

Looking back now, it cannot be denied that the latter was lurking about... us... all the time. Though unnoticed, it was there, behind every line in Coroner's medical books, behind every indelible burden of primate nature—and thinking of evolution, it was there below every dream of lost aeons, every snatch of life I called up to entertain my unasked companion, seeing how he craved for the invisible he could never glimpse before. I did not want to disappoint him. These dreams were the life-saving medicine he should have received long ago, and meaning to give him the best, I called up the most soothing visions his collection and the entwining whispers offered. But still, may I have strained as much to be tactful, curiosity had to allure me one day, I had to offend him with a mere thought—as if the game of mutual dissection, if played correctly, would inevitably break its own rules.

But was it my fault then? The wind brought the tangled voices, the words and the icy clatter—was it me, then, who ripped up an old sore in Coroner; a painful and ominous memory of the sort I would never touch? I think, in this final stage of the game, it did not matter at all. What only counts is that the fleeting flash, the picture of the woolly rhinoceros pack, almost afloat in an endless field of snow, opened a gate which no one of us can close anymore. And as I happened to take the first step, so did Coroner go on with his response.



“Just imagine, if this world here were a digestive tract... we'd be tapeworms, nothing else,” he said, as if he knew that a recognition—the *toxic-waste-theater*—still obsessed me as before.

“Why exactly tapeworms?” I asked after gulping down a mouthful of seafood pizza. Dinner was sure the most inspiring time to talk about intestines and parasites.

—... *malitia vetus*... —

“What if... it occurred to me, sort of? And you'd be a two-headed one, of course,” he added with a teasing