

The Speck

Rick noticed an inconstancy on the wall in front of him: a black speck, the flaw in defiance of the preternatural white. He focuses his gaze on this speck, ruminating. The windows on the wall to his right permitted slants of light to rest on the wall, limning the discrepancy he bore witness to. Paul McCartney drifted into the silence:

So may I introduce to you

The act you've known for all these years

His eyes spy a second infelicity: a flutter of movement. The speck lifts off the wall. *Despoiled no more!* The speck grows larger. It is a fly. A fly flying listlessly around the room. The door to his right opens. A man enters the room. Rick finds it odd that the man has no face. Not the factor of a phantasm, not a charnel horror; it is a matter of fact: this man is faceless. The faceless man speaks in unintelligible grunts and moans, the intended recipient of the sounds unbeknownst, and leaves. Rick feels time as a palpable being. He feels it escape him, sift through his fingers. McCartney chimes in:

Sit back and let the evening go

The fly comes closer, now possessing a kind of urgency. The fly comes closer still. Closer. Closer. Closer. Rick had read that such diminutive pests fear humans, acutely aware of the contradiction of the fact. *What a daring fellow!* It is now on his eye. He does not feel discomfiture. They are like old friends, reunited. More join the revel. *There's that plump, furry one! His sister, too! Are they mice or rats? Oh, I can never tell. Should I ask? No, they'll think it rude.* So he held his silence and the feast continued. He is the guest of honor and them his

subjects. This is his fief and he a king. *But what messy eaters!* McCartney makes his presence known:

We'd like to take you home with us

We'd love to take you home

When he took her home, what he saw shook him to his core. He saw a canvas so ripe for metamorphosis. He would dream of transforming this picturesque New England home into a squalid den of blood, viscera, and cadavers (of course, when he was caught, the entire sordid affair would be spun like some sort of inane flux of romanticized insanity a la Hannibal Lector and Ted Bundy, reduced to superficial popular fixation). He would shiver with longing. He would inspire nightmares for generations, an epitaph more ghoulish than those of Goya, Bundy, or Manson. Not the nameless, eldritch horror of Lovecraft, but the beautifully flagrant terror that clutches and rends.

He had the deed in its entirety playing in his head night and day. He would climb in through the washroom window, at 10:00 PM, when Mr. Strynck would take his bath – a habit he picked up recently due to the complaints of his better half, Rick knew. He would assault his person, knife in hand, creating a tableau in honor of Hitchcock. Bloody, he would slowly open the door and slink through the corridors, a rat, a pestilence grown large, large enough to slaughter the lions in their palaces, the pigs in their dens of filth. Next would come Mrs. Strynck, preparing Mr. Strynck's favorite casserole (Rick thought it was vile. *Onions must not be implemented so!*). He would put the knife to her throat and spill a fountain of blood.

There would be. A moment of revelation then.

In fits and

Affaan Sohail

starts.

the moment of discovery was nauseous as the world itself was being shaken to its.

Foundations.

like when the vindictive celestial power.

of the Old Testament released the Flood upon Man.

At once chaos and serenity.

A becoming.

Silence. He would sit and bask in the sheer avarice of his nature. How selfish! To bask alone in his work. Surely these are more than carnal sins to be gawked at by ignorant, self-proclaimed guardians of spiritual and psychological rectitude.

But would they understand? *NO*. He'd be another name in their grotesqueries, strung up on display. "*COME SEE THE SKULL OF THE RAVAGER*" (he was certain he'd be called something as ridiculous as that), "*THE BULLET THAT SLEW THE MONSTER!*" (they would use guns, much cleaner that way), and other phrases spat out by some glorified carnie.

He had no agenda. Manson with his new-age hippie drivel – some kind of whacked-out commie, he was. Rick remembers that Manson treated them, the dead, like pigs. Of course, that was terribly rude. Black Dahlia, now there was a nasty bit of work. Who could forget Elizabeth Short? Cold sweat, blood-less, they faced rapture. Wild!

Affaan Sohail

He was being burned.

His guests had their fill long before the faceless man returned and rudely chased them off. The man had a strange self-righteous air to him, Rick remembered. Now the fire was around him, the point of ingress shut tight. The door made a noise with a nice sense of finality to it. Clang. How long would it take for him to be reduced to dust? He dreamt thinking of the Beatles and the blisters on his fingers.

“Sometimes time just slips by, man,” some voice called out in a bizarre, alien drawl.

Right on, he wanted to say, but his mouth was sewn shut. Rick turns in his claustrophobic little oven and sees a bearded man in flowing white robes clutching a bong and beaming.

He wakes up.