

à ma mère

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Flotsam and Jetsam

A collection of funny bits

Devonian Press

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MEETING POINT

Though its location varies, our meeting point always stays the same.

The meeting point is the point at which we meet, you and me, and even the others, assuming there are any.

Where we meet is where we will have met, and that is the meeting point.

We always meet at the same point, though never at the same place. It is where our paths cross that we meet, and that is the meeting point. As our paths change, our speed wavers, and ours is a spacious and many-sided land, this point, like its agents, is difficult to map in advance, always on the move, unexpectedly appearing where it is least expected.

The meeting point emerges where and when we meet, then disappears as soon as we drift apart, its spectral charge drifting along with us until we meet again (and it is our particular pleasure to make it seem as if we had always met by chance, rather than by design).

PRESENTATION OF AN OBJECT

To start, you are presented with a book, this one for example. Its pages are charred, its spine is broken, its illustrations are stained beyond recognition.

Some unrelated bits and pieces are introduced, others are suddenly removed (and it is only because of this that you even notice their presence). You are presented with a pedestal. It neither supports nor represents anything. At this stage, and given the circumstances of this encounter, it is better to refer to it as a stand.

But here's another thing, one whose entrance is both sudden and unexpected. You are presented with a catastrophe. It hits the stand hard and fast, overwhelming it instantly then burying it under a pile of its own rubble. Part of a tool, a length of string and a catchy hook accompany it in its premature burial.

Now you are presented with the object in question. The stand comes to mind as something that could prop up the object so that it sits or stands at the appropriate height. But the stand is no longer of this world. You are shown a door. You are presented with a piece of paper (an invoice, a missive, a warning?). As for the object, it is promptly forgotten under one or more layers of dirt.

STOREROOM

There are more and more things in this room of mine. I have not had time to organize them nor even to look them over. I have been accumulating them for as long as you and I can remember. There is nothing I would like better than to have the opportunity to see them deployed. I imagine them being wrenched from their places, pulled from their scabbards, torn from their boxes for a strong and clear purpose. It would be a directed thing, a thing that directs, a thing that targets and orients everything around it, a thing that would inscribe all of these other things within a network of urgent and necessary demands. Even those things that would be left by the wayside or trampled underfoot would have their place, their meaning, not their meaning, their sense, not their sense, their purpose, or rather their position. They would be positioned somehow with respect to some thing, or some other things.

I have here a thousand and one things that were built especially for you. Or for someone else for that matter. You happen to be here so they can only be yours. They are not for you to take but to employ. If you are here, if you have come here, it can only be for this.

Many of them have been hidden under layers of, how should I say this, layers not of grime, nor of dirt, but rather of time. They are hidden under layers of time. There are layers of grime that with and over time have, how should I put this, sealed these objects, preserving

them from wear and tear, air and light. Few things are more damaging than wear and tear, air and light. Which is why you will see that I have also collected several jars of colorful makeup for you and yours and, why not, for me and mine to wear. That way we can keep up appearances while we execute this wonderful performance of ours. For it can only be a performance. What else could you ever imagine doing with all these things?

MUMBLER

The mumbler fumbles, bumbles, and tosses his lead into the open sea. Had it been a lake, a pool, a river, or a pond, then everything would have been different, though perhaps, it is true, certain things would have been the same.

I would describe him and I would describe the scene, but there is no need to engage in such retrospective efforts. He has lost his lead and with it, our attention.

A purpose falls flat across the desk of a person. The purpose is not his, nor is it anyone else's. It is its own purpose, and it grabs a hold of him in spite or perhaps because of his growing importance. With all the weight of his importance, he grabs and holds onto this purpose. It is perhaps he, in a moment of instinctive fear, that manufactured the purpose, but that is neither here nor there. It does not seem as if he has the wherewithal or the means to create such a strong, polished purpose. It is a purposeful yet purposeless purpose: purposeful in its effect, purposeless in its aims. It has a sharp point, yet can neither be described as selfish or selfless. It sounds like the insinuating call of a tin whistle. It feels like a pair of weighted pliers. It tastes like victory, and smells like a thing of the earth.

