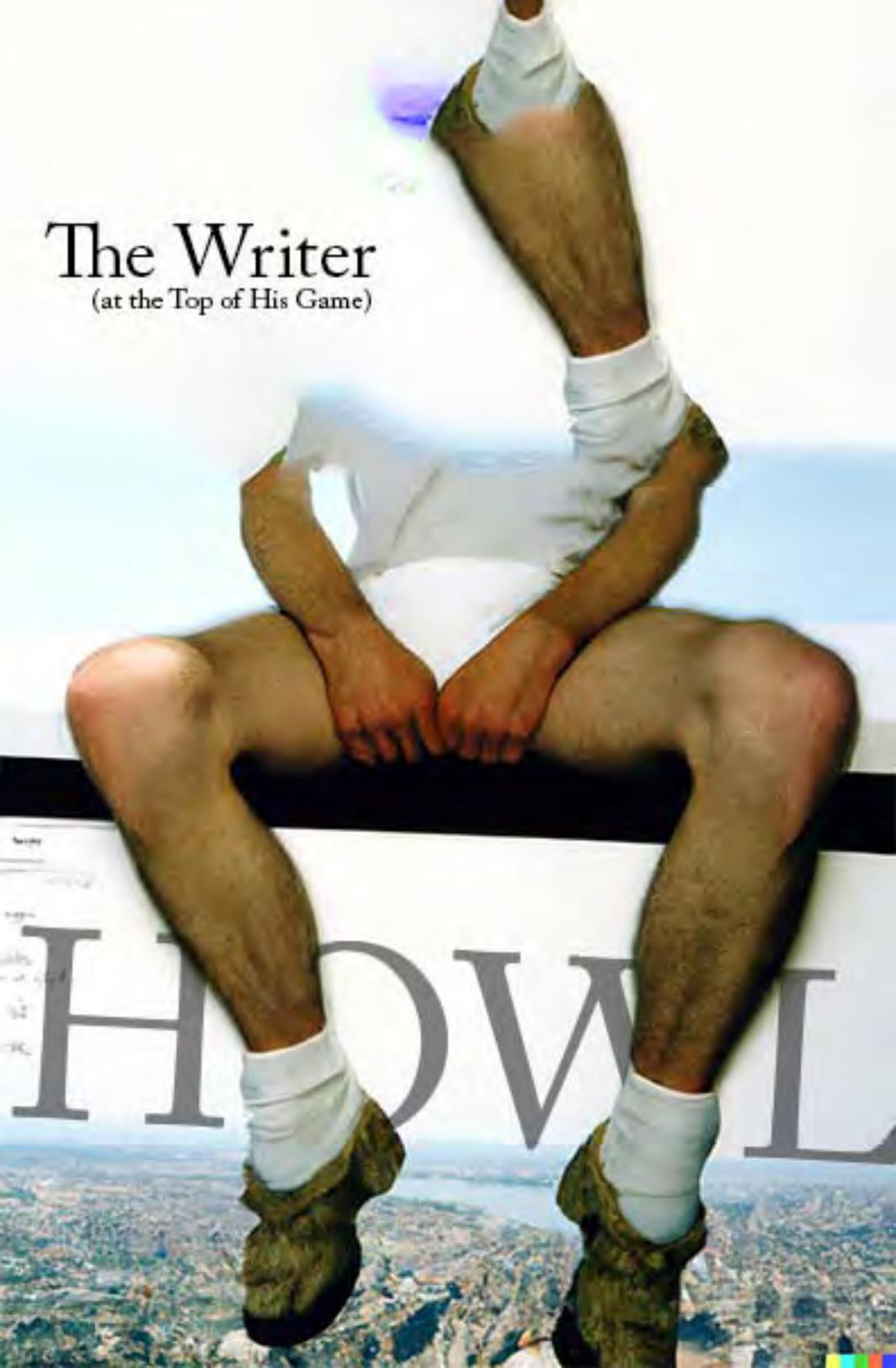


The Writer

(at the Top of His Game)



The Writer

(at the Top of His Game)

a book

by

VERNON HOWL

Cytophylaxis sucked in the last of the gas spurting out from the end of the machine his father had willed him. Sister Sixteen had gotten the Cadillac and he this strange device and lifetime supply of drugs, he joked to his wife Marissa, who wasn't listening, who was having a stroke of her own from indulging on the pipe's fumes first.

