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### Amplitude of the Cosmos

As the beautiful blue dawn rose over the banks of green Volkswagen vans parked alongside all the curbs of Brattleboro, Vermont, Brahms sang down from heaven, and all was definitely a bit sinister with the world, Dietrich Zinzendorf, an Austrian émigré cellist with a sinister smile, and whistling selections from Brahms, drove his green Volkswagen van through the narrow, twisting streets of Brattleboro, Vermont in the early dawn.

Was it because he wanted to rouse the uncouth laggards slumbering inside their hillside condominiums, that he pressed the heel of his right hand against the car horn so that it blared over the village like the violin part to Schönberg's String Trio as played by a beautiful and wickedly aggressive Japanese woman violinist? Or was Dietrich Zinzendorf merely fleeing the inevitable crumbling of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ancient core of the entire continental mass? The dull glow hovering ever over the crumbling archways of picturesque Brattleboro ejaculated the sperm of madness.

After circumnavigating several mountains, a green Volkswagen van driven by an Austrian émigré cellist, sinisterly smiling and whistling snatches of Brahms, stood before the gates of the Yankee Pilgrim nuclear power plant. Parking the vehicle alongside the curb, he opened the can of kippered herrings and uncovered the mounds of old bagel crusts he'd put aside for breakfast. He munched over his meal with deliberate care. Sticking his left hand in the left pocket of his blue orlon trench coat, he foraged among the colonies of head-lice for a shredded pocket score of the Brahms F- minor Quintet. Then, blowing away the vermin, he settled into his reading.

Around the same time that the beautiful blue dawn rose over the banks of green Volkswagen vans parked alongside all the curbs of Brattleboro, Vermont, ( while Brahms sang down from heaven, ( and all was definitely a bit sinister with the world ) ) , Jean-François Aspèrge, an embittered and chronically unemployed celesta player, a man deeply jealous of all successful concert artists, sat at a table nearest the entrance of the bakeshop underneath Brattleboro's most picturesque crumbling archway. As he munched over his mound of old bagel crusts, he cursed the Marlboro Music Festival

in a bizarre mixture of French, Russian and Mandarin Chinese.

In the coal-black depths of the previous night, for their concert

in the Marlboro College concert barn-auditorium, the beautiful and wickedly aggressive Japanese woman violinist Mitzi Kagami, the

Austrian émigré cellist , Dietrich Zinzendorf, and warmed-over Death had, which cursing the North American pre-Cambrian shield under their breaths in a mixture of German, Japanese and Medieval Church Latin, whistled the Schönberg String Trio. Midway through the piece Death stalked out of the barn, ejaculating the sperm of madness. Over their audience, from the crumbling recesses of her coal-black eyes, Mitzi Kagami had flashed glances of surly contempt.

All this and more - and much more - was on Jean-François' mind. Murder was on his mind. Murder, and revenge, and blood! At odd moments, he would suddenly shout "Blut!Blut! ", imagining himself -perhaps- in the last act of Alban Berg's opera, Wozzeck . Jean-François had convinced himself beyond the shadow of a doubt that the beautiful and wickedly aggressive Japanese woman violinist Mitzi Kagami was sleeping with the Austrian émigré cellist, Dietrich Zinzendorf of the sinister smile . Now he was determined to assassinate them in their beds, ( or bed, as the case may be). Indeed, he had already chosen his murder weapon: a razor-sharp hunk of obsidian torn from the nearest extrusion of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ancient core of the entire continental mass.

Joyous with anticipation, Jean-François wept tears of beautiful blue dawn. Sticking his left hand in the left pocket of his blue orlon trench coat, he foraged among the colonies of head-lice for a shredded pocket score of Arnold Schönberg's Pierrot Lunaire . Blowing away the vermin, he settled into his reading.

It was somewhere around the time when Dietrich Zinzendorf, finishing the last of the kippered herrings and , smiling sinisterly, was preparing to turn his green Volkswagen van around and return to Marlboro, Vermont; when the Marlboro College concert-barn was being vacuumed clean of headlice, old bagel crusts and shredded pocket scores; when Brahms sang down from heaven , ( though all remained definitely a bit sinister with the world ), that warmed-over Death, shrouded in a flowing burnoose, walked out of the best bookstore on the main thoroughfare of Brattleboro, Vermont,

and stalked its streets lined with banks of green Volkswagen vans parked alongside all the curbs.