On a whim, or in response to a call from above and beyond (over there, over yonder, over the hill, behind a tree, across a river, on the other side of the path, deep,

deep in the dark depths of the deep dark folds of forest
at the base of a round lump of bald rock) he slips and
hides between a pile of layers, keeping his intruders at
bay with a clod and a stick.

SHIFTS

The shifts in terrain are abrupt, yet a constant velocity is maintained (damage is inflicted onto the suspension).

THE WORLD

On a stage, in a world. There would be a story, made-up, fabricated (a fiction). Someone or some people would take it seriously, for a while, in front of a witness or three. They would take it just far enough for it to be too far, too soon, and too much.

There would be a metaphor, an image even. Someone would take it literally; another would make it, literally.

A blinding would be orchestrated, then effectuated with the suddenness of a pulled plug. It would be brief. It would only last a split second, more or less, but it would be enough (a flash!) to make an impression, to leave a residue, like the fading pulse of an afterimage.

A tremor. A pound. An ambient noise. A scented breeze. The disquieting feel of a soft middle.

I can neither describe, narrate, nor invent what is or what should be about to take place. Not in any sustained manner that is. I am far too tired, lethargic even, lazy perhaps. I have neither the words, nor the templates, nor even the inclination (writing is sliding words down an incline into a template). I can only propose, not one but two things, of which the first will be kept under wraps for now.

The second is to have a fluid interruption, like an opaque wash, marring, blurring, then slowly drowning

out the contours of a world (this world), and of its figures, and of its settings and props, and even of its innumerable backdrops. Things would not end. They would simply sink, and later, perhaps even at a more hopeful moment, in a less attenuated place, they would rise to the surface, like bloated corpses, like matchsticks, like bubbles or balls.

A STAGE

The world is a stage. It is separated from the ground by a space, a hollow cavity, over which it is tenuously suspended, like the floorboards of a hastily erected dais. The world has a margin, like the twin wings that flank a stage. The world has a backdrop. The world has a backstage, an arsenal of props, a crew of stage hands, and an exit, but no audience. Or a singular one: not an author but an observer (impotent and mute, wrapped in a shroud of darkness, camped out on the outskirts like a crumpled wrapper). The world is a stage and if there is a play it is being written neither for you nor for me, but with an eye to its darkening margins.

If there is a plot, it is being spun neither by the one nor his other, but with a gossamer thread of fiction, a biting twine, and flecks of soiled fleece. If there is a horizon, it is displaced, adrift, sundered.

On the world's stage, a cast of thousands, no hundreds, millions, and millions more to come: the ass, the captain, the scoundrel, the whores and wastrels, the strumpets and floozies, an army of one, a band of outsiders, her best friend Sally, his girl Friday, the mother, her aunt, Harold B., Francis, Molly, the squadron commander, the naval recruit, the musical prodigy, the underworld underling, the boozier, the repairman, the hunter and the hunted, a bird of prey, a mousy figure, a woman like no other, an unusual child, a precocious patriarch, a tempestuous proposition, a tenuous link, and more, many more, there being a whole lot more where that came from.

DUMMEREL

Act I

The curtain falls or splits.

The stage is almost empty. There would be nothing on it if it weren't for the dummy sitting or rather resting on a chair, by a bucket, under a bright circle of bright, white light.

The light dims. It brightens, and then turns "off," plunging the stage, the theater, and its audience into darkness. The light turns on once more, but it is accompanied by other lights that illuminate other, more distant (from the audience) corners of the stage.

In front of the dummy there is a prompter's box, and if the theater has none, then there is a cardboard box or a wood crate turned on its side, large enough to fit an actor, its opening facing the dummy.

"You are a dummy," the prompter says, to break the silence.

"You are a dummerel and a stiff. You are a man of straw, a prop, a block, and a stone.

