

Ratself stumbles over rotten garbage into the dank alley
behind Boneyard, dizzy
with oblivion and welcome of it. They trip, lurching faceward
into goop and grime,
betrayed by a loose, fraying shoelace rapidly congealing into
the mess. Ratself is
wasted. Nose leaking, blood pooling amid the filth, Ratself
heaves their jangling
flesh back upright, spuriously choosing to live in the moment,
the moment of
falling. They slump against Boneyard's famed dumpster, known
affectionately as
the meat pit. The fruits of said pit, borne of or born in, are
myriad but indiscernible,
discarded treasures, wasted meals, feral cats or any wretched
combination therein.
Some such monster bangs about inside as Ratself waxes in and
out of lucidity. It's
winter, muses Ratself, yet the night is sickly warm, a fever
waiting to break. While
it could very well be wintertime, Ratself doesn't know as much
with any certainty.
Of late, there's less and less they know as much at all.
Knowledge of this waning
knowing too, unfortunately, eludes Ratself, steeped in a
manufactured contentment
atop their puke stained throne of half truths and whole lies.
They shiver against the rusted metal of the meat pit just as
the monster, some
novel creature recklessly spawned from the pit's fertile,
festering loins, shivers
back on the other side. Shivering, it seems, could pose a
revolutionary mode of
wordless communication. It seems so, anyway, to that baby in
the dumpster, which
shivers and shakes harder and more violently in ecstasy of its
newfound language.

From raucous, thrashing gyration, to fervent, senseless vibration, the creature discovers a new frontier of sonic sensation, perhaps overzealously. A creature was immaculately born from the meat and just as suddenly reborn as a sound incarnate. A sound which thoroughly seeps into the pallid, crumpled up body of Ratself. The hum parasitizes Ratself. It reproduces in their vocal chords, lays eggs in their throat cavity which swells to accommodate them, then hatches, wriggling up and off their tongue. They ho and hum, raspy and off key, a senseless, drunken hum. Still, it is music, and energy, and a throbbing beating pulse of life. This disturbance rouses the other denizens of the alley. First to pounce is the hob, a tricky and conniving goblin by birth, merchant by trade, and asshole by choice. Only last night, or the last last night, Ratself had been coaxed, with little if any understanding, to pawn off those last fleeting scraps of consciousness for an unreasonably generous, this according to the alley cat, dosing of splooge. The alley cat who was then keeping company with Ratself had vigorously balked at their exchange, beside himself that the hob would even consider cutting such a generous deal on what he assured Ratself was indeed premium splooge, fresh from the fae's knob, encouraging Ratself to transact while the going was this good. In most likelihood, Ratself was fated else bound to accept the hob's terms and didn't require the sly conning, yet the hob considered himself a maestro among splooge

peddlers, an upstart and champion, and craft demands ceaseless innovation, theatrics or other such brain hacks. So last last night it was the charade with the alley cat which siphoned that meager remainder of Ratself's thoroughly fractured mental focus. Tonight, though, the hob was not feeling so crafty. A bobgoblin on the way and with it one more gobby mouth to fill, the hob scuttled restlessly from down the alley, stepping to Ratself after first stepping on Ratself to curry their attention, itself an increasingly exquisite commodity. The pooling blood, still trickling out Ratself's nose, pooled yet more. A pool as deep and sprawling as this ought to charge an admission fee. It ought to rent out pool noodles and floaties and hire lifeguards and host swim meets and maybe even erect a snack shack. While Ratself bled and hummed and clung, the hob raised his grubby little foot once more and stamped down hard on the wastrel's liver. They flinched, not wincing in pain so much as shocked into an alternate plane of unconsciousness. Get up, fool. You want to buy some splooge. They kept shivering.