



Somewhere Sings About the Sky

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Magic

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[A Digital Fable, or Une Fable Digital]

Even the warts didn't stop his hands from reading. Not knowing about something never prevents it from being, his thousands of fingertip eyes went right on seeing.

Some years later he'd find someone who must have thought his same thoughts..he liked the way alphabetic cyphers like thoughts couldn't be tracked down to where they lived, that they were considered things that could be actions at the same time, yet no one seemed to know where they came from or went. Adults liked to tell him that there were five separate ways to know things but sometimes he tasted the air, other times he heard it. And his fingertips spoke that private language that even his tongue could not understand, only utter with his windpipe's invisible conspiracy with that strange worm for a muscle. Forty-seven other muscles making up his face reflexed into a thing called a 'smile' when he was revisited by that placeless thought stored in a somewhere they called 'memory', seeing his idea of a flower whose buds he watered and fed every day through the opening made when his nose—and that worm's familiar slime called 'saliva'— told these muscles it was time.

One way of knowing seemed more powerful than the other four, olfactory they taught him was its name; in the same lesson it was said that people who lived in caves a long time ago needed this more than any of the others besides eyes, before their mouths knew how the pink-budded flower that lived in that dark personal cave could help them make sounds for their ears, he suspected. The best sounds were made in what they called singing

even without the musical instruments, like the ones he is told to pretend to play at St. Ovid's Fair.

That man whose appealing words he discovered later sang of this changed way of being so that its rhythm seemed to chant its way into his 'somewhere' memory's incantation reverently standing on feet worthy of the name meter, feet that impressed upon his mind's crooked pathways and cramped wet fields invisible power taken as a branding by honeyed sustenance from it and its willing obedient lips as they joined in that song:

"The eye of man hath not heard,

The ear of man hath not seen,

Man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive,

Nor his heart to report what my dream was."

The frenetic happenings at the Fair celebrating St. Ovid, patron of the ear, was not seen or heard before or since he was later told. Among the few selected to play in the show he then had counted himself fortunate to be part of sitting as he had beneath a sky whose brisk winds soothed balmily his soiled face almost hidden by too-large adult-sized blank paper lenses, his eyes, presumed to be ever-idled, hearing the wind whistling through the man-made tunnel his face's taunting accouterment had fashioned accidentally, his ears seeing twittering aviary droppings onto heads as if in displeasure at the foolish mortal cacophony they were both helpless to prevent. Fingers atop loose atonal strings as mimes antics mimicked his soundless plucking of heartstrings reporting wordlessly conceived songs understood by the sky within and overhead.

And with the fretwork of the violin his fingertips translated sadness, his somewhere mind hearing tomorrow's routine alms-gathering refrain whose coins were surrendered to the House of Quinze-Vingts, itself an offering to an invisible deity who had deemed that the then French monarch's crusaders, three hundred in number, should have had their eyes heatedly poked by Saracens in honor of their pictorially faceless jealous godhead.

Fretting his mind and violin thus, his running stationary nose dreamed of that holy heavenly head without any face and whether it, too, had ever had eyes or a nose; his old visitor, memory reminded him that cyphers forming words describing things were foolish mortal magic tricks able to control muscles by simply being conjured in the arbitrary forms of thought. This happened every time memory drunkenly barged in wearing its clown garments, urging his face to show the opposite of its, and his ears to join in with his fingertips in showing him that god's head as some phonetic 'old factory' was a upturned senseless bloody nose whose endless production was suffering and death. How wise, he would think, was the man who had had similar ways of seeing the world, the one who sang about the ways of knowing about things, in leaving out the nose,

like the god's head seemed to do, unwilling to face the smell of flesh, decaying always, slowly or suddenly. It was all this invisible faceless god's will—the testamentary kind, like the King had made when he suddenly died in Syria on a second Crusade. What would St. Ovid do on arriving in Heaven? The boy known as Lucius (even his name was unreliably sourced, as with all French orphaned) put it to his silent conversant, the festival's patron of the useless ears a faceless god had long ago judged deaf even to His wisdom.