I am a fool. I am a fool to speak to you, dummy, as if to a living ear, sinking words into the dim tin din of your tipped top.

As for rest of you... You are all idiots and dummies and imbeciles, captives of a stupid stupor. You are all stupid idiots and imbeciles and dummies, fool that I am, idiots and imbeciles that you are, dummy that he is (dumb, dimmed, and dumped here like a bag of flour, a sack of dirt, a drenched overcoat).

A fool is an open parenthesis. A dummy is a solid point. An idiot is a closed circle with a frayed knot. A sponge is stupid, and an imbecile is a tin bell swaying in the breeze.

A fool is a man on a tightrope, eating breakfast, suspended over a fall, then falls. An idiot launches a thousand warships towards a foreign shore, with a quivering nostril and a wavering lip. As for the dummies, they litter the streets like confetti after a parade. Stupid is the one who gazes up at the stars in wonder, like an imbecile, caught in the weak breeze of the carts, convoys, and battalions that pass him by.

Scoundrels! Thieves and Liars! Idiots and Pricks! Pricks and Asses! Imbeciles, dummies, rotten piles, wet rags, stuck sticks, swept under the rug, caught in the headlights, flies on the wall, shit on my shoe...

I have something which I care to convey and desire to sell, at a reasonable price, to those of you who might

need it. It is a piece of advice, thin and fragile like a sliver of gold leaf, a shaving of soap, or a snippet of foam. I have it in my safe keeping, yet I must part with it soon, for it will surely shortly wilt, waste, and die its own death. I have no use for it, for I am content to remain the fool that I have been striving to become all these years.

Through all his years of fear and loathing, ignorance and hardship, obscurity and persecution, he clung to his conviction like a squirrel. He was a dummy to some and a patron to others, the mold, model, or measure of their ignorance, fear, loathing, obscurity, and persecution. He had the rank smell of a soiled hay bed, the stiff demeanor of a toy soldier, and the hollow stare of a broken headlight. He had nothing to lose and so very little to gain. There was nothing we could do to dissuade him from embarking on this one last journey to the bitter ends.

Through all their years of existence, they retained a clear sense of things, traced on a thin translucent sheet of paper which they held up to the light. It bore a small outline of things to come, a simple narrative of the past, a simplified tabulation of things out there, a simplistic fable anchoring the whole of their world like a clothespin or a vanishing point of light. A thousand and one or two sparks of rebellion, moments of indecision, and tremors of significance were quickly and quietly dis-

pensed with, under the cover of darkness, with torch-lights and song. He that had never been nor would ever manage to become one of their own true blue, read and rose to a dizzying height, then plunged and plummeted into the dark waters of the harbor, quietly sinking amidst the boats, bundles, and buoys.

The silent musings of a mute. None of this would ever have come to pass. A fool slips, an idiot trips and falls, an imbecile laughs, and a crowd of dummies sinks, slowly sinks into a stupid stupor like a vapor or a stink.”

Act II

The curtain falls, the theater empties, the door closes.

STICK FIGURE

First a vertical, then a crossbar. A stick lands in the mud, another (its perpendicular) catches it crosswise, a shoulder to its trunk.

Next, borne by the same wind, comes a ball of twine, a clod of dung and hay, or a glop of sticky sap. It lands on the tip of the upright stick, it sticks on its top, capping things off, making a head: soft and catching all, a round.

Molded by the breeze, its frame slips into the semblance of a posture.

Other things catch its other ends, its sidelong tips: a tangle of threads like a hand, like fingers, holds to hold and hold onto.

Then the sticking on of legs, or knobs like wheels, or even the whole thing slung on a rail, and, like a bead on a string, set off, set on its course (the straight and narrow at first, then the drifts, divides, detours, and deviations).

But first, the stick figure (a stick in the mud, with a gummy head, and fleeced mitts for hands, and buttons for eyes, and a scab for a mouth, and soft fuzz for legs, and a crack for a tail, and pincers for feet) sways in the rising wind, pitches, taps the ground, then swings wildly in and out of position.

