

Seen in the Vitrine

Kickin' about, nowhere particular, on his day off from work what a sorry fuckn sight. He'd told himself and other people too that he'd put these days aside to write during—to work on his own investment so that one day it might actually lift him from the drudgery of his food service job and the begrudging grin service he worked on his social rounds. He'd write a novel and he'd make a name and money to boot and that'd be a whole new life for Charles Donald. Best laid plans and all that—when he did in fact sit down to write, the sentences that appeared took on the vague perambulation of his inebriated dreams, running on with themselves harrowing some aesthetic but ultimately letting meaning through the ornate gaps. He was unable to represent things as he saw them, so he wandered the city jumping social interactions, each leap a drawn out observation of people on the streets, hoping he would encounter some experience with a sufficient yet simple enough meaning for him to put down on paper.

Time and money could have been put into gathering and synthesizing the raw data of his moseying. Routes lined in red on a virtual map would maybe speak the deranged beautiful chaos of a fly's dizzying flight or perhaps of some fractal or Twombly scratching repeated over and over. Demographic information about those he saw and stopped to look at and what they wore and what their regional accents were would maybe give some brutish physical tarot psych reading of his mental state and the lines of the architecture of the buildings that walled his terrible procrastination maze could be read and interpreted to figure what sorts of shapes he reacted to the best, vaulted and drawing to some pinnacle or stark and clearcut the 90° pragmatism of industry. Cross-referenced to what he had been writing, this data may have been valuable could anybody have known to

gather it or even knew the profundity of what it might mean. Hell, no one even knows what happened!

So we'll get to it (god, I'm writing like him). He's walking along like he's always doing, zig-zagging streets like jaywalking is his philosophy, like some ray of light in a fiberoptic cable. The baggy legs of his trousers kick out with every step of his loping gait that matches his long kinda scruffy but he brushes yknow hair and bobbing it just right every footfall. His dreams are playing around his noggin: images of him holding a book, the tactile imagination of hands being shaken all steeped in some distinct perceived aura of respect, that's all it really is. Then he happens at a 30° acute upon a window display that resonates compliant with his mindscape. There's an old wooden writing bureau sitting delicate upon a warm looking rug humming some incandescent Seljuq white noise truth. The bureau is covered in bullshit tat the store is selling: candles that smell like parts of town? what? soap? huh, strange things to be on a writing bureau. He didn't occupy himself with it too much. On the other side of the display, however, peeking from behind the miasma of the street's reflection in the obtuse window, there is a mannequin wearing a suit so in touch with his idea of himself he jumps the additional five metres to be directly in front of it. Cut loose like he likes and in a light grey fabric suitable for summer and falling asleep in, the suit hangs off the tall mannequin like in some Lurie reverie Charles has had. The line of aspiration in his head is whipped up mad by this desirous eddy, the suit now couches him on red carpets at galas and he picks his reading glasses from it as he orates passages from his opus, choice gems from the heaving bedrock of his oeuvre, a beautiful woman hangs off of its arm but it retains its shape and its perfect fit on him.

How lost an individual has to be to do what Charles did next I do not know. How warped and confused one's self-image has to be maybe. Maybe not though. What time it must have been that the sun wrought the light on the street to just the ideal degree that the vitrine projected back a perfectly translucent image of Charles, what light absorbing coloured clothes he must have been wearing. In this sudden inexplicable moment of inspiration Charles shook out his body and fit it to the mannequin so his reflection matched the pensive repose of the plastic man behind the glass in his vision. He started by placing the reflection of his head so their chins lined up and his neck looked snug in the collar. Then came the conscious decision to maintain this head position, like a chicken whose body you're moving about will do. He

then placed his feet so that his tattered trainers overlaid the smart dress shoes. Finally he shot his hands out as if loosening cufflinked cuffs, then from the shoulders down he drew his arms into the paradigm ordained by the mannequin, placing them slowly, the humerus then the radius placed with the care of jigsaw pieces, the ulna rotated just right that the two sets of arms held the same but mirrored geometry. By now his hands were almost in the right position and all it took was a slight adjustment of the wrist and some finger motions to feel comfortable. And then there he was, stood static on the pavement holding this pose, like some vetruvian of a trapped movement, in the suit that hung off of his lank body. And there it is, that was the thing... there it hung, sitting on his shoulders and hips with no discernible change to the pressure he felt from his previous garb. Not just in the pathetic reflection he willed but there on the sidewalk independent of the vitrine's property boundary he wore the suit the same as the mannequin did. He looked beyond the harrowed reflection of his own eyes, crying some transcendent hosanna fear that many have no doubt felt, into the plastic recesses that signified the eyes of the original bearer. They were dead and not there and spoke of no shame or guilt, not at all like Jesus's on the cross. Charles let his body move out of the strict reflective transitive he and the mannequin shared, overcoming the fear that if he moved he'd be cast back into the self styled shabby chic that he wore dedicatedly but also fuck if not also self-deprecatingly, and the suit rustled slightly with him, moving for the first time, gulleys and folds forming with motion where once was only a pleat. A hand shot up to a lapel to feel it and shivered with the realization of a paranormal reality. The same way a friar's hand might shiver at the touch of a cluster of grapes on a rose bush.

His thoughts twistered with the physiognomy of stupefaction—bearing down upon the scarce planning of the township of the rest of his mind. Images of Jim Carrey playing an almighty Bruce happening clothes in windows onto himself but Charles hadn't done it with the ease of a deity, he'd chanced upon it with the minute tinkering of a scientist or artist, realizing some incredible truth purely accidentally from the crux of whatever grand function rules the universe. He thought of the emperor and his new clothes and snapped his head around to see if people on the street were repulsing away from the inherent grossness of nudity surrounded by concrete and brick and cars and dirt everywhere, but no. He patted his thighs and butt to check for his keys and wallet and phone for what is a new suit if you're

rendered penniless and homeless, but there were all his things, comfortably numb, just as ignorant of any change as his shoulders and hips were. His focus shot behind his reflection and behind the mannequin even to see any clerks inside the shop and if they were hurriedly dialling 911, but no they were all standing around chatting, looking at their phones and rearranging clothes on racks. He did about three double takes in all sorts of directions then quickly made off down the street, shedding his prior aimlessness and turving a b-line for his home.

His hands shook as he opened the door and they still shook holding the keys as he stood in front of the full length mirror on the back of his bathroom door, slung up in a dream rubbing his eyes of sleep as though he'd been awake for less than twenty minutes. Yep, still had it on.