



dim dunkel
 state of mind sindstilstand
 neurotic neurotiker
 assessment vurdering
 unscientific uvidenskabelig
 polarize adskille, dele
 shield skjold
 deepen blive dybere
 interior indre
 distanced distanceret
 equip udstyre
 log brændeknude
 birch birk
 cunningly snedigt
 jet flamme
 wing chair øreklapstol
 Vincent Van Gogh (1853-
 1890) hollandsk maler
 marigold morgenfrue
 easy chair lænestol
 paper afhandling
 colloquia pl. (ental: collo-
 quium) seminar

Dreamcatcher

by Stephen King

1998: Henry Treats a Couch Man

The room is dim. Henry always keeps it that way when
 he's seeing patients. It's interesting to him how few seem
 to notice it. He thinks it's because their states of mind
 are so often dim to start with. Mostly he sees neurotics
 (*The woods are full of em*, as he once told Jonesy while
 they were in, ha-ha, the woods) and it is his assessment
 – completely unscientific – that their problems act as a kind
 of polarizing shield between them and the rest of the world.
 As the neurosis deepens, so does the interior darkness.
 Mostly what he feels for his patients is a kind of distanced
 sympathy. Sometimes pity. A very few of them make him
 impatient. Barry Newman is one of those.

Patients who enter Henry's office for the first time are
 presented with a choice they usually don't register as a
 choice. When they come in they see a pleasant (if rather
 dim) room, with a fireplace to the left. It's equipped with
 one of those everlasting logs, steel disguised as birch with
 four cunningly placed gas jets beneath. Beside the fireplace
 is a wing chair, where Henry always sits beneath an
 excellent reproduction of Van Gogh's 'Marigolds'. (Henry
 sometimes tells colleagues that every psychiatrist should
 have at least one Van Gogh in his or her consulting space.)
 Across the room is an easy chair and a couch. Henry is
 always interested to see which one a new patient will
 choose. Certainly he has been plying the trade long enough
 to know that what a patient chooses the first time is what
 he or she will choose almost every time. There is a paper
 in this. Henry knows there is, but he cannot isolate the
 thesis. And in any case, he finds he has less interest these
 days in such things as papers and journals and conventions
 and colloquia. They used to matter, but now things have
 changed. He is sleeping less, eating less, laughing less, too.
 A darkness has come into his own life – that polarizing

filter – and Henry finds he has no objection to this. Less glare.

Barry Newman was a couch man from the first, and Henry has never once made the mistake of believing this has anything to do with Barry's mental condition. The couch is simply more comfortable for Barry, although Henry sometimes has to give him a hand to get Barry up from it when his fifty minutes have expired. Barry Newman stands five-seven and weighs four hundred and twenty pounds. This makes the couch his friend.

Barry Newman's sessions tend to be long, droning accounts of each week's adventures in gastronomy. Not that Barry is a discriminating eater, oh, no, Barry is the antithesis of that. Barry eats anything that happens to stray into his orbit. Barry is an eating machine. And his memory, on this subject, at least, is eidetic. He is to food what Henry's old friend Pete is to directions and geography.

Henry has almost given up trying to drag Barry away from the trees and make him examine the forest. Partly this is because of Barry's soft but implacable desire to discuss food in its specifics; partly it's because Henry doesn't like Barry and never has. Barry's parents are dead. Dad went when Barry was sixteen, Mom when he was twenty-two. They left a very large estate, but it is in trust until Barry is thirty. He can get the principal then ... *if* he continues in therapy. If not, the principal will remain in trust until he is fifty.

Henry doubts Barry Newman will make fifty.

Barry's blood pressure (he has told Henry this with some pride) is one-ninety over one-forty.

Barry's whole cholesterol number is two hundred and ninety; he is a lipid goldmine.

I'm a walking stroke, I'm a walking heart attack, he has told Henry, speaking with the gleeful solemnity of one who can state the hard, cold truth because he knows in his soul that such ends are not meant for him, not for him, no, not for him.

"I had two of those Burger King X-tras for lunch," he is saying now. "I love those, because the cheese is actually hot." His fleshy lips – oddly small lips for such a large man, the lips of a perch – tighten and tremble, as if tasting that exquisitely hot cheese. "I also had a shake, and on my way

objection indvending

glare blændende lys

expire udløbe

droning monoton

account redegørelse

5 gastronomy gastronomi dvs.

finere madkunst

antithesis modsætning

stray forvilde sig

orbit kredsløb

eidetic gengivet med fotogra-

10 fisk nøjagtighed

implacable kompromisløs

estate (jur.) bo

in trust båndlagt

principal hovedpart

blood pressure blodtryk

15 lipid fedtstof

stroke slagtilfælde

gleeful jublende glad

solemnity højtidelighed

fleshy kødfuld

perch aborre

20 exquisitely udsøgt

Mallomars en slags iskage
 waffle vaffel
 Leggo my Eggo slogan for vaf-
 felmærke
 crispy sprød
 package pakke
 take inventory tælle varela-
 ger op
 hunting trip jagttur
 hoot tude
 eaves pl. tagudhæng
 hunting license jagttilladelse
 outrageous forargelig
 profanity ed, bandeord
 deer rådyr
 pork chop svinekotelet
 corn on the cob majscolbe
 scoop kugle

back home I had a couple of Mallomars. I took a nap, and
 when I got up I microwaved a whole package of those frozen
 waffles. "Leggo my Eggo!" he cries, then laughs. It is the
 laugh of a man in the grip of fond recall – the sight of a
 sunset, the firm feel of a woman's breast through a thin silk
 shirt (not that Barry has, in Henry's estimation, ever felt
 such a thing), or the packed warmth of beach sand.

