

EXTRACT

THE ROOM

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NOTE ON THE SCRIPT

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DINO sits on a chair at a table and spins a bottle top a few times. He gets up and tidies up the pile of salt on the ground with his foot then sits down again and continues spinning the bottle top.

I went for a walk last night.

He puts on his black coat.

It was an ordinary night as nights go. A night sprinkled with dog's barks. Completely deserted. Wasn't even a moon. Point is I was walking along keeping to myself because I wanted to be alone. It's a need I like to satisfy on the move, or to be precise, on the feet, with one foot going plonk and the other clank. I placed my footsteps carefully, with a degree of forethought, making certain that my shoes didn't stray near the all the shit that was everywhere. And to contend with all the shit, I keep my breathing to a minimum, through the mouth rather than the nostril, my preferred conduit for air. The nostril unfortunately offers feeble protection when in the middle of a shit-heap like I was in, but I thought that's fine I can use it later, when the shit's at a safe distance.

Silence.

In truth, when I walk from place to place to place I resist any firm purpose. You see on those occasions when I have set my sight on a clear goal, it only abets my getting lost, or I find myself bored to death. No, I prefer to select a person or object, for some reason unintelligible to me, and then just follow it, wherever it takes me, some old hag peddling vegetables, a stray cat, an apricot kicked along by a horse, a hobbling dwarf, orange peel, weevil, it doesn't matter what, as long as the eye is caught and contact maintained, allowing me to tread behind unnoticed, at a cautious distance. Last night I happened to be on the tail of a chunk of bread when this bloke taps me on the shoulder. Seemed to be asking for directions. Of course I was hell-bent on ignoring him but he was quite insistent. Well it left me little room for manoeuvre. I had to take recourse to more drastic measures. I thought about it for a few seconds then picked up a rock and asked him club me on the head. Go on kill me I said. He felt very put out. Made a funny noise and fucked off. I had to whistle an old tune so I could forget about him. I've always had a deep love of music.

Silence.

Anyway that was someone I talked to. Briefly. Which is unusual. Which is why I'm telling you about it. Usually the bait of my wanderings is accidentally lost, or arrives at a destination that is not to my liking, or I get bored and give up and find somewhere to sleep for the night, or I might change my mind and catch hold of someone else, some other thing. And so the journey continues, over ditches, through tunnels, along winding paths, without ever reaching the city limits, for such a thing is not possible. Of course I've witnessed a few stories. I've eavesdropped on foreigners tell and retell of what lies beyond while the circle of listeners, all locals, gathers closer, letting their eyelids and jaws and tongues drop with incredulity. The details are never the same, the versions many, as many as there are foreigners, or so-called claimants to the title. I can barely bring myself to call them foreigners. What a filthy joke. Nothing strange about their appearance at all. Their accents are not remotely pronounced, unless artificially so, and their stories, as I have said, are never consistent. Their conflicting accounts merely serve to cancel each other out, so that not even one of these skunks can ever hope to gain the long awaited veneration of their audience. No on the contrary, the listeners invariably become embittered and angry at having their hopes briefly roused from the shit-heap, only to have them cast back down, deeper than before. And the foreigners, so-called, if not battered and lynched, trudge off in despair, knowing that their glory has been foiled once and for all and that their only solace can be found in wandering about, as I do, through the tumult and noise, through this endless dreary slop.

DINO waves sadly at the invisible stranger's departure. He removes his shoes and places them upside-down on the table. He inspects his feet. He takes a knife from the pocket of his black coat and digs into his foot. He removes a piece of glass.

I've neglected to wear socks for ages. They're an unnecessary inconvenience. Not that life isn't full of them. Socks land low on the list. Shaving for instance, what a heinous chore! Fraught with infinite difficulty and sometimes danger, depending on one's skill and the quality of the instrument. Mine are always cheap and unreliable. I'm too often the victim of little nicks, a trickle of blood down the chin. Members of the public are

prone to take fright, the self-obsessed and the stupid. They assume I'm a vagabond. The more discerning nod knowingly, in recognition that this minor scarification is the result of arduous labour, a pointless morning ritual designed to add freshness to one's appearance, to make it more acceptable to the eye and less furry animal. I've kowtowed to these notions for long enough. Not anymore fuck it. From today let the roots sprout unperturbed. Women have no need to bother themselves with that loathsome habit. They have corresponding sacraments restricted to their sex. The application of cosmetics, whale fat I believe, ramming cotton up the fanny, a few others.

The sound of a woman laughing. A piano is playing softly. DINO scours the ceiling. He imagines a series of holes in the ceiling. He picks up a chair and stands on it. He places his finger inside one of the imaginary holes. He withdraws his finger. He sits down and stares at the floor, grunts and sniffs. He becomes nauseous and spits. DINO scours the walls and discovers another imaginary hole. He stares into it. He sticks his finger into it. He falls over and lands on his back. He lies still. He regains composure and gets up.

