

The Weary Matter of Reason

The eyewitness account published in the paper tells me what I need to know. I don't need photos. My pictures are here, present and thick as weather.

I knew it at first sight. All knowledge opens from the spine outwards, wordless, clear and ancient as instinct. We fall in love this way. We kill this way. And so I knew.

The gash cut from the corners of her mouth down to her ears is not a smile. It was not the seduction glee leer. Girl mirth, a contented sigh, a freak jolt of joy: it is not these.

It takes pressure to split a face. The cut cleared the bone, the joints, gristle, and sinew. That would have split the palm of a hand, even a gloved hand. The wet leather sticks to the tingling skin. It should have taken hours. It didn't. It takes one cut to split a face: one clean, precise act.

Now, the face swings apart like one seamless hinge. It peels back to reveal the slick meat machine, the moist geography. She's a fissure in the muscles of the earth. She's a junked thresher left in the field to rust.

It takes patience to clean an inner cavity, to make it empty and sterile, restraint to drain the blood out into the dry, bony ground. She's the dawn seeds sown over sickly harvest. She's the fall buck hung upside-down in a halo of flies. A brown puddle collects underneath, drop by slow drop. This wary patience is not human, and it is.

Her elbows lift towards the edges of the vista. Her legs spread towards the bottom of the world. They divided her with two feet of cold, hard dark. This was not by chance.

Those two feet of space between tell me I am right. This is a pattern made flesh. This bare cavity, only skin, blubber and bone left, is a blank cosmos. It is what could have been if a spark had never lit the sky.

I don't know where to stop it, where to border this fluid daydream. Where to mend the weary matter of reason, and where to let it crumble. It is a sandbag against a flood; one breach is all it takes. The murky water trickles around my feet, then to my ankles, knees, calves, waist, chest, shoulders, over my head and above.

The newspaper published the number to report information. I'm standing in the hallway hand on the receiver with all but the last number rolled. I'll tell someone. I won't sleep until I do. I know what they're going to do to me inside those gray walls. I'm going to tell anyways.

I'll tell them the slit from her ear to the edge of the mouth is not a smile. She is the land with an open wound. She is a ragged stitch pulled, the gangrene pus oozing out. The face swings apart. It is space before anything was, it is space after everything is gone.