A man like a scarecrow in a windswept landscape.
Him, a hymn.

A wind blew (upon him, like the skin of) an event.

A tempest bore (upon) him (as if caught in the skein of)
an event.

A temperate zone, a shrill interruption, a sudden lurch,
all of this borne upon or by him.

He was a man of straw, a jack-of-all-trades, a scarecrow,
standing, arms outstretched, to catch the gleanings of a
disconsolate breeze.

Haled by forces unknown (unkempt, undone),

His was a length of stick unbroken.

His was a silence, tongued.

In a stale humor, in a lurch, heaved.

Heavings, smitten with a damp burden, unforgiving.

Unforgiven, drawn in, with a handshake spool.

The sun falls, rises, sets, rises, sinks, rises, then disappears and rises on another day in an other place. The shadow, grows, then twirls, then shrinks, then unfurls, then blends into the darkening nightfall, falling folds of a thick cape on a dispersed multitude of pliable frames.

A wind slowly gathers on the margins of the plain, pushing across it a vessel bearing men, women, children, and the stuff of conquest and settlement (pitchers, picks, forks, balls of twine, blades, spades, tarps, harps, muskets, casks, chains, daggers, a picture or two, and the like, and the rest, and the words to describe it all). The vessel hits against a lonely figure, planted, like a mast in the vast windswept canvas of the plain. The vessel catches its edge on his toe and pitches, then falls, losing one and all, all at once.

The figure is dislodged, displaced, and would have been hurled by the wind towards an uncertain fate had it not been for a wire strung or slung, like a hammock, between two trees.

The wind falls, the sun sinks, and the day passes into night.

Whatever happens to happen during the night is drowned in its sharp fold. The night is like a drum of black gum, dripped or pitched onto the world. The world is like a ball of twine, pitched or dipped into a bucket of tar.

On the next day, another day, the figure stumbles into a town, spread thin on graying sands. On that day, the figure wakes to find a city growing at his feet. There are streets and byways, empty sidewalks and packed highways, buildings built low to the ground, like boxes, and others tall and swaying like palms or columns.

The town grows, spreading itself thin around the figure, its holds dispersed over graying sands. There are other figures, all of them distanced and silenced by an irreparable din. There are a myriad hums. There is the expectation of a jolt. There are various things, scattered, here and there, neither known nor forgotten, simply set aside.

A sudden winds pulls figure and city apart, just as the dark mantle of night falls and folds onto the pliable frames of built and living things, their scattered multitude on the windswept plain.

The sea is a solemn gray. A white sail sinks and bobs back up to the surface, a yellow dot pierces the surface, then melts, briefly staining its liquid surroundings before dispersing, dissolving, and forgetting itself in the gray, graying waters of the sea.

The figure lies limp, a washcloth on the edge of a basin. The wind blows furiously in and around it, but the figure neither lifts nor stirs. The wind has no hold on its damp sagging flesh, its briny frame, its sand-clogged habit. It sits and soaks, like flotsam or jetsam cast aside by the still moving waters of the open sea.

Lapped up, rolled gently, slowly sinking into the sand, then suddenly pulled in and drowned out by the greater gray, the all-encompassing darkness, the deepening fold of night.

Imagine a man like a stick figure. The stuck figure of a man. Picture a wind like a flow of events. Then dream a to and fro, see the lights, the sudden pull of happenstance, a road narrowing like a destiny, with its sudden turns, and a fall, but no end in sight, not now, not ever. A stick figure, once lost or destroyed, can always be rebuilt.

CONQUEST

We did not conquer them from without, nor even from within. Ours was a suggested or insinuated intrusion. We whispered it in their ears, so to speak, we slipped it under their doors and into their thoughts, telling them of things they should be doing and others they should have done all along. On thin scraps of paper, we outlined vague threats of future invasions, while cautioning them (too little, too late!) against those things which they should have protected themselves from in the past. Now, as you can see, they are completely occupied, we have taken over and overtaken them from all sides, occupying and preoccupying the most intimate recesses of their frail, anxious selves. They neither have the time, the strength, nor even the presence of mind to notice our surreptitious conquest.