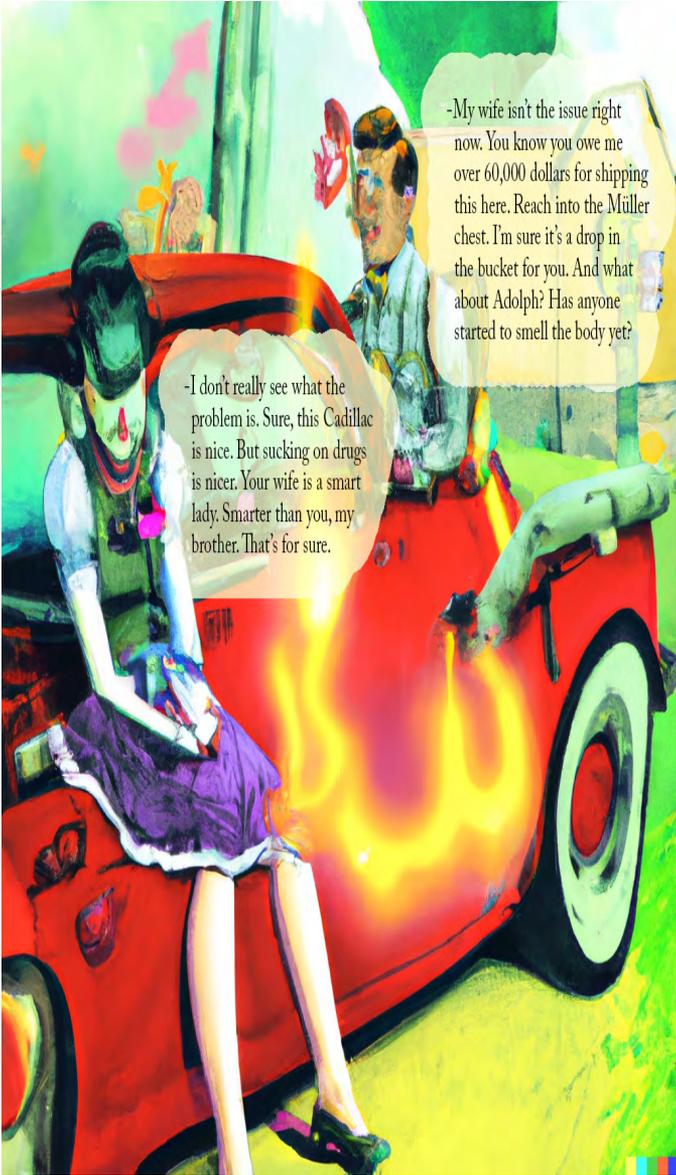
Cytophylaxis was a writer of some renown, having just completed a magnum opus of autofiction based on his little sister, Sixteen Smith-Müller, heir to the great Müller fortune after secretly murdering her husband with an ax. The book, *Duo Praxis*, was also a bestseller. He was certainly at "the top of his game."

Cytophylaxis visited his younger sibling at her country home in Germany as she toiled away on the great and famous car, which she still owed him a small fortune for shipping the automobile overseas.



