



# Rotten On The Inside

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It's painfully clear to me how completely self-centered I am. But it's not just me. It's you, too. It's everyone. Remember Thomas Jefferson? A man whose "pursuit of happiness" included a fifteen year-old slave girl?

We're all rotten on the inside, I'm afraid to point out. The Enlightenment, a fluke of an epoch that launched our modern society and gave us great institutions like freedom of speech and NASCAR, could be argued to be the White Man's justification for that era of rape and pillage euphemistically called the Age of Discovery. If Columbus had never set sail for the sake of his own personal glory, we might never have had the philosophies that gave us written works like *Harry Potter* and *The Da Vinci Code*.

Everything "enlightened" is no more than a cloak for our gutter-minded, apish ways. How else can you explain Ted Kennedy going into his ninth Senate term? What the hell is wrong with people in Massachusetts?

Once you've had this epiphany and seen the true nature of people, there is the terrifying effect of civilization being stripped away in front of your eyes so that, instead of people functioning within a society, all you see are ape-like humanoids grunting, oinking, and shitting their way through a meaningless spurt of oxygen-depleting existence.

That babe in the business suit sipping on the soymilk latte transforms into a bovine beastie snarfing her way through a grain trough. Yahoos are everywhere, scratching their asses and picking their fleas, ogling you with dim-witted avarice, wondering how you are going to help them feed whatever hungers currently afflict their bodies.

And then you face the ultimate horror of looking at yourself in the mirror. You creep around the corner, afraid of, but knowing, what you must find. You cover your eyes with your hands, turn to face the glass, pull the hands away and—you guessed it. There's Ted Kennedy staring back at you like a bloated toad on helium.

It's a rather off-putting view of humanity, but unfortunately it bears through the test of everyday reality. Try now to attend, say, a sporting event. You're cursed to see nothing but an amphitheater full of howler monkeys.

Go to the mall and observe the orangutans slouching through stores of brightly colored distractions—notice the two slack-jawed creatures jabbering nonsensically over a baby doll t-shirt with "bitch" inscribed in silver rhinestones. Want a real trip? Go to the zoo. You'll be shaking and salivating before you get to the giraffes.

There's no recommendation here, no philosophy to proselytize. Really it's an anti-philosophy, a proof that there is none. We're all just rodents sniveling at the garbage dump of truth. And, as if that weren't depressing enough, somebody threw the baby out with the bath water.

We can't face the truth because we fear loneliness. To admit that we're surrounded by puerile organisms animated by animalistic (but alliterative) anima is to admit that we are really all by ourselves. Imagine that. Imagine that it's just you and nobody else. And that you're Ted Kennedy. And you want to take yourself for a drive down to the lake over a wooden bridge to make out.

See where I'm going here?

It's not worth it. Instead, take the opiate. Tell yourself that you're a sophisticated creature with enlightened ideals. Go online and donate money to hurricane victims. Argue with friends about wine, literature, and Formula One tire treads. Tell yourself you are *haute couture*, that you have a sense of things that can be described only with words of more than two syllables—"transcendent," for example. It will answer your needs and make you feel much better about yourself.

But—and I apologize if I have cursed you to this fate with this reading—before you go to sleep at night, when you're confined to that solitary moment of thought before your mind is gratefully eclipsed by unconsciousness, you must stare into that dark abyss of your truthful self and whisper, "Ted, you can come out now. And take off the baby doll t-shirt."