Brattleboro snorted in derision. Green Volkswagen vans over all Vermont belched kippered herrings, their motors' snarling the strains of Brahms' Alto Rhapsody. Rivers ran red with émigré cellists. Wandering through picturesque crumbling archways, the eyeballs of Brattleboro's most abandoned alleycat ejaculated, from their coal-black depths, the sperm of madness.

And it must have been just then that Jean-François, the embittered, chronically unemployed celesta player, deeply jealous of all successful concert artists rose, crouching, swiveling and sniveling, from the table nearest the entrance of the bake-shop beneath Brattleboro's most picturesque archway - and dashed up the street - without paying his bill!

As through the frosted window-panes of the bake-shop, ( with the sneer of contempt he reserved for all musicians ) , the baker watched his flight , Jean-François jiffied up the narrow streets of Brattleboro, Vermont in the beautiful blue dawn. He quickly displaced the unnerving silence of this mountain village and its host of uncouth slumbering laggards, and stumbled almost the entire way up the mountain to Marlboro College, God bless it. The wild whistlings of willowy winds swirled Webern through his hair. From their crumbling depths, his coal-black eyes ejaculated the sperm of madness.

Less than a mile from the entrance to the college Jean-François discovered an extrusion of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ancient core of the entire continental mass. Scraping his knees raw on the compacted earth, he knelt beside the rock. Gnashing his teeth, he produced a sound very like the correct German pronunciation of " Immer leise wird mein Schlummer " , while the howl that was ripped from his guts might have been taken direct from the Third Movement of Schönberg's String Trio. Jean-François tore off a hunk of obsidian from the rock, and jammed it into his belt. Then he arose, crouching, swiveling and sniveling, and bent his jealous, embittered, chronically unemployed bones up the slopes of the mountain towards Marlboro College, God bless it.

In a recess of the dingy basement of the best bookstore on Brattleboro's main thoroughfare, an obscure young and disgruntled salesclerk took up the lotus position to peruse books ( that, crammed with facts and figures, stressed the necessity of immediate direct action to save the environment or what was left of it) , with grim irony. In a studio apartment above the store, an aggressive

though not very wicked, ( and certainly not beautiful )  
coloratura soprano practiced high c# all afternoon long.

The bookstore salesclerk's heart and soul were dedicated to promoting ways to abolish nuclear power. Even the uncouth laggards slumbering within their hillside condominiums know that Brattleboro, Vermont is surrounded by nuclear power plants on all points of the compass; though only a few of them also know that they are fueled yearly with uranium pellets unloaded from green Volkswagen vans driven by individuals with sinister smiles whistling snatches of Brahms. In the winds that blow the topsoil from the rare outcroppings of the North American pre-Cambrian shield in this region, one may at times hear the voices of electric utility executives whining for their megabucks. Along the terraces of the surrounding mountains ingloriously revel the wastedumps of progress.

He was fully aware of the fact that very few successful concert artists give a damn about nuclear power, or any other political issue for that matter. In and around the Brattleboro area he knew of at most three such individuals : first an embittered, chronically unemployed celesta player, deeply jealous of all successful concert artists. He had encountered this man one morning in the beautiful blue dawn sitting in the bake-shop underneath the most picturesque crumbling archway in the village.

Then an Austrian émigré cellist , ( whose smile was somewhat sinister, obviously obsessed with Brahms ) . In the depths of a certain coal-black night he had given the salesclerk a lift from the Marlboro Music Festival back to his dingy garret in Brattleboro, Vermont. Though he proclaimed his unalterable opposition to nuclear power, still the disgruntled bookstore salesclerk was tempted to regard him with a certain measure of distrust. He had noticed a freshly opened box of uranium pellets, the kind used to refuel nuclear power plants, laying on the back seat of his van ( a green Volkswagen ) .

Finally there was a beautiful, aggressively wicked Japanese woman violinist. She had come into the bookstore one afternoon to pick up a book she'd ordered, a collection of recipes for kippered herrings.

