

EXTRACT #21 (ANNA)

She passes that way another time and the portrait has been removed. The face of the shrouded figure imposes itself upon her for days afterwards and will not go away, printed onto her retina in negative. Perhaps, she thinks, it is the mad architect of the place, a mysterious and malevolent benefactor, a magus, an alchemist whose ghost walks the halls along with her at night, conjuring up ancient spells, dispensing calculations and formula extracted from recondite experiments.

*She still says nothing?*

She had been getting better, albeit slowly. And then, at almost the exact moment, everything came flooding out and everything came grinding to a halt.

*So suddenly?*

Perhaps this rupture was heralding a new kind of figuring out. It had started with an image but was more to do with language...

*What happened?*

It started with remembering the sound of an insect, some kind of cicada she had heard on a summer holiday. One afternoon she was lying back in the grass feeling perfectly at ease and in the rapture of that moment, the chorus of cicadas had been somnolent, enchanting. Now she thought back, the memory left her distracted. It was her own silence now, set against the insistent of the remembered 'voice' of the insect that bothered her. She imagined each insect to have two dark and pearlescent wings that gave the appearance of a carapace split into two sections, like a brain. That was the moment some spark had fired or misfired and she began to speak for the first time in a long time.

*To herself?*

The words came out of her as static, filled with misalignments and repetitions and it seemed to flood back, as though she was swallowing

what had been spoken. There was this need and this repulsion about an absorption into language.

*As a refuge?*

It felt inescapable, almost inevitable.

*And what is it she says?*

The sounds she emits are trying to tell her something but she is not sure what it might be. There is an element of pain and also disgust and also bliss, intoxication.

*She is not 'speaking in tongues'?*

No, I wouldn't want to give the impression of some kind of ersatz religious ecstasy. In fact, the words do make a kind of sense, an abstracted reality, only a few times removed. I need to stress this aspect, the importance of these sounds, her language. The importance to her, I mean. She speaks in front of a mirror, like one who is training to elucidate. She begins a sentence or an abstract statement, then repeats it, repeats it again with a slightly different stress on the words. This continues then breaks down, only to reform with a realigning of the sentence. Then continues again until it becomes a drone, a word trance. Sometimes the sentences form angular, staccato narratives. Sometimes they are random words, misaligned or ill configured.

*How long does this continue?*

It is not constant. I mean it comes and goes. But she feels it is something she needs to work out. In her room, alone. She has no feeling of losing control. It is more like trying to speak with no understanding of syntax or the need for spoken words to go anywhere, to allow them to circulate back to her, at least to her understanding of structure. She feels as though the words, or the abstract structures she forms of words, their rhythm, their sound and inflection and their vibration from off the tongue and into the air, she feels as though all this is building a spiral or labyrinth or invisible field of energy around her. The pain and frustration subside and slowly her confidence grows.