As for us, we are secure in the knowledge that we have won, that what was theirs is now ours for the taking, though we are content to leave it with them for the time being, having taken little or even nothing at all from their hearths and homes. Ours is the forward march, the thrill of conquest, the burden of expansion and drift, and the incessant hum of victory. The rest is a residual heap, weighed, stroked, fondled, then swiftly cast aside without so much as a parting glance.

A COMEDY

Though the following two characters cannot be said to work together, in any sense of the word, they are often associated in people's minds.

One is a builder. He never builds from the ground up. His are constructions whose elements shoot up into the air, and then fall into place on the ground. Imagine throwing the walls of a house up into the air, and having them land along a precise layout, then tossing a roof on top of them. The precision of his canons and the stealth of his movements allow him to produce buildings that come together in an unexpected flash. Like a bell, or a tarpaulin, they are designed to cover things up. They could cap a man, for example, or a group, or even a puff of smoke, or an eventful gathering. Moreover, they are so incredibly airtight as to stifle, kill, and entomb their living prey. Theirs is a form of containment which provides certainty and security, especially for those who are distressed by the mobility of their others. A building of this sort may kill its content, but it at least gives it a precise and immutable location, while preserving it from certain unforeseeable incidents and accidents.

The other has no title. He is instead defined by his activity, which is one of destruction and demolition. He targets buildings. A building for him is simply something that has been 'built', whatever that may mean. At times, he will blow something apart, reducing it and its contents to a pile of rubble. At other times, he will collapse

an edifice in on itself like a house of cards, keeping its walls and roof intact, so as to entomb and preserve whatever happens to be inside of it. Occasionally, he will blast a cavity under the building, so as to make it vanish underground, or form an evocative hollow.

As I said earlier, though their activities are not directly related, these two figures are often associated with one another, and there are even some who think of them as one and the same person.

A WORLD LIKE YOURS

It was a world like yours or mine, but different. It was, in fact and in truth, almost indistinguishable from the world outside our respective windows, but not the same. It was as if, if you can imagine, as if you were returning to a familiar place but returning not the same: a different you landing in a differing place.

On that day, a day much like this one, a day that could or even might have been, might very well be even, this one (this very day, the day that I am writing this, the day that you or I are reading it), a wind blew in from an unexpected direction. A wind like a tide of pebbles. Later that same day, and into the next week or months, things simply followed their course (for a stoppage can provide continuity just as an interruption can be a form of speech).

To give you a description of this world is useless, a waste of words and effort, you would do better to look outside your window, to take note of your surroundings, and to write a long, rambling description of it for a distanced interlocutor. As for its inhabitants, they were just like you and me, except that they too had been living under a cloud of fear and apprehension. People were bracing themselves for the worst, for the worst is always yet to come. A flood came and went upon a foreign shore, a tremor seized and shook a distant land, and a myriad gales expired on a nearby coastline, but things remained strangely and menacingly calm here at home.

There were reports of wars and casualties, many of them closer than we or they cared to imagine. There were stories of terrifying diseases and incurable ills, there were hints and forebodings of a deep dark conspiracy, yet, most terrifying of all, there remained the ongoing expectation of imminent doom.

It was a world suddenly bereft of agency. No-one was to blame anymore for anything anymore, things happened with the help of people, but they soon receded under the shadow of other things to come. It was a time of halting speech and streaming diatribes, for the most abrupt of interludes can work to link front and back, beginning and end, like two pieces of toast or two slices of bread. There was a swirl of images and the world of screens on which they passed (like clouds on a wet pavement).

On such a day, in such a world, a man and a woman like no other walked into a dark hollow, deep in the bowels of an open city. Deep in the open bowels of a city like no other, three men and a woman walked into a trap that had been set for a multitude. Their capture passed unnoticed. They were quickly dispensed with and promptly forgotten.

