

## The Red Eye

It is too late even at the point of starting. Now I am caught, obsessed, alone, one. By conjuring the name I raised the single staring eye of the devil, the Red Eye, burning its hole through the shimmering layers of my London. I must finish this thing, capitulate to it utterly. Curse dropped into me as soon as I put pen to paper, I have given it the shape it needed to become, given its form snaking through looping handwriting, I have tangled it with myself. A descent (no longer solid and placed but shifting and falling step by step down the spiral DNA stairwell, tearing myself apart to find these patterns - love and sadness - if I can destroy them and live with shivering blood-filled hole frozen; looking for myself but not finding...) through shadows towards the sun outside, radiating poison from its sick bright hole, bleaching the air blue, the point of fire at its heart unlocked in every cell, the curse... I awoke knowing I had to kill this thing, the only way I know how: let it in, let it take me. I had to speak to my landlord (real matters: slips of paper bearing figures sent by a computer, no name and no face, the world dreams its reality in black ink upon white sheets, bends us to it) the first time I have ever met him - shudder through my system, I could not look long: the Red Eye, richly fertile blood-filled gristle, the imbalance of the curse gloating from his face. Locked in, I must fight through what I have started, a thoughtless flick of the wrist and suddenly the city is shot through by the Eye's stare and I must drag it back through myself, through every cell, unwind the knotted gene-string until the curse possesses me so completely that I will be free...

The Red Eye. The third mind destroyed, no shadowed figure to walk beside us. Now there is only this. The solitary stare of the curse levelled in wrath, ever focussed upon me, crushing me into my shape, no distance in its gaze and no perspective. Only one aim and only one message, the simplicity of meaning eating corrosively at the shifting forms of dreams that veil every building flung upwards from the earth. A secret plastered openly all about me; staring angrily with the goat's long pupil from bus stops, point of departure, we knife through the multiplicities motion offers, our opportunities reduced to a single point, a destiny: we arrive where we started. The dream that is London ripped away by the Red Eye. Oval tube: I realize that I have found it again, named and nailed to the wall, the stare of things dying infecting and overtaking the strange burrowed calligraphy of the underground network, word turned into a curse that precisely echoes every pen stroke, the spread palm the picture of my love now the form of the demon, hidden devil of nothing rising to possess the carnal lines of roads, the pathways in, the skins of buildings, the city the map of my hand written in it I see this demon eating me behind my thin skin; the Red Eye, staring from the hole of every tube window, watching its work upon me.

There was a Japanese girl in my carriage on the underground, collapsed into fantastic shape in her seat, effortlessly sculpted, posing, chin on fist and head half overwhelmed with black hair. A layer of colours upon colour, her whole self thrown into that moment of physical being, stretching and warping the foreground, a buckle in the field of vision. Her dark eyes and dark rich smile were focussed on the long lines of her legs arching elegantly outwards; she need not look any further, knew she had become my fulcrum, bent me away from myself. Cool cruel power, there is nothing even to give, just to take from relentless exegesis of genetic wreck with bloodshot eyes bent on her; she threw me a stare of triumph as she got up - unbreakable, oxymoron of obliquity and transparency - shot arrow-straight upwards, floodlit Centre Point against the nightfall, there is no point me struggling because it is always lost ("...I feel nothing more...") but I watched her anyway as she lifted her superb form and smiled to shatter me, and I turned my head back to watch the plastered-on symbol of the Red Eye, which all the while stared at me, reminding me...

Camden. I emerge to rain, a Mother Sky of heavy clouds trying to wash clean this hideous infected wound. The skin will not close, we must fester publicly, Irish drunk singing shit and some sanctimonious bitch yelling about God to a group of coloured semiotic signs all screaming out for a fuck and for making more our dirt brings us together into this shock of noise and stinking bodies sending up chemical signs to join the neon and the twelve foot silver boots hanging overhead, twee wall of town houses erupting into glitzy plastic crap the stink of money like a wet cunt a hard cock clinging all about me these signs "We Know What You Want" I raise my eyes from a gaggle of starstruck tourists and strung above a moulded shop-front: "the red sun." The Eye, the oldest sign; it is the One, the reduced everything, slayer of all other words, all other hopes. Life-giver in its shock of fire, its meaninglessness raising us from mud, giving us names, it has touched us all and waits within

us to be unveiled. Life-taker as it sinks to the horizon, bleeding from its hole into the clogged city air, its stare the only trace upon our retina as with the final, shuddering second our bodies give in, chemical lines part and leave us only with blackness... The lack of madness is gruellingly physical; as I walk through the concertina of unnamed market-stall streets the ease of motion, of holding myself within my skin, is a screaming agony of absence of pain. Everything carries on, floods about me, a woman waits for a bus and as Chalk Farm Road empties northwards I have to turn back, the nothing tripping all my synapses and ripping up the line of my nerves, move in random figures through the market, knowing that the Red Eye is mine, burning out blind, the fury of making this nothing.

dirty...