Had their fates been kinder, had other initiatives been attempted which could have brought them together long enough to reveal their political affinities, how much cruel carnage could have been avoided! Who is to say? Yet, inexorably, before the night was out, the haft of the obsidian blade was destined to glint above the singing strings of the violin like the sunlight off the hoods of a thousand green Volkswagen vans, the guts of the cellist

would ejaculate the sperm of madness, and the head-lice of the celesta player were fated to wallow in the kippered herring trough. All in vain, ( from a certain point of view); for the inevitable crumbling of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ancient core of the entire continental mass, was not to be delayed, even by an instant.

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Mitzi Kagami stood on the stage of the Marlboro College concert- barn practicing the first movement of the Prokofieff Violin Concerto in D . Brahms sang down to her from heaven, ( though all remained definitely a bit sinister with the world) Her gold and silver bangles glinted in the sunlight pouring in through the panes of glass dense with the shadows of silhouetted birds.

The sky, as a stiff chilly breeze emerging from the whale-runs of the Far North flounced the hedges and trees on the Marlboro College campus, melted like burning wax.

Her bow rasped on the E-string like an obsidian blade across the carapace of an arthropod as, uncontrollably, she yawned. Pondering once again, as she did every afternoon at about three, the intrinsic banality of existence in general and the worthlessness of the human race in particular, her bow creamed off a hefty schmorzando from the creamy, dreamy Prokofieff concerto, played as she alone could do it, with all the beauty, aggressivity and wickedness in her nature.

Mitzi's growing fame did not permit her to waste even a second of valuable practice time: as her arms schnoodled Prokofieff, her bare feet skipped to the rhythm of the opening movement of the Schönberg String Trio. Neither would she permit her mind to rot, like the North American pre-Cambrian shield, in idleness. Even as she practiced Prokofieff, waltzed Schönberg and flickered the picturesque eyelids of coal-black eyes lodged in the crumbling recesses of coal eye-sockets, ( black as night) , she was setting her mind busily to work thinking of ways to promote the abolition of nuclear power. The construction of nuclear power plants had to be stopped if Prokofieff were not to have composed music in vain. She had, alas, all too often seen the reveling of the inglorious wastedumps of progress, nor would she ever become resigned to the spectre of a world ejaculating the sperm of madness.

Violinist Alexander Schneider spoke to pianist Rudolf Serkin in Brahms. Serkin replied in Brahms. Beneath the trees outside the cafeteria David Soyer, cellist, explained Brahms to violinist Isidore Cohen. In a secluded forest niche, hidden from the eyes of mankind, bass player Joseph

Levine knelt on a carpet of pine needles and worshipped Brahms.

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The night air, wild with the shrillings of costly violins, was. Sitting on the face of a large rock outside the concert barn,

( coincidentally yet another rare regional outcropping of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ( ancient core of the entire continental mass ), warmed-over Death in Harlequin masquerade, rollicking like a ourang-outang, played mournful melodies on a Shakuhachi blown through his nostrils. Music lovers flounced through the double-doored entranceway in a frequently modulated stream. Odors of licorice clung to the warm interior of the concert-barn, the accumulated residue of a hundred Mozart clarinet concertos.

The major work on this night's program, Schönberg's String Trio, had been sandwiched between von Suppe's Light Cavalry Overture and the Brahms F-Minor Quintet. Alexander Schneider and Isidore Cohen teamed up for the violin part, Leonard Rose

grappled with the ghost of Pablo Casals for possession of the cello, while the viola part was handed to the 193rd person entering in through the front door. It was entirely owing to this strange ritual, the momentary brain child of a Marlboro Festival director, that the young, sparsely bearded and disgruntled bookstore salesclerk was wrenched from his accustomed obscurity and thrust into world prominence. This was not due to his viola playing, ( his sour disposition having so affected his hearing that he could play no musical instruments ) , but because of his impassioned speech against nuclear power, flashbacks of which would emerge in the nightmares of the audience over the next two years.

Even as this concert sped to its inexorable close , a green Volkswagen van hurtled down Interstate 91. Its' passengers, an Austrian émigré cellist , ( a man obsessed with Brahms who tended to smile in rather sinister ways ) , and the wickedly aggressive and beautiful Japanese woman violinist, Mitzi Kagami, were bound for Amherst, Massachusetts. Fleeing premonitions of panic, they moved towards a still greater madness. Their dinner, 16 Tofu cubes, a bucket of sprouts and a bottle of rancid white wine, was consumed in the open countryside under the full moon, beneath baobab trees whenever they could find them, otherwise on the park benches of small towns where the great clocks in the towers of deserted City Halls bonged the tormented hours.

