twelve silver monkeys strolled arm in arm on the far shore of the lake. and victory is mine sayeth the lord. and the queen of swords and the ghost of sorrow danced a foxtrot on the roof of the wrong hospital.

## chapter 2: another body in the snow

baby baby can you hear my heart beat. you're the one i love. this kinda rubbish ran thru' his veins and his blood all the time. ray charles, bobby womak, the raelettes, the ronettes, blind lemon arthur, sweet pink louie and the knights and he just couldn't switch it off. he was kinda used to it and he kinda liked it some of the time. my heart is an open book. meet on the ledge. happy mondays. goodnight susan. matchstick men and matchstick cats and dogs.

yeah he just couldn't switch it off. the green green grass of home, pop goes america, goodnight saigon, when will you be mine. he just couldn't switch it off. and death waited on every street corner playing an old trombone. and silence waited on every other corner. and he kinda liked silence. and she did too.

and when silence spoke to her she couldn't hear because she didn't want to. the screaming of the sixty six tv's didn't help. and when silence spoke to him he couldn't hear because of ray charles and bobby womack, the raelettes and the ronettes, blind lemon arthur and matchstick men and matchstick cats and dogs. to be fair to silence - silence tried. and silence tried again. but no fucker was listening. radio this, radio that. nobody wanted to know about the great god silence.

so silence waited in the wings and as he waited he noticed how just the thought of sunlight wandering thru' the small hairs on the back of her neck made the prince tremble and took him close to the point of collapse and silence made a careful note of this. yup maybe use this later said silence.

she wasn't happy unless she was with somebody she didn't want to be with. and there were a lot of people in the world she didn't want to be with and being with people she didn't want to be with made her feel safe and kept her away from the hall of mirrors and away from him. man she was a pain in the ass but he adored her and he didn't want to change.

heroin is ok for five minutes. it makes you feel like a god for five minutes. then it makes you ill. then you need some more heroin. then you end up just another body in the snow. light and dark. and parallel lines. light and dark lighting and shading just another body in the snow. seems most of us end up just another body in the snow or we become cartoons of ourselves or even worse we become shadows of our former selves. such are the fruits of experience.

he could no longer rely on his good looks. they were long gone. his mind was a ruin but he had new spectacles, new wings and his brushes and paints sat quietly in his travelling bag next to his photograph of elvis. and they awaited his instructions. things were looking up. and it was around this time the prince was adopted by a little grey cat who in time he called the puddings. and thereafter the prince was never seen without the company of the puddings.

mothers - don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys. and don't make gods out of cigarettes and alcohol. red sails in the sunset - and on the far side of the lake the cisco kid walked hand in hand with jesse james.

yup heroin is ok for five minutes. it makes you feel like a god. then it kills you. and yes there was an endless supply of people she didn't want to be with and being with people she didn't want to be with somehow made her feel safe. and migrating geese flew low over the armada of paper boats sailing on the lake. and the lord giveth and the lord taketh away.

and god only knows what i'd be without you.

chapter 3: a wrong hospital on every corner

she was writing a book. and the name of her book was - i am the wrong hospital. and he was writing a book. and the name of his book was - i am the wrong hospital. one can't help but notice a clash of interests here. she'd started her book in one wrong hospital and he'd started his in another. and in another life they had worked together in another.

and he had been born in another and he would die in another. and she would never die - he would see to it.

and death lived on every corner and sometimes it seemed there was a wrong hospital on every corner too. and almost every wrong hospital has its own dead lions department where the living dreams of poets and saints are stored. and almost every wrong hospital has its own butter thumping clinic - o' yes the ancient esoteric gentle and often forgotten ignored and marginalised art of butter

thumping. and kerouac's ghost was king of the butter thumping clinics. beyond the shadow of a doubt.

yes most of us have our own wrong hospital. most of us live in our own wrong hospital. she had hers and he had his. she wrote her book and he wrote his. in his he was a prince and she was a shadow. in hers everyone and everything was a shadow. he'd tried to break into her book many times but the doors were locked and there were no windows in her book - just people she didn't like and didn't want to be with and she turned them all into shadows. he'd tried to break into her book to make a few changes but really he wasn't wanted there. she did not wish to be adored.

he concluded we are all our own wrong hospital. yes he had his doubts but he didn't want to give up and he didn't want to sail his paper boats forever. and his brushes waited for him with smiling faces in his travelling bag. perhaps a journey would do him good.

he'd thought to look for her in secret gardens little knowing or realising that just like him she had been living in her own wrong hospital for years. he didn't know there was more than one wrong hospital. he had been ill for years and in many ways his mind was still a ruin. and in his book they were the king and queen of crossed wires.

there was no light in her book. only shadows. and in her book the hall of mirrors showed nothing. and she was addicted to shadows.

keep right on to the end of the road. keep right on to the end. yup hit the road jack. and don't you come back no more. he'd started his book in one wrong hospital and he'd end it in another. in his private world what he really wanted was to die in her arms. not much of an ambition i know but in his private world that's what he really wanted. and this meant that one way or another he had to find her. he had sought her in secret gardens little knowing that just like him she was living in her own wrong hospital. and this was before he discovered there was a wrong hospital on almost every street corner.

his was a monumental task. first he had to work out that she was living in her own wrong hospital and not in a secret garden. then he had to work out the location of her wrong hospital. it was all too much for him and he shrank from his task like a mouse before a lion. and this was before he discovered there was a wrong hospital on almost every street corner. and when he made that discovery - fuck it - let's not even think of trying to go there. maybe later - a few miles down the road.

and the king and queen of swords smiled at each other. from one wrong hospital to another.

