

The painter decided to begin his painting by creating fields of abstract calligraphy, letting his hand move his angled brush in an automatic, intuitive way, a rhythmic play of paint on surface. The unscrolling marks looked like some kind of ancient script, Asian or maybe from the ancient near east, Sumerian, Babylonian. But not really, for this was just non-referential improvisation, made up on the fly. After working on his canvas in this way for an hour, he realized that someone had slipped into his studio unannounced and was sitting in his studio chair, staring intently at the canvas, smiling at times, nodding his head as if in recognition.

He was dressed in red and yellow. The garments were loose and baggy around the arms and legs, but wrapped in tight bands around his very thin and apparently taught torso. Something like a baseball cap he wore on his head, a cap with an unusually long bill. There was nothing unusual or familiar about his face. This stranger looked like everyone he knew and no one he had ever met. The strange sense of almost familiarity unsettled the painter, stopped him in his painting track.

The stranger spoke.

“How the fucking hell did you get here?”

Of course, these were the words, or something like them, that were in the Painter’s head and now he was taken doubly back. The stranger’s voice had the quality of a mellow midnight flute but with a slight rasp at its edge, somewhat soothing to the Painter’s jangled nerves, but not quite calming.

“Here?” said the Painter. “this *here* is *my* studio, *my* here and now you have come *here* into this place of *mine* and I want to know who *you* are.”

“Relax, mudswipe, I think you are confused. I have been here all along and then with this writing you have done you have arrived unannounced and uninvited into my house and so I have to ask again, how the holy fuck did you get here?”

The Painter stood, brush still in hand, looking at the stranger, sitting in his studio chair. He began to look about his room, noting all the familiar structures and things, the racks of painting, the piles of canvas scraps, his table full of paints and mixing bowls, his paint spattered floor and the light filled painting wall reaching to the skylights high above. Nothing had changed, everything in its place, his studio

as it always was. Except for this stranger sitting in his studio chair, sitting in determined expectation of an answer from the Painter to his absurd question.

“Look, this is my painting studio, this is a new painting I have started, these are my painting tools, my bowls of paint, my brushes and you are sitting in my studio chair and I have no idea who you are or why you are here or why you are talking to me in this absolutely crazy way”

The stranger chuckled with incredulity.

“ my dear little cuntwasp, you are standing in my kitchen, writing on my kitchen wall, holding one of my mixing bowls having mixed a pungent batch of our most traditional stew, our beloved *dictsa*, though it smells as if you have used too much bacon. And in a clearly unhinged act, you have been writing the text of our most sacred ballad, the *Orionso*, on my kitchen wall using this soup as paint. Your rendition is an admirable transcription of the original, by the way, although your spelling is atrocious, as is your grammar. But again, I have to ask, what in the name of heavenly buffalo shit are you doing here?”

The painter stood in complete disbelief, utterly flummoxed. This was all a joke, right? But whoever this crazy person was, he was playing his part with such conviction that it stopped the Painter from throwing down his brush and grabbing this moron by the folds of his floppy sleeves and throwing him out the door. There was an intriguingly bizarre humor here, a winking riddle disrupting the certitude of his daily routine. He decided to play along with the game.

“OK, strange sir in yellow and red, I will tell you my story and how I have come to your kitchen to make your beloved soup and with it write on your wall. I am a lonely artisan, wandering from town to town, taking nourishment when I can, sleeping when I must. This text came to me in a dream last night and I was moved by the cadence of its words. Since awakening at dawn, I have been repeating its phrases over and over in my mind so as not to forget them. Then, coming upon your charming dwelling and smelling the inviting smells of baking in your kitchen, I decided to invite myself in and with the most respectful mendicancy, offer you this transcription of these singing words, hoping that I might partake of whatever delicious treat you are making.”

The stranger's face then, broke out the most ecstatic grin, stretching so wide across his face as to nearly cut it in half. He clapped his hands and bounced on his feet. "I knew it!" he said. "I thought this might happen one day, but you caught me off guard, I'm sorry if I was rude before. And yes I have been baking, I have made these lovely *scrita* which as it so happens, go precisely well and delicious with *dictsa*, isn't it amazing? I made these today almost as if I knew you would come, but still I was alarmed by your sudden appearance, but here, you must try one of these *scrita*, try one, dip it in your *dictsa*, you will see, you will understand the true grandeur of country."

And with that, the stranger went over to one of the Painter's studio tables and picked up a wide brush with a short handle. "Here try one" and he handed it to the Painter.

The Painter looked at the brush with longing and satisfaction and in one swift motion, dipped the brush into his bowl of paint and began vigorously painting over the calligraphy he had spent the morning creating. He painted as fast as he could, paint splattering the floor, the wall, on his clothes. Any second he expected to be grabbed by the lunatic in his studio, to be assaulted, stopped in his work. He didn't turn around, he didn't look left or right. He didn't stop until the paint ran out and the canvas was almost covered, the calligraphy no longer visible.

The Painter set his bowl and brush down on the table. He turned and went to his chair and sat down. There was in the distance the sound of a car door closing and the sun cast stripes on top of his paint-splattered floor. He thought to himself, this new painting I think I will make blue.