The rag surrounding his ears was giving the devil to all his sensory organs, an ally to an unappreciated Lucifer seeming to forbid any more wasting of calories on so unsympathetic a creator. Even that wise man who shook that deity's too-worshipfully warring world with a spear could not have sensed that such a one as approached him could exist as he shook the cup whose tin seemed to compete with the freezing air for its ability to make every nose wish its own god-like absence.

The sound the thin atmosphere allowed as the coin collided with its metallic container tasted to Henri like copper, cousin to its tin under a star too distant to bronze naught but his chapped skin.

“Sir, this is an ecu, you have gifted me far too much!”

The generous intent of the donor, while a rarity, was eclipsed by the never yet heard reluctant receipt in such a way that St. Ovid's own ears may have taken note of this gilded coin worth a day's wages, causing some hagiographer to also take note of its donor.

Among the audience at the less than saintly Festival of St. Ovid that September day had been the donor, a veteran of voluntary service under Lafayette's American adventure and, while it had been some years since that day in 1771, he recognized the boy's delicate though wart-afflicted hands that had so caressed the frets of the usually aural instruments offering into that shared sky of yesteryear, and, again, at this moment his ear had seen the song it had silently played about the sky known by men and their saints as the Heavens.

The master of the House dispatched the boy to the man's custody with the same haste as informed his receipt of the ample supply of livres tendered for what the stunned master diffidently presumed was the going price of pederasty.

Once bathed and deloused, the boy's ears could for a brief time no longer see, his hands unable to taste. He had not slept, yet his eyes, as ever, lived in the dark light of a dream. Could he sleep and wake together, his somewhere clownish mind asked him, and Lucius's silent moving lips repeated the almost unbearable rhetorical query for the man whose cyphers he's seen with his fingers. The part of his wondering mind he called his somewhere memory remembered that his fingertips had as yet not seen much of that man's sung

feet, as the few meters of them he had seen were with his ears, and he thanked St. Ovid for this, but wanted more.

His immediate saint who was not called Ovid entered his quarters; his unchosen god-like nose had not, for the time being at least, smelled the coming of injury or death from above's old factory owner.

"Come to the table, I want to show you something; it is a way of seeing the world through cyphers" he reassured the boy called Lucius nose and ears.

Seated next to him, without touching him—as the man knew this was far too alien to his young ward's heightened senses—the young one learned about a way of seeing using raised dots. As his fingertips visited these intaglio arrangements they stirred his somewhere mind's as yet untrod paths dust into harmless whirls of winsome meaning, all the while his benefactor recounting his exploits with the cannonading French troops on necessary moonless nights when their lives depended on somehow knowing each other's movements, the mother of the mother-lode innocently placed beneath his ward's thousand-eyed fingertips.

One particular night's tale caused the young ward's ears to lend such attention as St. Ovid himself may have offered, his warted fingers now spread out like spider-spun silken struts upholding a patient sticky web of wonder Lucius's face had become, the warts but the spider's silk-spun future meals. His ears seemed to twitch, their keenness unknown until then, as if they had become attached the exquisitely sensitive furry feet of the tiniest of arachnids governing his face's entrapment.

"What I will tell you now is sworn to the highest occupants of the sky known as Heaven...." his eyes habitually gesturing skyward as if the young ward's silky skein of a face might have then needed mere eyes.

"That creature, known to most as but a donkey, was this night a savior to mortal men..." Mssr. Hauy's own ears, surprised by the taciturn youth's spare voice, perked.

"It was such a one as was ridden by our Savior, the Bible says" his excitement aimed at St. Ovid more than the grumpy Father figure of the older testament.

"Well said, my...son" his pause aimed at both the youth and the holy scriptural ass's rider.

"As I was saying, that night I tapped with my fingers the message in dots, as it were, on the creature's muscular neck, instruction on where to take the cyphered missive, to which his neck gestured a nod as our...eyes do know it, and he was off, and toward the proper destination, assuring our victory over the British."