#### chapter 4: lonesome furniture

the first thing he had to do was rid himself of the illusion that she lived in a secret garden. he'd always been a sucker for soft mushy poetic romantic ideals. he had to kill the illusion that she was living in a secret garden. then he had to work out that in the real world she was living in her own wrong hospital and turning her world and everybody else's into shadows. and this was no easy task for such a mind as fragile as his.

and this was before he'd worked out there is a wrong hospital on almost every street corner. and way well before he discovered that every second door is another wrong hospital.

he knew something was going on. there was something new in the wind. but really he hadn't a clue. and it was clear he was not yet ready to quit the wrong hospital. so he returned to making and sailing paper boats and he resumed painting for a while - poets falling off chairs, wingless birds and birdless wings. and it was around this time that he started the series of paintings which later would become known as - lonesome furniture.

his lonesome furniture paintings now hang in the great museums of the four worlds and they are worshipped by all. worshipped and adored by all, everybody, except the river gods.

but for now he needed quiet and rest. so he sailed his boats and painted and rested. and for weeks he listened to nothing other than the flying burrito brothers' gilded palace of sin, the byrds' sweetheart of the rodeo and the fragrant lowell george. and all that long summer even tho' it was 2013 the prince was convinced it was 1967. sometimes he could convince himself of almost anything. if he could convince himself she loved him - he could convince himself of anything.

and the queen of swords danced a tango with the ghost of sorrow on the far shore of the lake. and regarding his famous series of paintings of lonesome furniture it wasn't actually lonesome furniture that he painted but the ghosts of furniture and their magical mystical ethereal luminosity. it was his fine painting of the ethereal luminosity of the ghosts of lonesome furniture that finally in the end won him such huge acclaim and acceptance.

the moon was not seen that whole summer. it was a long hot summer but each night clouds came and the moon was obscured. but nobody seemed to notice that the moon had not been seen in months. but the prince noticed. and the queen of swords noticed that the prince noticed. and when autumn came and everybody started to panic because the moon had not been seen in months the prince and the queen of swords were already a few steps ahead of the game.

the moon was in hiding. the moon was ashamed. the queen of the shadowlands refused to love the prince and the moon was ashamed so he hid his face from the world and waited for the world to notice. and the world was slow to notice. now there was less and less light in the world and this was down to the queen of the shadowlands and her book filling the world with shadows instead of loving the prince. and now the moon felt obliged to protest and express himself. the moon was in hiding. and some even thought the prince had stolen the moon. the stars sided with the moon and now there was no longer light in the darkness of night. and the people of the world were in panic. they just couldn't get used to less and less light and more and more shadows. some blamed the prince. and ugly rumours were rife.

there was no light in the darkness of the night. the moon was in hiding. the moon was ashamed. and clearly something had to be done about it. something had to give.

the prince was a kind and simple man. he consulted the stars and the birds of the sky that lived in her hair then he approached the moon and asked him to forgive the queen of the shadowlands. and the moon agreed and thus light was restored to the world. so, gentle reader, when next we enjoy the moon and stars in the night sky please remember it is the prince that we must thank.

and remember too, gentle reader, there is a wrong hospital on almost every street corner. and every second door is another wrong hospital.

yes indeed his middle name was sometimes nobility but more often that not he was his own personal disaster area. yes a king amongst thieves with a paint brush in his hand but he couldn't paint all the time and in most other areas of his life he was a clown. quite simply most of the time he didn't function properly. sometimes he was aware of this and sometimes not. he had no idea, for example, that his mind had been for years little more than a ruin.

laughter and the queen of shadows continued on the road to the wrong hospital. travelling in the pockets of laughter she was no longer writing her book and it was laughter's hope and desire that the wisdom and living dreams of dead poets and saints stored in the dead lions department would free his mother from all her shadowy business. little did they know that the solution lay not in the dead lions department but in the janitor's room.

but his mother did not want to be free. she did not want to be adored. she did not want to be cured. she had no wish to be restored to reality. if she was free she might have to talk with people she liked so she clung to her shadowy business in the pockets of laughter. and laughter marched on - the little black and white dog barking at his side. and the moon and stars, having taken up their rightful positions again at the request of the prince, smiled down upon them and gave light to the darkness of the night.

his middle name was more often than not inability. the birds of the sky loved him, the librarians in the dead lions department adored him and the puddings adored him. he had restored the moon and stars to the night sky and restored light to the darkness of night and the moon and stars adored him. he was not unhappy. his magnificent series of paintings of the ghosts of lonesome furniture hung in the great museums of the four worlds. no he was not unhappy. but his mind was a ruin. and there was the constant nagging pain...lonesome for her. all that mattered to him was loving her. and the puddings. and the birds of the sky. and his photograph of elvis in chains. and yes indeed - his middle name was more often than not inability.

many times the birds of the sky would try to explain to him that there were many other girls in the world. but the prince would just laugh. yeah he was pretty dumb but true to the flag. and she was his flag. and his flag was travelling as a shadow in the pockets of laughter.

and god only knows. and god only knows. and god only knows...what i'd be without you.



they say judge a man not by his friends but by his enemies. and his enemies were the river gods. and they were kinda smart. they hated his paintings of poets falling off chairs and they especially hated his much acclaimed series of paintings of the ghosts of lonesome furniture. they simply hated the prince of time and they had been out to get him for years. often the prince did so much damage to himself that he unwittingly and unknowingly delivered unto the river gods exactly what they wanted on a plate and in spades. time and time again.

the river gods lived in the woods just outside the wrong hospital and they dreaded seeing his paper boats sailing on the lake. it was their river that fed the lake and man they hated and detested his paper boats with a vengeance. and they did everything they possibly could do to destroy his pretty little armada.

tired of having his fleets destroyed by the river gods the prince and the puddings started to build and to sail ghost ships which the river gods would be unable to see. and to construct their ghost ships the prince and the puddings used the trusted and ancient methods as prescribed in the notes and dreams of the painter, murderer and lunatic caravaggio whose dreams and notes had been on file and stored in the vaults of the dead lions department for many a long year. and thus the prince and the puddings flummoxed the river gods yet again.

and out of such small victories bliss and joy and contentment are often made.