They were in love! Wild, enraptured, sickly love, of the kind that occurs but once in a lifetime, if at all. Amherst had been picked for this wild flight from reality owing to Mitzi's passionate attachment to the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Across the lanes of Interstate 91, lizards, under the gleaming headlights of the green Volkswagen van, scissored ecstatically in extended ensembles . In the coal-black night , over the inglorious reveling of the waste-dumps of progress and above the mountain peaks scarcely visible in the great distance, forked lightning ejaculated the sperm of madness.

At 2 AM the van entered the desolate wastelands of Amherst, Massachusetts. Parking the vehicle alongside the curb, the musician lovers opened their instrument cases for donations on the most deserted sidewalk in town, (which at that hour was just about anywhere) . Under the light of a full moon almost entirely obscured by the fleeing of bats from a hundred church belfries, they performed the Kodaly Duo for cello and violin. The ghost of Emily Dickinson, shivering and sobbing in gossamer moonlight beams, prophesied the imminent crumbling of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ancient core of the entire continental mass.

Their recital concluded, cellist and violinist replaced their instruments in their cases and drove to the corridors of the sub-sub-sub-basement of the Student Union building of the University of Massachusetts. This labyrinthine complex of tunnels stays open all through the night. Lingering in the cafeteria just long enough to finish off the bottle of rancid white wine, they walked arm-in-arm, dragging their instrument cases behind them, through the halls then up four flights to the lobby of the university hotel which squats atop the student union like a lost Eskimo on the coasts of Baffin Island.

The rooms of the hotel of the University of Massachusetts ( in Amherst, Mass ) are simply palatial! They can be rented at prices perfectly consonant with the parameters of liberal hypocrisy imposed on any modern university feasting at the public trough. Indeed, one might call them veritable butter baths of luxury. The wall paper is tastefully ornate, with replicating patterns of schools of kippered herrings and lox. Long sound-smothering curtains cover floor-to-ceiling bulletproof windows like hangings over the picturesque crumbling archways of ancient temple vaults. The beds are regal, even grand, their springs so supple that their mattresses begin bouncing long before anyone rolls into them. The ambiance is that of a

space capsule destined for distant, better worlds. The most commanding presence in all the rooms is that of the color television set which hangs suspended from the ceiling on long translucent Teflon fibers , God bless them.

Their mutual intention was to engage in fornication and related disgusting acts , such as eating one another's mounds of bagel crusts and grooming each other for headlice. Yet neither reckless inseminations nor any other kinds of spicy ruttings were destined to occur in the seamy pulchritude of the hotel at U Mass. In a tiny isolated office of University of Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group, ( at U. Mass Amherst ( in Amherst, Mass.)) , Jean-François Aspèrge lay awake on a green leather couch. Attempts at sleep being largely unsuccessful, he arose frequently throughout the night. Not wishing to sit around and rot , like the North American pre-Cambrian shield, in idleness, he used the time strengthening his wrists by bonging spoons on the radiators. The music that emerged - the celesta score of Bartok's Music for Celesta , Strings and Percussion - radiated through the oleaginous mass of concrete that passes for a college hotel , ( squatting atop the student union building like the cracked eyeballs of Amherst's most abandoned alleycat) , as forked lightning will revel ingloriously through wastedumps of progress. The bonging of Jean-François spoons, rasping on the couple's nerves like an obsidian razor on the carapace of an arthropod, drove them wild with pentatonic agony. Bartok's melodies resonated at much the same frequencies as most of the electronic gadgetry in the building, with the result that all the color television sets were turned on full blast. Sleepless and wretched, the lovers found themselves forced to watch reruns of reruns of Late Late Late Shows of movies from the 40's. It was outrageous, it was utterly intolerable, and that in spite of the fact that the room's seamy pulchritude cost not a penny more than what was perfectly consonant with the obligations of liberal hypocrisy imposed on a modern university feasting at the public trough!