The young man then recited the very words of the spear shaker his somewhere mind had stored from but one hearing at the puppet show near to the place where mendicants avoided bullying, adding: "These are the words of one known as Bottom, weaver of dreams; your tale, it was woven of dots, dots that were woven together, and his muscles they did as those of my fingers tips eyes have done" and his silken face's forty seven conspired

happily at the place where his tongue's buds opened with unseasonable colors. Perceiving the hue of vermilion come over the boy's face (it having been fertilized by his somewhere mind's merest imagined thought of such a hue) Mssr. Hauy was reminded to lament openly the thankfully unseen by Lucius older housemate of Quinze-Lingt attired in red, donning the ears of a donkey, beating out a primitive cadence to the others mimetic playing on instruments. Lucius, smiling unconsciously, affirmed his knowledge of this risible cruelty, shrugging his now less burdened shoulders, uttered a puerile quip as balm to the conscience of Hauy as well as his own taxed pulse: "Sad tail, yes? I so like it when the ear confounds the eye's troubled invention of different meanings for the very same sounds!" They laughed as friends, their ears having detected mutual braying sounds of the very creature at issue.

So practiced had the boy become man in the years that ensued that Mssr. Hauy, owner of a polyglot flowery tongue, utilized his translator appointment to the Sun King to gain audience for his student whose performance so impressed the court as to endow the globe's first and only school for the blind.

"From the very bottom of the body of my subjects though you have come you have subjected us to what—had we not all witnessed it—would otherwise be but a strange dream!" the King had declaimed.

And Peter, the Housemaster of the ancient Quinze-Vingts home for the blind beggarly unfortunates, was sent for to personally see to the construction of a place for Mssr. Hauy's new charges. Though but seen as a mere carpenter, he has seen this unforeseen development as wrought by an unseen hand, taking it as an opportunity rarely given the commoner, and for redemption of his slight regard for his once ward and his ilk. On hearing his voice instructing the builders, Lucius's capacious ears greeted its vigor with an equally growing confidence, Peter even seeking Lucius's help in placing the mechanism for the translation of ordinary eyes cyphers unto the third dimension as if in complement of the proverbial third eye the written of by Descartes the mathematician and philosopher. In that space and that time hundreds of manuscripts had been produced and Lucius, now wiser as a consequence of Peter's industry, had begun to assist Mssr. Hauy in his official duties to the increasingly harried monarch.

Having learned of the spear shaker's schooling in the tongues of the ancients, Lucius's understanding of Latin and little Greek (he employed the bardic excuse of its difficulty) grew such that it proved useful in a near future drenched in the bloody ancient art of revolting conflict. When Lucius put the innocent yet profound question to Mssr. Hauy as to how the bloody Latin root for the alphabet's 'sanguine' seemed to contradict its denotation of optimism, he knew that Lucius would be ready for the chaos to come. In the interim, his fingers eyes beheld the worthiness deemed to reside in the beast of that American night. He absorbed all he could concerning the 'golden ass' (as the Saint called Augustine had named it) and its prowess, including an obscure unfinished

poem by the Italian Machiavelli and the quixotically praised mount of Cervantes Panza.

The young artillery officer was himself ready as well.

And sanguinary were the times, heads alienated from their familiar shoulders until the headwaters ran to flood as France became the most unnatural of rivers overflowing with human hemoglobin inhumanely loosed. Its season's end came when the river craved the flood makers' own.

The Corsican was less concerned with others past bloodlines and far more with his own's invention as transfusion of modernity's reshaping of Europe enlightened by his aggrandizement. Practicality his guide, he knew his French was only serviceable, and Mssr. Hauy's allegiance was embodied in his many spoken and written tongues, and his wish to keep it in its original house. Among this polyglot array was the artilleryman's great ally, coded cyphers such as this new ally had employed in America. And it was in this dark realm that Lucius became their chief adjutant. The Grand Armee was, thus, seemingly grander.

Seeing the constancy of Lucius's company with Mssr. Hauy, the would-be Emperor inquired of his useful mouthpiece as to the necessity.

"Good sir...I am unsure as to how to address you..."

