“The Lives of Inventors”

When Leonardo is 11 and still sober, he brings home a dead wren to disconnect. His parents hope he is a genius and not just another morbid little boy dressed funny: balloony pants, purple shoes, poofy hat. They hope his brain isn't the Devil's cricket. We shouldn't laugh. Back then backwards handwriting was a scary thing. People died from infection of the finger. You couldn't just go someplace warmer in a helicopter. No wonder Leonardo's not even sure they are his parents, he thinks he dropped from a flap in the cosmos. He thinks if he could pull a man apart and reassemble him, the man could fly. Most of what we know about Leonardo's brain is conjecture because when the Egyptians pickled him, all the other organs were carefully packed in nitron and surrounded by mummified cats but the brain was tweezered out and discarded. In some cultures, eating the brains of your ancestors is the polite thing to do. Once in a drive-in, I ate approximately one ninth of a brain sandwich which tasted like the meat of sad and horrifying dreams, the kind you'd have if you were completely wrapped in bandages or dropped from a flap in the cosmos. My girlfriend then could play the piano without any training at all. So for awhile the song passing through our heads seemed passing through everyone's head then only ours then only mine then it wasn't a song, it was a mechanism, part tank, part bellows, and I got out of there quick.

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