

Work at the asylum has been taxing, as of late; after enough years, the study of madmen and the mentally inept begins to grow stale, as you hear the old lady reminisce about her dead cat for the thirtieth time in the hour, or are tugged at by the schizophrenic who wails about the clattering of the pipes. Doctor Wilson has advised me to, on particularly draining days, record my grievances with my patients in writing, so as to avoid the capital sin of taking out my frustrations on them directly.

I will narrate, in this entry, the account of my experiences with a particularly unnerving senior Frenchman who suffers from scopophobia, among many other things. He sits alone, often wherever there are the least people, smiling to himself. Typically I pay him no mind, as he does not obstruct my duties or interrupt me on my patrol often.

However, yesterday, he called over weakly for a doctor, not bothering to seek us out due to his visual impairment. I was on my way to my lunch break at the time, but I was the closest one to him, so with a heavy groan I trudged to his side. He bid me to sit down, and asked my name rather politely, so I told him; he said that he was getting on in his years, and wished to relay a story from his youth related to his incarceration in this place to someone. With an unnoticed roll of my eyes I agreed, and he began to speak.

He began his story in the streets of Paris, some four decades ago he said this was- he sung many praises of the city's lights, her bustle and spirit, her intellectual charm, and bottomless history. He described the French capital like a long lost lover, with a doting smile on his lips as he reminisced. I tuned out much of his speech, and from the drought of my responses he must have inferred to quicken the pace.

He told me that he had once worked as a museum curator, much to my surprise; he narrated how he rode atop his bike to the front of the museum he was employed on one fateful autumn morning, describing the building as a vault of our nation's history. That day, the museum was closed; the only reason he was in the building was because a colleague of his had received a package which he desperately desired a second opinion on.

Stepping into the dusty, crypt like inventory room, my patient described looking about the sealed crates and veiled artefacts throughout the chamber with a sense of belonging and purpose, as if he had been guided to hallowed ground; he told me that he often felt that way when he arrived at the building, and from that I inferred he had much passion for his craft, to my respect.

His colleague soon emerged from an offshoot closet, bringing with him a barrage of dust and cobwebs, along with a single box that he cradled closely in his arms. The patient testified to how he almost immediately inquired as to the nature of the box's contents, to which his colleague explained that he had discovered an unmarked package by the door while locking up the previous night, describing how it sat directly beneath the glow of one of the building's exterior lights, as if the

illumination itself acted as guide for the mysterious container. I rolled my eyes once more, rubbing the bridge of my nose from the clear allusions to superstition.

His co-worker carefully removed the object from its container; it was a lustreless golden statue that showed much age, though no signs of direct damage. Its form was similar to that of a human eye, but around its top a number of stakes, or perhaps nails, he was not sure, had been smashed into the statue and also seemingly coated in gold. Neither of them knew what to make of such an icon, and at that point I must admit I had actually begun to think more of the patient's words and less of my lunch.

My patient began to explain a strange sensation he had felt when he was there, examining that eye; as he stared into its lifeless core, he felt more and more unnerved by its nature. He felt his mind screaming at him the more he regarded the icon, as if its mere existence was a sin against the brain itself. He felt a desire to run, to turn away, but was entranced by an ineffable curiosity.

For hours, him and his colleague debated the nature of the iris; they first believed it to be an Aztec religious icon, then debated if its origins could be found in the east; they then shifted to Africa, then back to the Aztecs, briefly to the Incas, and then concluded by throwing their hands up in the air. The object bore no telling signs of culture or history, no scratch or dent, no ancient god that it could be perceived as an avatar of; it simply existed.

I noticed as he spoke, my patient began to cup his hands around where his eyes should have been, shivering slightly. I asked him if he was alright, he said yes and took a deep breath, before continuing on with his tale. He explained that by the time they had finished their debate, the hours of the morning had long stretched into the back half of the evening.

Shocked at the time, the colleague began to panic, explaining he had a reservation later in the evening; my patient reassured his co-worker, promising to lock up and do some more research into the object at home. Relieved, the colleague offered a thousand thanks, before departing into the night's maw.

Alone within the complex of the museum, my patient noted how as he made his rounds, checking to make sure all the windows and doors were properly sealed, he had the unshakable sensation of being watched. He specified it was not merely the anxiety of being alone late at night, it was not his mind playing tricks on him; he felt a piercing, inescapable gaze from every direction, as all encompassing as the air he breathed.

There was no sanctuary from it; everywhere he looked, he endured that indescribable feeling of prolonged eye contact, and slowly, as he made his rounds, the feeling began to creep up and into him more and more. He began to stride, then to jog, then to dash, sweating, heart pumping as he went. This was far beyond anxiety, he told me, rocking back and forth as he did. This was terror.

As he went, he combed every room, every rafter, seeking for a source of the gaze, thinking that if he could just identify the root of his guttural discomfort, he could rationalize it and overcome it. But the museum was lifeless besides my poor, terrified patient.

He paused again, asking me if I had heard of the uncanny valley, a primal fear our brains endure when we observe something that is close to human, but unnervingly different. I nodded as he explained that what he felt in that museum, that night, was similar, but instead of observing something human like, he felt something observing him. Something wrong. Something ineffable.