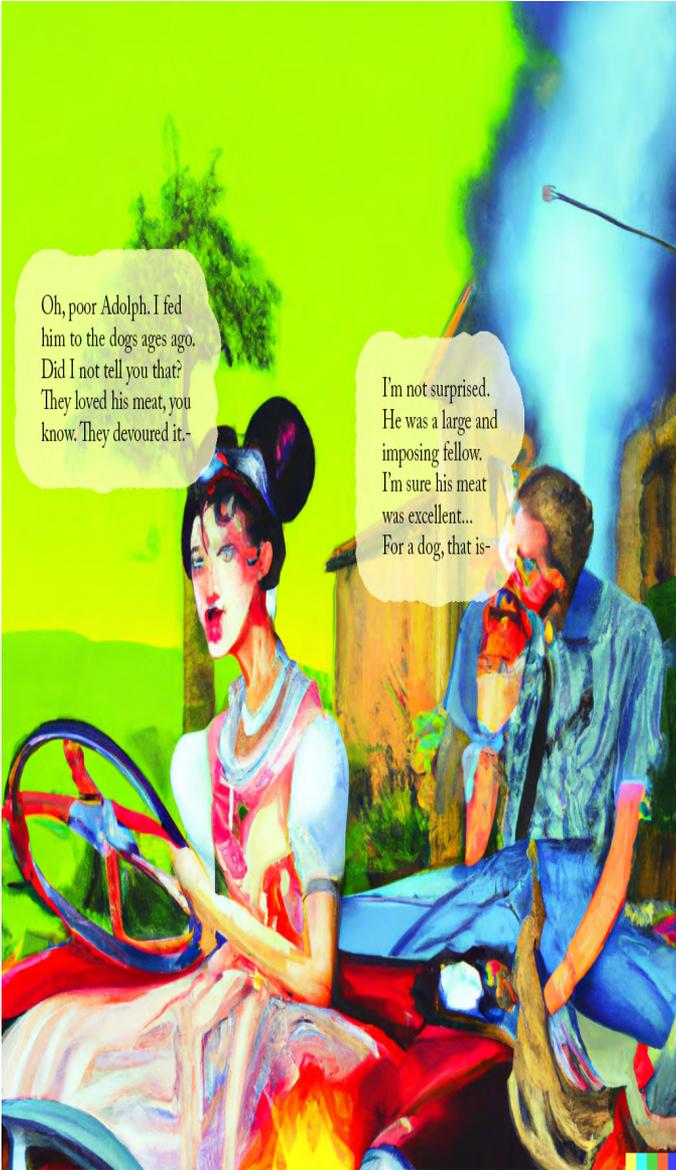
-Well you got the machine, you shouldn't be so angry at me

-Ha! a lot of good that's done me. My wife is hooked on it though, so that is nice.



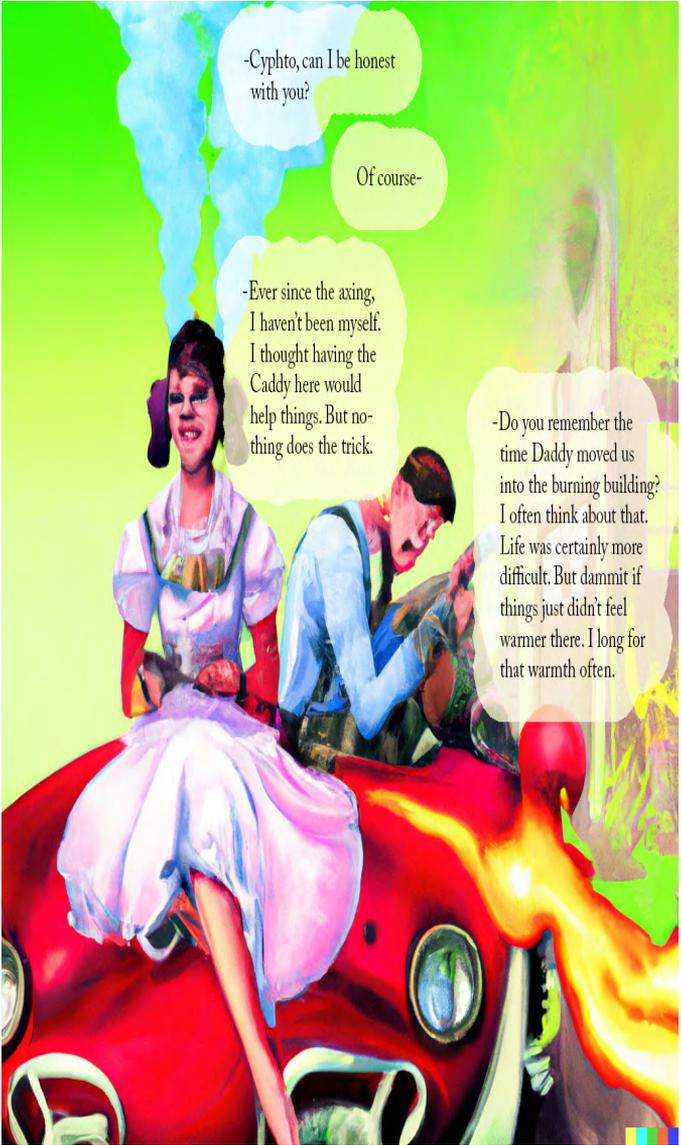
-I don't really see what the problem is. Sure, this Cadillac is nice. But sucking on drugs is nicer. Your wife is a smart lady. Smarter than you, my brother. That's for sure.

