

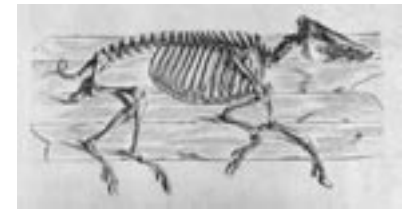
Outrageous Fortune



*With devotion's visage and
pious action we do sugar o'er
the devil himself.*

Gunmen blindfolded them and marched them down the hall, then made the three men kneel on a concrete floor. The next thing Mr. Hassan heard was a gunshot, very close to his right ear, and a body slumped to the floor beside him. Another gunshot brought another slump, and Mr. Hassan believed he was next. But soon Mr. Hassan's captors lifted him to his feet and escorted him back to the small room he had been housed in for over a month. The last remaining man in the room was then blindfolded and taken back down the hallway. Mr. Hassan then heard a third and final gunshot, and assumed his life had been spared because his kidnappers had confused him with the other prisoner. There was a toilet in the floor, and food delivered twice daily.

“Giles, the new member from Virginia, sat next to me. I saw a speech of his in the papers, which read very well, and they say he delivers himself handsomely. I was, therefore, very attentive to him. But the frothy manners of Virginia were ever uppermost. Canvas-back ducks, ham and chickens, old Madeira, the glories of the Ancient Dominion, all fine, were his constant themes. Boasted of personal prowess; more manual exercise than any man in New England; fast but fine living in his country, wine or sherry bounce from twelve o'clock to night every day. He seemed to practice on this principle, too, as often as the bottle passed him. He is but a young man, and seems as if he always would be so.”



Sus scrofa (old-world swine)

That first night we went out without the wheelchair, me and my fiancée Lauraleigh met a few of my old high school buddies at Buffalo Bill's. I didn't drink, but everyone else did, and it was pretty fun. Me and Lauraleigh danced a little to “1999,” and I was surprised I could. The prosthesis hurt some, but they told me that was normal. I was thinking toward the end of that song—when I was holding Lauraleigh and leaning on her a little—it reminded me when I got wheeled down the ramp out of the C-141 in Landstuhl, and I thought, “I'm going to make it; I'll just be like this.” This was another one of those times, when that song ended and another one came on (I can't remember what it was). I had to go sit back down at the bar, but I was thinking, “It isn't going to be so bad. I'm not on wheels.” But I knew something was wrong. When we got home, I took the leg off and my stump was full of puss and blistered, blood was running down the leg and soaking my pants all the way to the sock. I hadn't even noticed. I had to go back to Walter Reed in a wheelchair, more surgeries, and I'm still not on my feet and don't know if I ever will be.



*Something is rotten in the
state of Denmark.*



Cercopithecus macacas
(old-world monkey)

“I don’t know that you will know what it sounds like to hear a man’s head being cut off with a butcher’s knife until you hear it with your own ears,” Mr. Hassan said. “The sound I would say is worse than the sight. Almost like a shovel being thrust into a pile of gravel.”



slings & arrows

It’s good to have him back, and kind of fun to go out like we did that night, but it’s not the same.

An officer called the house and said the blast tore through his right foot and calf and blew a golf-ball-sized hole into his shoulder. So they were going to amputate at the knee. I asked to talk to the surgeon, but it wasn’t possible. I just wanted to ask if they could try to match up the lines in his tattoo when they sewed up his shoulder, but in the end, it’s just a mess of ink like the rest of him. I think that tattoo was really special because he got it for a buddy who died during their first tour.

People say they wouldn’t blame me if I left, but I’m not sure. He needs me. But I’m not happy. I haven’t been since before he left the first time.



*O, my offense is rank,
it smells to heaven.*

“Avarice and ambition are the motives, while the cry of patriotism and the interest of the people are used as the ways and means of advancing their private ends. This peculiar malady is not peculiar to Pennsylvania. It is the disease of all popular governments. Nor does the fault seem to be in Nature. She certainly at all times produces stores of candid and ingenious characters; but these, generally modest and unassuming, are passed by in the ferment of popular elections, attended at the Senate as usual.”

Mr. Hassan said his kidnapppers appeared to be part of an antigovernment death squad, linked to the insurgency and using funds raised through kidnapping to undermine the government’s fledgling police force and military. Mr. Hassan had been working as a security guard for a private corporation recently relocated to Baghdad from an undisclosed international location.

He has sold much of his furniture to repay the ransom money which secured his return.



To die, to sleep—



*The dram of evil doth all the
noble substance often dout to his
own scandal.*

“The human heart really is a strange machine. I certainly have severely felt the inconvenience of being away from home these two years past, and my judgment plainly tells me that I am wrong in having submitted to it. Further, I can not help knowing that my re-election, with no friends and many enemies, is impossible; and yet, under all these circumstances, the man who expresses favorable wishes is by far the most acceptable to me. But upon the whole this is right. Good ought to beget gratitude, but oh!”



Some material adapted from: Journal of William Maclay (first United States Senator from Pennsylvania, 1789-1791), Library of Congress “American Memory” holdings; and *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* by William Shakespeare.