## chapter 6: the incident at the lake

the prince's middle name more often than not was instability. anyone who could move as he did, left and right, forwards and backwards at one and the same time payed a price for it and the price he payed was recurring instability. as kind and as beautiful as he sometimes was, he was also often quite unstable and he didn't have the necessary equipment to recognise his own instability. and he payed a price for this too. capable of profound clarity of thought he was also more than capable of making a perfect arse of himself. and in this respect he was just like most of the rest of us.

in short, he was pretty much just like everybody else. good times, bad times. right moves, wrong moves. sometimes he'd get it right and sometimes he'd get it wrong. sometimes monday was tuesday. sometimes tuesday was friday.

what set him apart from other men was his ability to travel backwards and forwards thru' time but this ability was more than somewhat limited by the caprices of time. whenever he travelled forwards or back in time he always found himself in the wrong hospital so it didn't add up to much. it wasn't much of a trick.

in short, he was pretty much just like all the rest of us. just like you and me. apart from his wings and his photograph of elvis in chains and his magnificent series of paintings of the ghosts of lonesome furniture. yeah he was pretty much just like all the rest of us. apart from his loyalty to the flag. nobody in a million years had ever been as loyal to the flag as the prince of time. and now he was getting old. and she was his flag. and his flag was tattered and torn and travelling to him in the pockets of laughter - from one wrong hospital to another. and she didn't want to be adored. and his mind was a ruin. and his ghost ships sailed on the lake.

a mind in ruins - maybe that's what you get for acting like a prince all the time. maybe it was a reward for playing the trees so well in the deer hunter. who the fuck knows. but as sure as eggs is eggs his mind was in ruins. and his flag was tattered and torn and travelling to him in the pockets of laughter. and the secrets of mountains waited and watched. watched and waited.

a card arrived from kerouac from new york but the prince was too far gone to read it. the river gods had sighted his ghost ships and his ships were under attack. emergency. which service please. fire. police. ambulance. and the prince requested them all.

the emergency services arrived quickly and the prince was found on fire, clutching a sword and halfway to drowning in the lake. relapse and recovery. recovery and relapse. the same old song. the song of the wild things in the woods. the song of the river gods. he was her idiot. and she was his flag. and that was pretty much all that he knew. he was her idiot. and she was his flag. and she didn't want to be adored.

another card arrived from kerouac. this time jack was in the mountains again. yup jack's ghost sure got around some. and north beach just wasn't the same without jack. and there are no happy endings in the dead lions department. and every second door is a wrong hospital. and the prince was resting after the incident at the lake. to call it an incident is something of an understatement. it was

a war. many ghost ships were sunk and many river gods perished. they say you can't kill a river god - but you can. they say all that glitters is not butter thumping but the jury is still out on that one.

and when he recovered from the incident at the lake the prince resumed work on his third book - moon saucers of cheese bark.

#### chapter 7: moon saucers of cheese bark

moments of madness. moments of clarity. another card arrived from kerouac - let's get wasted. so the prince and kerouac's ghost hit the north beach bars and got wasted for a few days and a few nights. it was very satisfying. they let off steam, let their hair down and blew a few gaskets. in short they rocked the north beach bars for a few days and nights. they ran at it hard, had a good run at it but their days of running hard at it were behind them now. they were both getting old and drinking is a young man's game. and for the prince of time and kerouac's ghost the game was edging towards its conclusion.

they could no longer cut it as drinkers and wild timers. bodies and minds could no longer cope - jack of course hadn't had a body in years. but all the signs were there that high and wild living had to stop. jack retreated to the hollywood hills and the prince retreated to his room at the wrong hospital. and continued working on moon saucers of cheese bark. his first two books had bombed badly. but he had high expectations that moon saucers of cheese bark was gonna be the big one.

he wrote about drinking in north beach with kerouac's ghost. he wrote about the last lonesome buffalo, butter thumping and battering the sun with a stick. he wrote about when he was the birds of the sky that live in her hair and when he was the trees that grow in her heart. he wrote about how and when they met and made love as waves on the ocean. he wrote about his gift of light to the darkness of the night and how the moon and stars forgave her for not loving him. all of it was true and none of it made sense. he was too scared to write about the fairies that lived in her voice, too scared to ever even think about the fairies that lived in her voice.

it was not his job or function to make sense. he didn't give a fuck about making sense. all he wanted was to die in her arms.

o' for the wings of a dove...to carry me back to the snow. o' what i would not give if they'd just carry me back to the snow.

a card arrived from the mountains. jack again. he was tired of the mountains and wanted to get wasted again but the prince wanted to work on moon saucers of cheese bark so jack hit the north beach bars alone. and the prince continued to write.

he had heard that listening is an art. so he listened to his heart. and his heart said only one word and that was her name.

he thought of his grandfather and how he had been his grandfather's favourite. and he remembered the bother it had caused in the family. and he loved his grandfather for it. and yes indeed there were those who had never forgiven him for it. and their names were - the river gods.

his grandfather had been the first ghost to visit him. and his grandfather had been the second ghost to visit him. his grandfather had been the first angel to visit him. and his grandfather had been the second and third. and yes the prince was indeed jimmy strain's boy. but like most things of value in his life - it was all now a long long time ago.

then he remembered the back streets of naples. then he remembered the bridge and the river in glasgow where he did his growing up. and he prayed for the wings of a dove to carry him back to the snow.

and because she refused to love him, a glass sky fell and shattered on all the village greens and playing fields of england and nobody was ever thereafter able to play games on them again for the glass sky would cut them dead. fish refused to be caught, poets refused to write, rain refused to fall, paint refused to dry and parents ran away from their children. buildings refused to stand, thinkers refused to think, kings refused to govern and fire refused to burn. doctors refused to cure, nurses refused to nurse, teachers refused to teach and carers refused to care. the sun refused to rise, the moon and stars refused to shine and idiots, wingless birds, darkness and shadows ruled the world.

there are no happy endings in the dead lions department. and every second door is a wrong hospital. sometimes one forgives. and sometimes one forgets to forgive. sometimes one regrets. and sometimes one doesn't regret at all. and darkness filled the world. because she refused to love him.

and the river gods laughed to see such fun and a dish ran away with a spoon. kindness refused to be kind, dreamers refused to dream, lovers refused to love and darkness and the river gods ruled the world. the sick refused to get well, pain refused to cease and beginners refused to start. trains refused to run, planes refused to fly, children refused to grow and flowers refused to flower. because she didn't want to be adored.

visitors refused to visit, helpers refused to help, innocence refused to be innocent, calm refused to be calm, composure refused to be composed, faith refused to be faithful, respect refused to be respectful and friends refused to be friends. cats refused to be cats and the guilty refused to be guilty.

when black refused to be white, when green refused to be yellow and when her little tin soldiers refused to obey her instruction to jump into the fire - a change came over the queen of the shadowlands. she was slow to notice. she was used to being obeyed and at first she was simply amused by this new train of events. books had refused to be books, dictionaries had refused to be dictionaries and thereby she had no proper grip regarding revolution. words. words like love, adoration, courage, change and revolution were not needed or wanted in the shadowlands. what was wanted and needed in the shadowlands was shadows. shadows. shadows. shadows. and more shadows.