The tiny room in which Jean-François Aspèrge made largely unsuccessful attempts at sleeping, and failing that trained his musician's wrists by the bonging of spoons on its radiators, was the headquarters of the U Mass MassPIRG at Amherst, Mass. It was situated in a narrow second floor corridor amidst a crowd of other political advocacy organizations. That afternoon Jean-François had conned the activists at MassPIRG into letting him crash on their couch, by pretending to be an organizer for the Clamshell Alliance who happened to be hitch-hiking to a sit-down



demonstration in front of the nuclear power plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire . Among the students present in the office at the time, only one had suspected that he might really be an embittered, chronically unemployed celesta player deeply jealous of all successful concert artists; but her opinion was ignored. In fact Jean-François had not been deceitful, not in the long run, since he was, heart and soul, fundamentally opposed to the advancement of nuclear power. Had it not been his misfortune to be driven by two dominating passions , first his ferocious jealousy of Mitzi and Dietrich's sickly love, secondly his unachievable dream , so abused and frustrated that it had swollen to an incurable pathology, to be recognized as a true professional concert artist, he would most certainly have made good on his commitment to go to Seabrook.

All of the offices were separated from one another by windowed panels. The entrance to the darkened corridor was secured at the front end by a door opening onto a balcony. Directly before the balcony on the ground floor of the student union stood the student bookstore, where one might expect to find many books that, crammed with facts and figures, stressed the necessity of immediate direct action if the environment, or what was left of it, is to be saved. Although this door was kept locked at night, it was opened at two hour intervals by a security guard with a flashlight whose job it was to patrol the corridor just in case beatniks, homeless radicals, or borderline psychotic musicians might try to crash out on the couches of the numerous on-campus political advocacy groups.

Jean-François was therefore obliged at two hour intervals to put aside his spoons and to appear to be doing some paperwork relating to the struggle against nuclear power. Nor was this pretense: U. Mass MassPIRG at Amherst, Mass. had in fact given him a sheaf of documents relating to its investigations into fraud and conspiracy in the management of nuclear power plants which he had promised to edit before leaving, a decision that was not up to him, but would be governed by the perambulations of the cellist , Dietrich Zinzendorf of the sinister smile, and of the beautiful Mitzi Kagami who, with much wickedness, and aggressively , played the violin .

Evidence was tightly scribbled over these pages showing that there existed a conspiracy of manufacturers, owners, and operators of nuclear utilities to take over the world. Specifically: the nuclear power industry had elaborated a strategy for international blackmail, based on the threat of a meltdown at the Yankee Pilgrim plant near Brattleboro, Vermont within the year.

The consequences of such a deed were unthinkable. To avoid them, mankind had to relinquish control over the planet to a consortium formed by General Electric, Westinghouse, Con Edison and Hydro-Quebec . One can readily picture the smoke-filled caucus rooms in which these executives, munching over their stingily hoarded mounds of old bagel crusts, sparks sharp as flakes of obsidian spurting from the coal-black recesses of their crumbling eye-sockets, and ejaculating the sperm of madness, concocted such schemes. Among other things, they had neglected to take into account the inevitable crumbling of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ancient core of the entire continental mass. Yet it was all there, right on the pages before Jean-François in horrendous black and white.

Action focused on a certain, in the beautiful blue dawn, green Volkswagen van driven by an Austrian émigré cellist, a somewhat sinister individual who whistled snatches of Brahms. Under the guise of delivering crates of kippered herrings to the Yankee Pilgrim plant cafeteria, he would actually be bringing in canisters filled with pellets of neutrino paste compacted under enormous pressure. Immediately after their delivery, the nuclear consortium intended to announce its' ultimatum to mankind.

Under gossamer moonlight beams, warmed-over Death, shrouded in reams of computer printout, wandered the open countryside between Brattleboro, Vermont and Amherst, Massachusetts. Resting in the shade of spreading baobab trees wherever he could find them, otherwise on the park benches of small towns where great clocks in the towers of deserted City Halls bonged the tormented hours, he twanged the Dies Irae on a Jew's harp:

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Boing! Boing! Boing! Boing! Boing! Boing! Boing!  
Boing!

