

*...The conclusion was irresistible. I was not within the vault. I had fallen into a trance while absent from home-while among strangers -- when, or how, I could not remember - and it was they who had buried me as a dog -- nailed up in some common coffin -- and thrust deep, deep, and for ever, into some ordinary and nameless grave.*

The reality of the situation was overbearing. In a feeble attempt to draw some kind of attention to myself, I called out, louder than was conceived humanly possible. The effort was all in vain. I could tell the sound had been muffled by something dense, never to be heard by anyone besides myself. The smell was overbearing. The earth which surrounded me must have been turned in the digging of the grave, for it smelled of the decaying leaves which fell in autumn. I could not help to think that the stench of my own decaying flesh would soon be added to the aroma. The silence drove me mad, coming from a home where there was always a bird singing in the oak tree or a coach driving in the street. Whether it was created in my head to compensate for the pure silence, or my hearing was made so acute by the stress of the situation I don't know. Whatever the cause, I swore I could hear the worms as they drove themselves through the solid earth which encompassed me.

I became frantic to get out of the cramped space. I clawed at the polished wood until all my fingernails were worn down and my finger tips bled. I don't know what I had hoped for. Even if I did break through the lid of my prison there was at least five feet of

earth between myself and the free air above. I began to wonder how much air I had left. How long had I been asleep? I breathed in measured amounts to try and conserve the breathable atmosphere I had left. If I could survive long enough, maybe my friends and wife would search for me knowing the state of my condition. If they did search for me, could they find me? I didn't even know if my grave was marked. Everyone that knew my name knew that I suffered from catalepsy. To throw me into a hole without waiting for my decomposition- the only reliable indication of death- was the act of a stranger.

He was probably a respectable man, the one who I speculated had arranged for my burial. He had a nice house, a wife, and two well-behaved, clean-cut children. His wife, beautiful of course, probably packed homemade leftovers from the prior night for his lunch every morning while dodging the kids as they prepared themselves for another school day. They had been taught independence since they could walk. I'm sure he was admiring his polished shoes, smelling the leftover roast beef and potatoes in his shining lunchbox, and thinking about his latest accomplishments when he came across me. Me, lying unmoving in the street with a pulse so faint it couldn't be felt or heard. I'm sure he called to anyone near to move me into a near house to try and revive me. It was a virtuous act considering he was oblivious to my condition. If only I could remember where I was when I fell!

Feeling in my breast pocket I pulled out what I decided was a wooden disk, a token. The only place I would have one on my person would be at the fair. It was a drink token! I remembered where I had been. I had been depressed that my condition was again preventing me, for the third year, from attending the annual fair which I had gone

to since childhood. Normally my wife and I had a few friends over to our house and stayed up late until my catalepsy set in. This year I hadn't wanted that. While we were arranging the "party" the disease finally exhausted me mentally. I cursed my disease and my loyal friends that held themselves back from the fair for my comfort. I didn't want to be a bother to them anymore so I dared to go to the fair and stormed out of my house. I hadn't told anyone where I was headed.

To relive old memories I went to a brewer and purchased the smooth wooden tokens which I could trade for drinks. Alcohol, being a depressant, heightened the severity of my condition and I passed out unusually fast. I didn't even have time to sporadically notify a stranger of my state. With this remembrance, I realized with due horror that it was the circus workers of the fair that probably buried me beneath an animal's enclosure or near the outhouses. My grave would be unmarked. There wouldn't even be evidence of the earth being turned. The tumult of the fair would have trampled the spot. (At least they got me a box!) I began to wish I had been buried by the man with the perfect life that I envied.

I became drowsy as the air in my grave was approaching exhaustion. I lulled in and out of consciousness, knowing that the end was near. When I would come back around, I wouldn't know if I had crossed over or if I was still trapped in my wooden prison. The worst part was that I was hungry and hung over. I noticed another smell mingled with that of the decaying leaves and the moist earth. It was vomit. I wasn't even presentable when I was buried. Covered in vomit! Of course the carnival workers didn't take time to identify me or see if I was truly dead. I was just another drunk

looking for entertainment. Being in a bad mood, knowing myself, I was likely vulgar. I was glad that it was impossible for me to see myself. Slowly my eyes grew heavy, my tensed muscles released themselves, and I left the living world forever.