



Scratching Face

in 10

SCRATCHING FACE

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Argotist Ebooks

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SCRATCHING FACE

1

Light so thick no animal sleeps. We stumble through the glare trying to read the white shapes. Roots grow up from the medicine ground so black they are the only thing that penetrates. They are fresh signs of a writhing language, black salvation in a shining rage.

2

Tangled barbed wire in the back of my brain runs through my dreams to reveal the secrets of the saints. He who walked barefoot through the icy mountain pass. She who was pierced though her heart preserved in glass. They were devoured one and all by an all consuming Lord. I wonder why he needed them and why he still wants more.

3

Meticulous adjustments to the biology of any individual species become quite difficult at the distance of only a few light years. Stellar winds and magnetic storms on nearby stars can distort a signal to such an extent that it has no effect on the species, or worse, creates unintended mutations. The only solution is to make the adjustments at the planet's surface and run the risk of exposing the whole operation.

4

13 lawyers at the end of a rope. 13 musicians playing a rag. 13 dancers circle the fire while dead meat burns and smoke writhes into maps. The stars of heaven all have fates no one can see or forecast or blame. The hounds of hell are just dogs in a race toward the edge of a cliff hidden in rain.

5

The frustrations of the emerald tablet. Hermes is drunk and riding Dionysus piggyback. I say, Look here boys, we got to get the muses back on track. But the maenads ran me over in a box car and devoured what was left. Maybe its best to leave the gods to it than try to do the job yourself.

6

Sufficient to Charlemagne: The trap door in Normandy is buried like Jericho. Three old men in homemade chairs pass the pipe and count ants building nests around their crooked feet. This is history – the coils of memory when the serpent is spent.

7

Smith is a covert machine. An eraser of humans forgotten in a name surrendered to hammer and fire. The great oaks shudder, but remain where they are born. Endless generations of the rats they nest bark, feed and disappear one into the next. But in that static roar his tenacity is legend. The work of his hands and days frame the cities and leather our ape becomes in the welcoming ground – a ringing pillage of caves.

8

They clothed the buzzcut 5-year old in grandfather's wool suit and drug him screaming to church. They were proud of the heirloom. He was the image of humiliation in knee length britches brought before the Lord and the scorn of his fellows. The scowl on his face in the ancient photograph tells the story of the loathing a child can muster on a hot summer morning and how devils are born in love's failed calculations.

9

Many years of trial and error are required. If your life is not at risk failure is inevitable. But once the tincture is properly distilled it can annihilate the world, imagination and memory. It is the only work that matters until it is accomplished. After that everything is impossible. You were born with the burden of this knowledge. It is your birthright. Death is hidden in sleep and you will never sleep again.

10

A wing of broken notes that seed the unmarked graves of the disappeared flutters across the surface of the sun. What the desert has forgotten before the floods return. What the monuments erase in the species by their resurrection. These and the others that flow in a graceful heat assume us in our homes as if we were their bodies nesting.

11

The fireflies have returned! After a decade so sparse in number that one felt lucky to see a few at twilight. But last night they were abundant, rising from the grass, swarming around me asking a question in a language I could not understand, though I was delighted to be interrogated. Later, the moon rising low in the southeast, behind a veil of clouds, a portent of rain, was the answer. We revel in what we can never know.

12

We tell ourselves stories to keep the thread intact. We tell stories to friends and strangers that are woven out of fragments of memory. Any system in nature or randomly generated by computers tends toward self organization in defiance of the laws of probability. What is happening? Why do such acts of creation arise when none are necessary? We invent mysteries deeper and older than our species. We cry out.

13

The day of a great tragedy begins like any other with the exception that one place, far removed from the scene of the tragedy, is uncommonly silent, as if something is missing. We wonder why one morning the birds are not singing, there is no sound of children or traffic. The silence makes us as afraid as the victims will be unafraid, safe in the day's noise and ignorance as the event arrives through a crack in time.

14

When I am twice removed from my skin I am no longer capable of making decisions that have any connection to reality. It began when I said I - somewhere, a long time ago, when all humans were young in a river valley high in the mountains. After that the genetic triggers multiplied, the weather felt distant even when we were standing in the rain and snow. We could no longer hear the voices. I said I and I am nothing.

15

The sky rippling with electricity. My tears mix with rain and blood in Babylon on the bank of the river. I wait for the vision: Ezekiel. The chariot, wings in front and behind, wheel inside a wheel. The same chariot dwells in every thunderstorm. Those that have stood in the open field and dared the lightning to take them know. They have felt its body move in their eyes while their vanities tore them apart.

16

It's a long ride. No place to stop for water. The air is thin and full of dust. This quarter belongs to the sun. Legend has it a great river, called Colorado, used to run through this land. Obviously there were humans or some creatures. Their drawings remain in the rock face. Who knows what they mean? The people themselves stopped caring, then they forgot, then they vanished like their memories. Inevitably beautiful.

17

Is my skin more real than I am? Physics proceeds. We discover that the heaviest elements live the shortest lives. The moment cannot be sustained. Hammers fall. Bones are shattered. The clocks are geared to lie. They project time like a virus that will destroy us all. The sun, moon, planets, and stars tell a different story, one that we misread in subservience to the minutiae of our chronologies. The blind skin says I.