but every so often change comes along the road. before we go any further, gentle reader, let us praise and thank black and green and her little tin soldiers and their revolution. it is thanks to them that we all live today in a light clean and safe world. we must also thank fire. it is worth noting that if her little tin soldiers had indeed jumped into the fire as instructed by the queen of the shadowlands they would have been safe - fire having previously been instructed by the queen not to burn.

all's well that ends well. and now that the last lonesome buffalo has gone let us all praise and thank again black and green and her little tin soldiers.

and the prince? he wasn't really a prince. he was just pretending. come on baby let's pretend. let's pretend i'm your lover again. i haven't even drawn breath since then. so come on baby let's pretend.

moments of madness. moments of clarity. the prince spoke to his heart. but now he had no heart.

come on baby let's pretend. it strikes me that the prince will have trouble forgiving her for pretending that she did not love him. and on the far side of the lake radha and krishna walked hand in hand. and the prince counted and breathed gently on the pretty little hairs on the back of her neck.

and then he counted the stars.

chapter 8: a significant star

a significant star appeared above the wrong hospital. some said it was the morning star. some said the morning star was jesus. others claimed the morning star was the devil. the prince yawned and the morning star fell into his mouth and resided in his heart.

and the prince started singing. come on baby let's pretend - your eyes are like the night, inside you there's a jewel, hey baby you'd make a princess look like a fool. hey baby you're just like snow white with your seven angry young men, i wonder if you've already discovered which one of them isn't your friend, come on baby let's pretend...

the prince sang like an angel. and the star shone in his heart. birds of the sky rested on his shoulder and shadows lifted from his eyes. it was an old spanish love song written by peasants and the prince sang like an angel. hey baby your skin is so white, inside you there's a jewel...

and in a field just outside the wrong hospital a body lay in the snow. and beside it lay another dead body. young lovers become old lovers and death comes to us all. and the prince continued with his old spanish love song - come on baby let's pretend. harlequin on the rooftops. pierrette and pierrot on the stairs.

and the morning star lit up his heart and his eyes and his whole being. and he waited for her to come. and the queen of the shadowlands was indeed coming and when she came she came silently. no trumpets. no fanfare. no retinue. no entourage. not even a shadow.

and thirty pieces of silver jangled in the pockets of judas. and then he hanged himself. the lord giveth and the lord taketh away. and the prince continued with his song. his heart was lit up like a christmas tree and his voice was free easy and strong. he had been true to his flag. and the birds of the sky and the angels of the lord loved him for it. his voice had been a stranger to him for too long a time. and when he really let rip his voice and his song soared way way beyond the mountains. and on hearing it kerouac's ghost immediately rattled off a postcard - yeah been coming for a long time man. hey stranger wrote kerouac - let's get together for a couple of drinks.

kerouac had been drinking again in north beach this time with richard brautigan but these two never really got along so kerouac had returned to the mountains. and on the village greens and playing fields of england children no longer played because of the glass sky. and in glasgow the river rolled along darkly and tenderly following the prince's instructions heading out to the sea and to the ocean seeking out the very waves where they had regularly and repeatedly made love. the river kindly followed his instructions. the prince had destroyed the river gods. and the king of hearts was pleased. he had a soft spot for the prince and had been watching over him for some considerable time.

and the first shepherd and the second shepherd spoke silently amongst themselves in a field of glass as the sheep hummed and whistled like a ghostly choir the prince's ancient love song come on baby let's pretend. come on baby let's pretend that i'm your lover again, i've never even drawn breath since then so come on baby let's pretend...

and the moon winked. and the stars glowed. harlequin on the rooftops. pierrette and pierrot on the stairs. and two dead bodies lay in the snow. one bleeding fading red roses, the other bleeding wild horses, pots and pans and puppy dogs' tails. and peace came to the valley and then to the wrong hospital where she rested on the roof and then she danced on the rooftops with the ghost of silence. then she danced on the rooftops with the ghost of sorrow. then she danced with the ghost of twilight. then she danced with the ghosts of doves, sharks and whales. then she danced and made love with the glass sky.

and on the far side of the lake deep in conversation emmett grogan and richard brautigan strolled arm in arm. and maybe the star of bethlehem wasn't a star at all. and the queen of the shadowlands lined up all her pretty little tin soldiers in pretty little rows.

and his shelter was a stable. and his cradle was a stall.

yeah come on baby let's pretend.

## chapter 9: the calamity of failure

the phone rang. it was kerouac. let's get wasted. the prince had been wasted so many times before that now he no longer needed or desired to get wasted. but he had the manners of a prince and he was fond of jack so they hung out in the north beach bars for a few days and a few nights, jack drinking anything that moved and the prince drinking coffee and smoking cheap cigars. mostly they talked about books. and the secrets of mountains. and the river gods. and how books often write themselves.

jack was working on a new book and by a strange twist of fate it was called - moon saucers of cheese bark. the prince had finished his own moon saucers of cheese bark and he too was now working on a new book - the calamity of failure. and he had another in mind - the temptations of the queen of the shadowlands in which she makes love with all her pretty little tin soldiers then murders them.

the calamity of failure was progressing well but the temptations of the queen of the shadowlands was, to say the least, proving something of a struggle. jack and the prince discussed books and then they both returned to their own. jack to the mountains and page sixteen. and the prince to the wrong hospital and to page seventy. as he approached the hospital gates he thought or seemed to think he saw two bodies apparently sleeping and bleeding in the snow but he was tired and his mind wasn't clear. and soon he forgot about it.

the calamity of failure was taking care of itself and the temptations of the queen of the shadowlands was resolving itself. she brought all her little tin soldiers back to life then made love with them all again. then she killed them again. and the prince decided he would concern himself later regarding what might happen next. it was all happening again. two bodies in the snow. life imitating art. and art imitating life. moths round a flame - it was happening again and the smell of burning wings always made her feel unhappy.

i know she likes me. i know she likes me. because she said so. shine on you crazy diamond. the prince had no idea where these words were coming from but they ran thru' his brain like pantomime



horses stampeding towards the lake then stampeding away from the lake because of his armada of pretty little paper boats. they ran thru' his brain just as he sometimes ran thru' the rivers of stars in her blood. yeah shine on you crazy diamond. and he did. almost. he shined on like a crazy bastard. he was born to shine on like a crazy bastard. and to be fair to the prince he did indeed shine on like a crazy bastard most of the time. and rather well.

