



"where he used to be and might be still."

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"where he used to be and might be still."

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where he used to be and might be still. Let the dangle and the writhe see what it is missing; let the pain sing to the dirt where he stepped in the place where he used to be and might be still. I am not going to be healed, to find the arm removed from me. I am going to freshen the pain, point it, so we both know what it is for.

I am not angry. I don't need the arm. But I do need to know what it could have been like to have it. It's a phantom I have to behold and be held by. In whatever crevices it lies, under whatever branch. Or maybe it stalks treeless and open places, lit with an oily sun. This part of me that does not know me. Has never touched me or lingered at my side. This gone away hand that never helped me over the stile, or guided me past the dragons, pulled me up from the ditch into which I stumbled. Stroked my hair. Fed me food; took the far end of the load to make it easier for me to carry. Never held itself out, extended from my body, to give me balance as I walked thin rails or logs, round and slippery with danger. When I find it, will it wave to me? Gesture, beckon to me to come along? Or will it even know who or what I am? It doesn't matter. I will locate it so the severed part can remember the snatch, the slice of its disfigurement. Perhaps then, the arm will no longer be a phantom, but will take its own shape, grow its own muscle and bone, and its blood will pump from the loud singing that has found the purpose of its serenade. Amen.

His horse understood and bore him along with just a flick or two of the whip. Steadily it plodded, through valleys without



trails, across streams without bridges or ferries for crossing. Eye gaze just above the road, undistracted by the small life that darted toward its hooves, heaving its great chest forward, pacing to hold on to its strength and gather more. It did not know where it was going and it knew nothing of the way, but it did know the nature of its work. Get there, said its hooves. If we can just get there.

Who will take my part? Soap away the shame? Suds it till it falls away muck at my feet to be stepped out of? Will you? Redeem me like a pawn ticket worth little on the marketplace, but priceless in retrieving real value?

When I see him, or what is left of him, see the missing part, I will tell him all about it and listen for his crying shame.

I will exchange then; let him have mine as well as his own, and I will be free--straight, clear and clean.

What was I thinking of? How could I have imagined him so poorly? Not noticed the hurt that was not linked to the color of his skin, or the blood that beat beneath it. But to some other thing that longed for authenticity, for a right to be in this place, effortlessly, without needing to acquire a false-face, a laughless grin, a talking posture. I must have been crazy and stupid, and it infuriates me to discover {again} how unreliable I am. Now I have to think this through, carefully, even though I may be doomed to another misunderstanding. I have to do it and not break down. Loving him is not useful; I have to alter things.

to #  
Not hating him,  
for talking even

It had rocked him when he heard. Made him loose, lost. He fingered the clothes of his mother, sat in the grass looking at the things that scattered in his mind. Little lights moving like worms frolicked before his eyes, and the breath of despair had a nasty smell. That was when he noticed his right arm was not there and began to use only his left. It was True Bell who helped him up from the grass, soaped his tangled hair and told him what he had to do.

"Go on," she said. "I'll tell you how to find him, or what's left of him. It don't matter if you find him, it's the going that counts."

So he collected what she said he should collect, packed it all and set out. During the journey he worried a lot about what he looked like, what armor he could call on. There was nothing but his trunk and the set of his jaw. Ready, ready to meet the black and savage man who bothered him and abused his arm.

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Instead he met, ran into, a wild black girl smashing herself in the head with fright, who lay now in the other room being tended by a black boy. He thought she was to be his lance and his shield; now he would have to be his own. Look into the deer eyes with the dawning gray of his own. He needs courage for that, but he has it. I need courage too, the power to do what Dutchess of Marlborough do all the time: relinquish being an adored bud clapsing its future, and dare to open wide, let the layers of my petals go flat, show the cluster of stamen dead center for all to see. {What an awful thing to be 23 years old in 1873 [mtk]}



Now what?

Help is on the way. Health is on the way. We need a miracle.  
now.Now. NOW! Why have YOU forsaken us? We are your children.MER-  
CY! YES! MERCY! NOW MY GOD!

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What  
are you trying now?

Oh my son oh my song oh my son oh my son oh my son oh my son oh my

Hungry? Here. Do you want his life? His Life? Mine? Mind?  
Hungry? Chomp? Chomp! Eat away the sons. Eat away the mothers.  
Greedy, oh so greedy . MORE? Would you like MORE? When is it  
enough? When are you full and can leave this one alone? Where is  
the HELP? THE MERCY? THE GRACE? JESUS COME! JESUS COME DOWN HERE,  
COME DOWN HERE COME BY HERE NOW HEAR MY PLEA! save SAVE MY SON! HE  
IS IN TROUBLE!!!!!!! AMEN.

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When he fell in love with himself, he then began to love others.  
When he respected himself, he then began to respect others.

All things would then be possible, if only, if only, if only....

Can there be a yes? YES?! And can there be a help available  
if the yes is announced? YES YES YES YES YESYESYESYESYESYESAMEN.

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