18

Teargas in Persia and the propaganda machine rolls like ticker tape counting the phony dollars. Madison Avenue is ecstatic. On Wall Street the speculators genuflect and distort into phantasms Adam Smith never imagined. The pumps are loaded. The harbors are jammed with rotting merchandise. Static settles like malaria in the swamps of America and the Niger delta. Jefferson weeps. Revolution ain't what it used to be.

19

I filled all the requisite papers. I had contacts among the elite. I waited for months to hear. I took every sleep drug I could coax from doctor or herbalist. Nothing worked. No word. The mail never arrived. Then, late on a cold gray afternoon, I saw a figure, a shadow, approach the door. I felt it like a weight on my chest. There was a knock, and another. I opened the door.

20

A silver haired lady with gold in her teeth stares through the screen door at the day vanishing. She hears a song in the tall grass like violins played by a hawk's wing caught in the wind. There's no way her talons will ever touch ground again. She thinks to herself this must be how it feels when your eyes catch a glimpse of something so real you can't let it go.

21

Anatolia. A forgotten province. That was her crime. The prosecutor appeared before the judges at noon. He demanded that she be summoned. The guards delivered her bound and gagged in prison rags. She stood in the cage for hours while each of them in turn asked an absurd series of questions. At the last moment she managed to free her hands and present a golden Asian pear, held aloft. She was acquitted without delay.

Upon their return the travelers noted that only one species on earth was unable to actually see its surroundings despite having perfectly healthy senses. This species preferred instead to invent elaborate delusions that perpetually set them at odds with one another and every other living thing in their environment. They called this complex of delusions intelligence, but they could not define what it was.

23

No face but memory creatures struggling toward the surface, losing presence as they rise. Bodies fade in the tide pools. Houses crumble into the canals the sea reclaims. Voids, vanities, charades at carnival. The neutral animal tips his hat toward the ladies as he steps outside. Nothing remains. Not even the streets. Not a clutter of fossils floating out of the heat. Nothing remains where nothing breathes.

24

Recently Thomas has developed a problem with days. He cannot tell one from the other. Always before each day had an individual character. Saturday felt different from Tuesday which felt different from Thursday and so on. Now he is unable to place himself in any of them. He cannot sense them. He can only feel them slipping and fading one into the next. Each one distinct, but out of place.

25

Thomas suffers a similar affliction with space. The particulars have become irrelevant. If he is standing in a bathroom or closet he suddenly feels and sees open space, fields, trees, streams. Alternatively, he might be walking along a busy city street and suddenly be intensely aware that he is in a dark closet searching for the light. All of his senses confirm the opposite of what he suspects is actually there.

26

Thirsty. And thirsty again. Quells. Caravan these morbid intangibles. Ethiopia rising on an ancient sea. Summon those arriving late from other galaxies. Your equipment is obsolete. We slept beneath stone bridges, smoked extinct herbs out of memory. She sleeps, but some aspect of her visible and serene rises and scatters across the room. I bear witness and break. They ask, do you not know that nothing is always is?

27

See fist raised. Man in a hole. What his name got him, or the color of his skin. If I am at your door with a rake and hoe what do you do? Maybe your door is mine. Maybe the police don't care. Maybe we ate too much and slipped into a dream called America. We woke up fat and gassy, believing the lies blasting from all speakers, pictures pouring out of windows telling us we are dying. They lie! Pay up.

28

Aren't we invisible? Don't you feel it calling you? This is what you are when you are not present. This is how The Other witnesses you face to face. A blank stare = broken covenants. Bloody trails of broken hearts and shattered images. Things dreamed out of The Real. Aren't we invisible each to each in hard daylight. The phone is ringing incessantly. Who will answer? When the caller speaks you become fragments. Out?

29

Wrong face. Wrong planet. Where'd you leave your fiddle Homer? I need a rosy-fingered tune. There were moments when I almost knew where we were. The surroundings were familiar. The light, the odor of bread in the oven, a slaughtered boar in my nephew's hands. Then I lost track. I tried to replace the loss with a narrative based on what I remembered. Too many lost. Rain again. Lovely pain.

30

Spume and messianic dust. The corrosive tendencies of self-deception and the great flaw of righteousness. What became of the animal amid all these abstractions? Were they merely another manifestation of synaptic misfire? Or is the man on the corner with the suitcase selling trinkets more than he appears? Does the sea open beneath him and offer him secrets? What prevents him from drowning?

31

If a boy grows vines across his back will you know how to speak to him? Will you savor the wine he bleeds when he is alone? When will you shed desire and eat simple foods again? If the fog and rain are not enough we are the seeds of death. We rise from sand and clay and devour one another out of sheer boredom – creatures of grand opulence. Please take your pill and go to bed.

They stripped him to the waist and covered him with honey and the fresh warm blood of a wild boar. They tied him neck, hand and foot to a large oak and walked away. Then the flies came. He was unable to respond beyond opening his mouth to cry for help. A substantial portion of the swarm flew down his throat. Try as he might he was unable to dislodge them. The only solution was to swallow, keep his mouth closed, and struggle silently against the restraints.