and there is a green hill far far away. without a city wall. never say never. and the queen of the shadowlands hid herself further and further away. and with her there was only shadows. and more shadows. then she hid herself even further and further away. in even more shadows. but there is a green hill far far away. without a city wall. and this green hill far far away without a city wall is the heart. and there are no shadows in a pure heart.

the prince thought about this for a while. and then he thought of the queen of spades. he thought in terms of adoration and just wanting to be with her. but she didn't want to be with him, she didn't want to be adored and slowly the prince was getting the message. the prince was growing tired of shadows.

lesson one, she didn't want to be adored. lesson two, she didn't want to be loved. lesson three, she didn't want to be loved or adored. lesson four, she didn't want to be loved or adored by him. and slowly the prince was getting the message. kinda big fuck up for the prince if you ask me. and it kinda took him down. to places he most definitely didn't want to go.

yup that's the way it was with the prince and the queen of the shadowlands. to him she was the sacred heart and to her he was less than a toy. less than a fucking shadow. and he wanted to be something more than something less than a shadow or a toy.

and two bodies lay dead and bleeding in the snow. one bleeding paper roses and the other bleeding puppy dogs' tails. and the prince was finally getting the message. he'd had enough of shadows. even tho' they were her shadows.

and then sadly and unwisely the prince wished that he was the glass sky that had ruined all the village greens and playing fields of england.

and then he wished he'd never been born.

old angel, young angel - feel alright on a warm san francisco night.

#### chapter 10: the first rule of bank robbery

late at night a big old house gets lonesome. yes every form of refuge has its price. the prince poured himself a strong one. and then he poured himself another.

the phone rang. it was the ghost of hemingway. let's get wasted said hemingway's ghost. no thanks said the prince - i'm working on the calamity of failure. another time perhaps. and two bodies in the snow scratched around in the back of his mind. or more correctly, they scratched around in the little that was left of his mind. and the two dead bodies in the snow, one bleeding fading red roses and the other bleeding pots and pans, kept on coming back and rummaging around in the remnants of his mind. loose ends, old friends and the ties that bind. and the first rule of bank robbery - don't get caught. just ask a poet.

the phone rang. it was william blake. blake and the prince met for coffee in north beach and they discussed the calamity of failure, literature, the gates of heaven, the glass sky that had ruined the playing fields and village greens of england and the mechanics and the rights and wrongs of butter thumping. then blake left by spaceship for another world. and the prince resumed final editing of moon saucers of cheese bark.

if you want to know anything about anything - just ask a poet. or a sailor. or a candlestick maker. if you want to know the meaning of dreams just visit the dead lions department. there's one in most wrong hospitals. and every second door is a wrong hospital. sometimes it's easy to get around and sometimes nothing is easy. sometimes almost everything is a royal pain in the ass.

the prince was no longer young. but there were no longer shadows in his eyes and in his heart. the shadows had gone. and he was working well and happily on his fifth book - the thingimmybob of thingimmybob. the river gods were gone too. it was all over for the river gods. wiped out by the prince. and now rivers ran free and easy north to south and east to west free from the interference and dominance of the malodorous river gods. if the rivers needed direction or advice they knew they could always ask a poet. or the prince. or make a general enquiry at any dead lions department.

enhance or diminish. one is either part of the problem or part of the solution. generally. the prince was both. he no longer travelled to the future or the past. he had learned to live in the present. and as we write, he was working happily and assiduously on his fifth book - the calamity of failure. but he was losing control. all his books were rolling into one and he could no longer tell which was five, six or seven.

blake was visiting kerouac in the mountains and they were drinking heavily. and their whoops and cries of madness and delight could be heard as far away as north beach. it was so bad in fact that the prince had to resort to earplugs to allow him to continue his writing. he envied blake and kerouac more than he cared to admit but the calamity of failure had him in her grip and he was happy to be her prisoner. the calamity of failure demanded all he had. and the prince delivered. and when they were finished with each other there was nothing left. just a shadow. the prince had become a shadow again. and now the same old bits and pieces would start all over again.

the prince knew the solution. he grabbed a pen and started writing a sixth book. he knew that writing would prevent him becoming and remaining a shadow. even if he had to write constantly it was better than being a shadow. the prince had definitely run out of time regarding being a shadow. and now he was searching for a title for his sixth book.

and two dead bodies in the snow, one bleeding wild horses and the other bleeding fast cars, rummaged around in the back of his mind. looking for something. but they couldn't remember what. my guess is it had something to do with the sacred heart.

moon saucers was now complete. calamity was now complete. i am the wrong hospital had been finished a long way back. there was work still to be done regarding the temptations of the queen of the shadowlands and as we write, gentle reader, the prince was only a few short pages into his new book for which he had not yet found a title.

in temptations - she made him do unspeakable things to her body. then she made him do unspeakable things to his own. she'd dress as the cisco kid and make him dress as a wolf or a lion. then she would whip him. then he would whip her. she'd tie him to a chair and burn him. and he would tie her to a chair and fire arrows at her body. and she would cry when he missed. it was a dark book. but there were no shadows in it. and no animals were hurt in the making of this book.

we leave the prince now, illuminated by candlelight, pen in hand, eyes weak sore and tired and struggling bravely with the first few pages of a new and untitled book.

and two dead bodies swam thru' what passes for his mind in search of snow. and two blocks away destiny waits in a taxi cab whistling the bricklayers' march.

and william blake and kerouac stumbled around loudly and drunkenly on the far shore of the lake in the grounds of the wrong hospital. and harlequin and pierrette danced sadly on the rooftops.

chapter 11 - caravaggio's notes

his new book was progressing well. but temptations of the queen - it was a struggle. she wanted more pain. and he was tired of pain. he was ok with most things as long as no shadows were involved. and somehow more and more shadows were creeping in. she was after all the queen of the shadowlands and empress of all shadows. and he should easily have seen it coming. after all the title of the book he was writing was indeed the temptations of the queen of the shadowlands. and only an idiot would fail to expect shadows to be in it. all over the place. and taking over.

enter the prince of time. wings at his feet. doves of peace on his shoulders. and blindness in his eyes.