-My wife isn't the issue right now. You know you owe me over 60,000 dollars for shipping this here. Reach into the Müller chest. I'm sure it's a drop in the bucket for you. And what about Adolph? Has anyone started to smell the body yet?



Oh, poor Adolph. I fed him to the dogs ages ago. Did I not tell you that? They loved his meat, you know. They devoured it-

I'm not surprised. He was a large and imposing fellow. I'm sure his meat was excellent... For a dog, that is-



-Cyphto, can I be honest with you?

Of course-

-Ever since the axing, I haven't been myself. I thought having the Caddy here would help things. But nothing does the trick.

-Do you remember the time Daddy moved us into the burning building? I often think about that. Life was certainly more difficult. But dammit if things just didn't feel warmer there. I long for that warmth often.

Cytophylaxis returned to his wife Marissa rejuvenated, ready to give up sucking on the fumes from his father's machine. But she had other ideas.

In the time he was away, she'd sealed off the distribution pipe and thrown out all of the fuel. She had reengineered the machine to be something else. It wasn't quite a sex device but a device that made sex sexless and she said, not only that, but the machine could give birth to tiny machines if those who controlled it worked together correctly.

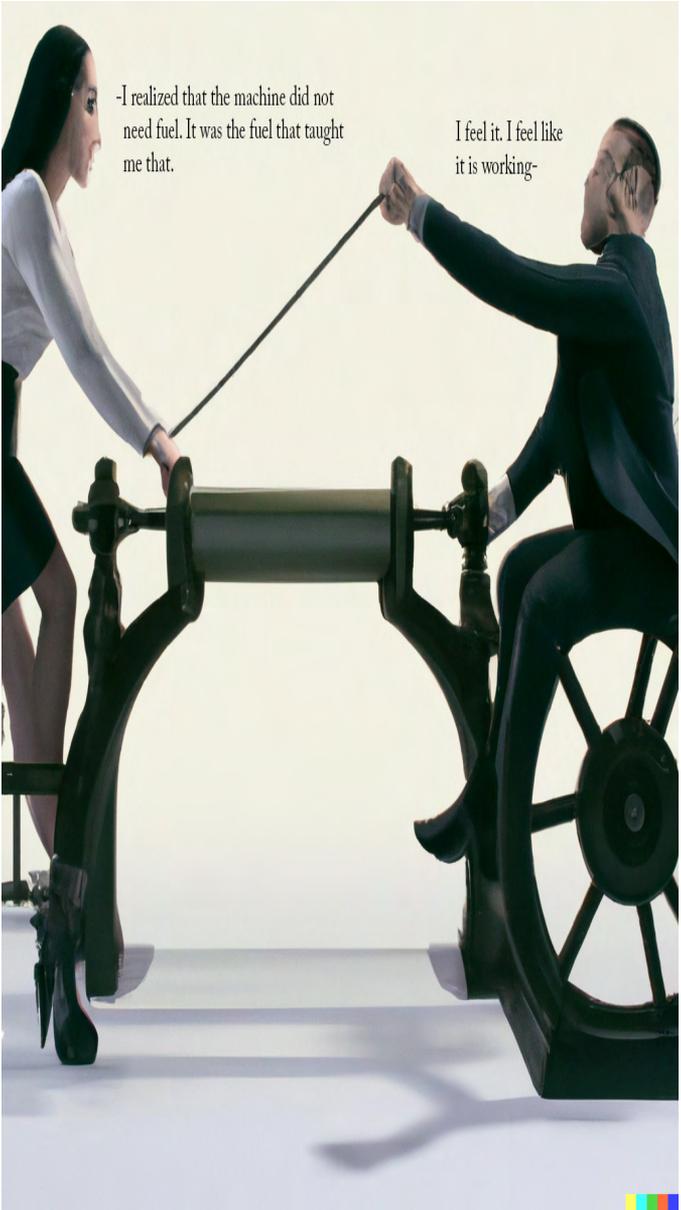
Cytophylaxis didn't quite understand. And, worse, he didn't know if this was something he was going to be able to write about. He was stunned to see what his wife had done in person, but he felt compelled to touch the new machine.



