

LE LIVRE DES FOURMIS

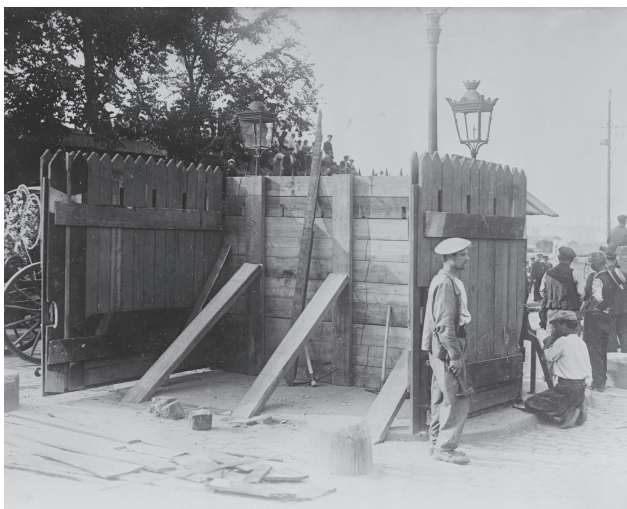
The Book of Ants



An Investigator's Guide to The Dreamlands

by

Robin D. Laws



WORLD WAR I BARRICADE OF A PARIS STREET.

LE LIVRE DES FOURMIS

THE BOOK OF ANTS

BY
HENRI SALEM

TRANS. BY STEFAN AUTIN



PELGRANE PRESS LTD
LONDON
First Edition

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Design & Layout: Sarah Wroot

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ISBN: 978-1-908983-68-8

We are in search of the force that is direct pure sober
UNIQUE we are in search of NOTHING
we affirm the VITALITY of every INSTANT
the anti-philosophy of spontaneous acrobatics

At this moment I hate the man who
whispers before the intermission — eau de
cologne — sour theatre. THE JOYOUS WIND

If each man says the opposite it is because he is right

Get ready for the action of the geyser of our blood
— submarine formation of transchromatic aeroplanes,
cellular metals numbered in the flight of images

above the rules of the and its control

BEAUTIFUL

It is not for the sawed-off imps who
still worship their navel

Tristan Tzara *Proclamación sin pretensión*, 1919

FOREWORD

Despite the protestations of my friend, the poet, painter and collector Roland Penrose, I feel duty-bound to label the text that follows a work of fiction—a dream about dreaming, as it were. It is out of esteem for Penrose, I must confess, that I publish it at all. I enjoin the reader to regard it as a fantasia on recent events, in which the names of actual persons are frequently invoked and sometimes defamed. As to the true identity of the author I cannot independently attest. Penrose assures me that he met and shared libations with Henri Salem on countless occasions during his sojourn in Paris, from 1922 to 1935. Yet my efforts to obtain evidence of Salem's current whereabouts, necessary in order to remit whatever royalties this meagre project might engender, not only proved fruitless, but brought into question his existence, full stop. One might mark this down to the present difficulty, with Paris still in the grip of the Nazi horde. Yet the names of other persons peopling Salem's narrative—Salvador Dalí, Tristan Tzara, Max Ernst, even such minor poets of the French persuasion as André Breton, Louis Aragon and Paul Éluard—can be found, however obscurely, in English newspapers and periodicals. Of Henri Salem's putative writings and activities there is no trace.

It would seem peculiar, admittedly, for a publisher

to question the existence of an author whose works he is committing to print. However, should you reach the final pages of this account, you will see that I am not the only one to express such doubts.

That I should label this work a likely hoax and publish it nonetheless might seem paradoxical, were it a chronicle of any other art movement. Yet, as paradox, stunt-making, and trickery lie at the heart of the so-called surrealist enterprise, one might argue that an untrue and fantastical account cuts closer to the heart of the matter than would one of scrupulous correctness. (Those seeking sober scholarship over fantasia would do well to wait for the publication of Penrose's various critical works.) This curio, then, might be best regarded as cognate to the boxes and valises of the artist Marcel Duchamp. These collections of documents threaten the linear nature of history and criticism, consisting as they do of various items which the reader, or perhaps encounterer, must puzzle through in random order.

Likewise the original *Livre des Fourmis* is in fact a collection of *livres*—a pile of loose, mismatched leaves of paper, inscribed in longhand. One must adduce their correct orders from the author's penmanship, which devolves over time from a tight but elegant hand to a rolling looseness, adorned with loop and curlicue. The ink used in the former is black (briefly green); later a difficult silver ink replaces it. The paper stock changes over time as well, from a fine paper bearing the watermark of the Papeteries de France, to a thinner, cheaper mass-produced commercial product, to a thick, hand-made paper shot through with curious fibers. Penrose, whose effortful stab at chronology I largely adhered to in the preparation of the final translated typescript, treats the paper stock as more reliably indicative of

time frame than the ink. The shift from fine to coarse commercial paper occurs in 1932, as the Depression hits Paris with delayed force. The handmade paper denotes the late 1930s.

Though invaluable as a general guide, this schema occasionally fails in relation to internal clues. First of all, certain of the entries are clearly dated, placing a select few silver-inked, handmade sheets quite early in the 1920s.

To confuse matters further, the creator of the *Livres* leaves other entries undated, and further still, marks others with a fanciful dating system unique to himself. (Or presumably unique. Inquiries at the British Museum Library found no antecedent for the calendar used here. Here presents itself an obvious caveat, that a similar search at the Bibliothèque nationale, were this currently possible, might yield quite different results.) In further evidence of the book's nature as an elaborate trick or whimsy, the fanciful dating system itself shifts partway through the document, with new names assigned to its thirteen months. These two systems we have dubbed Early Salem and Late Salem. As near as Penrose and I can divine, the months of these fanciful systems occur in the order shown below.

To think that the author has assigned to each "month" an equal or near-equal number of days would demonstrate impressive naivete. Penrose theorizes that Salem calendar follows a lunar system—albeit one keyed to the erratic cycles of an alien moon. When asked to elaborate, he declines, impishly giving the impression that he knows more than he lets on. The reader might draw from this certain conclusions.

Regardless of their notational peculiarities, the latest documents cannot date past March 1940, when they

EARLY SALEM

*Moonbound**Frostgrass**Ghastprowl**Zephyr**Greenseed**Redseed**Porphyry**Onyx**Basalt**Oldscepter**Echomount**Brownhill**Chillmist*

LATE SALEM

*Hysteria**Hidewoman**Skullbreast**Ordure**Mechanism**Roseblood**Engorged**Flacidity**Machinegun**Hermaphrodite**Astrog**Fire Piano**Headbowel*

were delivered to Penrose at his Hampstead home in an ornately decorated box.

It arrived in brown wrapping paper, which I have inspected, addressed in the silvery late Salem hand, bearing uncanceled French stamps commemorating the 1937 World's Fair. As near as can be determined, they arrived outside of post office delivery hours. According to Penrose, a neighbor noticed a diminutive, dark-clad figure exiting his property during the period when the box must have been dropped off. He further attests that the box contained several objects, including an impractical silver tool resembling a miniature surrealist sculpture, a fist-sized glittering rock, and a piece of driftwood resembling a bifurcated phallus. The rock soon went missing—most likely falling prey to the acquisitiveness of a young relative. I have seen the others, and confess that they provoked in me an inexplicable unease.

Were this an ordinary memoir pertaining to an avant garde movement, I dare say that it would not fit the purview of this modest imprint. It is only the occultic connections, as fictional as they might be, that our faithful readers will find of lingering interest.

As temptingly decadent as their intertwining lives might be, the work of the surrealists does little to impress. To dismiss their poets would be redundant. Like all French verse since Rimbaud, it will find no adherents outside its native language. I will not be alone in saying that my own sympathies in painting remain with the symbolists the surrealists sought to displace. British curators and art collectors have always maintained a sense of careful proportion, unbuffeted by modish winds from the continent. Though it pains my friend Penrose, it is easy to see that the surrealists, like the cubists and futurists and other ists who have jockeyed and contested in the studios of Paris, will imminently be forgotten, and the sublimities of such peerless names as Watts and Duncan restored to the eternal pantheon.

With these nested provisos, I now present the curious contents of Henri Salem's *Book of Ants*.

AMERY GREVILLE

Textual notes: For the ease of questers esoteric headings supplying proper names associated with each entry have been supplied by Penrose and translator Stefan Autin. Footnotes are by the translator.

Dates in *italic* are original. Dates in ***bold italic*** are inserted, and in many cases must be regarded as provisional. In rare instances dated entries are slightly rearranged to preserve continuity of subject matter.

Underlining in the original is here rendered as *italic*.



GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE 1916

Guillaume APOLLINAIRE

9 Novembre 1918

Apollinaire is dead. I know this when my own head wound convulses, and I see a flash of the old man in his bedroom. The shrapnel in his skull made him a stupid thug but still I regret that I did not meet him. He was once my father in poetry, then my brother in martial mutilation, and now is a dead thing lying in his cot. Frozen out before I so much as start. Who will I try to meet now?

APOLLINAIRE, Jean COCTEAU, Max Jacob, Pablo PICASSO

11 Novembre 1918

To the rue de l'Odéon. There will be something to hear at Monnier's bookshop¹.

And there is: Cocteau, who they call all sorts of names, wrinkling their noses, inserted himself into the situation. He is young and a popinjay but wants to take the old duffer's place as arbiter of the avant-garde. He brought a doctor, and the cubist painter Pablo Picasso, and the poet Max Jacob (who like Cocteau is a poof), but it was for nothing. It was the flu that killed [Apollinaire], but I know different. It was the war whose mechanized violence he drooled for. Death will be mocked, but she hates to be cozied up to.

Omens: that morning on the rue de Rivoli, Picasso was walking. A big wind blows up, tearing a widow's black veil from her face and throwing it in his. Picasso, a Spaniard and thus a man of the 14th century, recoils. Knows death is coming for someone. At the bookshop they say he's madly superstitious but that's what blind men call the sighted. I've known of the magic hidden in the world since I was six, on that feverish night I felt the

1 La Maison des Amis des Livres.

cold hand of my dead mother sop sweat from my brow.

That's who the artist is, the poet. The shaman of old in the cloak of a new day. Picasso knows this. This is what I will be.

I still haven't met any of them. Even here, at the bookshop, second hand, I'm not saying anything. Only listening, stupid as a log. How do I crash in? Cocteau tries to crash in, and he's much further along, and *they despise him for it*. I must do it without letting them see me try.

They say there's another: younger, sterner, vicious. He'll fight Cocteau for Apollinaire's spattered crown. I strain to catch the name but I miss it. I summon up the gall, dare call attention to ask.

But then greater news obliterates all. Armistice. The war is over, they say. We'll be choking on its blood for decades, that's my prediction. It will bubble from the ground when we try to forget it. Poisoning us. Only with fire and anger can we exorcise it.

That's what I will be. Not shaman but exorcist. Not a priest, nonexistent God forbid! But an exorcist. A caster-out of the Europe's demons.

The literary people will gather to celebrate the Armistice. That's where I'll sidle in. Word arrives: Paul Poiret, some kind of fashion magnate, has announced a party.

It's the end of the war. There will be no checking of invitations. I'll put my uniform back on. Brandish my ruined hand. No one will dare stop me. Henri Salem will arrive.

20 Novembre 1918 André BRETON

At Monnier's again, I talk to a fellow my age about

Mallarmé. Or rather, he talks to me, intensely, with fire, and I am held in his gaze. About his hatred of novels, about a writer I have never heard of, Lautréamont, who fifty years ago wrote a book so modern most cannot understand it today, about the ghastliness of Cocteau. His head oversized, his lower lip prominent, his jaw pulled to the right. It takes me a good while to realize that he is the one they've been speaking of, the new leader, who will defeat Cocteau and take the place of Apollinaire. André Breton is his name. We will be friends and allies, he tells me. He knew Apollinaire. He knows the poet Paul Reverdy—though I think likes him not so much now. He speaks of his friend Jacques, who I must meet, who is a genius. Because we speak of this Lautréamont and his book *The Song of Maldoror*, the subject turns to magic. His parents once punished him, he recounts, for using his spending money on a fertility doll sold to him by a sailor. The primitive people of the world, he says, understand what we have forgotten. It is the poet's job to find it again, to change it all back to what it should be.

Louis ARAGON, BRETON, Philippe
SOUPAULT, Jacques VACHÉ

24 Novembre 1918

Meet Breton at a cafe for introductions. Not to Jacques, but to two others.

Philippe Soupault, soft-spoken, expensive clothes, shares Breton's opinions without the force. He's the one who found the old copy of Lautréamont, the one they pass along like a talisman. It's my turn to have it next, they promise.

Louis Aragon, sensitive, alive with ideas. He shrinks back when the language of the trenches falls from my

lips. I shudder, chastened to have offended him. Like me, he had it bad in the war. Buried alive, three times in a single day. Unlike me, he came out intact.

They all met Apollinaire, who offered to take them under his wing, but he was of an older generation, the gap of understanding unbridgeable.

Together we hate the war and the rightist fools who made it.

There is a thing in Zurich. Dada, they call it. An assault on all reason, in a world where reason fled. Strange cabarets. Gibberish and drumming. Pamphlets whose letters arrange themselves like a minefield, ready to explode in the eye. Maybe this can be our thing, too.

We talk about Jarry, and Rimbaud, and Sade, and also this Jacques they're all in thrall to. I ask what he's written and they say that's not the point. It's not what he writes (though he does, a little), but how he lives. A new man. A caustic character, full of black humor. He wouldn't be offended by my language, I intuit. Unlike these three. Humor, I realize, is a quality they envy, which is to say they all lack it.

Breton does not see himself as the new leader. He is the lieutenant, and Jacques Vaché the dark general.

On learning that the others at Monnier's have given this three a collective nickname, I deflate. They are the Three Musketeers.

In matters of musketeers, to be the Fourth is no good. It is to always to be the junior. The male ingenue.