she kinda thought he was writing the book. and he kinda thought she was writing the book. but she was kidding - she knew she was writing the book. and when the prince figured out she was indeed writing his book he decided it was time to quit. and then he reconsidered - who better to write a book about the queen of the shadowlands than the queen of the shadowlands herself. but by then it was too late. she had foxed him. and now he was a shadow again. a shadowy prisoner in a shadowy cell in the queen of the shadowlands' shadowy castle.

fuck it. here we go again. please release me. let me go. but his mind had gone completely now. the only things functioning remotely properly in his mind were the two dead bodies both seeking snow, one now bleeding accordions and trumpets and the other bleeding albatross trousers. it was all over now for the prince. man he was gone. she well and truly had him by the balls.

his climbing the ladder to the moon now meant nothing. his destruction of the river gods now meant nothing. his series of great and magnificent paintings of the ghosts of lonesome furniture now meant nothing. his career in films now meant nothing. now he was a shadow again. a blind shadow in a shadowy cell. seeing nothing and feeling nothing. he didn't even know he was a shadow.

pipers poets and acrobats couldn't help him now. all the dreams and wisdom stored in the various dead lions departments in all the four worlds couldn't help him now. but just maybe - just maybe - there was something in caravaggio's notes. and there was.

caravaggio awoke from a long dream. he knew immediately and exactly what was going on. and immediately and exactly he went straight to the queen of spades' castle and immediately and exactly he cut off her head. the queen of spades often doubled for the queen of the shadowlands so it was the end of the road for them both.

all shadows immediately were restored to normal activity. the prince recovered and was restored to his rooms at the wrong hospital. his eyesight was never the same again. it took a long time to return to base and when it did - let's keep it simple and just say his eyesight was never the same again.

it was a long time before the prince was told caravaggio had killed the queen. in time he was able to paint and write again but his nerves and his mind never did fully recover. and ever afterwards he kept all the lights on when he slept.

caravaggio joined blake and kerouac in the mountains and together they got drunk with hemingway for a month. and all caravaggio's notes and dreams disappeared mysteriously from all the dead lions departments in all the wrong hospitals in all the four worlds.

fire. police. ambulance. which service do you require. and the prince requested all three.

the ghost of caravaggio has killed the queen of the shadowlands.

## chapter 12: darlin' be home soon

american leaves fall from american trees underneath american skies. time passes slowly up here in the mountains. the prince never did fully recover. but for now he was as fully recovered as he was ever gonna get. it was no secret caravaggio had killed the queen. but nobody dared speak of it in the company of the prince. he laid flowers on her grave almost every day and he was surprised to note her grave was not haunted by shadows. no matter how or when he looked at her grave - there were no shadows. but there was a shadow in his heart again and shadows in his eyes. and he knew for sure they would never leave him.

he was staying with kerouac in the mountains for a few days. blake was there. and brautigan too. caravaggio also. and they swore to the prince that they were no longer drinking like mad men. just a little bit of this. and a little bit of that. but it was plain to see that this was rubbish. the prince had heard it all before. a blind man could see they were blind drunk every single day - falling off chairs, dropping things, bumping into things and each other like clowns in a circus. but the prince enjoyed their company and with them he drank strong black coffee and smoked cheap cigars.

they'd reminisce about the old days and discuss books and plays and paintings. magic and mystery. they were like wise and unwise kings. they knew what they were doing. they liked to keep the prince amused entertained and safe. they'd do anything to prevent the prince from thinking of shadows. the ghosts of blake, brautigan, kerouac and caravaggio.

the prince managed to complete the calamity of failure but he never worked again on the temptations of the queen. there was not enough paper in the world to list her resentments. and now she was gone. she'd wanted a war. he'd given her a war. and now she was gone.

to refuse to worship at a shrine is one thing. to attempt to destroy a shrine is quite another. and in his mind the two dead bodies in the snow continued to bleed strange and wondrous objects. one bled marmalade olivers while the other bled the bones of saints. and now she was gone.

proportionality - if only he could get a grip on proportionality he might prevail.

old cop, young cop - feel alright on a warm san francisco night. snow in the mountains. and cinnamon lights in north beach. and in glasgow the river headed out to sea following perfectly the prince's instructions. and in the prince's mind far out at sea they danced together and made love.

she wears my ring to show the world she's mine eternally. except she didn't. she wasn't. she doesn't. and now she's gone.

even when he played the trees in the deer hunter she refused to love him. and sydney carton's collars. exactly the same. even when he played sydney carton's collars in a tale of two cities still she refused to love him. the prince had pretty much nowhere to go. insult after insult. rejection after rejection. even when he played the plague in death in venice. still she refused to love him. and now she was gone. he had pretty much no place to go.

o' for the wings of a dove to carry me back to the snow. and american leaves fall from american trees underneath american skies. and i'm stuck here in the chelsea hotel surrounded by your stinking lies. and when lady luck calls tonight tell her i busted the wheel. and just for a laugh before she leaves ask her if she still feels. and if she wants to find me, and i'm expecting her to try, tell her i'll be out there somewhere underneath a glass sky. tell her i'll be somewhere near to the lonesomeness of an empty chair. and american leaves fall from american trees underneath american skies.

and o' for the wings of a dove to carry me back to the snow. and he laid flowers on her grave almost every day.

and darlin' be home soon.

chapter 13: prisoners and thieves

the prince contemplated her empty chair. then he contemplated her empty chair again. then he contemplated the high walls and tall gates of the wrong hospital.

then he read all of kerouac's books again. then he read all of brautigan's books again. and his understanding of them changed having spent time drinking with their ghosts. and then he read all of wilde and all of dostoyevsky again. but his understanding of them remained the same having spent no time drinking with their ghosts.

his paper boats and ghost ships sailed contentedly on the lake. and the ghost of sorrow danced sadly on the rooftops with the ghost of twilight. his eyes were weak these days. but once upon a time they had been the eyes of an assassin. and shadows lived where his heart used to be.

brautigan kerouac blake and caravaggio visited regularly and he visited them often in the mountains where they were living in an old canoe which had once been owned by cervantes. and the glass sky in his heart continued to rule and ruin the village greens and playing fields of england.

eventually wilde's ghost visited regularly too but dostoyevsky refused to travel for legal reasons and only occasionally sent a representative. and a sky of glass lived in the prince's heart.

and you gave up the only one who ever loved you and went back to the wild side of life played on the radio and shadows played within his heart. even tho' he no longer had a heart. he had been dumb enough to think that anyone who had a heart would love him too.

