

Full Excerpt: Source Unknown, Author Unknown

cold

cold and the wall is wet against my shoulder and the wall does not feel like a wall it feels like skin and the skin is breathing and i should move i should move i should

move

i moved

the alley is longer than it was. it was thirty steps. i counted them. i counted them when i came in but i have been walking for longer than thirty steps and the alley is longer than it was and the bins are different bins and the bins were red and now they are not red they are a colour i can't say. i can't say the colour.

the colour has no name.

the colour has a name but it isn't a name a mouth can hold.

something is dripping.

drip

drip

it isn't water. water doesn't *sound* like that. water sounds like water and this sounds like

drip

—

i haven't eaten. i know i haven't eaten. my stomach has stopped asking. my stomach asked for a long time and then it stopped and now it is quiet and the quiet is worse than the asking was. the asking was loud and angry and the quiet is the quiet of a thing that has gone somewhere else to wait for me.

mum used to make the bread on sundays.

mum used to

the bread on sundays

was that mum? i think it was mum... do i have a mum? it might just have been the woman.

it might have been the woman before mum... or after mum?

there was a woman. her hands smelled like

her hands smelled like

—
a voice

—not in front of me. behind me. inside me. behind the inside of me. it is speaking a word i almost recognize. it is speaking a word that is almost in my language but not quite. if i listen harder i can almost—

iiiiirrrroonnnnaaahhdddznnaaeeiii

i don't know that word.

i don't know that word but my throat knows it.

my throat tried to say it back and i pressed my hand against my throat and told my throat **no**.

my hand is dirty.

my hand is so dirty. i don't remember when my hand got dirty.

i remember it being clean.

i remember running it under the tap and there was steam and there was soap and the soap smelled like

the soap smelled like

the soap

—
something is *following* me.

i won't turn around. if i turn around it will not be there but if i turn around it will know that i looked and if it knows that i looked then the next time i turn around it will be there.

so i won't turn around.

i will keep walking.

i will count my steps again.

one

two

three

four

five

five

five

five

five

five

i cannot get past five. every time i try to say six the word goes somewhere else.

the word goes into the wall and the wall accepts the word and the wall is breathing again and i should not be touching the wall but i am because if i don't touch the wall i will fall down and if i fall down then the thing behind me

the thing behind me

the thing

—

i saw a light.

it was a long way away and it was the wrong colour. lights are *not* that colour. lights are yellow or white or sometimes blue when they are old. this light was the colour that the bins had become.

this light was not a name.

this light made my eyes hurt in a way that was not the front of my eyes but the back of them, the inside of them, the place behind them where the dreams come from.

i did not go to the light.

i am proud of that.

i *think* i am proud of that. i think pride is a thing i can still have.

i held it in my chest for a few steps and then it slipped out through a hole in my shirt and i tried to catch it but my hand wasn't fast enough and now the pride is on the ground somewhere behind me and the thing behind me is probably eating it and that is fine

that is fine

that is

that

—

[inaudible whispering]

don't run. you are safe. just rest.

[whispering in a language I do not understand]

twenty-six

—

it said *my name*.

it said my name and the name was right. the name was the name the woman called me when i was small and she was angry but not very angry and the voice had the shape of her voice almost exactly except for the part in the middle where the voice was not a voice but something *underneath* a voice. something that voices grow on top of.

and i wanted to answer it.

i wanted to answer it so badly that my mouth opened and i had to put my whole hand inside my mouth and bite down on my fingers and the taste of the dirt on my fingers and the blood seeping from them was the only thing that kept me from answering and i cried a little bit i think because there was something wet on my face and it wasn't rain

it wasn't rain

—

the alley ends

the alley ends here. it ends in a wall.

the wall is the same wall i came in through. i think.

i don't know. the walls are all the same wall now.

i think they always were.

—

i am sitting down.

i didn't decide to sit down. my legs decided.

my legs have been deciding things without me for a while now.

i should be angry at them but i am not because they did so much. they did so much.

they walked me here and they walked me through the alley and they walked me through the alley a second time and a third time and they only stopped because they couldn't go any further and that is fair.

that is fair.

—

there are shapes at the edges.

they are not coming closer. they are already as close as they were going to be.

they were *always* this close.

i just couldn't see them before. they have been standing at the edges of every room i have ever been in and i never looked sideways enough to notice and now my eyes are sideways and now i can see them and they are

they are

[a description that cannot be held in a sentence]

—

drip

drip

twenty-six [in her voice]

twenty-six [in a voice that is not hers and never was]

—

the cold is not cold anymore. the cold is warm.

the cold has been warm for a while.

i should be afraid that the cold is warm because i know the cold being warm means something is wrong but i am too tired to be afraid. i used all of my afraid earlier.

there isn't any more.

someone will have to grow me some more afraid before i can use it again and there isn't anyone here to grow it for me and that is fine

that is fine

that is

—

mum

—

my eyes are closing.

i didn't decide that either. my eyes decided.

my eyes have been wanting to close for a long time and i kept telling them no and they kept asking and now they are not asking anymore they are just doing it and the shapes at the edges are not at the edges anymore they are

they are closer

they are

—

—

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[Excerpt from, [Source Unknown], [Author Unknown], Date Uncertain, presumed to be PFC929 after thorough post-cognitive analysis.]