1 Decembre 1918

VACHÉ

So much talk of this Vaché I feel I have met him already. I have read his writings—he paints Apollinaire as the “trepanned lieutenant” penning work for the



HUGO BALL, DADA CABARET, ZURICH 1916

soldier's newsletter. I imagine a crooked smile, a conspiratorial lean against the wall, a cocksure way of holding a cigarette.

Myself, I must write something good for Breton. He thinks of starting a journal. I must be in it. Everything I've written in months is shit. I see where we have to go but can't get there.

31 Decembre 1918

I stumble home to my wretched flat, drunk from celebration with the idiot cousins. Must cut myself off from them, from my family of dullards and tinpots. Roger pawed a girl and all three of them took a stomping. Her brothers would have done me, too. Then they saw the hand. I pass out dead away, barely reaching the bed.

I wake up in the middle of the night, the battered and bruised cousins snoring all around me. A cold hand waves near my face. Maman again?

No, someone else. He tries to say something. A message for Breton.

It's Vaché.

I tell him what to do with himself. If he wants to get word to André, he can do it directly. He has no justification reason barging into my flat in the middle of the night to interrupt my sleep.

Of course it is a dream.

8 Janvier 1919

BRETON, VACHÉ

Breton and the others at the cafe. Immediately I see it: he has crumpled inside, the others consoling. I sit and right away he tells it: Vaché is dead. An opium overdose, along with two others, in a hotel in Nantes. One of them survived and may pull through.

This happened last Monday. I am already counting

the nights.

That really was Vaché, who appeared before me in my bedroom. First my mother's ghost, now this.

I don't dare tell them. Not now. If I'd told the story before, it would be different. Not a ghoulish attempt to shoulder into their grief. I can't say anything now.

What was it, I wonder, that I was supposed to tell Breton for him? That all would be fine and good?

That doesn't sound like Vaché.

ARAGON, BRETON, VACHÉ

14 janvier 1919

Breton has more of the story. It's an assassination, he says.

By who, I ask him.

Forces unknown, he says, the phrase dripping portent.

It's mad, and my expression tells him I think so. He withdraws from me. I try to assure him, without giving in to his conspiracy talk. Breton is the one now. He mustn't perceive me as the enemy.

So I don't say this: there's a question of pederasty hanging over the matter. Breton can't let this be true, or his love for Vaché becomes so much sodomism.

Aragon won't say this to Breton's face, but he thinks suicide.

They ask me what I believe. Who am I to judge? I never met him, I lie.

I try to remember his phantom face. A look of gentle surprise—neither murder nor a suicide, I think. A bittersweet accident.

Bittersweet because he doesn't have to live up to the hero Breton made of him. He doesn't have to make the new writing that changes all. That mountain of a task

he's left up to us poor saps.

Vaché had two others join him. Only one lived. If it was suicide, then it was also murder.

12 Janvier 1919

BRETON, Tristan TZARA

We have Tristan Tzara's Dadaist Manifesto. A manifesto against manifestos. Contrary things done at the same time. All that we'd hoped and more. Breton nearly leaps from his seat as he reads it to us. Even his deadly monotone can't smother it.

Ideal, Ideal, Ideal

Knowledge, Knowledge, Knowledge

Boomboom, Boomboom, Boomboom

We must get Tzara to Paris. In our mind's eyes we behold him, a dynamo of the new understanding, legs held wide apart, swinging a sledgehammer of words and resounding nonsense, to crush the skulls of fatheads and let the truth rush in.

The elimination of prudishness, the abolition of logic, the negation of the family.

Undated

Breton is writing to Tzara. He's telling Tzara about Vaché, informing him that he's the replacement for Vaché.

I am disquieted but, as I must on the entire matter, keep my lips tightly shut. Are we smashing idols, or only making new ones?

8 Mars 1919

Paul ÉLUARD, GALA

Another poet arrives: Paul Éluard, he dubs himself. Asymmetrical, tall, thin, tubercular.

With him is his equally young wife, Gala. (Is that a name?) She is Russian, strange, hungry, disinterested

in talk of Lautréamont and Dada and the ossified old order upended. Also tubercular. Her gaze bores into me, a drill of assessment, as if deciding whether to bed me or hang me on a meat hook, for curing and eating. She is as pretty as a vulture tearing strips from a wildebeest's flank. Her husband sees her size me up as a potential object of lust and seems in no way perturbed.

He is as desperate as the rest of us to make something change. I am a Fourth Musketeer no longer. We are now a bandit gang, waiting for Tzara to lead us.

TZARA

Undated

Tzara writes back to Breton. He is coming, but there are delays, which he alludes to only in the broadest terms. A menace lurks between the lines, one Breton, the logical acolyte of the irrational, does not recognize. I do not so much read it as taste it in the air. A formless force.

That night I dream of that force, paralyzing and coming my way. I wake myself up in the dream, tell myself that a dream is all it is, that the force can't hurt me. Then it surges at me. I waken myself in truth, coming to with a jolt on a sweat-soaked mattress.

ARAGON, BRETON, Pierre DRIEU La

Rochelle, *Littérature*

19 Mars 1919

We hold the premiere issue of *Littérature* in our hands. The others have been published before but for me it is the first. Until press time, my poem was called "How To Kill a Ghost." Then I understood, just in time, that it had to be titled "How To Be Killed by a Ghost."

Poetry is an extension of life, someone says. Yes, agrees Breton, but it is also a terrorist conspiracy, requiring of its confederates secrecy and loyalty. This

last word he directs at Aragon, whose face spasms in response. Breton wants him to break off his old friendship with the writer and troublemaker Pierre Drieu La Rochelle. Drieu wants to join our cabal but Breton will not let him. There are those who say he is a poof, and there must be no hint of Cocteauism about us. Aragon disputes the point: Drieu has a subversive spirit which might be pushed in the right direction. Breton shudders. He has decided that Drieu is an odious creature and that is that. Aragon knew Drieu before he fell in with us. To Breton this means nothing; to value ordinary friendship over intellectual association admits an insupportable weakness.

An assignment, says Breton. Let us each write an advertisement for heaven so powerful that everyone who reads it commits suicide.

*Late Spring or
Summer 1919*

BRETON, SOUPAULT, *The Magnetic Fields*

Breton has broken with another of his old mentors, this time Reverdy². As he grows in confidence he casts aside his toadying. From now on, others will petition him for entrance.

Soupault comes to my flat to tell me that he and Breton have broken through to a new poetry.

I think, you've left me out again.

Perched on the edge of my bed, Soupault lets the words spill from his mouth. It is through Freud they have found it. The conscious mind, the shaping and cogitating of the old literary method, has been set aside, in favor of free association—of automatism. Verse bubbles up from beneath the surface, where the blood

2 The poet Pierre Reverdy (1889-1960.)

of the war-murdered dead soaks the ground. It is a secret. I am forbidden to tell Aragon. Not yet. It is not a collaboration but a conspiracy, entered into in a spirit of exhilaration, secrecy and menace. They've been at it for five straight days, letting unbidden hands scratch across the page. Soupault must get back to it, to Breton. Suddenly he's frightened, that I'll try to come along, that my sudden presence will break the spell. That I'll reveal to Breton his betrayal of the confidence. What they see frightens and delights them. They will call it *The Magnetic Fields*.

I bump into Soupault buying bread on the Saint-Germaine. He looks terrible. Like a horse shat him out, I tell him. He grabs my lapel, his breath stinking of exhaustion and sour milk. We had to stop, he says. We never slept. In the end, we were hallucinating. We went outside but the cats followed us. The cats that were also cars. *Four Days Later*

I glimpsed a strange place, a place interpenetrating this one, he says. Breton didn't see it but I did. It nearly pulled me through, called me to the Rue Froidevaux and the Catacombs below.

Don't tell Aragon, he repeats.

Go home and go to bed, I tell him.

Lomar

7 juillet 1919 16 Roseblood, 4283³

Frightened, I skulk between shadows in a city of towering gray heads. Chill winds blow, and outside the city I know that long-armed creatures gather, waiting to

7 juillet 1919

16 Roseblood, 4283

3 Strikeout in original; it and the new text are in silver ink, while original is in faded black ink.

enter the city and set upon the survivors.

I wake up. The name of the city, Olathoë in the land of Lomar, lingers in my mind.

Undated

Georgina DUBREUIL, BRETON

Breton's new love is a married woman, Georgina Dubreuil, insanely jealous of him or perhaps simply insane. She's clairvoyant, he tells me, and sees the future. Georgina tells him that she sees a safe bourgeois marriage and a brush with madness. What's my future, I ask her? Her eyes cloud over. You don't have one.

11 Decembre 1919

Francis PICABIA. Also Marcel DUCHAMP, BRETON, SOUPAULT

We meet Francis Picabia at a very expensive cafe none of us have been to before. Throughout the encounter I stay shamefully mute, able to think nothing except *I hope he pays*.

Picabia is old, older than Apollinaire. Well-established, and rich already, from the pretty paintings he made before he became interesting. He drives up in a massive black automobile. Steps out in a well-tailored suit. Addresses us with barbed charm. The world-wise young uncle, reeking of sexual adventure.

With his own money, he publishes a journal, called *391*. Now it is a Dada journal. After he was an post-impressionist, he was almost a cubist—a geometrist. Today he paints brown still lifes of electronic components and vague architectural shapes—his *mécániste* style. Breton likes two in particular from his show the other month: *Serpentins* and *L'Enfant carburateur*. They are not so much ugly as ignorant of beauty, and that's

what shocks. He writes poetry, too, his new book called *Letters Without Words*, and that is why Breton wants him for *Littérature*.

He talks of New York, of a Frenchman there named Marcel Duchamp, who was Dada before there was Dada and is now in touch with Tzara. I want all these things: car, suit jacket, pocket square, cologne, America.

Later, when the two of us are alone, Soupault calls him a snob. He mocked Breton throughout, and neither André nor I could see it.

BENJAMIN PÉRET, BRETON

January 1920

A hilarious story from Breton, which would be more hilarious still if he an ounce of humor in him and could convey it properly:

We have been shadowed by another would-be conspirator, but he has been too frightened to approach. Or perhaps he sidled up to Soupault at some point and was discouraged; that part's not clear. At any rate, he wanted in, as I wanted in, but lacked the courage.

So at six in the morning who shows up to bang on Breton's door? Not the trembling poet. No, his mother! She demands to see André Breton! She demands that he accept her son as a contributor to *Littérature*—and as a friend!

There he is, cowering behind her heavy skirts, round-faced and stoop-shouldered, in a jacket two sizes too tight. His name is Benjamin Péret.

I meet him shortly after, and think, *he won't last long*.

TZARA

January 1920

After a year of waiting, Tzara arrives. We expect a thundering colossus, a dark prince of subversion, a Fantômas

of the cabaret. Instead a waxy little man, monocled, apprehensive, looking over his shoulder as if pursued by phantoms. Over Picon citron and port at Certa, we suppress our disappointment. It is not the man, it is the idea. We prepare for Dada's assault on Paris.

January 1920

A whirlwind of publication. Picabia is starting another, *Cannibale*. Tzara gets us to work on two journals: *Bulletin Dada*, and *Dadaphone*. He sweeps as many as he can into this. For Dadaphone, he solicits Cocteau! We try to dissuade him, to warn him of the toxin this aesthete oozes, draining meaning from all it touches, leaving only style. He will not hear—or refuses to.

5 Février 1920

Manifestos read at the Salon des Indépendants, where Picabia has paintings showing. Tzara spreads the rumor that Charlie Chaplin has joined Dada and will be appearing. A mob shows up. Delirious madness ensues.

7 Février 1920

Invited to take part in a literary discussion night at the Club de Faubourg. It starts with a boring speech and descends into a worse debate. We chant for Dada, Dada, Dada. Aragon gets up to decry vulgarization—as usual veering close to the point, then missing it. Breton leaps up to read the Dada Manifesto. The crowd boos. Anarchists stand up for us and trade blows with the socialists. The boring speechmaker ends by congratulating our sincerity—the dagger of condescension, driven deep.

We leave divided, some saying it was a disaster, others a triumph. Breton troubled, Tzara chipper.



FRANCIS PICABIA, 1920. TOY MONKEY AND INK ON CARDBOARD. ILLUSTRATION IN *CANNIBALE* NO. 1

21 Mars 1920

BRETON

A tale of horror and dread from Soupault. He is present as Breton's maman shows up, angrily clutching his press cuttings. He must return to medical school, she demands. She'd rather he died on the field of honor than disgrace the family like this. He's packing his bags when his spine reattains solid form; he rallies and defies her.

Soupault says he understands now, about his previously unseen horrible mother. Child and parent are the same person.

What will poor André do, cut off and forced to earn a living?

Undated

Breton has broken it off with his prophetess, Georgina. Too much like his mother perhaps? He returns to his hotel to find his possessions destroyed by the spurned lover. Among the dead, canvases by Laurencin, Derain, and Modigliani.

27 Mars 1920

TZARA

Finally a fully realized Dada performance! Aleatoric music, dramatic skits, Musidora⁴ herself modeling constricting Dada fashion. Enemies show up with anti-Dada leaflet and decry our snobbish burlesque. Tzara gets the scandal he sought.

Mai 1920

BRETON, PICABIA

Showdown between Breton and Picabia. Picabia subjects him to a witty flaying, for taking Dada too seriously. Picabia accuses him of asserting dominance,

⁴ Stage name of silent film actress Jeanne Roques, star of *Les Vampires* and *Judex*.

of taking up with the establishment literary crowd at Gallimard, where he is editing Proust. Breton withers under the older man's fileting. All of these things are true, except André thinks he's in the right. He complains in private that Dada is treated as too much a joke, including by its participants.

BRETON

18 Septembre 1920

Breton has announced intentions to marry. He's been seeing her since June—Simone is her name, Peruvian, a Jewess. As smart as he is, and livelier. I gather there were tortured letters sent before his entreaties won approval. She hates Dada, as, these days, does André.