In the darkness the devil's eye burns, the coal-red glow of one cigarette. Pulling back another line of destruction until its floating ruined filth hits my eyes, and I briefly allow myself to remember. A sting of defeat as the building shakes to the first tube waking in its warren I dreamed she folded onto the bed drew me down and turned away, her hair bleeding to another colour and she looked up with another face, another name and smiled. She stared at me too long. Splatter of veins pressed wall to wall, our unreadable palms touch skin to skin we still twist this double helix about each other. Every time I return, life leaking out along Clapham Road, south-escaping slug's trail between bone-flesh towers, dirty dreams of Lambeth the vampires here are Blake's strange Gods, they waken to these hungry dreams, stretch their forms to mirror me in the asphalts wide puddles. I wanted more, to act within the total boundary of flesh; if I don't touch all the better, I throw myself to the sky and dream, meeting lips would be pointless I prefer those blue eyes levelled...

Dreams all too easily caught by the fire of the Red Eye, burning their fragile substance to ashes. I hold it here, the last thread of dream stretching backwards into time, about to set the fire with its own words: "Sunset, the image reflection scattered, a score of fragment suns burning back across to the west, the tower in my vision a totem, throwing back the single burning hole as a plurality of shattered forms, many eyes gaping at the ragged puncture. There is only light within this incision in the sky. The tower blocks are giants, the dreams of titans standing tall against a gilded sea of clouds, watching as once again Chronos dies and we enter the age of dreams. Dying fire in the sky, outflung light sculpted into epic forms over the vast but huddled jumble of roofs (this sun sinking now upon the distant windows to lurid red, radioactive blood washing secret chambers twenty stories high) gold fanning the the lowering heavens as underneath the cars honk at each other blind machines stumbling out from Claylands Road, rush of canyon-hidden traffic staring up at the blind eyes of empty rooms, scattered spilled people drawn along the conduit from M.J.'s Halal Kebab, the Portugese restaurant, the hidden oasis of the Hanover Arms. Light sinks and the new electric constellations flicker on one by one by one and as night falls the new gods possess the darkness with their signs." Such is the shifting siren call of illusion, the hope kniving in were there anything but flesh and blood to hurt. The scrape of flint and fire spills upwards, the circle burns and the Eye stares out from me, wreathes me in smoke. The last thread of dream catches, flares, and is gone.

Is this it? Game over, quiet voices in the orange suffused darkness as the wind slowly opens its mouth and hushes out a soft breath of air, the upflung arms of tarmac-trapped trees sway slightly, leaves scraping their skins against brick; the only contact. I leave Wren Street with maybe the wrong words having spilled from my hole to the inside and rain sweeps down, a pollutant curtain and the closest thing to sweetness or mercy, clinging to me with the tight embrace of a long absent lover, a shadow other that with the smoke of every cigarette she puts to her mouth slides into my nostrils, is sucked back, invades parts of me that hands and eyes can never find, spreading the dirt, trigger detonators cancer release and I'm so sorry - a hopeless word - that I'm wrong. Bright glare of the Euston Station lights our voices spill into the silence of sleeping forms, the hopeless lumps of clothes clustered upon the wide sweep of floor: a mantra of controlled friendship repeated over and again, a plea and a rejection and a desperate searching sorrow, push at the limitations of the heart and nothing gives, shuddering flesh is solid enough. So over the collapse in days I walk through clinging rain, the lifeless silence of crumbling Bloomsbury broken only by the tongues of water smattering the pure mirrors of the blank sky, talk of secrets of closeness in language only of rain.

