

The Tale of John Hooper

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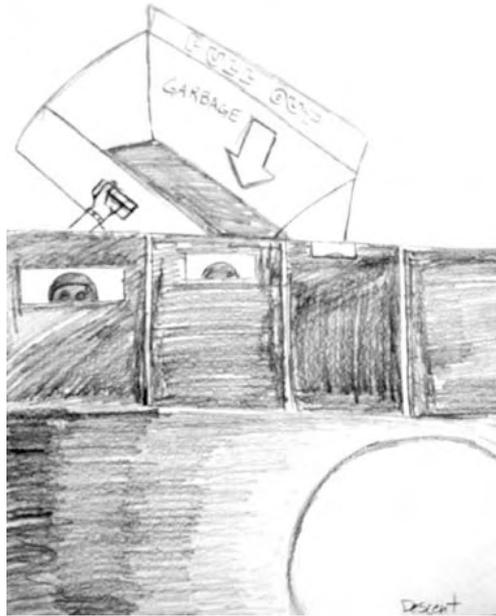
Assignment 1

No one is sure who John Hooper's parents were, and no one is entirely sure about the unique circumstances that gave rise to his life. What is known about John Hooper, however, is that at about four years of age, John was separated from his parents, and lost down a garbage chute in a jean factory.

Now, this situation could easily have been remedied, but Mr. Hooper's parents never contacted the authorities about losing John, and, even today, no one has come forward as John's family. Even more so, John's situation was unique because he was lost to one of the only fully automated jean factories on the planet, and as such, not a single worker ever entered the room he was in. Thus, John Hooper spent over thirty years isolated from the outside world, living in the bowels of a jean factory.

Mr. Hooper, of course, can only speak very rudimentary English, so I have taken the liberty of clarifying the history he laid down about himself. As John has no real knack for details, John's story is a rather bland and vague tale. As to make the material more understandable and vivid, I have added in a few details gleaned from my own investigation into this matter. One last note: John Hooper is assuredly not the name of the boy in this tale, but rather what Mr. Hooper believes his name to be. A thorough search has been contacted to find Mr. Hooper's family, but after tracking down all "John Hoopers" born around 2012, nothing was found which connected those families with this John Hooper. The incident at the jean factory left John and orphan, both from his family, and from the world.

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John found himself tumbling down a long black tunnel, each twist in the tunnel slamming his body, scraping his elbows, rubbing the skin from his knees. John's mind reeled in terror; he couldn't understand how he had gotten into this situation, nor could he foresee the life that awaited him at the bottom of the garbage chute. After what seemed like an eternity to John, he landed in a garbage heap consisting of peeled banana skins, apple cores, half eaten sandwiches, paper, magazines, charts, files, cookies, water bottles, spent pens and pencils, and the like.

John lay unconscious in that pile of garbage, the shock and fear created by the fall having been too much for his young mind. When John awoke, he was stunned and scared. He had been lost before, but in those cases he had had the ability to find his way to a security desk. There a security guard could help him find his way back to his parents. As he scanned the room, it appeared to him as though there was no way out. It was then that John began to cry.



Eventually John came to his senses, picked himself up from the garbage heap, let himself onto the floor, and began to survey his surroundings. At his age, John had no idea what he was seeing, but he was able to find that there was no clear way out of the room he was in, nor was there anyone else in the room. The room was lit by long lasting light bulbs that did not require changing for many years. Conveyor belts crisscrossed the room; jeans would fall through an opening in the ceiling, pass along the belt, and be picked up by a mechanical hand, be pulled through a slot in the ceiling too small for John to fit through, and disappear from sight.

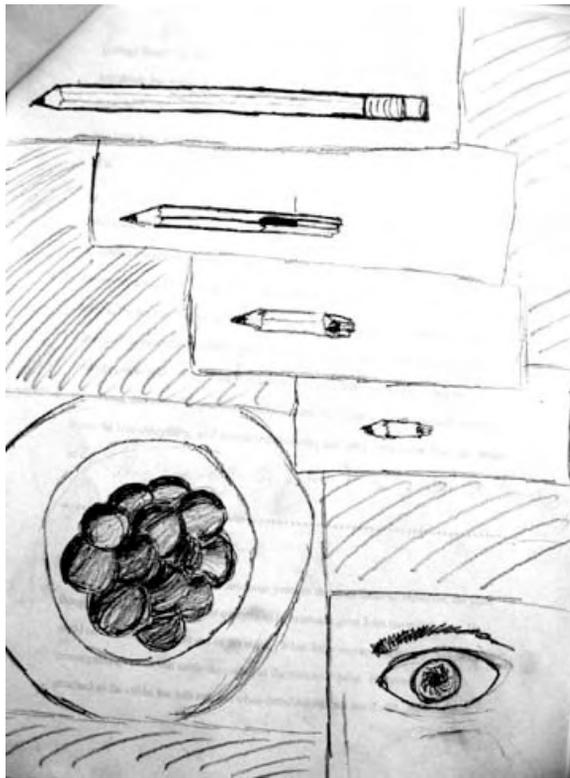
Days would come and go for John, many of which he spent crying. John felt confused, and was desperate for rescue. He subsisted upon whatever came down the garbage chute: old, half eaten food and drink. John lived reasonably well on this refuse that the white collar workers threw down the chute, and every night the heap of garbage would be dropped down through a set of trap doors set into the floor. John made sure he never was on top of the garbage heap as this was happening.