BRETON, PICABIA

9 Decembre 1920

Breton exacts his revenge on Picabia, heckling his art opening amid a swarm of high society patrons. The crime—encouraging Tzara to collaborate with Cocteau and his pet composers, Les Six⁵.

The battle is on. Dada is not what Breton wanted, so now he will destroy it.

When the boarding action occurs, for whom do I swing my cutlass? Tzara and Picabia have the understanding humor brings. But it is all looking a bit threadbare. What scandalizes Zurich is a petty hiccup in Paris.

They are better company, but Breton has the energy and the implacability and thus will own the future. Which is all I have ever wanted.

⁵ Georges Auric (1899–1983), Louis Durey (1888–1979), Arthur Honegger (1892–1955), Darius Milhaud (1892–1974), Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) and Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983).

21 Decembre 1920 **ARAGON, BRETON**

Soupault reports that André and Louis went to the offices of the French Communist Party, intending to sign up, but left without completing the procedure. The reason? They were put off by all the paperwork.

25 Avril 1920 **BRETON, ÉLUARD, TZARA**

The wallet affair. At Certa, a waiter sets down his wallet and walks off. I snatch it up—intending only to play a prank on the man. Opening it, I see that it contains a thousand francs! Like stampeding antelope we repair to the bar across the street, where a rancorous debate over core principles breaks out. Tzara says only Dada is nihilistic enough to steal from the poor. Breton says we should keep it for movement expenses. Éluard and I argue that there is a difference between poetic terrorism and petty churlishness. He sneaks away to give back the wallet, returning to jeers. Unlike the others, Éluard has to work for a living.

Breton these days looks quite the sight, a maniacal Harold Lloyd in his tweedy suit, glasses (non-prescription) and cane (which he also doesn't need.) Close up, the cane's sculpted head reveals a morass of obscenity: slugs crawling toward vulvas, a muscled Negro holding his massive erection.

Late Spring 1921 **Marcel DUCHAMP**

Duchamp has returned to Paris. Not for good, but to pave the way for an American friend. Finally we meet this legend, who put a urinal on display in a New York museum and who the Yankees revere and revile for his futurist-cubist-nudist work *Nude Descending a Staircase*, which no one here gave a fig for.

He is older, elegant, quiet, a twinkle in his eye. His jokes whisper like dry leaves. With a single *aperçu* he could slice Breton to cold cuts, were he to so deign. Which naturally he would not.

He peers into my eyes and asks me if I've ever met a fellow named Kuran. Duchamp seems on the brink of a confidence but instead asks me to play chess.

I fare respectably against him until he grows bored and demolishes me utterly.

He tells me to look after his friend Man Ray, who will have no French. And to drop his name with Kuran, should I meet him.

René CREVEL

Undated

Breton ropes in yet another poet, liking a piece he wrote in *Aventure*. Blond, handsome, uneasy in his skin. Searching my face as if I might have something on him. When he thinks himself unobserved, a cloak of sadness weighs him down.

Man RAY

14 Juillet 1921

Duchamp, having met his friend at the pier, brings him and his steamer trunk to Paris, installing him at Tzara's hotel, the Boulanvilliers, and then bears him to Certa to meet the group. A small ball of a head atop a short, stocky body. It is hard to get a sense of the true man with Duchamp translating, but he burns with an anxious energy. I feel his ambition as if it is my own. He doesn't want to sit around in a cafe arguing what is and isn't Dada. In his practicality and his drive, he is America. He left New York, he said, because it was already Dada, and nothing you did there mattered.

He glances at me like Duchamp did when we first

played chess. They confer in English, and Duchamp shakes his head.

What do they see in me? Why are they hiding it?

Good and drunk, we all totter to a funfair.

February 1922

BRETON, TZARA *et al.*

In his war against Tzara, Breton has gone too far. One day he's attempting to establish a Congress of Paris, an alliance of all the avant-garde against all who would return to classicism like Valéry and de Chirico—whose metaphysical paintings from a few years ago strike such a deep chord in us all. I feel like I've walked his deserted plazas, surrounded by weeping statues.

Then just a day after Breton issues a communique condemning Tzara's foreignness, like some rightist pig. Breton's Congress meeting turns into an inquisition against him, and rightfully so. Never have I been so close to thrashing him. In a curious turn, only Picabia, now on the outs with Tzara, stands with Breton. In passing a motion of non-confidence, I join Éluard, Péret, Dr. Fraenkel⁶, and Soupault—the last because of Breton's harassment, over his taking a job at another magazine.

Undated

Somehow Breton has won us back. That damnable power of his. Some of us, at any rate. Éluard remains in exile, his words during the non-confidence proceeding in some obscure manner more hurtful than the rest.

His latest whim: truth or consequences games, in which one is required to expose one's deepest sexual yearnings. Mostly what it reveals is Breton's own

6 Theodore Fraenkel (1896–1964) Doctor and contributor to Dadaist and surrealist journals and manifestos. Friend of Breton's from his *lycée* days.

prudery. When confronted with the idea that one attempts to give pleasure to the woman, he is not merely shocked but genuinely baffled.

Crevel's jitters escalate. Now I see it. He likes men, and Breton and most of the other despise his kind. In his distress I see the smallness of my own judgments. What is to me, where he wants to stick it?

Robert DESNOS

Undated

Péret keeps introducing a friend, Robert Desnos, and this time it appears to have stuck. Jug-eared, sleepy-eyed. Like me he is a ghost at meetings. He has that desperate look of wanting entrance. I regard myself as senior but have only a few pieces in *Littérature* and *Dadaphone* to my name. Maybe I should be fearing for my position more, working harder at it. There is a frustrating calm about him, beneath the shyness. I guess that he is a man who does not hate his family, and he confirms that I am right.

Francis PICABIA

Mai 11 1922

Picabia is out for good, he writes in his latest communique. This time I believe him. One does not need to embrace Breton in order to kick Tzara.

Max ERNST, ÉLUARD, BRETON, GALA

Septembre 3 1922

Éluard gains readmission to the circle by bringing a gift—Max Ernst, illegally in France under false papers, as “Jean Paris.” Breton has been writing to him for more than a year, and visited him in Cologne. Through Teutonic *politesse* a cold-burning madness shines.

Éluard has supplied him room in his flat, a job at a trinket factory, and Gala, with whom both are now

sleeping. Sometimes in tandem, one presumes. I hate to express curiosity about their arrangements. The last time I so much as batted a lash, Paul pulled his latest nude photograph of her from his wallet. One encounter with the little beast was more than sufficient for me. Scratches rise spontaneously on my back whenever I draw near her.

Septembre 8 1922

CREVEL

A girlfriend has been teaching me the most amazing trick, René says. We are early at Certa, waiting for the others to arrive. Yes, a girlfriend, I nod, yes, yes, René, I don't suspect a thing.

She's a medium, he says.

Surely not.

Yes, yes, she is.

She speaks to the spirits of the dead?

Well not really, at least I don't believe she does. Well maybe she does. But the main trick of it is falling into a hypnotic trance. Then you can set aside the unconscious and access the true mind. Take its unassembled contents and put them together, find the hidden secrets that unite mankind.

What is the name of this girlfriend?

He makes something up.

Septembre 14 1922

SALEM

Back to Lunel, alerted by a letter from his sister. The bastard made no effort to contact me. Yes, I'd made it clear to him that the only reason I'd go to *his* funeral would be to spit in his casket. But Marguerite, my step-mother, who always shielded me, she deserved much—a show of respect, at least.

I get there too late, of course. I find him sitting in the dark in the front room, the shirt of his gendarme uniform draped over the chair, staring into nowhere. He is so startled he nearly pisses himself. He kicks a over a tumbler of wine; red liquid seeps across the floorboards.

Unable to look at me, he weeps. The fists that so often pummeled poor Marguerite clenched in helpless balls, age spots growing between the veins. Again I wonder if he hit mother, too. He had to have.

You are lucky to have that, he says, pointing to my mangled hand. Better than any badge of valor. I am so proud of you, my son.

I ask him when the burial is and check into a hotel.

CREVEL, DESNOS, BRETON *et al.*

Octobre 7 1922

I miss one meeting and in my absence madness has descended. Crevel has been teaching his mediumship trick to the others. The last time, I learn, he sank Desnos and then Péret into trance. Desnos in particular mastered the slip immediately, and can now do it on command. They wrote automatically, answered questions in the voice of an undefined intelligence, made ominous proclamations. Man Ray's girl, Kiki, bolted from Breton's flat in terror.

This is not occultism, not an inquiry into the supernatural, Breton says. We are psychonauts, diving deep into the well of the mind. With what we find there we will stage a campaign of terrorism, waged against the forces holding humanity in mental slavery.

Crevel drops into trance and hallucinates a spontaneous narrative of impressive brilliance. Desnos writes with such blind fervor that his pencil snaps in two. Seeing a shimmering ocean, Péret cries, "It is the



RENÉ CREVEL

Cerenarian Sea!” and throws himself onto the table, swimming.

This is nonsense, Tzara proclaims, sweat bleeding through his collar.

I can only agree.

CELEPHAÏS, Cocteau, KURANES, SERRANIAN

That night

I am no longer in Paris but in a blue city. Everything the color of the sky: cobblestones, spires, pathways, bridges, columns, temples. Intoxicated, I bumble down a wide boulevard, gaping with a child’s openness at the city’s oddly dressed inhabitants. They sweep along on coppery slippers, in gossamer robes, golden Art Nouveau headpieces teetering like skyscrapers from wild coiffures. They chatter in a language I do and don’t understand. A crowd parts to make way for a hard-skinned man carrying a hooked and spiraled staff, clad only in a vestment of orchids. They bow to him, as if to a bishop.

These beings, with their impossible beauty, I find offensive. And so I prowl toward the smell of the salt water and the unmistakable bawl of men at work. The truth of a place lies always in the stink and sweat of its waterfront. Along a wall of pillars lean gnarled stevedores, weathered hands and arms coated in grime. They smoke crudely rolled cigarettes and puff from pipes. Amid them stand tall, brittle men, cascades of amber hair waving in the seaside breeze. These remind me of Cocteau’s giggling coterie at Le Boeuf Sur Le Toit. But as I draw closer I hear their joking and it’s not boy’s asses they’re after. No detail of the female anatomy is left undescribed as they recount exploits with women in oddly named places: Hlanith, Dyath-Leen, Inganok.

When the sylph-like men talk of their home, they point to the sky and frown. The fleshy pleasures they celebrate down here are forbidden up there, in Serranian. (Inexplicably, I accept without questioning the existence of a sky city.) Up there they must behave like the rest of the population—bourgeois, cowed, oppressed by the judgment of neighbors. Why not liberate yourselves, I hear myself asking.

They start, not having noticed me standing there, listening in.

You're not from this place, one of the sailors says.

That's right.

No, he says. You're not. From. Here.

I think I am dreaming, I tell them. Sky cities? Orchid-draped clerics? It is as I have walked into an aquatint by Félicien Rops⁷. I *am* dreaming.

Yes, we can tell. A hint of the ominous enters their tone. They circle me, as one might a dangerous lunatic who has yet to bare his teeth.

One of the sailors slips away.

Does the king know about you yet?, another asks.

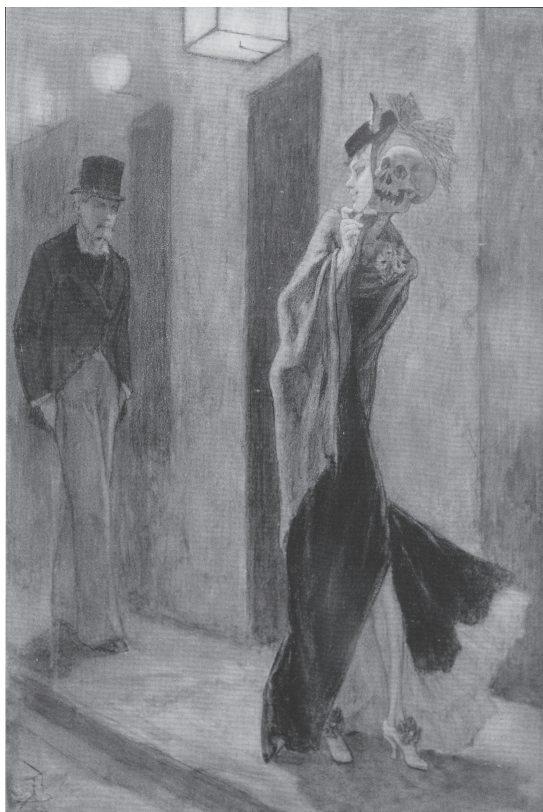
What king?

Sailors shake their heads. The king will want to know about you.

I think to run but they are big men, their legs powerfully muscled. Even if I knew where I was going, they could catch me readily. And, as for the sky-men, who is to say how fast they run?

Then, as happens in dream, I am in another place, the situation abruptly altered. Wan pink light shines

7 1833–1898; French printmaker whose works of decadent beauty commingled sex, death, and Satanism.



FÉLICIEN ROPS MENSCHLICHE PARODIE, 1878-1881

through semi-translucent walls of rose-colored crystal. I stand on a silver carpet before a dais, from which rises a fluted and filigreed throne, of also rose-crystal. Through the walls I see gliding figures like those whose bloodless allure repelled me on the boulevard. Their faint laughter whispers through the halls.

On the throne sits a man, his features ageless and blandly perfect. He wears modern clothes—well, perhaps not entirely to date. His suit reeks of Englishness—the product of Savile Row, from a generation ago. With a tired smile, he aims to put me at ease.

Will you be so good as to tell me your name?, he asks.

I see no reason not to tell him.

French, then? Do you know Cocteau?

Unable to contain my contempt, I spit the name back at him. Cocteau?

My display discomfits the king. Then he smiles. I take it you're not on good terms, then. But he showed you how to get here?

I would not let Cocteau show me to the toilet. Especially to the toilet.

