

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL &  
INTRODUCTORY  
*Traffic*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & EARTHLY  
*The Somebody Logo*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & BODILY  
*House and heart*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & MANLY  
*Ethan, for a man*

ETHAN  
*New tenements*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & CRUMBLY  
*Cellophane*

PATRICE  
*The Age of Obsession*  
*Full of face*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL &  
MELANCHOLY  
*Birthday*

ETHAN  
*A pair so famous*  
*A godless herding*  
*Canals*  
*Old soup*  
*Oats*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & STILL  
*Milky way*

ETHAN  
*This Tudor trifle*  
P.S.

PATRICE  
*Darkling*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & SLEEPY  
*Coffee all coffee*

PATRICE  
*Hortulan Greenth*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & FALLING  
*Ducks, electric*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & HOMELY  
*1,094 bones*

PATRICE  
*Margarine*  
*Bowl and box (storage)*  
*Must your hot itch*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & WEARY  
*Rainbows*

ETHAN  
*An occult alphabet*  
*Farmyard pH*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & GRASSY  
*Spirit levels*

PATRICE  
*Divining the dog*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & ANIMAL  
*Café calling*

PATRICE  
*Time*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & WOODY  
*Glue*

PATRICE  
*Cherries, newly*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & HEAVING  
*Dust*

ETHAN  
*Specific antibodies*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & SULTRY  
*In a fool's coat*

PATRICE  
*Table of excluded dishes*

ETHAN  
*A kneaded clod*  
*Monster*  
*Terms in crumpling*  
*Natural sweets*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & SUNNY  
*Open sky situation*

PATRICE  
*Little mushroom*

ETHAN  
*Maltworm*  
*Heavy metal*  
*Cardinal directions*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & COUNTING  
*To grasp a fish*

ETHAN  
*No fixed address*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & YELLOW  
*Two flowers*

PATRICE  
*Busy (future perfect, feminine)*

ETHAN  
*Boon (future perfect, masculine)*  
*Sousing the nappy*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL &  
COMMUNITY  
*Invent the underworld*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & BLUE  
*Shorts, early*

ETHAN  
*Th Dyssy*  
*Science (old magic)*

PATRICE  
*Happiness*  
*Great is wickedness*  
*On more wizened dismantling tools*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & PEATY  
*Rotten earth*

ETHAN  
*A tobacco zone*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & SORRY  
*Witch grass*

ETHAN  
*Ichnos frog*

PATRICE  
*Jogging to the sister library*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & WATERY  
*Sailing alone*

ETHAN  
*Chopped hands*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & STRICKEN  
*Memorandum*

PATRICE  
*Luxury*  
*Dead Badger*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & WEALTHY  
*Always Christmas*

ETHAN  
*Browned off*  
*Delicates*  
*Customs and declarations*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & BREEZY  
*Old wind*

PATRICE  
*Hot shells*  
*Lobster, a season in red*

ETHAN  
*A wretched macaroni*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL  
& DARKENING  
*Fishing*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & SALTED,  
OPTIMIST & OILS  
*Out*

PATRICE  
*Big sky*

ETHAN  
*The farewell head*

PATRICE  
*Home*

## PROLOGUE

MESSRS.

*All the broken windows and propped doors are where we left them. The snapped twigs pointing the way back are where we left them. It smells of cooking and non-poisonous paint. Legs inert, legs wide apart, legs striding. It's all there inside the head. Calmly floating on shadows. We comment, not complain. You could speak about the colours where we left them too, but perhaps that wouldn't reflect a commitment to the truth.*

ETHAN

*I offer this brain to you like shedding orange peel.*

*It comes to you soft in the shape of a face and says here, welcome, have my skin, my looks, my point of view.*

*It has the oblique body of a paragraph slanting down on the page.*

*It has committed feet, with momentum, like a half moon hell-bent on getting full.*

*On getting off.*

PATRICE

*The absolute honest truth frightens me. There are misguided souls who find its essence in a bowl of washed spring greens, with nuts and olive oil licked about. But when that dish is knocked by flies, made erratic, buzzed and opened up to wind, the simple circumstance of it changes. Brusque access of feeling, too, might seize you and there is often some confusion, some fraudulence. There are peanuts thrown in wild disorder.*

MESSRS.

*We are like a plastic hawk dangling from an olive tree, our movements tracing a shape to inform fullness, swaying through the blaze of sun. The olive tree, grey and stoic with observation, is always there. And when in those glorious new days we are not the hawk – neither body nor air, but a silent streaming of temperature – we can see it all from a dissolving point of view. There is no code or sin, but translation.*

*This is the grand scramble, the boiled in between.*

*Some day edibles will run slim and the fat holding us all together will sizzle off or flatten out dried as paper. When we reach that point, even a bit of poison proves useful as glue. A malignant strain at least provides direction.*

*Who will care about the facts and faces then? When bodies are just bulbous costumes with cobbled information. When proper pronouns and their coordinates blink out leaks.*

*What use is all that when the action is striking out, keeping going where we don't usually care to look?*

MESSRS.  
EXTERNAL & INTRODUCTORY

*Traffic*

It is sometimes said that tears are shed over disappearance. It is sometimes said that the maximum figure of domestic entanglement, without reduction, is two. Human solicitation sometimes means an unzipping of one face and the absorption of another, of many different smiles piled on, glued over with specks of unspeakable matter. This is the threadbare business of men and women and babies. All their animals, the plants, the packaging, milky linen and a stomach filled with mulch.