"Most people use the toaster oven for their Eggo waffles,"
 Barry continues, "but I find that makes them too crispy."
 The microwave just gets them hot and soft. Hot ... and soft."
 He smacks his little perch lips. "I had a certain amount of
 guilt about eating the whole package." He throws this last
 in almost as an aside, as if remembering Henry has a job to
 do here. He throws out similar little treats four or five times
 in every session ... and then it's back to the food.

Barry has now reached Tuesday evening. Since this is
 Friday, there are plenty of meals and snacks still to go.
 Henry lets his mind drift. Barry is his last appointment of
 the day. When Barry has finished taking caloric inventory,
 Henry is going back to his apartment to pack. He'll be up
 tomorrow at six A.M., and sometime between seven and
 eight, Jonesy will pull into his driveway. They will pack
 their stuff into Henry's old Scout, which he now keeps
 around solely for their autumn hunting trips, and by eight-
 thirty the two of them will be on their way north. Along
 the way they will pick up Pete in Bridgton, and then the
 Beav, who still lives close to Derry. By evening they will be
 at Hole in the Wall up in the Jefferson Tract, playing cards
 in the living room and listening to the wind hoot around
 the eaves. Their guns will be leaning in the corner of the
 kitchen, their hunting licenses hung over the hook on the
 back door.

He will be with his friends, and that always feels like
 coming home. For a week, that polarizing filter may lift a
 little bit. They will talk about old times, they will laugh
 at Beaver's outrageous profanities, and if one or more of
 them actually shoots a deer, that will be an extra added
 attraction. Together they are still good. Together they still
 defeat time.

Far in the background, Barry Newman drones on and
 on. Pork chops and mashed potatoes and corn on the cob
 dripping with butter and Pepperidge Farm chocolate cake
 and a bowl of Pepsi Cola with four scoops of Ben and Jerry's

Chunky Monkey ice cream floating in it and eggs fried eggs boiled eggs poached ...

Henry nods in all the right places and hears it all without really listening. This is an old psychiatric skill.

God knows Henry and his old friends have their problems. Beaver is terrible when it comes to relationships, Pete drinks too much (*way* too much is what Henry thinks), Jonesy and Carla have had a near-miss with divorce, and Henry is now struggling with a depression that seems to him every bit as seductive as it does unpleasant. So yes, they have their problems. But together they are still good, still able to light it up, and by tomorrow night they will be together. For eight days, this year. That's good.

"I know I shouldn't, but I just get this *compulsion* early in the morning. Maybe it's low blood sugar, I think it might be that. Anyway, I ate the rest of the pound-cake that was in the fridge, then I got in the car and drove down to Dunkin' Donuts and I got a dozen of the Dutch Apple and four or —"

Henry, still thinking about the annual hunting trip that starts tomorrow, isn't aware of what he is saying until it is out.

"Maybe this compulsive eating, Barry, maybe it has something to do with thinking you killed your mother. Do you think that's possible?"

Barry's words stop. Henry looks up and sees Barry Newman staring at him with eyes so wide they are actually visible. And although Henry knows he should stop — he has no business doing this at *all*, it has absolutely nothing to do with therapy — he doesn't *want* to stop. Some of this may have to do with thinking about his old friends, but most of it is just seeing that shocked look on Barry's face, and the pallor of his cheek. What really bugs Henry about Barry, he supposes, is Barry's complacency. His inner assurance that there is no need to change his self-destructive behavior, let alone search for its roots.

"You *do* think you killed her, don't you?" Henry asks. He speaks casually, almost lightly.

"I — I never — I resent —"

"She called and she called, said she was having chest-pains, but of course she said that often, didn't she? Every other week. Every other *day*, it sometimes seemed. Calling downstairs to you. "Barry, phone Dr Withers. Barry, call an ambulance. Barry, dial 911."

skill færdighed
 near-miss lige ved
 seductive forførelserisk
 compulsion sygelig trang
 pound-cake pundkage, hvor
 ingredienserne er pund til
 pund: et pund smør til et
 pund sukker etc.
 fridge køleskab
 visible synlig
 pallor bleghed
 complacency selvtilfredshed
 assurance overbevisning
 resent være fortørnet over

svelte slank
 cheesecake ostekage
 Tennessee Williams (1911-
 1983) amerikansk dramatiker,
 især kendt for sine skuespil
 om problemfyldte familiefor-
 hold 5
 premature for tidlig
 burial begravelses-
 fist knytnæve
 lid låg
 coffin kiste 10
 Babel dengang alle mennesker
 ifølge Bibelen talte samme
 sprog, besluttede de at bygge
 et tårn i Babylon, der skulle
 nå helt op til himlen. Gud
 straffede menneskene ved at 15
 give dem forskellige sprog,
 så de ikke kunne samarbejde
 om tårnet, og det styrtede til
 jorden
 dish tallerken
 shelf hylde 20