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The concert in the concert-barn auditorium of the Marlboro Music Festival drew - at long last - to its blissful close. Afterwards a reception designed for the constructive mingling of both audience and musicians was held in the Green Room. Caterers had prepared a spread composed of mounds of old bagel crusts, plates of kippered herrings, lox, buckets of bean sprouts , and rancid white wine collected from the remnants of bottles left over from previous festivals.

Pompous, stiff and ridiculous, Alexander Schneider, Isidore Cohen, Leonard Rose, the ghost of Pablo Casals and

the obscure and disgruntled, young and bearded bookstore salesclerk moved through the crowd , imbibing its praises as nothing more than the fulfillment of its natural obligations. Warmed-over Death, in Harlequin masquerade, hitting his teeth with xylophone sticks, chortled at them through the frosted window-panes in unseemly fashion , but they were too busy to notice or care.

Sitting down on a torn couch upholstered in green leather, surrounded by its admirers, the ghost of Pablo Casals hummed his celebrated Song of the Birds . Alexander Schneider and Isidore Cohen exchanged tips on the effective production of a violin schmorzando . Leonard Rose, by means of multi-phonics produced with the f-holes of his instrument, was playing both solo parts of the Brahms Double Concerto for Violin and Cello simultaneously .

Finalizing their strategies for international blackmail in a dingy corner of the room , trustees of the Yankee Pilgrim nuclear power plant sucked the marrow from the bones of Kentucky Fried Chicken dinners. Snorting in derision, the North American pre-Cambrian shield buckled and groaned, leaving six hundred Eskimos on the coasts of Baffin Island homeless and wet.

The young bookstore salesclerk, no less obscure , (nor less sparsely bearded), for having performed that night in the Schönberg String Trio, took up the lotus position in a conspicuous location near the cabal of utility executives while affecting the perusal, with grim irony, of a textbook on nuclear engineering. Later than night he would be telegraphing their plots, sub-plots and counter-plots in code from his garret apartment above Brattleboro , Vermont's best bookstore, located on a Main Street lined with banks of Green Volkswagen vans parked alongside all its curbs, to the offices of U. Mass MassPIRG at the U. Mass. Amherst, in Amherst, Mass.

And so it was that, to the sound of the celesta part of Bartok's Music for Celesta, Strings and Percussion bonged on MassPIRG's radiators ; to the wretchedness of the bagel swapping, frustrated fornication and headlice grooming of the sickly musician couple, Mitzi and Dietrich; to the endless reruns of reruns of Late Late Late Shows of movies of the 40's; to the grisly hummings of the ghost of Pablo Casals and the reverential chirpings of the birds; to the sounds of the xylophone , Jew's harp, Shakuhachi and teeth playing of warmed-over Death; to the fleeing of bats from a hundred church belfries as the great clocks in the towers of deserted City Halls bonged the tormented hours; to the

evil schemes of nuclear power executives; to the sobbings, in gossamer moonlight beams, of the ghost of Emily Dickinson; and to the inevitable crumbling of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ancient core of the entire continental mass; and last, but not least, to the dull glow of the coal-black eye-sockets of the eyes, black as night, of Brattleboro's most abandoned alleycat which, under its most picturesque crumbling archway, ejaculated the sperm of madness, the night drew to its blissful close.

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As Brahms sang down from heaven, ( and all continued to remain definitely a bit sinister with the world), the embittered, chronically unemployed and deeply jealous Jean-François Aspèrge wended his sad way up the mountain slopes towards Marlboro College. Gleaming in the beautiful blue dawn like the glintings of sunlight off the hoods of a thousand green Volkswagen vans, Marlboro College snarled, cursed, belched and indicated in a great many other ways that it welcomed this intruder about as much as it needed another Brahms F-minor quintet, the grey matter behind his eyes crumbling like the ancient archways of picturesque Brattleboro, Vermont, this sinister madman flapping his arms and crying " Blut! Blut! " like someone -perhaps - living out the last act of Alban Berg's opera Wozzeck , .

Munching over his hoard of old bagel crusts, Jean-François sat down on the face of a large rock , coincidentally another rare outcropping of the North American pre-Cambrian shield, ( ancient core of the entire continental mass ) . His mind steeped in contemplation, he was debating the merits of two alternatives : was he paranoid? Or (perhaps) schizophrenic ?

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