I may have been shot in the back, for I did hear shots. Three ringing detonations.

DINO wipes his neck.

The woman and I haven't seen each other for some time. We thought better of it. We were detrimental to one another. And now she crops up, never quite buried, no matter how incidental, like our first meeting, the result of an accident. Looking back, it's quite impossible to eradicate whatever it was that led up to that which happened. If it were the shoes, for whose benefit I detoured my normal route homeward, so as to avoid the sludge, or the handkerchief, which I used to mop some mud from aforementioned shoes or... The shoes were spic and span and I was anxious to wear them in, to put a few creases in the leather. The use of the handkerchief I can't explain. An uncharacteristic move. I'm not exactly fastidious. Still, they were first class shoes, and the mud, who knows what's in it, something toxic, Black Death, who knows. So I hesitated before mopping it away, thought I'd take the liberty to enjoy a pause. It was a fatal error because I was hassled from all sides by a bunch of beggars, cripples with malnutrition, ugliness, the usual, a few lepers. I tossed some loose change hoping to cause confusion.

Instead I managed to encourage them all the more. Before long I had them burrowing into my pockets, they bit my legs, ripped off my buttons, and in short tore me to pieces. Left me naked lying beneath the wall with a sore head all covered in mud. Nothing too serious. Passers-by glanced with open hostility. An old man even kicked me in the shins. I cursed loudly and swiped at him. Missed him unfortunately. He hobbled off like a twisted foreskin. Inane details. Should have erased him from the story. The point is the woman must have seen everything from over the road. She opened a window and lent out, allowing her auburn hair to stream down. Then she smiled and vanished. A little brown door opened and she came over and dragged me into her house. She lowered my head ever so gently onto a large red carpet. The room was very plush. The ceiling depicted naked figures dancing on the hindquarters of a whale. The woman was standing. Her shadow caressed my torso and leg, and my cock. She was beautiful.

Silence.

When I awoke, the shutters were ajar. Sun spilled through. I was lying down. The woman's arm pressed on my abdomen. Her hand squeezed my cock, making it fruitful. So I reached up and bit her nipples, fiercely. She decided to brush her cunt with my tongue. I ate her like a cannibal, with ritual severity, jawbone almost crushed. She cried then pissed. I gulped it down then rolled her onto her back and pressed myself into her, as far as I would go, my teeth digging into her shoulder as my cock thudded her womb.

Silence.

We remained tightly yoked for several days, our bodies cemented by excretions. I wanted her to be pregnant, so she would stay with me forever because of our child. It's a trick I learnt off my father. As it happened her womb was barren.

Silence.

We lived together in the house for a few years. I rarely went outside, only when it felt auspicious, to water the garden, I refer to the beans that sprouted in the gutter, or sometimes simply to exercise the limbs at greater length than possible when surrounded by four walls, or to observe the goings on of fellow human beings, obscure deeds that either irritate or delight, depending on the mood.

DINO belches, coughs, swallows, and licks his lips.

That sort of thing.

Silence.

I rarely went anywhere. Bliss after all consists of lying naked in a room with a lover so why do anything else. The rest can be forgotten.

Silence.

Someone passes. I open my eyes. The outline of a man continues into the darkness,

The sound of wind blowing leaves along.

A man is running. As he runs, he is encircled by leaves that cling to his hair and cover his face and eyes. He stumbles and falls. His throat is cut. The leaves are soaked with blood, still warm against the tips of my fingers. I place my hands inside the pockets of my coat. I walk away. The body is curled on its side under the arch of a bridge. I must continue, I have nothing to stalk, but I must keep walking.

Silence.

I should forget about it.

Footsteps are heard, laughter, and murmurings. DINO runs as though being pursued.

He stumbles and falls. We hear footsteps. DINO wipes himself down.

I need a drink of water. My head hurts.

DINO takes a pale blue letter from his pocket.

It's from Bernard. The Egg gave it to me.

DINO looks at the letter. A brown feather pokes out.

I can never be certain that these letters are destined for me. The letters after all are not addressed to me personally. No Dino, no nothing. It's sheer arrogance.

DINO scrunches up the letter. He peruses the hairs on his knuckle. He picks up the letter and hurls it over his shoulder. He retrieves it and kicks it along the floor. He laughs. He fetches the letter, opens it up and reads it. He spits at it. He spreads the spittle over the letter. He grabs the feather and puts it in his pocket, then folds the paper into a boat. He places it on the floor and blows it along the floor while speaking.

I live in a tower. One of many that dot the city. I have one room, people I have never seen live in the rest. I pay no attention to them. I don't stay here to socialise, far from it.

He looks through window.

The moon is stuck out.

DINO stares at the floor. He picks up an orange peel and bites it, then some chewing gum, then some coffee beans, which he sniffs.

