Last Year at Betty and Bob's: A Novelty
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She was drifting, losing the thread of her impulse. The Purello does that. She refocused. “Monsters. Where are the monsters?” Returning to her bookcase she spots her target, nestled alongside a first edition of John Gardner’s *Grendel*. On occasion, there was method in her archival madness. Pulling out a book of Derrida interviews, she checks the index for keywords and finds a scrolling list of “monster” citings. The first entry reveals this:

Monsters cannot be announced. One cannot say: “Here are our monsters,” without immediately turning the monsters into pets.

Were Montaigne’s self-described monstrous imaginings, once out of the pen, so to speak, now domesticated pink-eyed albino bunnies of the tamest sort? Like GenTel hybrids or virtually any breed of “man’s best friend”? She’s quibbling but it’s of importance to her as she fancies herself, on good days, the anticipated arrivant. Or doth she think too lustrously of her predicament? She searches for another interview fragment, imagining an older Frenchman and an earnest academic sitting at a café in Paris or Berlin, sipping strong coffee with a clunky tape recorder placed conspicuously on a small, scarred table littered with cigarette ash.
JD: [...] But the notion of the monster is rather difficult to deal with, to get a hold on, to stabilize. A monster may be obviously a composite figure of heterogeneous organisms that are grafted onto each other. This graft, this hybridisation, this composition that puts heterogeneous bodies together may be called a monster [...] monstrosity may reveal or make one aware of what normality is.

Bette B can’t help thinking of the description of inoculation she looked into some weeks ago as she was being initiated to life as a specimen. “To graft in or implant the germs of a disease as into the bud of a plant, or into the skin of a victim.” She considers for a moment the implications of the graft itself as monstrous. Too old to be GenTel, she has not had to confront the efficacy of her chromosomal origins as many of her students have. This Frankensteinian complicity excites her fantasy. She nearly drifts off into another ethanol-driven episode of sublime supposition but instead, deftly reels in the whip of her casting line to continue reading:

JD: But a monster is not just that, it is not just this chimerical figure in some way that grafts one animal onto another, one living being onto another. A monster is always alive, let us not forget.

Yes, Yes. She’s agitated now, on her feet. Ridiculously, she craves a Camel as she prances through her apartment, disappointed in the knee-jerk reaction since she quit smoking fifteen years ago. Clues. Lots of clues! Derrida was emitting a post-mortem stream of evidence as forensically potent as a DNA sample. Philosophers, the clever ones slightly off the grid, were at heart detectives. Not so much interested in determining truths as adrenalized by the chase, attending to the unfamiliar, the unknown.

JD: Simply, it shows itself [elle se montre] — that is what the word monster means — it shows itself in something that is not yet shown and that therefore looks like a hallucination, it strikes the eye, it
frightens precisely because no anticipation had prepared one to identify this figure [...]

Such a delicious word, “hallucination.” It can be read as synonymous with “epiphany” if the conditions are favorable, when the clues converge in a PAAF! or a BOOM! or an AHA! Closing her eyes she recalls that elusive instant in the Corridor when *Rattus norvegicus* became *Cavia porcellus* in the grip of her own wooly, mitten hands. She aborts the thought as the violent memory intensifies. Reading further:

JD: [...] as soon as one perceives a monster in a monster, one begins to domesticate it ...

Her skeletal frame is vibrating like a tuning fork, pulsing a frequency even her evolving ears cannot transduce.

JD: [...] the future is necessarily monstrous: the figure of the future, that is, that which can only be surprising, that for which we are not prepared, you see, is heralded by species of monsters.

Bette B rereads the entire interview, her heart pounding against the brittle rib cage that protects this delicate pump from the rowdy outside. Anxious, thrilled, terrified. Why she thinks of the Dylan line “The pumps don’t
work coz the vandals took the handles” as she attempts to steady her pulse is beyond even her copious gift of bizarre association. Pulse. Heart. Pump. She nervously plunges the Purello bottle, blind to the obvious connotation. Sucking from her trembling digits while reading, she wonders what to do with this information? Something once abstract is now concrete. And to make matters worse, it’s personal.

Lost in quixotic meanderings, she imagines herself walking a domesticated rat on a long leash along the dirt footpaths of Peoples Park and takes weird comfort in the normalcy of her projection, wondering if any of her Twitter followers might dream of taking her own Rat-tatted, rat-addled nee rattled self on a chaperoned walk through public space one day? ShazDada perhaps?