"Never mind formalities, they are for the populace; tell me of this boy."

"Very well; I came upon him as in a turn of Fortune herself. He had been the object of much abuse and derision, both in the Quinze-Vingt and as one of their mendicants....I chanced upon him on my walk from church service, tendering him a coin, whereupon he cautioned me that I had been overly generous. It seems that he knew its value instantly, by touch alone."

Bonaparte appeared dumbfounded, then spoke of an incident in his own childhood.

"In my school days I became fascinated with geometrics, and the shape of things...how the Egyptians and their pyramids came to be; did you know that their goddess Isis had been worshipped here, in Paris? It is written, in the Bibliotheque Nationale, by Lemair de Belge that the very name, Par-Isis, speaks of this; we shall see soon enough, for we embark soon for Egypt, and Isis's mysteries" and he walked off as though no reply could equal his positing of his thorough understanding.

The next day emissaries of the foremost man of the five-fold Directory of France arrived at Hauy's quarters with orders to move he and Lucius into rooms at the palace.

Arrangements had also been made for the mechanisms of translation to accompany them.

The first night Lucius found himself awakening surrounded by sands, the repetitive wave action his ears reporting the nearness of a large body of water from which his beastly ears detected the emergence of one

calling herself Isis, whose instruction was made to Lucius that he would journey to Egypt whereat a temple priest would greet him; at such greeting, he was to eat the flower of the priestly garland, gaining the form of human sight called by the name insight, unrestricted to any one of the senses.

Long immune from circadian rhythms, knowing nothing of night's common marriage to sleep he was unable to separate dream from waking. Feeling his face's lids for what had always seemed to compare to what he knew of sand

and finding none his curious digits eyed his ears, now shrunken and hairless.

Resting hands on his temples, then, came such sight within—'remembering', so strange the cyphering, as to connect to some lost appendage. So joined to his somewhere mind Lucius recites in whispers thoughts of that Byron of rhyme, and ahead of time so that Lucius, through an unmeasured space found future cypherings decoded: '...by gazing on thyself grown blind, thou taught'est the rest to see...thine only gift hath been the grave, to those that worshipped thee...'

At Toulon finding himself among the many savants of the sciences Bonaparte had admired since boyhood made Lucius all the more curious about Egypt's Isis who had seemed in his sandy stupor to foretell this very passage. Was the goddess who seemed to inhabit all places also there in that somewhere of his mind's growing awareness, singing to it in a boundless sky? Was she there, governess of his tiny temples, showing Napoleon's fall from Byronic grace? That she so used those seemingly lame—he of ordinary sight, the poet of foot, though not its rhyming meter—impelled him toward her greatest of all temples.

Aboard ship for his eastern tongues deciphering, Mssr. Hauy had insured that his young prodigy was introduced to these, his fellow savants, some of whom mistook him for the 'idiot' sort. But not the studious Champollion, as taken with the glorious etchings of vastly tall temple walls and columns.

"Broadsheets, in stone" his succinct assessment in reply to Lucius' curiosity. "Yet, while detailed, even mundane, most seem to speak of mysteries locked within their formal mystery; there is everything to be learned, least by the eye alone" his kind deference to Lucius' only apparent malady only incidental, as his sincerity shone through in honoring perhaps greater sensory means.

Lucius hoped to requite this gesture with the sightedness his body had known even within his mother's roseate waters—as his increasingly poetic somewhere memory knew only her Christian name of Rosetta, it so consecrated her womb.

Whether he owed the coincident discovery of a black stone bearing Greek translation of Egyptian inscription on its basalt face to Isis was affirmed by his vaunted ear which heard the shouts of the French soldier as he approached one of her temples to find Champollion examining its inscriptions. "Rosetta! A stone of great value it is thought...." was the modern message of ancient words.

The day before, running his hands over the delicately carved image of Isis Lucius had murmured his mother's name, with the French scientist nearby; after an innocent "What did you say?" aimed at Lucius by the scientist still absorbed in his unrelated task, the reply caused the serious student of ancient oriental languages to turn his head toward Lucius and remark that there was a town nearby of that name, but 50 kilometers from Alexandria, where they stood.