Ultimately, John gained the mental faculties to try and appreciate his situation, and began to make some observations. Around the age of six, John came to notice the difference between the types of trash that came down the garbage chute. He found some

types of garbage were hard, like pens, others were soft, like bananas, and still, others flowed, like water. What's more, when John sucked air from a bottle with his mouth, he noticed the bottle crunched in upon itself. John knew that bottles did not crush in upon themselves when filled with water, so air itself must be some sort of matter. Thereby, John came to believe everything came in one of three forms: solids, liquids, and gases.

John was around ten years of when he found himself snapping a pencil in halves. First, he would snap the pencil itself in half, then he would snap that half in half, and continue to snap that half in half, and so on. He realized that each time he snapped the pencil in half, it was becoming smaller, but was still a pencil. Eventually, John couldn't break the pencil in half any more; it had become too small. What would happen, he wondered, if he kept breaking the pencil in half? He reasoned that, eventually, he would come to the smallest possible piece of pencil there was. He would eventually reach the basic thing that made up a pencil. John reasoned that he could do the same to anything else, solid, liquid, or gas, and eventually get to their basic pieces too. John decided to call these pieces, by random chance, "atoms."

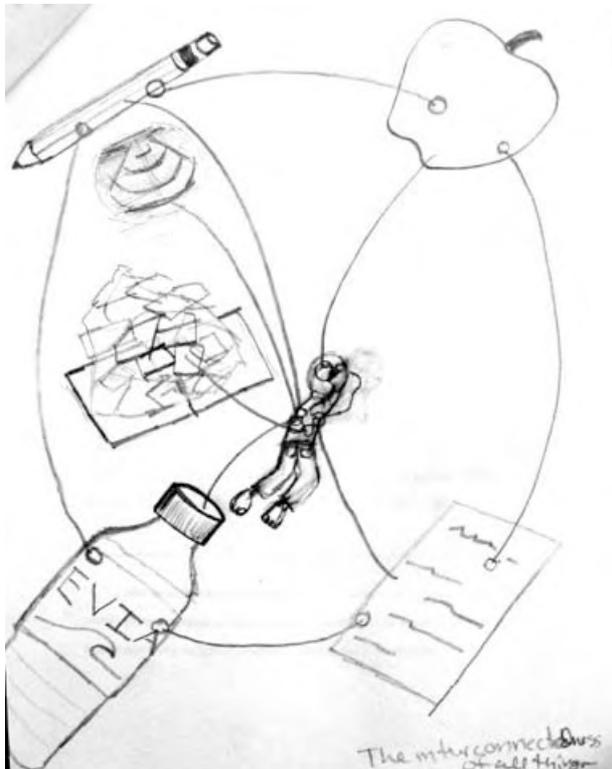
One day, a banana fell down the garbage chute, and John began to eat it, as he had eaten many before. However, John realized, as he consumed the banana with all the table manners he had never learned, that small pieces of the banana were sticking to hands. John thought back to atoms, and realized that the pencil hadn't been sticky at all, yet he knew the pencil had held together just fine as he continued to snap it in half. John considered at this point, that perhaps the stickiness of an object itself had no connection to whether or not it was a solid, liquid, or gas. Obviously, he had experienced sticky liquids, like sugary coffee, yet that he been a liquid. John reasoned that it must be the stickiness between atoms, not the stickiness of an object itself, that decided whether an object was solid, liquid, or gas.



Around thirteen years of age, John realized that all the garbage he had was of varying colors, textures, shapes, and sizes, however, when he stepped far enough back from his garbage heap, they all seemed to melt into one freckled color, and, even though it was made of many pieces, the garbage heap still had a definite shape and consistency. This revelation struck John with enormous force. What if everything acted like that garbage heap? In other words, what if it wasn't just one type of atom that made up any one thing, but rather, a mixture of atoms of different types that made up everything? John dug within the heap and pulled out a pencil. That would explain why some things had both hard and soft pieces, like a pencil and its eraser, or an apple and the liquid inside of it.