They have never talked about Barry's parents. In his soft,
 fat, implacable way, Barry will not allow it. He will begin to
 discuss them – or seem to – and then bingo, he'll be talking
 about roast lamb again, or roast chicken, or roast duck with
 orange sauce. Back to the inventory. Hence Henry knows
 nothing about Barry's parents, certainly not about the
 day Barry's mother died, falling out of bed and pissing on
 the carpet, still calling and calling, three hundred pounds
 and so disgustingly fat, calling and calling. He can know
 nothing about that because he hasn't been told, but he *does*
 know. And Barry was thinner then. A relatively svelte one-
 ninety.

This is Henry's version of the line. Seeing the line.
 Henry hasn't seen it for maybe five years now (unless he
 sometimes sees it in dreams), thought all that was over, and
 now here it is again.

"You sat there in front of the TV, listening to her yell,"
 he says. "You sat there watching Ricky Lake and eating
 – what? – a Sara Lee cheesecake? A bowl of ice cream? I
 don't know. But you let her yell." 20

"Stop it!"

"You let her yell, and really, why not? *She'd been crying*
wolf her whole life. You are not a stupid man and you know
 that's true. This sort of thing happens. I think you know
 25 that, too. You've cast yourself in your own little Tennessee
 Williams play simply because you like to eat. But guess
 what, Barry? *It's really going to kill you.* In your secret
 heart you don't believe that, but it's true. Your heart's
 already beating like a premature burial victim beating his
 30 fists on the lid of a coffin. What's it going to be like eighty
 or a hundred pounds from now?"

"Shut –"

"When you fall, Barry, it's going to be like the fall of
 Babel in the desert. The people who see you go down will
 35 talk about it for *years.* Man, you'll shake the dishes right off
 the shelves –"

"Stop it!" Barry is sitting up now, he hasn't needed
 Henry to give him a hand this time, and he is deadly pale
 except for little wild roses, one growing in each cheek.

40 "– you'll splash the coffee right out of the cups, and you'll
 piss yourself just like she did –"

"STOP IT!" Barry Newman shrieks. "STOP IT, YOU
 MONSTER!"

But Henry can't. Henry can't. He sees the line and when you see it, you can't unsee it.

"— unless you wake up from this poisoned dream you're having. You see, Barry —"

But Barry doesn't want to see, absolutely will *not* see. 5
Out the door he runs, vast buttocks jiggling, and he is gone.

At first Henry sits where he is, not moving, listening to the departing thunder of the one-man buffalo herd that is Barry Newman. The outer room is empty; he has no 10
receptionist, and with Barry gone, the week is over. Just as well. That was a mess. He goes to the couch and lies down on it.

"Doctor," he says, "I just fucked up."

"How did you do that, Henry?" 15

"I told a patient the truth.

"If we know the truth, Henry, does it not set us free?"

"No," he replies to himself, looking up at the ceiling. "Not in the slightest.

"Close your eyes, Henry. 20

"All right, doctor."

He closes his eyes. The room is replaced by darkness, and that is good. Darkness has become his friend. Tomorrow he will see his other friends (three of them, anyway), and the light will once more seem good. But now ... now ... 25

"Doctor?"

"Yes, Henry.

"This is a bona fide case of same shit, different day. Do you know that?"

"What does that mean, Henry? What does that mean to you? 30

"Everything," he says, eyes closed, and then adds: "Nothing." But that's a lie. Not the first one that was ever told in here.

He lies on the couch, eyes closed and hands folded on his chest, and after a little while he sleeps. 35

The next day the four of them drive up to Hole in the Wall, and it is a great eight days. The great hunting trips are coming to an end, only a few left, although they of course do not know this. The real darkness is still a few days away, 40
but it is coming.

The darkness is coming.

vast enorm
buttock balde
jiggle dingle
depart forsvinde
ceiling loft
replace erstatte
bona fide case ægte tilfælde

Questions

1. How does Henry treat his patient Barry? And to what effect?
2. True or false:
 - a) Obesity is hereditary.
 - b) Obesity is caused by a dysfunctional metabolism and cannot be helped.
 - c) Obesity is due to lack of self-control.
 - d) There is always a psychological explanation for obesity.
3. What is Henry's theory about Barry's overweight?
4. What is the difference between *a couch man* and *an easy chair man*?
5. Account for the significance of the word 'darkness'.

For discussion

1. When are the following needs/activities healthy? And when are they an obsession or a compulsion:
 - a) competitiveness
 - b) eating
 - c) drinking
 - d) use of medicine/drugs
 - e) exercise

Written assignments

1. What happens to Barry after he leaves the consultation? Write the story.
2. Barry wants to complain about his treatment to the American Psychiatric Association. Write his complaint.