The Red Eye's words hidden behind my own tell me it was wrong to try anyway. A coward's option. Love? To be read into from every line of crumbling mortar, every water-slick road shining broken pictures of false light, is: "fuck me or walk away." From the crumpled green hills of Surrey slowly rises this brick and concrete hive of dirt, pushed skywards by the curse, a city jammed full of

unknowns ever shrinking in silent eyeball to eyeball life on the Northern Line, a pathetic seepage inwards from our clustered windowed prisons, herded into the service of shrieking wheels and sucking mouths of money pumping the virile New Truth into the horizon. Brand new temples, Canary Wharf and the Natwest Tower, give false prophecies across the river to South London, align wrongly. Feel the forked tongue of Clapham Road and Brixton Road swing the whole city into perspective, the teeming grubby attempt at godhead a series of distantly shining towers, a gloss on a vacuum pulling me always towards the centre, the heart. My heart. A lie. We squat, tenants in a creation bigger and better suited than ourselves; we fuck better than bunnies and the rest dies unrecorded, a futile gesture of fingers out against the mirror trying to push through. "In case of emergencies break glass" shielded panic button of personal apocalypse cracked already I verge on pushing it through. And then what? Free to create the same mistakes. There is nothing but the agonizing surface of this city fronting the void, constant rejection from doorways and brightly lit windows, the spitting of badly wired neon theatre signs, the luvvies are out gabbling posing wannabe artistes flashing West End wad the money lets you in but keeps you out, another drink, another coke talking together in the flooded white cafe pressed against a line of cars, we talk and my loneliness grows, a broken thing in a chair hacking back smoke and a regretted letting go she asks me why everything is so complicated. It isn't; we are greedy - watch the lipstick and the knee-high boots as the Soho Things drape themselves in windows surrounded by a cloud of wealth and good breeding, big mouthed boys cackle complacently as they show themselves off down the tinsel conduit of Old Compton Street, excess expensively downmarket sit here and just take anything, its all offered. Light another fag, sastrati across time, breathe in more of my shortening life we are surrounded here by an animal carnival shovelling food and drink into their holes to fuel another spasm of wet genetic code and do the whole fucking shit again and distance holds me, a constant bodily "no"; we rise angels in shoddy clothes to unveil Blake's prophecy that heaven is only a mirror of hell, Satan is the only one who moves us and these wings only bear us downwards. We have failed, always failed, because I can never love enough and she has a hole in her heart endlessly eating up her insides.

The curse endlessly recreated: I dip my fingers into the cup and they are withdrawn black, the chalky black dust of escaping life, ashes of these days spent watching the walls; dip my fingers into this city heaved up upon marshland and dead bodies blistered with buboes, towers filmed with the secret axioms of death: double-helix parts, splits, staircase torn the steps split out to reveal the silence between c(h)ords, muscle stops and the blood-shot globes of gristle black the light completely. I have lost and these walls bound my totality, dull lustre of matte white suckling the lightbulb, cracks split the path of a river back to source, uncounted books the hopelessness of communication: the world is sealed no bleeding out, blood like beer drunk only for the pretense of intoxication, feed the growing emptiness ever unhappy because the promise of every child is unfulfilled, they emerge fully formed and untouchable, the first blaze of gestalt already too late. The light bounces off my skin revealing nothing, the cup of ash growing ever deeper as one by one I pull the fires into myself. The blind thunder of traffic tells me nothing.

The blind thunder of traffic tells me nothing. Take me home; how many hundreds of thousands pass me by, eyes on home, partner, kids. Every so often the goose squawk of horns - has language come to this? - the absurd angry bark as some fool messes our asphalt river carrying us back to our boxes of hell; follow the pattern, skin meets skin, the tv's on sink down into food and the bathe of radiation. For much the same reasons I stalk Leicester Square, like all the other people, how to spend the time, end the interminable gap between words, eyes up twenty foot to the posters promising FULL COLOUR to the greying skies skin damaged and blistered by neon EAT Chiquitos or Burger King the queue for Haagen Dasz to turn you on food fucking meat stuck inside meat and shivering, a picture on each of our minds as we sit smoking, shuddering, debutantes at a ball whirling all about us, prostitution in pictures "how shall we avoid tonight...?" those actors stripped to bare clothes are doing it for us, elaborate cameras and stage sets trembling lengths of cable, clapboards huddled technicians the nearest to an audience all to make it real, like all magic we suspend the knowledge that it is not, the light...incandescant flat spaces faking depth and holding me out, with these staged sensations the space between us grows ever wider I remember holding a hand and feeling...nothing.

No. I am not here anymore. Not capable of this. Not enough left in the wooden box of heart, all my tears cried in rain, my turbulence blown across the sky, my hope drawn into the Red Eye as it swallows the upthrust bones of concrete, a carcass of a city, shadows leaking out, filthy city and filthy sky infect one another, the darkness carrying her to me, shadow which obliterates heaven.

I try to look away. Turn my eyes to the Red Eye that is here, at the heart, staring at me. There is no finishing this.  
Close.

© Jethro Perkins, Oval  
April - May 1997