He can be bit much, can't he? But not so bad, really. You do him a disservice, Mr Salem. What about Carter? Do you know Carter as well?

I shake my head.

Then who showed you the way? Did you go down the stairway into the cavern of flame?

Sir, this is all nonsense to me.

He shifts on his throne, adjusting a cushion, concern rising. You came here on your own, but did not encounter the priests?

When you say 'priest,' I hear 'parasite.'

You were not granted entry by Nasht and Kaman-Thah? They did not stare into the back of your soul and pronounce you fit to wander here?

The only thing wandering here, sir, is my subconscious mind.

Subconscious?

Yes, as Freud says—

The king scoffs. That puerile charlatan?

I straighten my spine into a posture of Bretonesque dudgeon. You must understand that you are merely a reflection of me. Or rather, my sleeping mind, chewing over the events of this evening's séance.

He bolts up. Séance?

I realize I'm saying too much, that a subversive should never trust a king, but the words tumble out all the same: I mention Crevel, Desnos, Péret's swimming the Cerenarian Sea, Breton, psychic automatism, Dada, Duchamp, all of it.

A pair of tall brass incense holders flanks his throne. He taps his ivory cigarette holder absently against the one on the left. Well, he says. This may require some sorting.

You're clearly not from here, either, I say, taking the attack to him. Are you also dreaming in a bed somewhere? In London let's say?

A pall drops over him. If only that were so, he says, more to himself than to me.

I've given you my name, I say, and those of my friends. Who do I address?

I awaken, bedclothes soaked with sweat. Although he didn't tell me, I do know his name, or one of them at least. Kuranès.

Even as the reality of my flat—its clutter, its

Octobre 8 1922

chill—reasserts itself, I can't help thinking that it was a mistake to tell Kuranés about Crevel and Desnos.

Desnos, BNAZIC DESERT

I go to bang on Desnos' door but his landlady tells me he's already down at his morning café. More exhausted than when I went to bed, I bawl to the proprietor for coffee. Desnos sits in the corner, staring into an invisible vanishing point, bread held frozen in one hand, a jam-slathered knife in the other. Catching sight of me, he breaks nervously from contemplation. His half-lidded eyes seem on the verge of slipping back into last night's trance.

I gulp down my coffee as soon as it arrives and tell the owner to drown me in it.

Desnos doesn't laugh at my ridiculous story of Celephaïs and King Kuranés. He's been there, too, he says. Not Celephaïs but a place like it—a dream of effete and exotic imaginings, all too vividly realized. It first happened after the night (Sept 25) when Crevel hypnotized him for the first time, and he realized that he could fall into a sleeping fit all on his own. He went home and dreamed that he strode across a desert. Not an earthly waste, but magical, not hot but tepid, its sands not tan or white but blue and green. He stumbled through a maze of coral protrusions, as if on a sea bottom that had been abandoned by its sea. Nomads came to him, astride sinuous, humped amphibians. They demanded to know how he had crossed their land, the Bnazic Desert, on his own, unmolested by gharks or dagorm. Meanwhile the loveliest woman among them fixed him in her almond eyes.

I am thirsty, Desnos told their chieftain.

You may not drink here, he was told.

He pointed to a shimmering mirror of water just beyond his reach. What about that? Is that safe to drink?

They hauled back in their saddles, dismayed. Their camel-salamanders snorted and cantered. That wasn't there a moment before.

They pointed to him with their scimitars. You made that. You're a maker.

I don't know what that means, Desnos told them.

They captured him with ropes and threw him in a pit. He would work his magic for them, as a slave.

How did you escape them? I asked.

Desnos laughed and shrugged. By waking up, of course. Afterwards it all seemed so real. More than that: another reality on top of our own, possibly more important.

Did you tell the others about this?

He shook his head.

Did you tell Breton? A stupid question. What would Breton say? What could he say? We are to be a serious movement, and this is anything but. Schoolboy fantasies.

Breton leans in. The thing is: I keep going back. Every night?

As a prisoner?

No, no. I evade them.

But why go back?

The widest of grins: for the woman.

Aragon, Breton, Crevel, Desnos, Éluard, Ernst,
Max MORISE, Soupault; AIRA

Octobre 13 1922

We are drunk on trances and sleeping fits. Every night we journey into the unconscious—those of us who can

do it. Breton, Éluard, Ernst, and Morise⁸ can't get there. The others are amused by their failures, detached from the enterprise, but Breton is deeply galled. Soupault finds the whole matter ridiculous.

We shake and roll, bursting without warning into mournful laughter or riotous tears. Péret predicts his own death, in a crowded carriage, assassinated by a wild animal.

Desnos falls into trance at any time. At the cafe, rumbling the beer glasses, he shudders and drops in, intoning in the voice of the ocean. Crevel, who started it all, hates his deepening prowess. Eclipsed, he shakes his pretty locks and fumes.

I ask Crevel about his dreams. They are shallow and take him nowhere, he says. Only when suspended between sleep and waking does he live.

Aragon, who was in Berlin when it started, worries; we are slipping away, he says.

The words we scrawl, flowing and disconnected, are not dictated to us by residents of the dreamlands. They are ours, churning up unmediated. It is only when we drift too far down that we exit our own realm and into this other place.

I corner Desnos; when he falls into trance in mid-day, unbidden, is he in the dreamlands? Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

Slumping on the cafe banquette, sleep takes me, and I am in the city of Aira, walking down a long corridor decorated with a colorful fresco, champions and monsters battling in lazy and erotic symbolist style.

⁸ Max Morise (1900-1973) surrealist poet who took part in séance, psychic walks, and exquisite corpse experiments. Expelled by Breton in 1929.

Through elongated, arch-cut windows I behold the gold domes of Aira's skyline. A woman slides along beside me. She has thoughts of guidance for me, or warning, but can't communicate them. No matter how I turn, or how quickly, I can never glimpse her face.

At the same time, a part of me remains aware of the talk at the table, here in the 9e Arrondissement. Soupault is telling us again of his latest adventures in the arbitrary gesture. It's that old trick of his, where he walks up to the doors of random houses to ask if Philippe Soupault lives there. He mimes the puzzlement and thwarted helpfulness of those who come when he rings the bell. One day, mutters Crevel, you will find yourself waiting for you, with a knife. And one of you will murder the other.

I wander through the halls of Aira until I come to a gilded door. Pulling it open, I see myself standing there, with a knife.

Shuddering awake, I kick the table, sending saucers flying.

BAHARNA, ULTHAR, Ernst

Octobre 13 1922

The *univers onirique* is a place of oceans and rivers, of ships and ports. Our sleeping minds drift on its waters.

Rain slicks the stone terraces of Baharna, yet another city by the sea. A quick downpour has just ended. Cool, moist air billows in from the tropical sea and within moments is warm again. Over the city looms a volcanic mountain, its reaches dotted by climbers. Zebras laden with basket bring the stone to town. Artisans squat outside granite shops, carving the polished rock into strange figurines.

I turn and there's Ernst—a plume of silvery feathers

in place of his white hair, but Ernst all the same.

I thought you couldn't drop into trance, I say.

I can't. It seems ... imprecise.

Yet here you are.

Ernst nods. Here I am. He picks up a statuette from a marketplace table. A female form, a sylph or mermaid, wraps her slim arms around a globe.

How is it that you are here, I ask him.

You started with the first trance?

Yes.

I've been coming here for many months, he says.

Since when?

Since I saw my first reproduction of a de Chirico, after the war.

Are there others, here before us?

Duchamp and Ray showed up here last year. We went to a city where cats supposedly rule, but as far as we could see there were no cats at all. Ulthar, they called it. Looks like a good medieval German town, run by fat burgomasters, surrounded by gypsies and their carts. Perhaps it is where the folk of Munich dream themselves to, a place where they are freer and more unusual, but only somewhat. They kept telling us there were cats. Ray thought either that the creatures were snubbing us, or the locals pulling our legs. Duchamp thought it amusing. As he finds most things. Sometimes he is a woman here. If you see a fussy old matron who looks strangely like him, she is him. Call her Rose Sélavy, so as not to confuse the dreamlanders. As peculiar as this place is, there's a quaintness about them. Easily shocked. I suppose that means the others will be here, too. Who else have you run into?

I heard Cocteau was here. He's a friend to the king

of Celephaïs.

No surprise there, Ernst chuckles. We must get together with whoever has the secret and agree to take care.

We're not inviting Cocteau.

Don't worry about him. I mean within the circle. We must agree.

He turns the globe over in his hand. It has changed, its nude figure shifting from Platonic ideal to one of loose and fleshy invitation. A wound gapes on her side, releasing entrails to encircle the globe, whose land masses are now those of Earth.

Ernst blushes, then sighs. Slipping it into his jacket pocket, so that the vendor can not see what he has unknowingly done to it, he asks how much it costs.

Half a florin, says the artisan, striped hat bobbing.

Pay the fellow, Ernst instructs me.

THRAN

Octobre 13 1922

Carved from a single block of marble, tunnels below and vaults above, Thran is a place that could only be imagined, never built. So who imagined it? The stone corners are worn with age, the bronzes bearing the patinas of centuries. But it looks to me like an Arnold Böcklin painting, with touches of Khnopff⁹ and some of those mad Russians. And Khnopff died only last year, if I remember right. So how can this be ancient, yet dreamed up by him? We can't be the only artists to ramble through this place. I suppose he dreamed its antiquity, too. It is antediluvian on the surface, but, if scrape the paint off, you find a canvas that was stretched

9 Fernand Khnopff, Belgian painter.



ARNOLD BÖCKLIN, ITALIAN LANDSCAPE 1858.

only a few decades back.

Might there be a place here where you can step into a hell painted by Bosch? I have heard attenuated grave-diggers speak of an underworld below. Perhaps that's where the toads and demons of older art have gone to writhe and dwindle.

A woman's scream rends the air. Barefoot, she rushes down a set of marble stairs, a filmy scarf trailing behind her. Four helmeted men pursue her—stinking cops! She rushes around a corner, into a darkened tunnel. I point in another direction, yell at them that she's escaping, and two of them peel off in response. Soon enough, though, the others haul her from her hiding place. She's shrieking that she didn't do it. She didn't murder her husband. She would never murder her husband. Her blond hair, which she tears at for want of any real way to resist, is the same shade as Crevel's. Tell the king, she cries. The king is good. He will see that she did not do it, and save her from the gallows.

To the amazement of face-painted carters who mill nearby, I cup my hands around my mouth and shout, "There are no good kings!"

I'd like her better if she were a murderess, slashing her brutish spouse to ribbons in crazed protest against the world. Wronged innocence is so banal.

Crevel

Octobre 14 1922

Once in trance, Crevel cries out: "Murder! Murder! I did not do it! Tell the king! Save me from the gallows." The voice is that of the blond-haired woman of Thran.

Aragon, Thran

Octobre 18 1922

I return to Thran in hope of rescuing the accused

woman. There, in the market, I spot a familiar swaggering figure—Aragon. He's putting up a bluff front but is bewildered at the vividness of his dream, and my oddly intense presence in it.

I pull him into a tavern frequented by coopers and smiths. In a gloomy annex I explain what I know of the realm and its unnatural laws. Recovering quickly, he demands to come with me on my damsel-rescuing mission.

If we are here because we are poets, he asks, can we not shape the place, as we shape our work?

I don't know, I tell him.

If we imagine we have swords, do we have swords? He asks, and there is a cutlass in his hand, and another in mine. The workmen drinking in the other room take no notice of our sudden armament.

What if I thought I had a rifle?

That they will definitely notice, I say.

Unsatisfied with the answer but willing to follow my lead, he follows me into the crypts, where I have learned that the criminal courts of Thran keep their prisoners.

After hours winding through marbled passageways, walls greasy with smoke, we find a rheumy-eyed jailer, half-snoozing on a stool.

The blond woman who slew her husband and cried out for the king?, he repeats. Why, I remember her. They took her to the gallows when I was but a boy.

Dejected, we stalk away. Time here, I tell Aragon—as if I knew this before now—is not the same as time back home.

Unless, says Aragon, we choose to make it so.

Crevel, Desnos

Undated

A shoving match between our rival mediums. Crevel pushes Desnos into a mantelpiece, cracking him on the head.

Crevel, Ernst

Early November
1922

Breton is away, so the sessions move to the villa of a rich friend of Picabia's, Marie de la Hire. She knows Madame Dante, who started the first session before Crevel took over. In this new situation Crevel has determined to take charge again. I am tempted to talk aloud of the *univers onirique*, to say that only one able to explore there (that is, Desnos) should lead the proceedings. But an unspoken arrangement reigns: those of us in the brotherhood understand who we are and what happens at night, but do not speak of it around the uninitiated.

Aragon wants to help Éluard learn the slip. In our planned uprising against the king of Thran, he would fight well.

Perhaps sensing my resistance, an angry Crevel curses us all with illness. Ernst chokes, heaves, and spits up blood.

Crevel, OSHIJ

Early November
1922

Another session at Marie de la Hire's. Crevel puts ten of us deep into trance.

...

A permanent twilight hangs over the nameless plain, strewn with lichen-covered rocks, one must walk to visit Oshij. Among the stones lie mold-coated bones of men, horses, and creatures I can't identify.

After what feels like days the timbers of the Gallows

City thrust up past the gray horizon. On closer view, the aptness of its name becomes all too evident. It is both settlement and execution machine, bristling with hangman's posts, guillotines and torture cages.

Sentinels offer no challenge to the stream of entrants passing through the city gates. I thought myself alone on the plain but now jostle to keep my footing among the crowd.

Who are they hanging tonight, I ask a chortling rustic, clad in burlap hood and shapeless, dirty shift. Revealing a mouth full of rotting teeth, she smiles: why, it's us!

...

We awaken, ropes draped around our necks, slung over rafters at Marie's villa, all ten of us ready to hang ourselves.