In another part of town, high up in a tower of glass and steel, a darkly gloved hand pressed a gold buzzer concealed underneath his desk.

A slim woman with a protuberant jaw and glassed eyes appeared by his side.

Outside, it was raining. The sky was a uniform layer of gray.

The hand handed a thick envelope to the woman and dismissed her with an almost imperceptible flick of the wrist to which it was connected.

A door shut silently. A fleck of ash fell noiselessly into an ashtray. Outside, the rain fell continuously or continually (depending on your perspective) onto the sound-proof windows.

AN ACT OF WAR

This missive will be delivered into your unsteady hands by no less than three envoys. They will each have their character, their voice. In fact, they may even have more than one. This first one, the one you now see staggering to the fore, is wounded or crippled. I know not which. It is as if he has a weight on one of his hips or a bruise, or the weight of a bruise or the bruise of a weight, but enough. The other two you will meet in time, and on your own time. They have worked closely on this text so as to each have their own individual passages, corresponding to their individual roles.

It is a missive which I would like you to deliver to the proper authorities, or to their assistants. It is a notion which I would like them to entertain, like a shy guest whose eyes and feet slowly stray towards the door.

This is not a complaint because you are not someone I can complain to. More than once, I have been interrupted in my labors or in my slumber by the mayhem outside my window. I hear the rhythmic banging of the war drums, the roar of the crowds, and the loud pop of the cannons. I hear of the heavy posturing of the various speakers which pass before our screens, and of the nervous grinding of their teeth (and the powder which it

leaves on our lecterns and banquet tables). Ours has always been a noisy street, but I have never been aware of its sirens and horns before today.

The messengers will come on the hour. On the day of their arrival, you will have been led to a certain place of my own choosing. On the ground, you will see something like a thread or a piece of leather with markings on it. You may see what at first may appear to be a bottle cap. A man will pass you by and he will seem to be in a hurry. All of these things are signs, and you should read them as such. You may find a stain on your left cuff, that too will be a sign and a confirmation. The messengers will show up, unannounced. Things will be all too clear. Everything will have been laid out for you, on the page, on a table, but you will certainly not invite them inside for that would be the end of everything. The messengers will contact you and arrange a meeting at an undisclosed location. You will have something to give to them. You will discover there and then that you have been carrying it with you all this time.

Three messengers will come to your door. There will be three of them. One of them, as I said, is somewhat the worst for wear. Certain heavy and invisible things have

been using him as foothold and a stepladder. He looks, to put it humorously, he looks balled up, like a spat ball. As for the others, they are the ring to an absent leader, and they are mimed. As for you, you will be equal to the task at hand, whether you care to be or not (up and down, peaks and valleys, then turning, twisted, spun around, but always the man for the job; its shifting contours, its pulsating glow, its steady hum, and its direction; a clean finish like a firm wipe; a line in the sand; a post).

THE WATCHMAN

The watchman listens while the world
(a word)
glistens.

The watchman,
See (saw)
Thumbs his nose at the wall and says (said)
The watchman said

I have heard and seen and watched from over and up,
never sinking into, always swaying above, never running
towards, suspended instead, to feel the breeze and
breadth. There are things I could tell you, things I have
seen and heard, things seen and heard that would, if
only, or ever, not now, because things have pressed
(impressed) and fallen (stalled) and there are less than,
more so, more than ever before, never known, not like
this, not ever again.

He spoke to us of
Fragments of the unwritten, codes in a forgotten key,
snippets of ciphered speech, bribes in a foreign tongue,
smatterings of a distanced future, slivers of unrequited
longing,
and a terrible lust for voyage,
and truth, truths of or in a sheltering sand.

I have heard the start to a startling revelation, I have
seen the outlines of a dark, darke..., darkening plot. I

have heard rumors that would or could...