we are all a profound secret and a mystery to each other. we conceal ourselves from each other. we constantly fear that another's wrong hospital might be more or less perfect than our own. we are strangers to ourselves and to each other, some of us seeking darkness, some of us seeking light. some of us seek light in darkness, others seek refuge from the light. we are prisoners and thieves and each one of us is his or her own wrong hospital.

we are all the wrong hospital. and there is darkness. and there is light. nothing less. and nothing more. but is that so - said geronimo. is that so - said the poets. is that so - asked the dreamers. and their questions echoed loudly and ran madly thru' the wards and corridors of the wrong hospital.

there is madness in the day. and madness in the night. there is a darkness in light. and there's a light that always shines. and these were the prince's conclusions. there is madness in the city. there is madness in the town. and sometimes i take a great notion to jump in the river and drown.



some of us seek to surrender. and some of us seek to forget. we are all a profound secret and a mystery to ourselves. we conceal ourselves from ourselves. and these were the conclusions of the prince. we are strangers to ourselves.

we conceal ourselves from ourselves.

prince myshkin was a regular visitor. george c. scott too. actors and actresses loved the prince. some even worshipped him. but he worshipped her. and as we all know - she didn't want to be adored.

enter stage left the ghost of twilight wearing both a mystic smile and a painted smile. and carrying three masks. she had been dancing on the rooftops with the queen of swords and now she was on her way to the hall of mirrors. with the prince there was only black and white. he'd not been able to deal with twilight for years. each evening when twilight came he had to close his eyes and wait for her to pass. and sometimes twilight took a long time coming, her mirrors and masks making strange exotic inviting seductive and suggestive sounds. and each evening when twilight came to pass any peace calm or composure still clinging to the prince simply left him. simply disappeared in smoke and mirrors.

don't make me over now that i'd do anything for you. don't make me over now that you know how i adore you.

the prince stared at an empty chair. and now she was gone. his lucky number was thirteen. lucky for some. but not for the prince. and he stared at the empty chair. and his eyes grew weak.

and shadows played and kicked about in his heart. even tho' he had no heart.

chapter 14: maradona

some of us seek surrender. some of us seek never to surrender. maradona visited regularly and they talked about the good old days. cocaine, cinema, the heels of achilles, girls in high heels, the snows

of kilimanjaro, circles within circles and the dark arts of butter thumping. the prince was a generous host and maradona was a favoured and an honoured guest.

some of us seek surrender. and some of us seek the sacred heart. and in his prime and in his pomp there was nothing maradona did not know about the sacred heart. and the rain gods rained on the prince. and the rain gods rained on maradona. every time maradona visited the prince - it rained. it was impossible not to notice this. and maradona and the prince never did quite figure it out.

the rain gods were cousins of the river gods. but unlike the river gods the rain gods had always been well disposed to both the prince and maradona. and maradona and the prince praised and gravely thanked the sacred heart that this indeed was so. and long may it continue. the prince was not well enough to handle another war. but as usual maradona was willing. he would do anything to please the prince. and when each of maradona's visits came to an end it would rain for a month on the rooftops and in the grounds and gardens of the wrong hospital. and in the wards and corridors too.

vanity. vanity. all is vanity. and he waited for surrender. and the ghost of twilight. and her mirrors and masks. and her ribbons and bones. and her bells and painted toes. he no longer painted all day and all night. he no longer stayed up all night writing or counting stars. his eyes were pretty much gone. his heart was gone. and she was gone. and the ghost of sorrow danced sadly on the rooftops. and the rain gods rained gently on the ghost of sorrow.

his paintings of lonesome furniture hung in the great museums of the four worlds. a few sad souls had had a good laugh at his writing. a statue of the prince had been erected in the gardens of the wrong hospital. and another in san francisco's washington square. he had loved to cook, especially chinese dumplings, but these days cooking was pretty much beyond him and his chinese dumplings so often so richly praised were now less than a memory. tho' his dreams of them were on file and safe and secure in the vaults of the dead lions department.

and the prince's come on baby let's pretend thundered and echoed at high volume thru' the wards and corridors and all the buildings grounds and gardens of the wrong hospital. some things just don't change. some songs you just can't get away from. some of us want surrender. and some of us just want to be dust and bones.

come on baby let's pretend that i'm your lover again. i've never even drawn breath since then so come on baby let's pretend. hey baby you're eyes light up the night, inside you there's a jewel, you'd make a princess look like a fool - so come on baby let's pretend. and come on baby let's pretend

blasted at high volume thru' the walls and ceilings and floors and throughout all the buildings, wards and corridors, grounds and gardens of the wrong hospital. and it was enough to wake the dead.

and in the dead lions department the rain gods rained on his dreams of chinese dumplings. and the prince left the wrong hospital perhaps never to return. and as he walked out thru' the gates he heard laughter. and a shadow crossed his path.

laughter had arrived at the wrong hospital. and the king of hearts watched proceedings carefully from a secret place. then the king of hearts laughed and winked at the moon.

#### chapter 15: bubbles

every second door is a wrong hospital. laughter had arrived at the wrong hospital. as the prince walked out thru' the gates laughter walked in. and the shadow travelling in the pockets of laughter recognised the prince immediately. and it was like a dagger thru' her heart.

the king of hearts watched carefully and waited for events to unfold. the prince felt nothing. he had no heart. laughter noticed the wings at the prince's feet and couldn't help but laugh. the little black and white dog travelling with laughter sniffed cautiously at the puddings. and the puddings sniffed cautiously at the little black and white dog. and tears came to the eyes of the moon. and the stars hid themselves behind each other like children and shivered nervously.

the prince felt nothing. he had no heart. and every second door is a wrong hospital. and the king of hearts waited and watched carefully.

the prince was wearing his suit of windows and doors which made him invisible if and as and when he required. and which gave him escape routes if and as and when he required. it was an elegant piece of work designed and made by the prince in the days when he still enjoyed full use of his hands and eyes and his once close to brilliant mind. yes once upon a time his eyes and hands had worked well. his suit of doors and windows was a useful tool. and it was the colour of twilight. the prince

studied laughter as they passed but the prince had forgotten how to laugh. he had forgotten what laughter was all about. his mind had been in ruins for years.