Early November
1922

Éluard, Simone BRETON

We are calling down forces that should not be trifled with. Under the dream realm's cloying sweetness lurks a darker reality. I sense the bottomless indifference of its dwellers. When our limited consciousnesses come into contact with ours, they are reflected back at us, magnifying by a hundredfold the cruelty and corruption of the European urge to dominate.

Through the veil, destruction seeps. Éluard's tuberculosis relapses. A transom falls on Simone¹⁰, nearly killing her.

Novembre 13 1922

TELOTH

With Aragon we survey the cities of dream, to see

¹⁰ Breton's first wife, *née* Simone Kahn, married to him the previous fall, divorced in 1928.

whose king most needs to be deposed. Still haunted by the innocent woman hanged in Thran, I say it's the boy king there, the one everyone professes to love, who must be exposed and laid low. Aragon isn't so sure, so then we're in the bleak stone redoubt of Teloth. All here must work, furrowing the land, mucking the stables, hewing wood, hauling freight. In place of the finery seen elsewhere the locals wear worn peasant garb. We are assigned to a crew cutting brambles encroaching on the city gates. Bled by thorns, bitten by blackflies, Aragon takes to it with relish. We are the proletariat of dream! he exclaims. Alongside us toils a creased, palsied old man, white lice wriggling across his scalp.

Who forces you to this awful labor, I ask him.

To work is to be exalted, he replies.

It is the king who keeps you in rags, I suggest.

Yes, but for the good of the people.

A briar spear pierces his palm, drawing blood. This is good?

He gazes piously upward. In drudgery lies man's only salvation.

Aragon jitters with rage. Your king promotes this stinking doctrine?

The old man, now wary, nods slowly.

The bastard! Tell us about him.

I, says the old man, am he.

Desnos, LOMAR

Ghastprowl 15 4805

Desnos and I trudge a frozen waste, hard snow squeaking beneath our shoes. We shiver until we dream ourselves into furred boots and parkas, like those of the sublime Esquimaux. Desnos carries a shovel. The real power to transform will come, he says, when we bring

back an object from the night realm to the daylight. So many of the places here are ephemeral, he continues, because they were dreamed only recently.

(He accepts my theory of symbolist influence over the dreamlands.)

But beneath this snow, he continues, breath plumbing from his mouth, is a place that once existed, in a real but forgotten history, an empire of 4,000 years gone. If we dig down beneath the snow and find an artifact—a spear, a lamp, a chalice—that will be a talisman to change everything.

A roar erupts behind us. We turn. An enormous creature bounds toward us, a combination of polar bear and rhinoceros.

Desnos dreams a rifle and puts it in my hand. You're the one who fought in the war, he says.

I take aim and place five shots in brisk succession in its face and chest. It tumbles into the drifting snow.

A man, standing suddenly beside Desnos, asks a harsh question in a language we do not understand.

Pardonnez-moi?

Where did you get that, he says, repeating his question in French. His American accent is higher-pitched and less comical than Man Ray's.

Desnos faces him defiantly. Get what?

That. Pointing to the rifle.

What's it to you, Yankee?

You must be careful here. You don't understand what you're playing at. This is a special world, and fragile. Coming here is a privilege. It needs guardians, protectors. Not rifles. Is that a Berthier carbine?

The people need protecting, I say. From their oppressors.

You don't understand. The kings here, they are dream kings. They are ideals.

Like that wretched ascetic of Teloth.

Being ideals doesn't make them good. Not all of them. But you want to fight in a world of politics? Do it back home, while awake. Plenty of politics back there, for those who want to dirty their hands. None of that matters anyway. Measured on a cosmic scale, it's all inconsequential.

How quickly apologists for corrupt order resort to mysticism.

The American sputters: *Mysticism?* How can you say that as if it's *inapplicable to the situation*? He waves his arms at the snowy horizon, at the alien stars, at the six-legged creature lying dead a few yards away.

Are you Carter? I ask him.

Who gave you that name?

Kuranes sent you, didn't he?

Something over my shoulder seizes his transfixed attention. I turn around. Rose Sélavy, in crow-feathered hat and furred collar, reaches for the dead creature's horn. She tugs on it, pulling it off. A readymade, perhaps, says Duchamp-in-drag.

Desnos, Breton

Mid-November

Succumbing to a sleeping fit at the latest session, 1922

Desnos demonstrates a new trick—he composes spontaneous poems, witty and miniaturized, in the punning voice of Duchamp—or rather, Rose.

How does he do it?, Breton marvels. All is perfect—the posture, the intonation, the scissoring wordplay—yet he has never met Duchamp!

The feverish pen of Desnos jiggers across the



ROSE SÉLAVY, 1921. PHOTOGRAPH BY MAN RAY.

page, producing dozens of Duchampian, or Sélavian, self-contained poems, tiny, like beads of frozen water.

Desnos, Duchamp

Late November

Breton has a letter from Duchamp in America, laughing off the whole matter. Séances are old hat to them; New York's art circles went through the same craze seven years ago. Duchamp says he is not writing the poems from afar, is not in touch with Desnos' mind. I think this is true of him but what about Rose?

or Early

December 1922

Meanwhile, Desnos' repertoire has expanded: his sleeping hand now writes new works for the ghosts of Apollinaire, Villon¹¹, Nouveau¹², and Lautréamont.

Some are better than others. Certain of Desnos' sleep tricks are faked. The same can be said of Crevel's. Clearly not all of them are; I can attest to that.

Among the great wise tribes unpolluted by Western ideology, shamans indulge in legerdemain to create the mental atmosphere needed to fling open the gates and let the real magic in. There is no line between fakery and truth; they are intertwining threads of the same silver cord.

Crevel

December 1922

Crevel, outraged that Desnos has eclipsed him at the séance table, sensing that within the circle there is a smaller one, hoarding a deeper mystic secret, has quit as medium.

¹¹ François Villon (1431-1463) medieval poet and thief known for formal innovation and death-haunted imagery.

¹² Germain Nouveau (1851-1920) symbolist poet and friend to Verlaine and Rimbaud, struck down by a mysterious bout of mental illness in 1891.

Good riddance, Aragon says. It is Crevel's curdled soul that darkens our perceptions of the other place. Without his sticky influence, we will find it easier to launch our revolution there. As prelude, naturally, to the more difficult one here.

He alludes, I suppose, to Crevel's indulgence of the Greek tendency. Ironic, with the whispers about Aragon and his friend Drieu¹³. To find a pederast, look for a pederast-hater.

Zephyr 12, 4807

THE MOON, Aragon

Seeking tyranny, Aragon and I find ourselves on a lunar surface. A skiff of wood and gears lies nearby. We must have used it to fly here, from the dreamlands below. Its shape reminds me of the boat my uncle had, how he would take me out on the Scamandre to point out the herons.

We crouch beside a slave pen. Belching frog-beings wave mouth-tentacles at their prisoners, whose distorted forms seem human until they resolve into closer view. Horned protrusions jut from their heads; shaggy fur covers their bodies. With each lunge from their monstrous captors they leap on hooved feet, smashing into one another in an effort to flee. They outnumber the moon-beasts by twenty to one but see no advantage in their superior numbers. Instead, they betray one another, seizing their weaker comrades and throwing them toward the tentacles. Every so often one of the moon-beasts grabs up one of these unfortunates. It may nip off a limb, swallow the slave whole, or shake

¹³ Novelist and essayist Pierre Eugène Drieu La Rochelle (1893–1945), at the time an avant-gardist of a generally anarchist stripe, who would later convert to fascism.

it roughly and drop it back into the pen.

A series of hideous quacks wails out as a slave is taken up the tentacles of a notably bloated captor. I raise my carbine and take aim.

Aragon is a veteran, too, and knows how to handle his dream-rifle.

Instead he pushes my barrel down.

There are only two of us, he says. We are poets. Direct action is not our forte.

I reluctantly stow my weapon. He's right. We must fight with words and thoughts, in Thran.

Desnos, Éluard

February 1923

Deep in trance, Desnos quarrels with an unseen interlocutor. Increasingly agitated, he weaves in his chair, pushing his tormentor away. Suddenly he rises, somnabulating his way to the kitchen, where he seizes a butcher's knife. Eyes glassy and unseeing, he lunges at Éluard. Éluard leaps up, knocking over his chair, scrambling for the garden, where Desnos gives chase. Wary of his flashing knife, we finally restrain Desnos. Only I understand his garbled cries—he's shouting Carter! Carter!

Breton, Desnos, Thran

February 1923

Back at the de Hire villa. Desnos leads us on a procession through its dark rooms. Shuffling behind him, we fall into slumber, moaning, shuffling, uttering strange predictions.

Aragon nowhere to be found, I am back in the marble city of Thran. I stumble into a cafe frequented by beak-nosed men, dressed in flowing robes, wigs of high office on their heads. Before I can slip out again, they're upon

me, clawed hands digging into my flesh, demanding to know who I am and why I dare defame their guileless king. Tearing myself away, I run headlong through constricting corridors, down twisting stairs, deeper into the labyrinthine city. Exhausted, lungs gasping in my chest, I find myself where I started—except now here are the cops, with their shining helmets and feathered halberds. I try to materialize a pistol but nothing comes, the fear too heavy on me now. The cops throw me down and kick me, haul me up, toss me down a staircase, and drag me into a cell. There I languish with other guests at the party. Desnos has locked them in and kept the key. I ask them where they think they are: Thran, or the villa? Are the walls paneled wood or ancient marble? Wood they say, and yes, that's where we are. We pound on the door. Finally the handle rattles; Breton, key in hand, opens it. It's 3 AM. We've been imprisoned here for hours.

Late February
1923

Breton, Desnos

Breton summons the group to a meeting at his apartment. He announces that the sleeping fit experiments have grown too chaotic, too uncontrollable, and must therefore be curtailed. He should have halted it with Crevel's suicide walk. To let it go on to the knife incident was already irresponsible. The imprisonment is beyond a final straw. As leader of the movement (what movement?) it falls to him to reverse course.

Desnos reels as if punched. In a few short months, he has gone from peripheral figure to our vital shaman. Forbidding the séances means a relegation to the role of junior poet, behind Aragon and Éluard and Soupault, perhaps even Morise and even me. Breton has not

schemed to steal the crown from Tzara only to have it taken in turn by his court magician. Finally he saw the threat Desnos posed to his primacy, and acted.

Relief radiates from the others. Some sympathize with Desnos, but for most this has been a time of fear. Too many ill omens have been ignored already.

I share a glance with Aragon. We still have the keys to the back gate, and needn't consult Breton before making use of them.

As we file out, Desnos takes me by the elbow. He asks if I can't intervene with Breton.

He doesn't listen to me, I tell him.

Then talk to Aragon. He'll listen to Aragon.

No, Robert.

Desnos is shocked. You agree with him, don't you?

Louis and I have been talking it over. We should be going to the other world, where we are powerful. Not bringing its powers here. We scarcely understand them.

Ashen-faced, he staggers off into the night.

Aragon, Éluard, Ernst, Gala, Teloth

Greenseed 1, 4807

Embarrassingly I arrive early at the Éluard apartment, quite evidently interrupting the Paul-Gala-Max troika in mid-conjunction. Hair wild, robe half open, Gala struts at me in what is either invitation or contempt—if for her the two can ever be separated.

Aragon shows up late, escaping the cost of punctuality.

Ernst has collages made up, depicting the King of Teloth, maggots writhing on his scabrous scalp, surrounded by courtier birds who feed from his munificence. In the background, humans starve, their bony ribs cut from anatomical texts.

I still hate the king of Thran more than the king of Teloth. But Ernst has argued, swaying Aragon, that the latter is more unpopular and so a riper target for subversion. I feel that the point is wrong but can't find the logic in my own. German analysis trumps Gallic impulse.

It would be better to meet without the Éluards present but Max lives here and this is where he works.

Gala, the superstitious Russian, doesn't like this business one bit. If Paul were taking part, she'd block him. But he still can't dream as we can, so she needn't interfere.

We study the collages carefully, memorizing them. Unable to take anything other than our minds with us to the land of dream, we must replicate them mentally on arrival. Ernst of course has the advantage, as the artist who made them, and as a man who thinks in pictures. Any one of us might fail to show up—stopped at the starting line by insomnia, or diverted by unconscious impulse to Dother or the Fungal Forest. Should Max fail to arrive, one of us will have to suffice.

Aragon and I repair to our separate apartments. I fight sleep's call until the designated time: if we fall out of sync with one another, I might arrive at the height of Greenseed, Aragon in late Basalt, and Ernst in the year 4809.

Placing my head on the pillow, I enter the borderland between waking and sleeping. Isolated images resolve from darkness—not yet dream, but the makings of it: the bust of a man, in Greek style, but wearing sunglasses. A clanking automaton with animal appendages, like in Ernst's painting. A crepuscular tree, predatory branches groping. A typewriter leaps upon a

cigarette rolling machine and commences to ravish it.

A set of stairs appears. I rush down it, pushing past a pair of priests in dusty surplices, who warm skeletal hands over a brazier. I traverse a white plain, a sandy desert, a scrub forest. I walk along a riverbank and an ocean shoreline. When I see rocks and brambles, I move toward them, until I am surrounded by them. I call out, hearing first Ernst and then Aragon.

There is a clearing in the brambles. There wait for us half-broken toilers of Teloth, threadbare and grime-caked. They have the parts we asked for.

Ernst gets to work, directing the rest of us, his clipped instructions projecting a mastery of the mechanical. Together we assemble the device.

Tell us again, how this is meant to happen, says a Thranite, his tongue blighted by boils.

Another rubs his worn palms. This seems like more labor to me.

Aragon and I redouble our efforts, proving our worth to these ruined men. It is the greatest weapon of all, says Aragon. A weapon of pure thought.

Doubtful, they pitch in, until it is assembled. A printing press.

Ernst has fashioned a plate, replicating his collage in every detail. The Thranites pull from a burlap sack sheets of vellum purloined from the king's storehouse. I roll ink onto the plate. Ernst turns the press. The handle is a long-beaked bird.