It's managed to avoid a descent scrub-down since the day of its beginning. That was a long time ago. Before I made my own blistering entry into this world, before someone else made it for me, because at deep bottom they were very bored and needed a distraction. So I am born, on a rainy day, punctually at four o'clock in the afternoon. The rain ceased shortly after. Now it is different. Birth in the ancient manner is no longer viable. I remember the day they cracked it, scientifically speaking. Someone informed me in a cafe on October fifth, the world's first non-uterine pickaniny had breathed its first. A glorious day for humankind, which I dutifully solemnized by torching the remains of the late Proprietor of the cafe.

Silence.

It was almost the hour to close. I was the sole customer, though I refused to buy anything, when the Proprietor stooped to scratch his leg. His right hand displayed a gold ring, probably of eastern origin. I went straight towards him, until I was quite close, almost touching. Listen, I said, my cigarette was nearing its end. Listen, you wouldn't happen to have a spare ashtray mister? He wasn't even vaguely interested. Give me an ashtray please. I articulated this precisely in case he didn't have a good grasp on language. What do I do with this? I said to him.

DINO mimes stubbing a cigarette out in midair.

All he did was smile stupidly. The situation was clearly hopeless. I wasn't going to get any ashtray that was clear. Pieces of semi-masticated food clung to his gums. There's a definite link between the state of one's teeth and the state of one's brain. He stared into my face with an expression of serenity most commonly associated with retards.

The sound of water splashing comes from the ceiling.

His eyebrows exploded in sparse but extraordinarily thick tufts. His nose burst out like an onion with a virtual implosion at the centre.

DINO pokes the invisible man in the nose.

Criminologists would have certified this idiot a fatal threat to public stability on physiognomy alone. Then he starts pointing to this no-smoking sign on the wall. What do you think, that I'm some kind of fool? Earlier in the day it read 'pair of shoes', I was certain of that. Someone must have slipped in and replaced it, unless you're responsible I said, which must be the case, because there's only one door and no-one could have come in without me noticing. In any case, I'm not the sort of person who resigns my will to the mercy of a sign.

DINO wipes his forehead with his sleeve.

My tooth hurts.

DINO presses his tooth with a finger.

The Proprietor wobbles toward me. A feather is stuck between his teeth.

The sound of water splashing comes from the ceiling.

It must be late. I should leave.

DINO is scared. He backs away from the invisible Proprietor until he reaches the wall.

He looks at a feather on the ground. He picks it up and sets fire to it.

I don't like birds on the whole. Not since I fed them for a protracted period in my father's aviary. Too many mistrustful eyes and yellow wings fluttering about. And they never showed anything, neither their sex nor age, and then one day you find them dead on their back though in perfect nick, from paranoia I imagine. The slightest hint of trouble and off they go, which of course is why they're useful down mines, but not as pets for fuck's sake. No sense of play. So I let them loose. All of them. They only came back. Had to drown them, too used to captivity. I'm not like that. I enjoy a stretch of the horizons. I don't like my view blocked up by houses, ships, poles, curbs, kettles.

DINO sits at the table.

I must move my legs, cause them to shudder, heat them a little, prepare them for a long haul. I have to take good care of them. They're my chief asset. Can't afford premature

crumbling. I'd rather lose the teeth if I must be deprived, or the torso, but the legs cover distance. They assist in my departures, the fleeing of spittle when necessary etcetera. I demand it and the legs obey because they owe me. I've always valued them, taken good care, rubbed them when needed, given them exercise. I'm very fond of walking, and when my competitive streak blossoms it does so in the form of a sudden dash down the neighbourhood street to the corner, to the corner store. And I'll stop before entering, and then enter, at a normal pace. I have no desire to frighten the customers. I'll make my purchase, probably a paper, or an ice-cream, or a carton of milk, and then exit. The return might vary, it might not. It might involve another dash, but variation is more suitable to my character, so I'll walk, slowly, stopping occasionally to observe people's houses, to see if I can detect any significant differences, on the front porch for example, the number and size of pot-plants, artificial gnomes, certain breeds of animal tied with rope, types of caged bird, sometimes a nice onion, a twig. I'll lose interest eventually and decide it's time to move on.

DINO runs on the spot, then hops, twists about, crawls on his knees, then in various combinations, such as running and twisting, twisting hopping then on the knees, back to hopping, changes of leg, one legged hopping and two legged hopping, backwards and forwards, breaks to running, twisting, then back to knees, where he twists about, whistles and sings, clicks his tongue, jumps to his feet, runs in a circle, twist on every third step, clicks his tongue, slaps his thigh, then stops.

As for arms, I could do without them, reminder of the tree dwelling days. Perhaps I'll convert them into legs. Even then I'd use them as seldom as possible. I always regret picking up things. I'd refrain from doing that if they were absent, but because I have them, when the moment arises, to retrieve something from ground level, I neglect to check myself. Can't help it, lack of discipline, my gaol term was clearly faulty, so I go around picking things up. Just useless crap.

Silence.

All this is idle chatter, the knocking together of membranes and corpuscles to create an eternal buzzing.



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