Who Among Us?

At some point, way back, there must have been but one left: just one Neanderthal. Those cousins of ours—though not kissing cousins, what with the embarrassingly rotten teeth and those hurt dog’s eyes cowering beneath ramparts of brow—just one.

And perhaps one of our boys came upon this last limb of that regrettable branch of the family tree fresh in aloneness, perhaps holed up in a close cave, even, strewing her mate’s corpse with rank wildflowers. Her full, round belly balanced atop squatting haunches, and she keening as though with a mouth full of marbles, voice deep as a man’s.

Who among us would condemn that early homo sapiens for rolling a large boulder against the cave’s mouth, stopping the hole and her demented crooning? Who would deny the rightness of pruning the moribund branch so this tree of ours could grow?

And so Mr. Sapiens, concerned to prevent unnecessary suffering, did: seated that rock tight as an eye in its socket, stoppering the faint whinings of his proto-conscience deep within his uniquely large brain-chamber.
“Who among us hasn’t been forced to kill past and alternate selves?” Mr. Sapiens mused as he dusted his elegant hands, straightened his blazer, and went off hoping to make the 5:30 train for the east end. “Surely one for the history books,” he went whistling tunelessly, “One for wifey over her special meatloaf and mashed.”