-This is not real. Is it?

This is very real, and you are doing everything the right way. Keep going-





-I realized that the machine did not
need fuel. It was the fuel that taught
me that.

I feel it. I feel like
it is working-



-I am so proud of you. It won't be long now.

I'm scared of what we might create but I am going to keep going. Something is telling me that I have to keep going. -





-What this produces might be an abomination but it also might be our future. I am ready for anything.

Yes. YES! Yes.-

What happened next, startled both of them. A dog with red eyes emerged from the machine. It made its way to a beach and multiplied. It started to dig up ancient bowls.

Cytophyllaxis and Marissa felt compelled to make quinoa salad and fed each dog from the bowls. They all instantly died.



They had to start from scratch. And so they returned to the machine.



-This feels all wrong now.

I know it does-





-Almost like we knew one
one another before—

But were divided by two? -





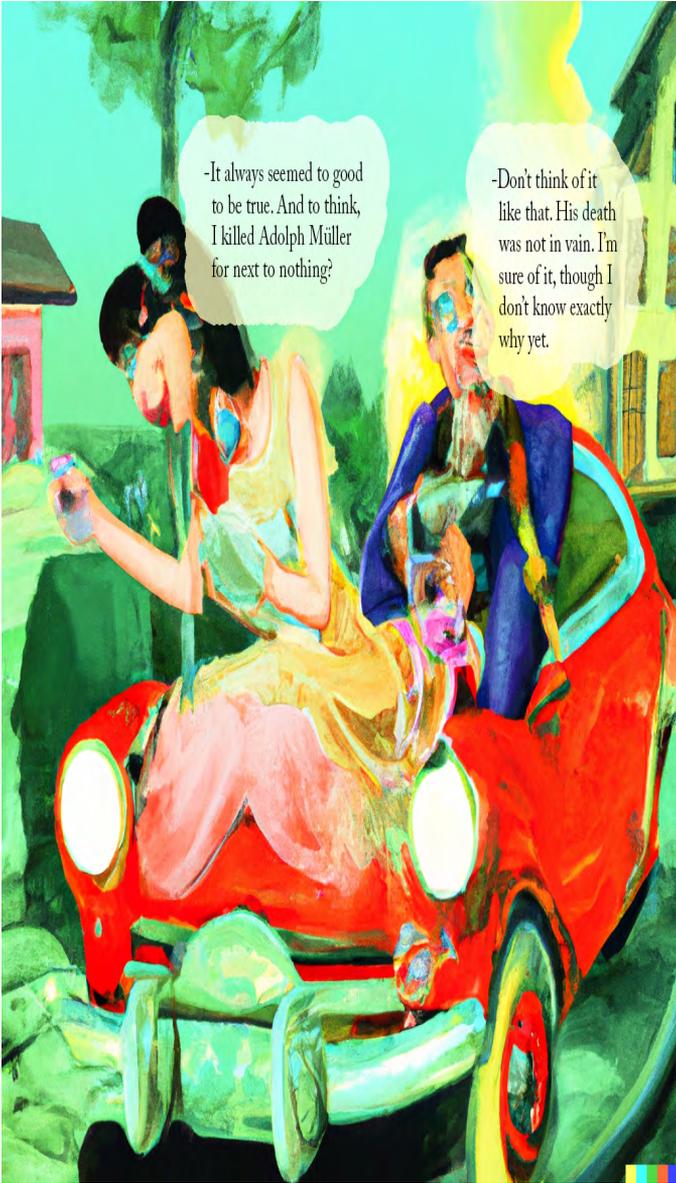
-I'm not your wife, Cytophylaxis

No, no you're not... -



Cytophylaxis and Sixteen were immediately back in Germany. They struggled to come to terms with the revelation and they worried what duplicity had been set in action and when and by whom? Was it their father all along?

The red Cadillac glistened in the German sunset as they contemplated their next move.



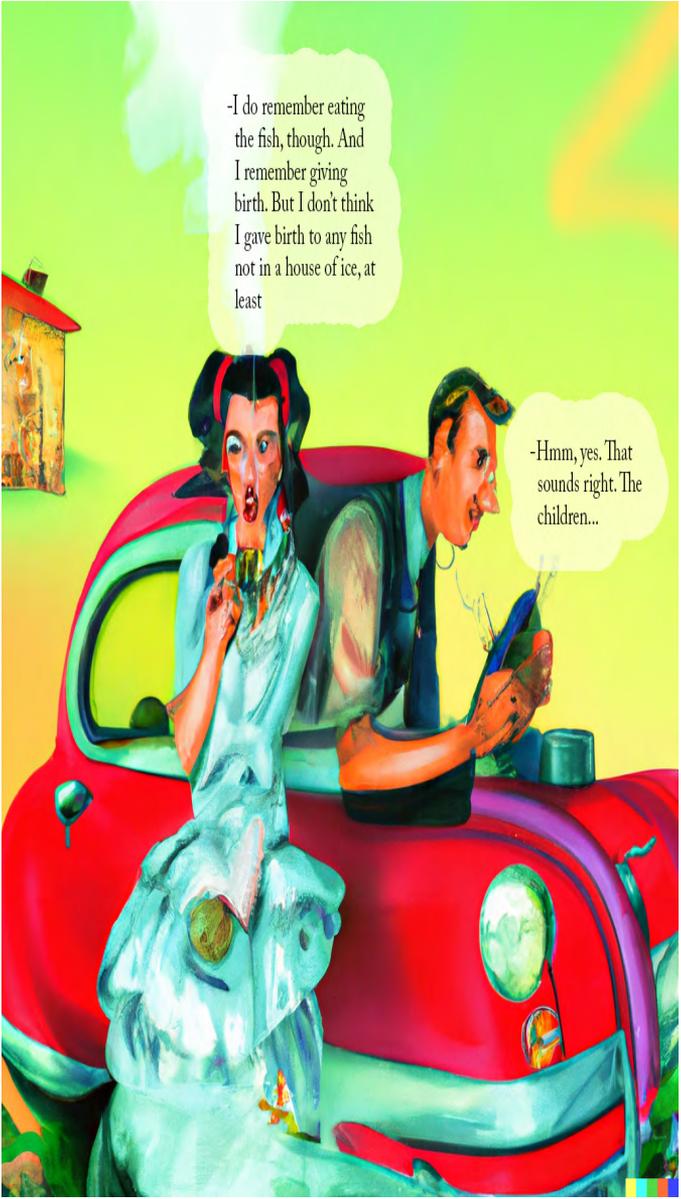
-It always seemed to good to be true. And to think, I killed Adolph Müller for next to nothing?