one of the windows in the prince's suit recognised the shadow. the shadow had calmed down somewhat, she was reasonably composed and the window let her enter the prince - thru' the window. she had a good look around and quickly established the prince had no heart. she thanked the window then quickly returned to the pockets of laughter.

laughter made his way to the dead lions department and the prince kept on walking not knowing or caring where he was going. and in the snow two dead bodies continued to bleed. one bleeding sardines and hatchets. the other bleeding cannons. and iron balls and chains. one bleeding ghost ships and paper boats, the other bleeding martyrs and the dreams of pigs and sheep. one bleeding cold logic and the other bleeding freshly baked angel cakes. one bleeding endless butter thumping clinics and the other bleeding the ghosts and dreams of wild horses. one bleeding fast cars and the other bleeding the novels of dostoyevsky. one bleeding chaos, the other bleeding black and white photographs of dust and sand. one bleeding drowning kangaroos, the other bleeding the sweet dreams of jesus. one bleeding white rabbits, the other bleeding harlequin ears.

one day all this bleeding must end said the prince to the king of hearts. and the king of hearts just winked. and the prince kept on walking underneath a glass sky on the road to nowhere.

in pasternak's zhivago when zhivago tells lara he's leaving her and not coming back he asks if she understands and she answers - tearfully - yes. when he asks if she believes him - she shakes her head to indicate no. and this the prince never forgot. this the prince refused to forget. even when he played the trees in the deer hunter. even when he played the plague in death in venice. and even when he played sydney carton's collars. and even when his mind existed only as a memory in a bubble at the bottom of the lake.

and geronimo said today is a good day to die. and bubbles played under the hulls of the ghost ships on the lake. and the bubbles playing under the hulls of the ghost ships on the lake whispered to the prince as he walked away from the gates of the wrong hospital - today is a good day to die. and the prince heard geronimo. and the prince heard the bubbles. and he answered - yeah today is a good day to die.

laughter had arrived at the wrong hospital. just as the prince checked out.

but as the bishop said to the actress - you can check out any time you like but you can never leave. the moon was still crying. and the king of hearts waited and watched all things carefully. but the king of hearts had failed to notice that in his deck of cards the aces were missing.

and every second door is indeed another wrong hospital.

## chapter 16 - the janitor's room

born in the waggon of a travelling show. any town. any place. any place but here. travelling now on a broken road. a broken song on a broken fiddle. out of tune. and out of time. short sentences. long sentences. he cared not. his life had been a short sentence. his shadow a long one. and in a mirror the king of hearts was looking for his lost aces. and little bo peep has lost her sheep.

out of tune. and out of time. he hit a few bars. and they hit him back. he hit the road to the mountains. peace surrender and acceptance waited for him there. and he made sure that he took a path avoiding the canoe where blake caravaggio brautigan and kerouac were still living it up and giving it big licks. big licks were not what he needed now. what he needed now was peace. surrender. and acceptance. and he found them. alone. in the mountains.

there were no wrong hospitals in the mountains. there were a few bears. and wolves. and eagles. and various other small animals and other bits and pieces whose merits have no place in this stage of this sad and sorry tale. there were no wrong hospitals in the mountains. and there his suit of windows and doors served him well. and there he rested for a while. in truth, he had become what is known in the trade as a busted flush. and there is no rest for a busted flush.

he listened to the song of the bear and the eagle and the wolf and the other wild things. he instructed the moon to stop crying. he instructed the rivers of the four worlds to behave. don't let yesterday use up too much of today. and with the help of the eagle and the bear and the wolf and the other wild things he prepared himself for his return to the wrong hospital. and it was agreed amongst the saints and the rain gods that geronimo's ghost would accompany the prince on his journey down from the mountains.

there are none so deaf as those who don't want to hear. and none so blind as those who don't want to see. please tread softly. and the voices of the wind sang their songs of the wind. and the voices of the sky sang their songs of the sky. and the smaller wild things sang their smaller song.

a wise man once said there are no lies or hypocrisy in chess. just kings and queens. victory or defeat. and in death valley and on a broken radio bruce springsteen plays tougher than the rest. from here to eternity.

and on another dance floor with no blood upon its tracks there they danced like angels with whip marks instead of wings upon their backs.

hitler invades germany. man bites dog. and in the hidden temples of angkor wat ginsberg howls his weary howl and refuses to lay down his pen or his soul or his self or his work. or his masks. and as ginsberg continues to refuse to surrender the prince and the ghost of geronimo continue their descent from the mountains.

words arranged in one order give one meaning. the same words arranged in a different order give another meaning. often meaningless is more meaningful than meaningful - such are the caprices of time. and one wrong hospital is pretty much the same as another. no retreat. and no surrender. springsteen was right - we learned more from a three minute record than we ever learned in school.

it was saturday night when the prince returned to the wrong hospital. it had been a dark road. and where the prince came from - you take what you can get. and in his back pocket was his photograph of elvis in chains. and by his side was the ghost of geronimo. his heart was a mess but at least he had a heart and he was almost home.

and his mind was a ruin. and as he entered the gates of the wrong hospital he combed his hair with a silver spoon like a young prince in a long forgotten movie about the king of saturday night. in time princes become kings. and in time kings become dead. he'd lived his life as tho' it was a movie and now he strolled thru' the gates of the wrong hospital combing his hair with a silver spoon like the king of saturday night - the ghost of geronimo by his side.

and in the end there is one dance and you do it alone. not dancing with the bears or the winds or the eagles. or the rivers. you do it alone.

and the bubbles playing under the hulls of the ghost ships sailing on the lake whispered to the prince  
- today is a good day to die.

and high in the mountains a small rock fell. and then another. and another. and as the rocks fell they  
gained momentum. roll away the stone. rock fall. rock slide. avalanche.

there was no solution for laughter in the dead lions department. and there was nothing there for the  
shadow. it just didn't work for her. but she liked to sit and linger in the janitor's room and remember  
how and when and where she had made love with the prince - the prince who wasn't a prince.

and the prince who wasn't a prince walked in. he noticed some chinese dumplings sitting in shadows  
on the floor in a dark and dusty corner. and next to them - the sacred heart. the queen of spades,  
the queen of the shadowlands. the queen of swords, the queen of crossed wires. the ghost of  
twilight.

she ran thru' all six forms within a second but when she turned herself into a shadow the prince  
grabbed her and died in her arms.

and the wings of a dove carried the prince and his shadow back to the snow.

the end