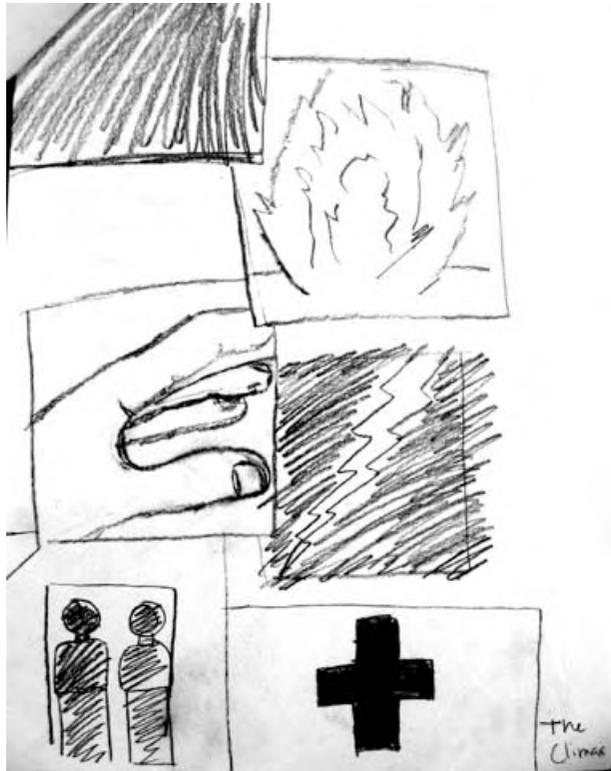
John realized that if everything was made up of the same types of atoms, they would all be fundamentally connected. A warm feeling crept into John's heart; he couldn't remember his old life, but he knew that he felt different then than he did now. That feeling, the feeling that he used to have was spilling into him. The idea that he was connected to everything lifted a weight off John's heart; the loneliness he had felt for years began to melt away. John knew at that moment that he was connected to everything, and everything was connected to him. He wasn't alone, he would never be

alone, he was everything, and everything was him, and John knelt to the floor, and began to cry.



John spent almost twenty-one more years in that jean factory. However, the mere thought that he was connected to everything in existence gave John the will to live. He could never put that thought out of his mind. When John was around twenty-two, he investigated an electrical cable connected to the conveyor belts. He noted that when attached to the cable, the belt ran, but when detached the belt stood still. John decided that some sort of matter must be running through the cable and into the belt, and, in keeping with his notion that all things were connected, that the matter which caused the belt to run was also the same matter that caused him to run. He called this new form of matter, "soul." His mind content, John was happy to spend the rest of his time in the factory contemplating the nature of soul, and where it came from. That is, until the night he was set free.

One night, John was awoken by a loud bang. The belts with the jeans on them had caught on fire; something John had immense trouble describing. It was hot and moved like water, yet it was hot and red, unlike any water he had ever seen. When he touched it, it hurt his hand so badly that he cowered in the corner, far from the blaze. A blaring sound came at this point, and John was wet from the ceiling as a sprinkler system came on, dousing him, and putting out that strange fire. John was terrified, he had never once been burned before, and the pain was new and excruciating. Suddenly, a huge noise came from the far wall, and a whole appeared there. Three firemen entered, and the shock of this so upset John that he vomited upon himself and passed out.



John awoke in a hospital, totally confused, and in a state of near catatonia. His world had been smashed to bits in a matter of minutes, and he could not adjust to this strange new world; its lights, its sights, its sounds, and its inhabitants.

It was not long after he was released from the hospital that I was appointed John's personal caretaker and psychologist. I have been able to make some headway into his condition. It's extremely unlikely that John will ever be able to commune amongst

others. However, hopefully one day, John will be able to live on his own, unafraid of things like cars, animals of all types, and, especially, people.

On a more personal note, I cannot help but to note how brilliant John really is. Besides the powerful deductive reasoning John used to puzzle together the existence of atoms, or the fact that electrical effects do allow the body to move, or that atomic interactions allow for the qualities a given substance has, John has exhibited the ability to quickly adapt to new customs. He is fully capable of using silverware, and has even adapted to using pen and writing screen to draw parts of his story. I cannot help but wonder about what John would have been like if given a real chance at life, what his mind could have been capable of. Maybe one day John will be able to rejoin the world, I doubt it though. On the day John was lost to the world, the world lost John.



This story was loosely based on

Ibn Tufayl. *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān: A Philosophical Tale*. Translated by Lenn Evan Goodman. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972.