-Don't think of it like that. His death was not in vain. I'm sure of it, though I don't know exactly why yet.



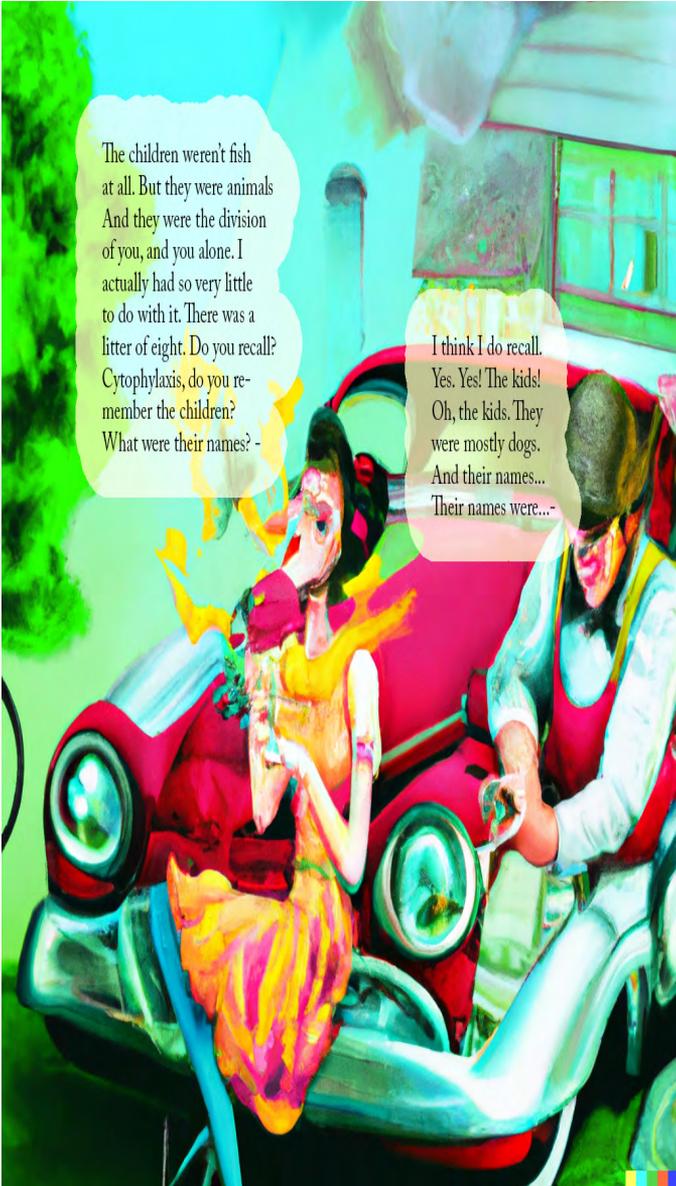
-Do you remember that time when we were kids and the burning home turned into a block of ice and all our pets turned into fish?

-No, not really. I think I was far too young.



-I do remember eating the fish, though. And I remember giving birth. But I don't think I gave birth to any fish not in a house of ice, at least

-Hmm, yes. That sounds right. The children...



The children weren't fish
at all. But they were animals
And they were the division
of you, and you alone. I
actually had so very little
to do with it. There was a
litter of eight. Do you recall?
Cytophylaxis, do you re-
member the children?
What were their names? -

I think I do recall.
Yes. Yes! The kids!
Oh, the kids. They
were mostly dogs.
And their names...
Their names were...-









Cytophylaxis and Sixteen were flooded with emotions as the memory of their eight children rushed back. The four sets of twins had actually been harnessed from Cytophylaxis's mouth and teeth via father's machine.



The true purpose of the machine was singular and the dogs on the beach had been Adolph Müller's and it wasn't the quinoa salad that had killed him but the very meat of the man. But they needed to die so the Smith kids could live.

