

Fulfilled

Anton and I grew up in a small periwinkle house with the highest house number in America. It was official. In the record books. Men with hats and cameras would come periodically to take our photograph in front of it and ask us what it was like living there, having to address letters and so forth. My father was a prissy man with lacquered fingernails. My mother smiled too much. All was well. In the photographs we would hold each other, the numbers showing just over Anton's small shoulder; big, round, heavy numbers that went on and on. Copies of the magazines and newspapers with our pictures in them would arrive from around the world. Anton took this to mean that he was an artist. He wore a cloak at 13 --- nobody stopped him. He poured Fresca onto bowls of cereal. He peed on the garden and sometimes in the sink. He was special. My parents allowed Anton these observances, but our neighborhood would not. Anton was defecated on and beaten. His cloak was torn to strips; he was made to eat rocks. His long ears were pulled. Local boys did not appreciate the arts. Anton passed the rocks painfully and went on believing. He never did paint. Nor sculpt. Anton never composed a symphony or a pop song or an opera; never wrote, danced, or sang. He moved to New York City. Artists flocked to his side. Their publications mentioned him in passing. Anton's plans and statements were never to be missed. His dream was to walk two llamas the length of the Appalachian Trail. He would subsist on Skittles and orange juice for a year. Anton once organized a panel discussion called Artists kNeeling On Nukes (ANON). The press turned out and many artists. Anton was the panel: He took the stage announcing that he would detonate small nuclear devices inside of his hands and ankles, then commenced cracking various joints and knuckles into the microphone. After a few minutes Anton wrapped his dark Merlot cloak around himself and strode off to wild applause. He was an artist to the death: One autumn morning they found him splayed across an abandoned field outside a housing project in the Bronx, face down. "He jumped to live!" the note said, not to die. They located his nails sparkling in the sun among the many bits of glass and metal, each one containing a single digit, but still not containing them all.