Imagine intercepting the tail end of a missive, a missile,
burrowed and burrowing (orders to seek and destroy,
find and blind, tail and trail, trails into a missed), then
looking past a telltale sign, a blurred foreshadowing, a
sign on the wall, the sign on the wall, the shimmer in the
trees, in the air, a blinding light.

The watchmen tilts and sways, while above an arrow,
above and around him, and in the air

Or a swert, or a rapier and a pin, stuck with a pin to the
wall like a fly (fly leave) and no more.

The watchman states (no more, no less)
I, whose task it is less to observe than to intercept,

whose mind can neither claim to remember everything
nor ask to recall that which you may have wanted me to
verify or forget, I have neither seen nor heard of such a
thing (not now, not ever), nor would I have laid claim to
being its witness were it not for the circumstances sur-
rounding its advent or occurrence, it having taken place
in a place not unlike this one, one place, on a day, one
day, whose very number makes me shiver and quake, for
there was nought but a tremble and neither in the trees
nor in the midst would it have lain there, down but
never out for the count, straight starlight, and fit to the
finish, they said and a fight to the death, but there was
neither the time nor the money to properly, and so on
we went, on our merry way, for we had a long way ahead
of us, to face

The distant and terrifying.

(a blemish on soft skin, hers)

and barely a whimper, then no more.

Drunk on wine and laughter, while he, all alone
And above them the pierced blanket of the sky and
below them the hollow drum of the earth, and they, like
swollen skins, balancing in the wind, like floaters, buoys,
castaways.

He had a spoon in one hand and a flourish in the other,
and neither the one nor the other, for there was no
more.

A town like a puzzle of lights and pathways. A sky like a
field of stones, a beach of pebbles, a tray of pins and
needles. A pathway overgrown with weeds, overladen
with wrappers and trash. A tower like a hollowed thumb.

A tomb like a hallowed stage. A candle like a match, and
a string like a fuse.

On the tower sits the watchman. In the sky shoots a star,
a shot, and an imprecation. On the pathway lie a corpse,
a bottle, a harness, and an empty boot. In the town stirs
a rebellion, sifts a breeze, and quakes a respite. The
tomb robbed, pilfered, and exposed to the elements. The
candle in a room, like a tomb or a tower, with a string
strung like a pathway across the floor.

Characters

There is, on the one side of things, a man like a storm contained in a room, subdued, under a light, darkening, tilting, swaying, then fallen, and his laughter, felled.

There are no more than three exits, one of them blocked, the other loosened (pried, opened), the third an easy way out. On the outside, looking out and across is a watcher (a watchman), and his staff. He holds a thin guideline, a rein, in his limp left hand, but waves. And a wind,...

There is that certain weight to his surroundings that only he can appreciate. There are casts and hues. That light's amiss, a light askance that floats dimly above the surface of things. I would not have asked you to come if you had not invited yourself. I would not have wanted you to see this if you had not. If you had not, I would not.

And that the watchman's is a slot in a mechanism. His, waiting to be filled.

THE FLAG SQUADRON

There was nothing more moving than to watch the passage of the flag squadron. Rollicking as one from side to side, they passed us by one fateful morning, armed with the blunt purpose of their high flying flags, thin reed-like flagpoles and glistening chins bobbing along to the muffled beat of their footsteps on the dirt road.

There was nothing more beautiful than the graceful swaying of their pennants and huntings in a wind of their own making, nothing more powerful than the unflagging pace and unflappable composure of the flag squadron as it inched along a path of its own tracing.

They raised a forest of signal flags. They waved a standard of rebellion. They unfurled a banner of pomp and circumstance, scattering a smattering of gonfalons, streamers, and pennants into the crowd. They turned and twirled and whirled and whirled and then they left, waving “P, the Blue Peter,” a flag of departure.

You too would have been moved, as we all were, by the tip-tapping of their well-heeled boots, the flip-flapping of their high-flying flags and the steady march of the members of the flag squadron, steadily making their way in a whirl, a world of wars.

Devonian Press
Rio de Janeiro, 2005