My patient, at that point, left the museum, striding out into the darkness of the night and hastily locking the building behind him. The feeling did not cease, and he elected to simply rush home as fast as he possibly could; yet, in his fit of terror, he forgot his bicycle, a fact he did not recall until much later.

Paris was uncharacteristically quiet; as he hastily walked down the empty streets, his path illuminated only by the light of a few overhead street lamps and the full moon above, my patient glanced around in a frenzy, trying to find the source of the infernal sensation. He combed every alley he passed, and glanced behind himself in paranoia more times than he could put a figure to; and yet, the only thing that stared back were the stars above.

In the all encompassing embrace of the darkness around him, he came to an epiphany. It was the stars themselves, the celestial eyes, the sentinels of the cosmos, that stared down at him; they were angels, he proclaimed, but not guardian angels; merely angels of observation, curious as to the affairs of such little beings as men, like a child with a colony of ants; and tonight, they had focused their gaze down upon him.

For a moment, he felt relief; he fell to his knees, staring up at the grandiose celestial bodies above him. He did not believe they expected anything, simply desiring to watch, and he found the slightest comfort in that fact of his mind's own creation; I believed it to be a construct to protect his consciousness from descending further into this fit of madness.

And yet, despite this moment of relief, more was yet to come. The voice of a woman called to him from a nearby alley; there was a lady of the night, chest bare, calling out to him from the sidelines. She asked if he wanted to take the edge off, he asked if she could see them; she was confused, and he stepped up from his worshipping position to explain closer to her.

He began to wail before me, crying that he tried to point her to them, he tried to show her their eyes, but she would not see, she was blind to those above. He began to slam his fist against his forehead in agony, and I thought at that moment I had lost him, but he breathed for a couple of moments, placing his hands around his temples, rocking back and forth, before resuming his position in the narrative of that night.

As the woman had turned and fled, he was left alone once again, but this time, he noted, he was not really alone. They were with him, the stars, the old ones who had watched man grow from seed to sprout to ash, who had seen our kind's failures and successes, who had not helped nor harmed throughout the many millennia gone. The watchers, he said, had always been there, looking down upon us; he was just the first to look back.

But then, there was another; the strongest gaze of them all; it pierced right through his very being, as if it was a divine bullet; there was none of him it could not see, for every emotion, every thought, every concept had been exposed to it. But my patient did not take comfort in this gaze, and he described how the stars themselves began to warn him, telling him that for his own sake he could see no longer.

It was when he began to pant and shriek from the sheer weight of the eyes upon him he saw it; the moon itself had been swallowed up by a single eye of titanic size; its pulsating iris stared directly into him from the abyss above, and this time, he could not stare back. He could not meet its gaze, for it was like a crushing wave of unbridled force, pushing him down against the ground, submitting to the perpetual, burning observation of the higher being.

My patient lay down upon the ground, his chin forced upwards and held in place by an ethereal strength unmatched in the known realms. He struggled, he tried to shut his eyes, he screamed for help, and yet not one single being could be of any aid to him. The moon stared through him, and this time forced him to meet its gaze, and my patient described in agonizing detail the strength of his sobs as his retinas began to burn from the moon's stare, before finally...it all ended.

He was able to see once more, better than ever; he could observe every element of the layered worlds, seeing through dimensions themselves as if he were everywhere and yet nowhere at once. He had been gifted sight, true sight, and none would take it from him. No matter where this earthly realm moved him, no matter what dusty, forgotten corner it prescribed him, he would be above all other beings, for he could see what all of us below could not even dream of.

I stared in shock at my patient as his tale concluded, looking directly into his long shut eyelids. He was not merely blind, no; both of his eyes had been gone since before the day he had arrived, the sockets completely empty and stitched shut for the sake of all around him. And yet, he proclaimed sight beyond measure still, refusing to acknowledge my claims that his eyes were completely void.

Upon my return home, the fanaticism and passion of my patient's tale had stuck with me; though I did not believe a single lick of it, it still shook me to my very core, like a particularly good ghost story. I felt terrified long after the story had concluded, my body shaking in responsive horror throughout the rest of my day. But, since I have returned home and begun to write this, I have realized that this fear is not because of the words of a madman or the chilling nature of a tale.

This primal urge to scream and run, to turn tail and flee, to shrink into a ball and never let myself be discovered...it is that same feeling my poor patient described; the piercing gaze. The eyes from every direction, I feel them, burning through me, into my very being; they do not merely observe, they dissect, picking apart every atom of my being in search of an unknown truth.

I do not know what will happen to me after my pen leaves this paper, but I am terrified. I believe that the greatest mercy bestowed upon mankind is blissful ignorance, that we could perceive something ineffable and never delve into its meaning, covering up that which we cannot understand with every barrier imaginable. We should never endeavor to observe what is beyond us, for humanity exists in a peaceful lie, and to disturb that deception would doom us all to madness.

As I look up from this page, I turn my gaze through the open window of my room, up into the inky abyss beyond. The stars look down upon me, glowing with a heavenly fervor as they do not act as judge or jury, but merely spectators; the moon as well, in its titanic ocular visage, stares down at me. And I will stare back at them.