Aragon holds up the first of the propaganda posters to show the oppressed workers of Thran. Weapon of the mind, he repeats.

Avril 12 1923

Breton, Desnos, Éluard

The hangover of catching up on lost slumber. Without the sleeping fits we are dulled, spent. When I can force myself to write at all the words land stillborn on the page.

I think myself the only one laid low. Then Breton declares that he has given up writing. Such a sense of relief, that I need not trouble myself any longer. So difficult.

Desnos has given it up, too. And also Éluard.

This world is pointless, the other one its shadow.

Avril 12 1923

Aragon, Breton

Breton and Aragon near a breaking point. It was bad enough that Louis dared to put food into his mouth by means of the miserable compromise that is paid journalism. Now he says he's writing a novel! Stubbornly he claims the right to persist in both perversities.

We can be comrades in Teloth, but not in Paris.

Redseed 29, 4807

Pablo PICASSO, KLED

Through furious jungles I plunge, the stamens of lubricious blossoms seeking my throat. Sweat soaks me to the bone. A red monkey offers me the dew from a sharp-edged leaf. I hesitate. It bounds off. The liquid spatters my face, burning it. When I stop moving, tendrils encircle my ankles. The monkey returns: we are full of nitrogen, it says. The forest wants our nitrogen. A stalk shapes itself into a spear and pierces the little ape's heart, drinking its blood.

His brothers jump and hoot, protesting his demise.

Where am I, I ask them.

The Jungles of Kled, some shriek.

Others cry: the heart of capitalism, parasitic, an incessant cycle of growth and the devouring of that growth its only ideology. We exist only for the draining of our blood.

Cool air wafts me; I lurch toward it.

In a jungle clearing lounge two figures, on a chaise of vine-draped sandalwood, both naked. At their feet are splayed voluptuous women of intertwined stems and fruit, pornographic Arcimboldo visions. Cooing, caressing, they drape themselves on the legs of the men, cooing.

The first of the two male figures is a minotaur, balancing a massive head upon a chiseled, shockingly endowed body.

The other, dark, serene, glowering with the consuming chaos of creation, is Picasso.

In the waking world, I have yet to meet him. He looks none too pleased to see me stagger in, to pollute the harmony of his clearing with my sweat and desperation.

I'm a friend of Breton's, I tell him. (Breton has been cultivating him.) I contribute to *Littérature*. Among other magazines.

The minotaur stirs, as if wondering whether to heave itself from the comfort of its chaise to crack my skull.

Are you a poet? Picasso asks.

I nod my head.

I respect poets, Picasso says.

The minotaur stands down.

If you don't mind my asking, sir, are you the waking Picasso, or my projection into dream of your greatness? (What a lickspittle I suddenly am! Such is his presence.)

There's a difference? Picasso shrugs. He holds out a goblet of ambrosia. Come drink with us. Girls, welcome



GIUSEPPE ARCIMBOLDO, DER HERBST. 16TH CENTURY.

my poet friend here. What's your name? Salem.
Welcome Henri Salem, girls.

Rind-crusteds breasts bobbling, they shrink from me.
They do not love poets. They only love Picasso. And of
course his minotaur.

Breton, Cocteau, Crevel, Desnos, Péret, Picasso,
Tzara

6 Juillet 1923

And the glorious battle is joined. Tzara has had the
temerity to stage an event, the Soirée du Coeur à barbe,
in which the despicable Cocteau will participate. We file
in determined merely to disrupt. Crevel is there, the
rejected prophet defected to the enemy.

Picasso, to whom Cocteau serves as prattling court
jester, is there. He nods to me in recognition, his gesture
as casual as if our sole prior meeting had taken place
here in the waking realm.

We take our seats, poised for a moment to seize. The
reading of the Cocteau poem is bad enough. Then one
of Éluard's is read without his permission. He seethes
but we do not strike. Then the non-entity Massot¹⁴
struts onto the stage and intones:

André Gide, dead on the field of battle.

Sarah Bernhardt, dead on the field of battle.

Francis Picabia, dead on the field of battle.

Pablo Picasso, dead on the field of battle.

How dare he insult Picasso! We storm the stage.
I keep heedless Samaritans at bay as Desnos grabs

¹⁴ Pierre de Massot (1900–1969), a sudden defector from Breton's
circle to Tzara's, who shortly before had slighted the latter in a maga-
zine article as a 'Rumanian Jew.'

Massot's left arm, and Péret his right. Breton brings his obscene cane down on Massot's arm. The bone breaks with a captivating snap.

Alarmed, Picasso shouts: No police! No police! (In this world, absent his guardian minotaur, the great painter harbors a paralyzing terror of official intervention.) Stagehands materialize to jostle me aside and eject Breton, Desnos, and Péret.

After a few more acts of this pitiful cabaret, Éluard jumps from his seat to attack Tzara and Crevel, helpless in their constricting cardboard tubes. Stagehands burst from backstage to savagely beat him, the audience yelping frenzied approval with each bloodying blow. When he finally goes limp in their arms, they toss him chin-first into the orchestra pits. Sparks and glass shards fly as he lands on a battery of lights, destroying them.

As I drag the dazed Éluard through the aisle, I see Picasso grinning: A delightful evening. Delightful!

Now the cops are called, but not against the stagehands—against us! Tzara has sealed his fate: from this day forward, history will forever label him a police informant.

Down with the king of Thran! Down with the king of Teloth! Down with the king of Dada!

August 13, 1923

Breton, Picasso, Tzara

Breton and Picasso holiday together, now the fastest of friends. Picasso greatly willing to bask in Breton's praise, especially in printed form. But always as the adored, never as supplicant.

Breton and Tzara, on the other hand, are suing one another over the *Coeur à barbe* affair.

THE ENCHANTED WOOD

Onyx 12, 4807

Beneath an eternal night made by oak leaves above,
through tree trunks, along a softly glowing fungal
carpet. In my sidelong vision, tentacled rodents, fatter
than tomcats, scurry and pounce. Curious, they scurry
toward my toes, first from the left, then from the right.
Slowly I come to understand that they represent rival
tribes. The ones on the left have ringed tails, black and
then white, while those on the right twitch tails which
are white and then black.

Join us, black-and-whites whisper.

We will serve you, the white-and-blacks hiss.

I have no part in your war, rats.

We are not rats, we are zoogs.

I am just passing through this place.

They eat their mothers, the black-and-whites accuse.

They snack upon their young, slurp the
white-and-blacks.

Neither charge surprises me. You may call yourself
zoogs but you're all rats to me.

The black-and-whites rear up on meaty haunches,
firing Berthier carbines at the white-and-blacks. They
die in droves; the survivors scamper to a trench to fire
mortars.

I stand there stupidly, tiny artillery bursting all
around me, striking exposed skin like so many wasp
stings.

This is not my war, I cry.

Who do you think made us these guns? they chitter.

I run, scattering acorns.

Breton, Desnos

Mars 12 1924

Back to writing again—automatic writing, without the

sleeping fits. Breton decrees it, and his work freely flows. Skimming the unconscious without diving so deep that we risk drowning. Desnos has resumed too. He sits in the dark, but does not fall into trance, composing long narratives that loop upon themselves. Those of us who have been there with him see that they are not improvised. He has changed names and altered descriptions, as any poet must. But this cycle, which he calls *Mourning for Mourning*, retells his dreamlands exploits.

Breton has found a name for our movement—*his* movement, now that Tzara's lies in fading ruins. We mine a higher mental landscape. Our work is not real, but surreal.

March 1924

Éluard, Ernst, Gala

Distressing news: Éluard has vanished! 17,000 francs missing from his father's firm. The father discovers a message from him, warning of death to any who would follow.

Hearing of this from Aragon, I rush to the apartment. Ernst paces. Gala is beside herself. Max can't talk with her there. Meet me on the Moon, he says.

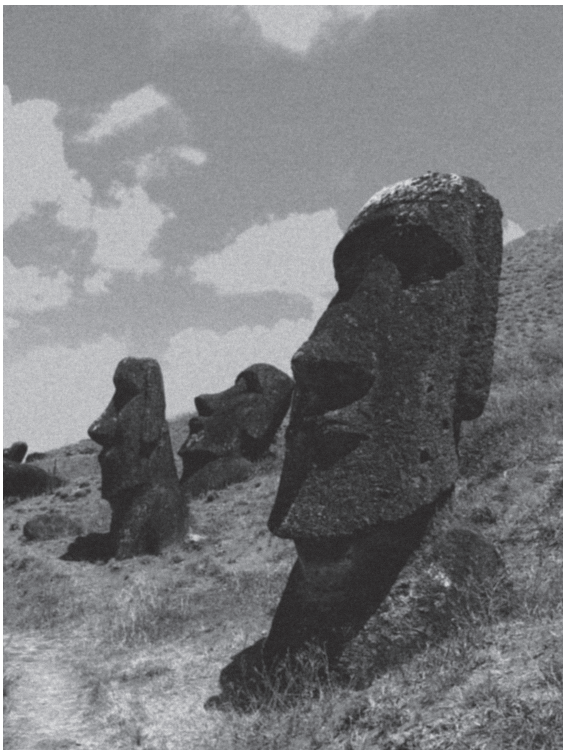
Zephyr 8, 4810

Cocteau, Éluard, Ernst, The Moon

I materialize by the slave pens. Ernst is already present in bird form, ruby wings keeping moon-beasts at bay. He bids me to stroll with him through a mushroom forest. We come to a ridge and slide down a hillside. Elongated stone heads cover its surface. I recognize the shapes: these are the idols found on Easter Island.

Help me push one of these over, Ernst says.

We put our shoulders against the nearest of them, grunting and cursing until the dry lunar soil gives way



THE MOAI OF EASTER ISLAND.

and the idol topples over onto its side. The part below the surface, the roots as it were, are interfolded tentacles. A bat-like wing can be seen, faintly outlined, on the face's exposed temple. Presumably a matching wing appears on the hidden side.

Ernst saw these in a book, Ernst says. Then he grew strange. It was like he was in one of Desnos' trances.

He could never fall into trance before, I say.

No, no, neither could I. But that picture worked a transformation on him. I saw a glimmer, then a dulling, in his eyes. He took the page with him, tearing it out.

He's not in dream, is he?

No, I don't believe so. This is a thing that exists in both worlds. Maybe more so in ours.

What are you saying, Ernst?

I think it's a god.

You're the last person I'd expect to be talking about gods—

Not a thing one ought to worship, but a powerful force, very old. Don't you sense it?

I didn't want to sense it.

Why did you bring me here?

Cocteau knows about these things. These gods. He wrote about one of them in his children's book, which I can't make head nor tails of.

And?

And I can't be caught talking to Cocteau. Word would get back to Breton, and the row it would cause ... I can't be distracted by that. I must see to Gala.

But *I* can be caught talking to Cocteau?

You're less known. Fewer tongues will wag.

Cocteau, Péret

March 1924

Cocteau, who I meet in *Le Boeuf Sur Le Toit* at opening time, when it is empty, reeks of opium—a high reek of burnt flowers and rancid honey. He ushers me into the back, jabbering a thousand thesauruses a minute. Satie¹⁵ has broken from him because he's taken up with a music critic who routinely shreds his work. (Word has it that it is the critic, Laloy, who put Cocteau on the pipe. One hears Cocteau rumors even if one does not wish to.) Cocteau very animated, thinking this is a back-channel diplomatic mission to finally effect the much-desired confederation with Breton. To learn what Ernst wants me to, I must let this impression dangle in the air, an apple for Tantalus.

What he tells me I will not write much of here. It comes by way of the American, Randolph Carter, who was wounded at the Somme when serving with the Foreign Legion. Cocteau, I am surprised to learn, volunteered at the front as an ambulance driver. He ferried the injured Carter to hospital. Cocteau, who must have been infatuated with him, spent time at his side as he convalesced. Learning that Cocteau dreamed, Carter warned him of the dangers there—the ominous entities I too have sensed, coiled beneath the sickly beauty.

After Carter, Cocteau wormed his way into the forbidden shelves of the *Bibliothèque nationale*, and plumbed the personal libraries of certain rich and decadent contacts.

There are indeed dark gods, whose mere existence it is risky to contemplate. It sounds to Cocteau that

¹⁵ Erik Satie (1866-1925) composer best known for his melancholy piano pieces, often with surrealistic titles.

Éluard has been called by one of them. If he's in the South Pacific, Cocteau has a guess as to which one it might be.

On a napkin he draws a charm, a little like an olive branch. Ernst can make a stronger one, with his painter's passion. He must find Éluard, and use this as a talisman to break the hold of Cthulhu.

Leaving the bar, I bump into Péret. He peers inside, knowing he has found me in the lair of Cocteau.

March 1924

Breton, Cocteau, Péret, Picasso

Péret sees to it that Cocteau's good deed for Éluard is punished. The popinjay must not be allowed to think it is acceptable to speak to any of us. As Breton looks on, Péret phones Cocteau's mother to tell her of his death in an auto accident. For good measure he calls Gide¹⁶ and Anna de Noailles¹⁷ to inform them of his dramatic suicide in a bar full of onlookers.

Soon Breton's phone rings—a furious Picasso knows who to blame. Breton shudders, his mortification palpable. He has worked so hard to make Picasso his, and pull him away from Cocteau. And now this vicious prank pushes him back.

Porphyry 18, 4810

Kuranes, SERRANIAN

I must rely on more than the word of a dandyish opium eater. Talk of evil gods makes a mockery of my every intellectual precept. Or rather, it contradicts who I was before I learned to sail a punt to the horizon, which in dream is a place one can reach, and upon steering the

¹⁶ André Gide (1869–1951) writer whose novel *Lafcadio's Adventures* won surrealist approval for its anti-heroic protagonist.

