

Excerpt 2 of 6 – “The Whistling Dragon or Every Boy’s First Murder: A Story in Two Voices” I

My programming, training, infusion or whatever you’d label it, is, to me, at least as interesting as anything that happened afterward. Not only do I have access to the human memories but my own and they’ve been fused and supplemented.

In my new form, I saw an old film that was supposed to be about the future. Much of it takes place in a year that has already passed but with none of the predicted incidents. At one point, near the end, a protagonist, on his way to the next stage in evolution, travels through what I can only describe as a traumatic array of color, a corridor of traveling hues. Part of the trauma is the relative length of time it takes the viewer to witness or shall I say endure this sequence. It does go on.

Now, imagine each swift sheet of flying color as a novel someone has read, a lecture, a formula that a person has learned, a piece of information about someone he or she knows. Imagine any and all memories plying themselves into your brain with the speed of those passing colors. As you know, these are not discreet packets of knowledge. They build and interconnect and interact and not in orderly or even logical or predictable ways. For instance, you may develop the habit of eating breakfast quickly even though you like breakfast. The person that prepares it, almost certainly your mother, takes care. Whether it’s savory: eggs whipped by hand for fifteen minutes, delicately fried in butter with bits of sharp cheddar, chopped garlic and, thrown in just in time to barely wilt, shreds of spinach or the meal is sweet: oatmeal cooked in milk with cinnamon and allspice, bananas and raisins, warmed sliced pears on a small side plate with a glass bowl over them to keep them hot until you are ready, the glass bowl steams up and makes a mystery of the pears, you want all the flavors at once.

But the other reason you may learn to eat quickly is that breakfast is the time your father discovers your older sister has been out all night, has come to breakfast from the outside. Young as you are, you surmise this was not like the “sleepovers” she used to attend. Your sister and father exchange what you can only discern as code,

keyless as it is grim. The room's light falls. You suddenly realize how ugly and nominal the bare bulb over the gray kitchen is, how what was supposed to be illumination conspires with the gray walls.

In a moment, everything is closed off. You, your brothers and mother are listening to clutched wire coat hangers swing through the air, almost whistling. Somehow, that ghost of a sound is as loud or louder, than her cries, pleading with him not to beat her anymore, not to kill her. He does not kill her. The fear he has planted and the suddenness of the attack keeps everyone in place. None of you can take your eyes from his arm slicing the air, her useless contortions to avoid the wire, the welts that rise on her hands and exposed legs and arms.

Later, as you prepare for school, you feel as though your brain has been wiped clean with fire. You happen to look toward a spot on the wall and notice a nail in the otherwise blank space where one of your school projects, a dragon made from wire, had hung. Now the tears can roll. You take the long way to school, slow and alone.

The beatings happen more than once, yet seem to happen only once. The days meld and fall over the edge. You learn to eat quickly. But, eventually the violence spills out of the morning.

There is only so much the brain can hold and precious little of that is available to the conscious mind. Most of what humans encounter goes into a reservoir, a primordial soup that slops to the surface now and again or whose incredible aromas cause what seem like unmotivated acts.