A quadrant of helicopters, each piloted by two of the children filled the sky above them: Oneg & Opos, Aneg & Apos, Bneg & Bpos, Abneg & Abpos.



IT WOULD NOT BE RIGHT TO
CRASH LAND ON THEIR HEADS .



NOT ONLY WOULD FATHER HAVE
NOTHING TO WRITE ABOUT BUT
HE WOULD BE DEAD .



PERHAPS WE COULD TRY TO
MAKE PEACE AND FIX THE
CADILLAC FOR THEM .



YES , RADIO TO APOS .
SHE'S A MASTER MECHANIC .



“NO, APOS. NO.”

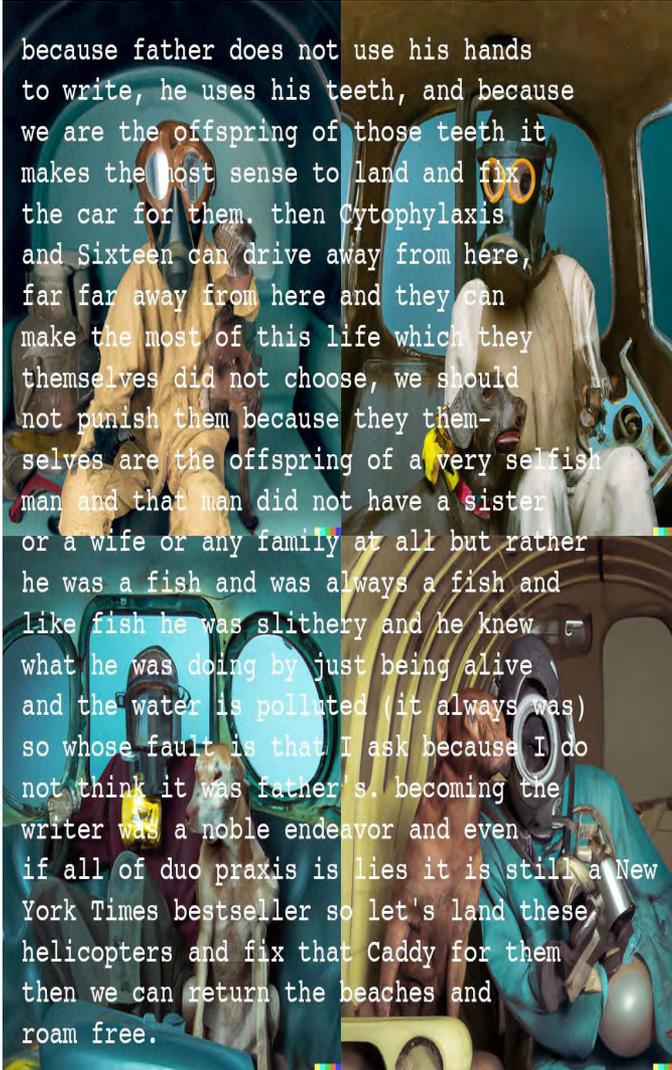
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THEY
DESERVE A SECOND CHANCE
BUT THEY DO.

IF ONLY FOR THE BOOKS
FATHER WILL WRITE. HE IS A
WRITER AND THEY SAY HE'S
AT THE TOP OF HIS GAME.

WHO ARE "THEY."

I'M REALLY NOT SURE.

Via the helicopter radio system, the dog children consulted Abneg & Abpos, the wisest of the twin sets.



And so that's what they did.

Cytophylaxis and Sixteen embarked on a journey in the fixed Cadillac and immediately were in a horrible car wreck.

They were split into five parts each: an even ten together.

But together they taught their odd pieces how to write as one. And, in time, they were producing works at an amazing speed.

By the end of it, every spot on the *New York Times* bestseller list was occupied by a Smith.

And the dogs on the beach, who never learned to read or write, were happy just the same.

They took off their gas masks and breathed in the very same drug Cytophylaxis and Sixteen's father had provided for the machine:

