

One forenoon a freeborn nobleman arrived and ran into Solomon's hall of justice, his countenance pale with anguish and both lips blue. Then Solomon said, "Good sir, what is the matter?"...

— from Rumi's *Mathnawi*, translated by Reynold A. Nicholson

All people of broad, strong sense have an instinctive repugnance to the men of maxims; because such people early discern that the mysterious complexity of our life is not to be embraced by maxims...

— *The Mill on the Floss*, Modern Library, p. 765.

"Who will it hit--Mikhaylov or me? Or both of us? And if me, whereabouts? If it's the head then I'm done for; but if it's the leg, they'll cut it off, and I'll certainly ask for chloroform and I may survive. But maybe only Mikhaylov will be hit, then I'll be able to tell how we were walking side by side, and he was killed and I was splashed with blood. No, it's nearer me... it'll be me." Then he remembered the twelve roubles he owed Mikhaylov, remembered also a debt in Petersburg which should have been paid long ago; a gypsy song he had sung the night before came into his head; the woman he loved appeared in his imagination wearing a bonnet with lilac ribbons; ...."But perhaps it won't explode," he thought, and with a desperate resolve tried to open his eyes. But at that moment a red fire pierced his eyes through his still closed eyelids....

— Lev Tolstoy, in *Sevastopol Sketches*

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids--and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination--indeed, everything and anything except me.

— Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*.

You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. But here you are, and you cannot say that the terrain is entirely unfamiliar, although the details are fuzzy. You are at a nightclub talking to a girl with a shaved head. The club is either Heartbreak or the Lizard Lounge. All might come clear if you could just slip into the bathroom and do a little more Bolivian Marching Powder. Then again, it might not.

— Opening of *Bright Lights, Big City* by Jay McInerney

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.

She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.

— Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*