Thereafter, Lucius was by his side daily.

Finally running his hands across the inscriptions, he knew the Greek found there, but not its meaning, explaining that neither did the spear shaker both he and the scientist admired. "The ciphers, they are arranged like ours at the school" Lucius blurted.

"The eye of man hath not heard, yes?" spoke the scholar, his words telling Lucius's ear of the tongue's smiling flower, its roseate flower.

Lucius knew that flower would soon perish, as the soldiers slowly did, their heroic leader's abandoning actions fulfilling the Isaic-inspired Byronic framing in unhappy rhyme. Other soldiers soon came, wearing roseate coats, who spirited the stone of Rosetta to England.

But he had learned enough of the Isaic tongue's intaglio, bas and bar reliefs as to have relieved their silence of some meaning, itself yet mysterious. In France, less mystery surrounded an embattled Bonaparte, whose increasing desperation caused the once adored now self-made Emperor to relieve himself of a too-distant part in America, forbodingly named Louisiana. Mssr. Haüy's English tongue could not forestall the cruel terms of 3 cents an acre for almost a fourth of a continent. French and American broadsheets depicted the seller as a four-legged ass whose crown encompassed enlarged ears upon an asinine head.

Mssr. Haüy, now at an age well beyond the demands of his new employers, the hapless Bourbons, sought to position his effective son in fact and affection at their needy court. This came to pass, despite the enduring resentment of Bonaparte's desolation of France and much of Europe. Beethoven had angrily withdrawn his dedication of his Third Symphony, Byron had done as Isis intimated and his daughter, the accomplished assistant to Mr. Babbage, had designed a code for a machine which Lucius sought to use in the school for the

unsighted he now oversaw. His first act was to gain approval for the striking of a commemorative coin for his surrogate father, whose demise was nearing.

In addition, an American painter had asked to create a portrait of Mssr. Haury to serve as the coin's image; his admiration for him was so great that he refused any commission in return.

Between sessions with an increasingly frail Haury, the portraitist Morse sought the company of Lucius, now having taken the surname of Haury by way of adoption.

"I am aware that you have painted Lafayette; perhaps you know that my...father served under him" Lucius offered.

"Indeed, good sir; I must say that that service seems to have stood you in good stead, owing to both his bravery and, of course, your mastery of the ciphering he took away."

Morse had asked for a specimen of this code which was given, along with some instruction as to its efficacy.

Years later, it would influence the world in ways that perhaps only Lucius could fully appreciate.

"The ear hath not seen'..indeed, those were his very words, from Shakespeare, I believe" stated Morse back in America, unveiling his Morse code.

And, as he spoke he held in his hand the silver coin minted in honor of the late Mssr. Haury whose image he had created. His hand rubbing unconsciously so that it had warmed the coin, he was reminded to mention a confidence uttered to him by his portrait subject.

"I must tell you an anecdote, told to me by the great Frenchman and friend of the unsighted, at least in the normal sense of sight; you see....there, our habit of using the eye to describe understanding....what I mean to say is that it was a donkey which began much of his life's work; indeed, while negotiating the sale of Louisiana he spoke of it to President Jefferson who, I'm told, urged it as the symbol for his Democratic Party...."

Just then a crow flew onto an open window sill, squawking in bursts that seemed sequential, even regular.

"Aha, there, he must have dispatched this clever bird from the sky, somewhere, to sing to us his language not unlike mine here demonstrated and, I confess, inspired by that same sky's great observer, though unsighted, Mssr. Lucius Haury..."

At the time of his own demise, the junior Haury was said to have had a similar visitor, a black raven, perhaps from Mr. Poe's American flock. As it cackled into his receptive perceptive ear he knew that everywhere, somewhere, sings about the sky code, what he told his scribe at his bedside: "Code, it is Life's own memory.....the sky, code's invisible slate...."

Imprinted upon the commemorative coin struck in his memory, between his all-seeing digits that evening, his last, were his last words:

“Somewhere Sings About the Sky”.

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