One might lie awake until morning, left fist balled against the wall, thumping out sheep or the minutes remaining to lever the right fist out of fury and into a hat or jacket, into an appearance of readiness. Sometimes there is an uncovered head, bald, or perhaps an umbrella, broken. Sometimes there is rain and its wetted roads. There is something in the very poise of a hand, its clipped nails and signals sent flying off under the sky that speaks of the grammatical problem of having a body. The birds arrange themselves on telephone wires; they spell it out; they are writing a play. There are people in the world who appear not as

primary objects, but as incidental specks or spots on objects. They too are writing a play.

We all have our audiences, our front row voices ready to whisper us into an unspeakable afternoon. The neighbours lend an ear, extend opinions, but never a hand. We love and murder at the same decibel. And together we scream or softly pace out the words that end in mortgage or divorce, in a nice bracelet or a quick trouser-down fumble under the stairs. We sit in our cars with the radio too low, holding our poor tails between sore legs until a shadow blows across the road and enough time has passed to feel new. To feel tenderly indifferent. We send a lasso out onto the air and feel the dead souls catching in its loop. We torment ourselves with all their commentary that gurgles and raves beyond our curtains. We twitch and lose our lip gloss. Voices leak. We invent them, footnote and file away. We get hot and strong and fall over our shoes with laces long undone. *We're on the verge of ruin!*, we say to each other and it feels nice to speak. *Let us have the moon and some steady flower to plant in our buttonhole, a rich rosebud stuffed in a jar and pickled to sludge next to biscuits and dog food! Let us have porcelain and paracetamol! Let us slam our heads first into each other and then against a wall! Let us be body and building, for both have a heart and a spine!* We are floor plans and footprints, little rats and private jokers. We run around in twos and fours, singles seeking girls and boys and a birthday in between.

We accept the situation. We don't like any politics. We shatter religion and family. We are the squashed beetles still breathing on the bottom of a shoe. We are smelly beige and full of beer. We are hair-spray, atomised, chemical, vanilla.

All those organic habits of the house are inscribed in us at organ depth. All our feet on the ground are just more examples of vehicles moving in sunlight – a diagram of function. The little empty attic of a brain, stocked with lumber and broken furniture. The kitchen with its earthquakes and fires. The bottom of yet another heart with all its accidents pushed back and forth, a large pendulum in aluminium foil. We remember the thousand little acts that took us to present day, the chopped onions and tears that ran down. It is impossible to find a permanent view. Nobody eats until they starve to death. Until they roll over and die or do a dance, kiss a lover quietly – the most solemn things a life can do.

Clothes look like weather and weather like a sheet to wrap closely about. Do we know what expires in daylight? What privileges of modern living or names carved into trees heal up and mean nothing in vast silence, without even the wild birds whose old seasons are a new delusion? The puddles of deserted gardens are left alone to swoon with their soggy reeds. We do not understand

the technicalities of life, so instead we get comfortable with the thresholds, with the buildings where we can camp down and behave with national manners. A body in a bin bag, after all, is a figure in a landscape. We spread butter on our bread or eat an apple and it is the first apple, the first bread, the first butter. There is something in the quality of stillness, in the sadness of beauty giving in to the sensation of *being* that turns everything into a prototype.

We Messrs. are always here. Our grips and turns, our fingers, our lips over body parts we barely dare to poke a finger into. We are always here and never here. We are a fiction. When we raise our hands or our voices, we launch a little banner. We are something like a cluster study of half a dozen surfaces pressed together, not against glass, but the general transparency of day, of a routine Monday way of looking at things, a Thursday way or a Sunday. We are several minds. We are male languages and female languages. We will look to the man and call him. We will look to the woman and call her the same. We are the breath, the stutters that fill it. We are dog languages carrying rhythm like water. We are built languages with glimmers of structure and a little trouble finding our way to the front door. We will concentrate on essentials: how is your health? Your happiness? Your heart rate? We will find a shape in the chaos. We are here

and there. The voice of tepid regret. The punctuation of accident. Wheat germ and same day dry-cleaning. It is our job. Our function to talk above all. Not a mockery, but a patience. Hands that rake over shoulders or open wide to absorb the impact of myth. We will tell you that you are a little brave, a little determined, a little sloppy and wet around the edges. We will watch you fuck and cradle your head in our arms. We will tell you that you'll chase a serpent map to its cursive end. We won't say stop. There are long years of scraping liaisons together, normal and expensive, pushing and scraping, sad or unusual tasks, always scraping, performed simply to declare *I miss you*.

Don't take for granted that characters here make their meals or meanings with regularity. It occurs to us that we, personally, have told you nothing. That our merciless proceedings show neither a future nor a past. We offer ourselves like a rope to hang onto. A flag, hoisted to signal the acts. We tell of Ethan and Patrice, the major chambers of their lot. We are not shamed by the power of love and its atoms that cling gathered about. We have no business affairs invested, no supposedly damaged heart. We are collective and all at once nobody at all. We say man or woman and mean not husband or wife but everything in between. We shall settle our voice on the veranda. We shall settle oddly, obstinate, above it all.