

Postcards from Venice



Utopia,

Even now it is rather hard to speak of.

I have no idea what they were talking about. Before I left, I mean, they said, here Snake, here are some biscuits, here are your glucosamine injections. Don't eat the meat Snake: it probably is man, or at best dog, and in any case it probably won't be very fresh and if it is, well then you're damn sure it's man! Here are your protein suppositories. These other things are vitamin patches. You can wear them on your thighs. That way you don't taste them. Your cigarettes contain an experimental combustible compound of omega-3, horny goat weed, and electrolytes. They're gonna burn a bit slow but they taste like acai or that's the story anyway and you're lucky we still give you anything that even looks like a cigarette after what happened. Those other boxes that are really cigarettes are for barter only. Maybe you can buy the island from those savages? Ha oh man, we're kidding Snake and that's in poor taste anyhow. But seriously don't touch the real smokes. Because we'll know. We just will.

Well, you know what they didn't know jack shit. Because if they did well then I wouldn't have sat down to an authentic Venetian meal would I? I think they don't know much as is. There are loads of people here, whole boatloads. They are still talking about the architecture and who did what to what buttress and when was a saint and they still put their tongues in each others' mouths from time to time, and when they do that, they still look to the side to hope to see me looking so they can say, oh yeah what if this was the hole in the middle of your skull that I was lapping, lapping at like a sloth, shhlp shhhllp (they say with their terrible small yet thick pink tongues), trying to steal little pieces of to bring back to mine? And they still go out to eat.

And I found the place. You know it's the real deal because the waiters weren't too nice, which would mean that it was just for tourists only, and they weren't too asshole,

which would mean the same thing, a big puffy bravado so everyone can feel like they've had an "Italian experience" and make a scorecard of restaurant service across the continents when they return to their hotel rooms and take their walking shoes off to let those stinky dogs rest and even put them up on the crinkling bedspread, without even washing them first. No, they just were, and more than that, there were honest white tablecloths, clean and starched. I hated the thought of getting wine on them so I stuck to beer. I know, I know.

There might have been a menu but I did not take it because I saw what the others were eating and I knew what I would be too, it's what I dreamt of, risotto al nero di seppia, risotto with little tendrils and slices of cuttlefish and the whole thing black, filled up with the ink of the thing that is cut up. I've been having this recurrent nightmare, but not at night, just awake while eating in which I am utterly convinced that I am going to bite down on the fork, that I am to shatter my teeth even though the whole time I am saying be careful! that's not food, that's a fork and this time it smelled so delicious that I actually stopped worrying about what was going to happen when I put the laden fork in my mouth. When they brought it out to me - I had already finished a beer and made that face while pointing at the empty bottle to say that I will drink another beer, please - I swear even the steam was black, clinging to the corners, whole snarling wraiths of it.

And my god was it good, and hot, and the inky grit was rough on my teeth, so when I caught my reflection in the almost fogged window I grinned and it looked like I had no teeth just a hole in my head. And I haven't been drinking here - you know - and it kinda went to my head, because I felt like those old Japanese women, or not that they are old, but they are young in an old time, Ohaguro it was called, and this was a different standard of beauty and I was the prettiest here with these black choppers. And after that anxiety about the fork and my teeth, that constant grinding fear, it was a relief to

get to pretend that I didn't have anything that could touch metal. So I showed em big to everyone, bared my teeth and I think I was kind of dancing a bit in my chair, they were grinning back those missing grins at me, all of us toothless as babies or old women, and even the waiter laughed a bit even though he sees this every night of his cursed life.

This one face I kept looking toward because it wasn't quite right, he was smiling too but it was as if someone had painted a perfect copy of his face on top of its face, so that it had feedback, a slight tremor, and he was sweating through his gray

polo shirt a bit. And then I noticed that he really was shaking, and that it started at his shoulder and went down his arm to his hand, which was under the table in his lap, and he kept that mirror smile fixed on me as his hand was working away down there.

He was grunting a little bit.

And I just couldn't believe it, I knew just what he was doing, there with that sick smile on his face, that sheen of pleasure, just going to town on himself here, and I said loudly, really sir this is a family restaurant! We are all trying to eat, every last one of us!

He didn't seem to hear me but he shuddered, a rattle, and there was a clatter on the ground, and I looked and saw that it was his dinner knife and it was all red, and just then he brought his hand up to the table and in his hand was a large chunk of his thigh that he had sawed off loose and ragged, the fat bright as days, and he dropped it right onto his risotto and, tears in his eyes, panting, he said

Man can't be expected to live on ink alone!

I thought I was going to be sick and raised my hand to cover my mouth and my hand too was red. And I could not look down because I could feel the raw ache in my thigh and I did not see my knife on the table where it should have been, and none of us could, all of us dawning on what we had been doing, our black teeth clenched and we did not feel much like eating anymore and there is a movement to the door.

And I am not even a thing that has been thrown to the garbage heap and I am not even giving this thigh meat to someone whose children are hungry even though they are already blackened with death. I am not throwing myself in the pot. We are just making a godawful mess, all of us, we don't know how to cook, just to make slices and how.

And how is it that to write this means that we end in red again, that one more thing else has been cut, as if this city was a film but it is not, I cannot let it be. Or how that I cannot see the white tablecloth which was the first stark thing I've seen in so long other than the black ink, which was also very dark. Or that I can't see either because, frankly, there is a blood everywhere.

The rain just started up again. How delicate it is. The canals shimmying in their little percussions. I'm eating a cigarette under what I think should be called an awning.

And really I do miss you like I would miss a piece of me that had been taken away and I'm not just saying that because I think there is actually a substantial piece of me that has now

gone missing, although just like missing you I don't want to look down and see because only then will it finally be gone.

Still, sorry about all the mess. I hope you can read what I wrote through it.

Love,
Snake

Utopia,

The natives get no rest.

On my raft a young girl holds a bird like it is no big deal to do so.

Though I fear that pot bubbles just for me. It has my name on it.

It is too big for even a thousand birds.

I sing loudly to ward them off. Nobody can stomach a warbler.

They have added spices the likes of which I've never known.

And that name is EATER OF MAN

Love,
Snake

-Evan Calder Williams