¹⁷ Poet, novelist and memoirist (1876–1933).

prow of your vessel into it, find yourself lifted up into the sky, to dock at a sky city. And then to move through hushed streets, one's every cough and snuffle an explosion to the shy folk furtively traipsing across its paving stones.

This is Serranian, the sky city, whose people may acknowledge appetites elsewhere, but never at home. Here Kuranos rules for part of the year, in a palace of gold shaped like a spun sugar confection. Perfumed breezes whirling around me, I stride through silent streets. Each home here is a spire, a temple to isolation. If there are families in Serranian, or children, I do not see them. Faces peer down at me from elongated windows, then dart from sight as I try to fix them in my gaze. The shadow of a cat falls briefly across my path; the creature itself stays hidden. I forge on between spires, the city swallowing the sounds of my footsteps. After a timeless interval of dream I am suddenly on the threshold of the royal estate. I identify myself to its hushed, hooded sentinels and wait in an echoing courtyard.

Then another oneiric break and I am in Kuranos' study. The interior of the chamber does not match the palace's candied and filigreed outer shell. Stuffey fixtures and furniture proclaim their Anglo heritage. Both ancient and modern are banished here, to make way for the burnished, the Edwardian. Oaken shelves, bursting with books, their leather bindings gleaming, surround us.

Kuranos sits on in an elegant chair, fashioned in the neoclassical style, with round, padded back. Only the starry swirls on its upholstery betray its otherworldly manufacture. He wears a tailored dressing gown and

holds an unlit pipe. A box of matches waits patiently for him on a polished side-table. Diminutive, gray-stubbed, wistful, he gazes out a window at a scene I did not behold during my circumnavigation of the palace: a terraced garden, and beyond that grassy cliffs sloping steeply to a steely sea. It is the English coastline.

“You have dreamed that into being?” I inquire.

He seems disappointed to hear me speaking foreigner’s English. How we perceive each other’s speech here, I have not yet fully apprehended. We all understand one another, but can, if I am right, identify the earthly origin of the speaker, should there be one. I perceive myself as speaking my own tongue, but Kuranès hears me as speaking English, though marked by a southern French accent.

Whatever his reasons, he bristles. “Perhaps, good sir, you might identify yourself, and your business in my kingdom.”

I remind him that we have met before. I am Henri Salem, a poet of Paris, and that I and a number of my friends have found pathways into this realm. We seek his counsel, to avoid its perils. Irritation twitches across his face as he pretends to recall our previous meeting, not here, but down in Celephaïs. I act as if I have not caught him at this. He must meet so many travelers, I say. Yes, yes, he gruffs, quite so my good man. Quite so.

It galls me, to kowtow to a self-appointed king. An imperial colonizer of the collective mind is what this ill-shaven roastbeef is. But we need to understand the forces that may have taken Éluard, and so I supplicate.

“Do you know Carter?” he asks.

“I know Cocteau, who knows Carter.” I now suspect that it was Carter Desnos and I met on the plains of

Lomar; as that encounter proved strained at best, I choose not to mention it.

Kuranes' shoulders perk up. We swap tales of Cocteauian impertinence, and a bond of civility forms between us. Now it seems he genuinely recollects me. As we talk I examine the spines of his many books: Dickens, Hobbes, Locke, Donne, Blake, Thackeray, DeFoe, Stevenson, someone named Dunsany. I pick up a handsome volume of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Its pages are blank.

Kuranes sighs. "I haven't the memory to reproduce the insides, you see."

I dare to ask him again, regarding his seaside view: "You made that, yes?"

Wary once more, Kuranes nods.

"We have found, some of us, that we can do the same."

Fingers jittering, he reaches for a match and attempts to strike it against the black sandpaper strip along the side of the box. "So you are responsible," he mutters.

"Responsible?"

He sweeps his hand toward the window. "This is one matter. To create a place of beauty. Of solace and memory. But what your kind are doing—first of all, you aren't only poets. The dreamlands has had its share of those. There are painters, too, and those are the dangerous ones. They see something inside their minds, and can project it out into this world. It may mean little to you, but the beings of this realm have no other place to escape to. Your friends may despoil it and wake refreshed on the pillows of Montparnasse. My people are left to dwell in the land they have cavalierly rearranged. Those who live here are people, not

playthings, not mannequins, not imaginings.” Kuranee sees that he has excited himself and strives for calm. “You seem like a reasonable enough fellow, Salem. You must protect dream, and its people, from the carelessness of your ... what do you call yourselves?”

“Surrealists,” I say¹⁸. It is uncomfortable to admit, but he has a point. Who is the colonizer here, and who the colonized?

“Do not make the folk of Celephaïs, innocent in their agelessness—the folk of Serranian, shrouded in introversion—do not make *them* suffer for *your* art.”

I nearly emit our standard retort—surrealism is not art but revolution. This of course would set me back further still with the man. Returning to the subject, I say, “Isn’t it the Old Ones we should fear?”

What color his face has drains away. “Who told you about—ah, Cocteau.”

“One of my friends is in danger—in the waking lands—and these Old Ones, or one of them, might be luring him, and clearly there is much we need to know, if we are to save him. You want me to intercede with my friends, to impel them to greater caution. Then give them a reason to heed me. Lend me your expertise.”

He rises, unsteady, from his chair. “You give me a choice between devils, Henry Salem.” On worn slippers he totters to a bookshelf, moving to a volume that, in its scuffed binding and metal clasps, stands out among the others. He extends it to me, then hesitates. “Understand that I do you no favors, my friend, by letting you read this.”

¹⁸ The first appearance of the term in the manuscript. Breton started applying the label to his movement that year (1924.)

"I'll risk that," I hear myself saying.

Kuranes places it in my hand. Its weight surprises me—the weight of a waking object physically transported into this world.

"You didn't make this one?" I ask.

His jaw tightens. "Surely not." He pauses. "If Carter asks how you got this, tell him you stole it."

I open the book. It is written in Greek. Here in dream, I can read it.

Soon I wish I hadn't.

Breton, Aragon, Roger VITRAC, Max Morise *Early May 1924*

Breton more anxious than ever to cross into the dreaming world, afraid the power we gather there without him will send his leadership into eclipse. Inspired by the activities of the absent Éluard, he will go on a destination-free walking tour of Paris, in hopes that one of the corners he rounds will lead him into Celephaïs or Serranian. With Aragon, Morise and Vitrac¹⁹, he begins his expedition from the streets of Paris to the avenues of dream.

The first night, Breton claims to have glimpsed the edges of "disturbing phantoms" and sensed the nearby presence of Vaché.

Perhaps it's not so absurd after all.

Hilarity, as revealed by Aragon: Breton's Paris expedition *Late May 1924* of 1924 a descent into frustration and ridiculousness.

Vitrac's apex of initiatory magic? His decision to vandalize a crucifix hanging in a train station.

His wild insistence that every niggling coincidence

¹⁹ Roger Vitrac (1899–1952) poet and playwright associated at various times with Breton, Artaud, and Buñuel.

they trip across drips with revelatory portent drives Breton to distraction. Vitrac's nonsense claps the shackles of rationality back on Breton's mind, destroying the mystical acceptance needed to walk waking into dream. Vitrac sees a large white cockroach and pronounces it a sending from an inhuman god. Aragon, not as amused then as in the telling, launches himself at Vitrac, fists flying. The two have themselves a good few go-rounds before succumbing to exhaustion.

After fourteen days, Breton has called it off. As ever, the transporting madness he cultivates refuses to root itself in him.

22 juin 1924

Salem

Tottering home from a night at Certa, head spinning from Pernod, I am intercepted in the hallway by the concierge. Worry wriggles across Madame Sallette's prodigious brow. I wish only to collapse into bed, so that I may be stationary as the world orbits around me.

Only half of what she says penetrates my drunken skull. She is terribly sorry. Thinks she made a foolish mistake. She let someone in. He said he was a friend of yours, Madame S., supplicates, but thinking back he did not seem so friendly. And not one of your artist types, like Monsieur Desnos or Monsieur Ray. Tall. Wore a black coat, black slacks, black hat. Frankly he intimidated her, that's why she gave him the key to your room.

The key to my room? Sobriety smacks me like a blow to the head.

He said he'd wait for you, had urgent business, concerning your family in Lunel.

The man knew enough about me to say where I was

raised? It is not a detail I bandy about.

I lurch into the room, trailing Madame S. and her apologies behind me. She says that after half an hour he left. I become all the more suspicious.

At first I note no signs of the intruder's presence. Then I take a closer look at the bookshelf. Several of the books on my shelf have been reordered—the copy of *Les Chants de Maldoror* is now under C (for Comte de Lautréamont), not L, where naturally one would place it. Moreover, the uneven layer of dust across them is gone. The entire contents of the shelf have been removed, searched, and put laboriously back in place.

“You gave this person my key?”

She clasps her hands. “I am so sorry, Monsieur Salem. An unforgivable lapse of judgment.”

“He wasn't American, was he?”

“God forbid. He spoke flawless Parisian.”

Could this be someone working on Carter's behalf, thinking I had somehow smuggled the book from the dreamlands to the waking realm?

Desnos, Soupault

14 *juin* 1924

I am headed to Certa down the Passage de l'Opera when the flesh on the back of my neck writhes. Glancing behind me, I note a tall man in a black hat, black coat, black scarf. An outfit unsuited to the warm summer evening. He sees me see him, and turns off at the next intersection.

Desnos and Soupault—the latter recently permitted back into the fold—are at the table already. I tell them about my intruder-cum-pursuer. Desnos gets up; he will take up a position down the street, to watch for watchers. He is not in the mood for another reading

from Breton's new work, *Soluble Fish*, or further invective directed at Picabia (once again banished.)

16 *juin* 1924

Desnos, Soupault, Vitrac, HECTOR DELVÉ,
CHARLES DEXTER WARD

Soupault, Vitrac and I are hauling boxes of books up the stairs to my new flat when Desnos bounds in. "I am quite the Philippe Guérande²⁰!" he exclaims. In his excitement it does not occur to him to assist in the carrying.

"Your tall man in the black hat and scarf," he says, "I tracked him to his lair. And then followed him about a bit. I don't have his name but he's a live-in aide to a man named Hector Delvé. Does that name have a familiar ring to it?"

I shake my head, but Soupault has heard of him—a book collector and filthy war profiteer, rich as Croesus and bloody-handed as Procrustes. Rumors place him as a black mass initiate and participant in orgies at the Meudon wood.

"And that's not all," says Desnos. "I followed him to the Bibliothèque nationale. Not Delvé, the black-garbed manservant. He sat down for a long chat with a young fellow, and I slid into a nearby carrel to eavesdrop. I mostly made out their tones. The young man's dressed like a tourist and talks with an American accent. Not Ray's brutal French, but weedy and soft. From what I could tell, Black Scarf was acting as a go-between in a transaction. The American wants to purchase an item

²⁰ The journalist-detective hero of Louis Feuillade's seminal 1915 adventure serial, *Les Vampires*, which starred surrealist muse Musidora as the villainess Irma Vep.

from Delvé. Delvé has it, is reluctant to part with it, but feels an obligation to the young man. Or perhaps a fear of him, which is odd.”

“Why odd?” I ask, my sweat chilling.

“He seemed a little off perhaps, but scarcely threatening. But listen to this: I think Black Scarf was telling him someone else in the city had another copy of the item, didn’t grasp its significance, and might be inveigled out of it.”

“Did you hear them mention Carter? Randolph Carter?”

Desnos shakes his head. “So when the black hat leaves, I strike up a conversation. Ward, the fellow’s name is, Charles Ward. From New England. Friendly but clams up when I ask him what he’s researching. I thought at first he might be a dreamer, and even mentioned a King Kuranès, but the name-drop washed right over him.”

“This must mean something,” Vitrac says.

It means I am pursued both here and in dream, for a book that exists only in the latter.

Ward

18 Juin 1924

Unable to stomach the anxiety, I take an arguably foolish risk, venturing to the library in the hopes of approaching Ward. I ask around for him, describing a young American with a soft voice. Oh, yes, Charles Dexter, asserts a talkative eavesdropper, eager to break from his study of tenth-century monastery accounting records. “A shy chap, but charming enough when you draw him out. Monstrously boring field, though, worse than mine. Writing a chemical history of salts, if you can believe that.” He has gone on to the next stop in his

tour, the scholar tells me. He wouldn't say where he was going but had a travel brochure for Czecho-Slovakia in his valise.

Perhaps, then, my worries concerning the book are at an end. He will seek it from someone whose copy exists in the real world, and leave me alone.

1 Zephyr, 4180

Vaché, ZAR

Wandering dream, sinister book clutched to my chest, I feel the tug of irrepressible melancholy. Before me lies a pristine land of limpid ponds and rolling, verdant hills. Its air smells of clover and fresh-cut apples. Lying on its hills are hundreds of young men, in the Sunday finery of a dozen ages, quill pens in hand, faces thrust upward to golden clouds. I want to be among them, and drift their way, feet not quite touching the ground.

Without forewarning I all but bump into Jacques Vaché, who leans, smoking in that rakish way of his, against a tombstone with his name on it, and the dates 1895-1919.

"You're dead," I stupidly observe.

"You don't look so good yourself."

Not done stating the obvious, I say, "You're here."

He hands me a cigarette. His fingers stink of opium. "How am I here, I think you mean to ask. I died dreaming, like your friend Kuranès, and so here I am."

"Is it really you?"

"A semantic question, which on principle I must reject. I am the Jacques Vaché who died that night long ago. I cannot become the Jacques Vaché who would have lived. Is that the answer you were looking for?"

I goggle my jaw like a surprised fish.

"You can't come in here with that," he says, pointing

at the book. "The *AlAzif*'s too evil for this place of crystalline regret. Though I could take it off your hands for you."

I recoil, holding it tighter. A jagged smile cuts across his lips.

"Pity," he says. "I may be a shadow of my former self, but there's a great deal I could do with that. If you want to leave that on that stump over there, you can come on in to Zar. Join the pining versifiers, piss-drunk on notions of eternity."

I take another step back.

He laughs. "Clever you."

In the distance, behind a stand of waving willows, belches a cloud of smoke. It rises from a contraption of rusty steel, looking for all the world like one of Picabia's paintings of a nonsensical machine.

"What's that?" I ask.

"A furnace," Jacques says, "for burning poets."

Ernst, Gala

July 1924

I go to the Éluard apartment to plot with Max, to show him what I have learned in the book, keeping as much of its contents from him as I can. It is slow reading, as I must go to dream, retrieve the book from its hiding place, study the impenetrable Greek (which resolves in my mind as equally impenetrable archaic French), then try to remember the contents. Taking notes helps only somewhat, as these of course are no more accessible to me in waking life as the book itself. I shudder awake each morning, chill sweat permeating the sheets, and rise shaking from my bed, the visceral, violating revelations of the text echoing more in my emotions than in my conscious memories. I stagger to the coffee pot, imbibe

the brown liquid, then wait for some of the words to percolate up into the intellect. These I dash down on my second set of notes, my waking set, writing as quickly as I can before the obscenities contained therein sink back into suppressed recollection. My mind protecting itself against the madness I nightly force into it. Diagrams prove easier to remember and to reproduce, though at greater cost to my equanimity. A few nights ago, at the Dôme, one of Kiki's stupid friends, Thérèse I think her name is, prattled away, blowing smoke in my face while in the back of my mind monstrous worms copulated into being an existence of malign deities, and before I knew it, I had a bottle in my hand and was about to brain her with it. Desnos wrested it away from me before I could smash her skull in, with none but the two of us understanding the origin of my wild outburst. In short the book is driving me insane and I cannot work systematically and avoid the worst parts, the not-pertinent parts, due to the complications of the process. What I can do is shield Ernst and the others, to perform for them the editing function that is denied to me.

If only we could meet in a cafe, free of the maenad Gala. Ernst won't have it; she's too fragile with Paul vanished. That gorgon, fragile! The thought provokes mirthless laughter. Despite his protestations, Max vibrates with German romanticism.

Gala touches me for money. To placate Ernst I parsimoniously comply. She's selling off Paul's art collection, which ought to fetch a sum to furnish a palace in Serranian. Yet she claims poverty.

FUNGAL FOREST

Porphyry 10, 4810

Carter pursues me, knowing I have the book. Kuranés, as threatened, doubtless says I stole it. As desperately as I wish to be released of it, I am not yet ready to let it go. On insight's precipice I stand, nearly ready to deduce the shape that will protect Paul from the many-limbed god that has drawn him to the South Seas. I tried to explain this to Carter but he won't or can't understand. Says that the Old Gods are a perpetual threat, deadly if confronted or dwelt upon, inevitable in their eventual victory, against which one can do nothing, but therefore a force to be left alone. Whereas the disruption we have set in motion is new, and unpredictable, and therefore must be halted. Like all Americans, if you scratch a millimeter below his love of freedom, you find a frothing reactionary.

So a night better spent apprehending the outlines of the protective sign is spent hurtling through a forest of towering fungal stalks, some crowned with mushroom heads, others formed into hungry jaws, still others into thickets of thorns. Crash into any of them and they explode into a cloud of blinding, choking thorns.

Either they, or the content of the book, further warp my perceptions. Before tonight, I would have said it was impossible to hallucinate in a dream.

Misshapen figures with mask-like faces leap out from between the fungal stalks to jab at us with serrated spears. Goblins, Carter calls them, cursing. They see his rifle and deem him the worse threat. Dozens of them converge on them. He blasts away, felling mushroom trees and slaughtering obscenely prancing dream-beings.

I run, the book clasped under my arm, its metal

findings burning my flesh.

3 Août 1924

Éluard, Ernst, Gala

Max and Gala are off to Saigon, to meet Paul. She knows where he is. Throughout his journey, to South Seas islands, to Tibet, and then to Indochina, she has never not known his whereabouts. She concealed this from us all, to better dun us for money. The witch.

I can only hope that what I have taught Ernst will allow him to break the hold on Éluard's mind. He wanted me to go with him. Too expensive, Gala said. To my shame, I am secretly relieved that I was not required to go. I fear what I might do, exposed directly to the presence of Great Cthulhu.

6 Septembre 1924

The Man in the Black Scarf

Much strategy at tonight's meeting regarding a cuckoo who has invaded our nest and means to heave out the eggs. A Dada hanger-on named Yvan Goll has gone to press with a journal appropriating the term surrealism, absurdly claiming that it ought to apply to the works of such fanciful aesthetes as Apollinaire, Reverdy, Paul Dermée²¹, Max Jacob, and of course himself. This at a time of nascence, with Breton's manifesto written (as a preface to *Soluble Fish*) but not yet printed.

I get up to head to the WC. In the narrow hallway outside its door, I blunder into another patron. A flash of steel glints in his hand. Staggering back, I see that it is Black Scarf. Surprised, he freezes me with an angry smile. I mutter in protest. What does Delvé want of me? There is no book. There never has been a book. Not in

²¹ Belgian poet (1886-1951) once designated by Tzara as Dadaist proconsul to Zurich.

this world, at any rate.

Desnos hears my distress and comes to see what scrap might be brewing. Black Scarf pushes past him, out the door, and into a rainy night. Desnos is ready to go after him, until I tell him about the weapon.

PEAKS OF THOK

11 Basalt, 4810

Black winged creatures seize me, sharp fingers tickling, and loft me into the air. I am borne to another impossibility, an underground mountaintop, where dozens of the things quiver and gibber. "What do you want of me?" I cry. They abandon me there, alone on the dark and frigid peak. I must live long enough to wake up, I tell myself. Then all will be fine. I reach for the comfort of the book. Not to read it—impossible in this lightless hell—but to feel the comfort of its insinuating pages. With its incantations I will beseech the gods, through their thousand-faced legate Nyarlathotep. I will reach through Yog-Sothoth's gate to seize the crawling allure of Azathoth and thrust it upon the western world, riding it like a chariot, laying waste to false authority, freeing mankind from the artificial yoke of Euclidean perception.

Then I realize: the book is missing.

The nightgaunts took it. (By abrupt recall of something written on those repossessed pages I realize what the black creatures call themselves.)

Carter. He sent them.

And consigned me to die in gelid darkness.

Well, it's harder than that to kill a dreamer.

Breton, Antonin ARTAUD

Late fall 1924 ?

Breton invites to the cafe a new prospect—Antonin

Artaud, who writes poems and plays and also acts. He stalks in like a creature out of Poe—a raven, nervish and predatory, inhuman suspicion glittering in his dark eyes. Alien in his male beauty. “I am already too much the surrealist to join you,” he tells Breton. But our André will not be deterred. Artaud published something in a journal, an exchange with his editor who found his argument about his rejected poems more interesting than the work itself. Breton sees a quality in the man, an energy that will revitalize us after the death of the trance experiments and his pitiful attempt to walk his way into dream. “He drags a Gothic cathedral behind him,” Breton later says. And, yes, an electricity does emanate from the man. The rest of us play at madness. As for Artaud, head darting, his every pore alert to offense and perhaps the vibrations of another, crueller sphere ... madness plays with him.

4 Chillmist 4180

GUG CITY

It is one of those dreams, in which I run, and run and run, my destination receding with each step. Yet here the landscape truly does expand beneath my feet. I dart between stone towers, their yawning archways sized for gigantic residents. As happens sometimes in dream, I sense more than I can directly perceive. The beings lurking inside the towers are indeed twice my height, their bodies hairy and bloated, toothy mouths running vertically through their melon-like heads. Each elbow sprouts a pair of forearms, topped with clawed hands. The knowledge that they're in there, and hungry, and could thump out of the towers at any moment, freezes the blood in my heart. Yet still I push myself forward, for if I stop, maybe that's what will prompt them to come

at me. What stops them? Is it a game they play—the ones closest to me when I collapse from exhaustion are permitted to come out and feed upon me? An agreed-upon property right, to prevent battles between them? To contemplate it is foolishness. Who knows what rules such creatures follow?

I run round a tower, stumbling over its crumbling foundations, to plummet headlong into a glowering man. Artaud. It figures he could access this place. He bore all the marks of a dreamer, back in the cafe. They were sure as the purple of his laudanum lips.

By bumping him I have affronted him. With the tip of his cane he pushes me back. “You were with Breton the other night,” he says.

“Yes, get me out of here,” I whimper. Disgustingly servile in my fear. Ever since the nightgaunts took me to the Peak of Throk I haven’t been right. What was once my power over the dreamlands are now their power over me. A quivering rag, that’s what I’ve been reduced to.

“You’re following me?” he snaps.

“No, no, I would never come to a place like this intentionally. Give me the crystal structures of Celephaïs. The airy spires of Serranian.”

“It’s my genius you’re after, isn’t it? You and the others.”

“Get me out of here. Do you know what lives in these towers?”

Artaud sniffs the air. “Gugs. They won’t dare come out when I’m here.”

“Why not?”

He rubs his considerable chin, overdoing the gesture as if acting in one of his films. “To be honest, I’m not yet sure. I spoke to one of them. He shrank back from

me. Said I might be the one to do it.”

“To do what?”

“End everything,” says Artaud. “This world, and ours, together. To open up the gate and let it all flood in.”

“Let what all flood in?” He’s making an idiot of me, forcing me to ask questions in response to his obvious prompts.

Artaud shrugs. “Damned if I can say. It’s lunacy, surely. They are monsters. Purest lunacy.”

1er Octobre 1924

Éluard, Simone Breton, Breton, Gala, Ernst

Éluard is back. Breton sniffs with disappointment. Éluard now claims that he was on a mere around-the-world vacation, and Breton accepts this at face value. When I press him for more details, Paul says that he’ll not speak of his “idiotic adventure.” Simone reacts with fury. What worry he caused poor André! And Gala—she knew all along, and made us think some fateful doom had befallen him! Éluard has brought back a case of souvenirs—fetish objects of the south island tribes. They attract some admiration but Breton sticks to his snit. A fresh affectation emphasizes the disproportion of his dudgeon. In what I sense will be a long-term symbol of his eccentricity, André has clad himself entirely in green.

I pull Ernst aside for the real story. Those trinkets are harmless, he says. But there was one that was not. Ernst found it on Éluard’s person when they caught up to him in Saigon, writing on the pension walls and promising to reach through Yog-Sothoth’s gate to seize the crawling allure of Azathoth. “If it weren’t for that leafy symbol you showed me we wouldn’t have snapped



KOVAVE MASK OF THE ELEMA PEOPLE,
PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

him free,” Ernst says. He painted the Sign on the wall and broke Paul from his mental fever. Then he took the stone fetish—“like the statue we overturned on the Moon, but more so”—and heaved it into the Mekong.

10 Octobre 1924

Breton *et al.*

The movement gathers for the opening of the Bureau Of Surrealist Research, at 15 Rue de Grenelle. It occupies the ground floor of private villa called Hôtel de Bérulle. Naville’s²² father has rented it for us, or rather for him. We will be open to the public 4:30-6:00 Monday-Saturday. Another Bretonian contradiction. We upend reality, but keep office hours. Yet he seems so pleased, and there is such a jolly feeling among the entire company, that to cavil would be churlish.

Artaud takes in the new facility as if it is a meal to be swallowed. We have not spoken of our confrontations in dreamland. Nor are Ernst or Éluard talking about his south seas misadventures. At the very time when we should be comparing notes, obsessively cataloging, a conspiracy of silence interposes itself between us. As if we are afraid to call the things from that world into this one, by giving name to them here.

Perhaps our instincts are correct.

24 Zephyr 4182

Aragon, Ernst, Thran

We chose as our rendezvous point the concourse over the Oukranos River. The first to reach it, I stand at a railing, pretending interest in the many-tiered barges passing below. Behind me stroll a pair of helmeted cops; I fight to imitate the insouciant leisure of a Thran

²² Pierre Naville (1903–1993) surrealist poet, later sociologist and political activist.

bourgeois. In a chromatic tunic, yellow leggings, and red sugar-sack cap, I look the part.

After a period of inactivity, a few of us have resumed our revolutionary intentions for the dreamlands kingdoms. My fears of Throk and the Gug City have ebbed. As long as I stay on the surface or above it, I shall be master of my own will.

It would have been better to pick a less conspicuous place to meet, but that's the vexation of dream navigation. The more obvious the spot, the easier it is to reach. One can find an anonymous back alley or spiritless residential lane, but not the right one, not in time.

Ernst arrives cloaked in feathers, Aragon a few minutes later in a leather jerkin and studded helm, a cutlass on one hip and a saber on the other. Ironically it is Max's ludicrous outfit that attracts the least notice from passersby. Mine is too utilitarian; Aragon's, overly martial.

Entering the wending marbled halls of the carven city's commercial district, we agree that among its bakers and candlemakers we will find a print shop. Manning the counter of the shop is a wooden artist's mannequin, wearing a lightbulb for a head, straight from de Chirico's metaphysical paintings, the ones he has now rejected. The wooden man blinks his light into the corner, where he has stacked the posters we asked him to make for us.

They bear an image we have liberated from the bookstore cheap shelves and the movie houses, a dream-being if there ever was one, who deserves to take on a life in this place. Who will disturb the nights of Thran's placid boy-king and prove the useless promise of monarchs and their authoritarian heirs. Ernst picks

up a glue bucket; Aragon a brush. I carry the posters. The posters of Fantômas, masked master criminal, who announces his intention to loot and despoil the marmoreal city.

24 Zephyr 4182 Rumors in the marketplace. Fantômas is coming for us. Fantômas stole the jewels of the Countess Sharak Shal. Fantômas raped virgin priestesses.

Men in badges listen in. They question Ernst. Cops always zero in on Ernst.

28 Zephyr 4182 A man drops dead of poison by the Oukranos concourse, reeking of arsenic. Witnesses spot a masked man dive into the river. He leaves behind his top hat. The cops who pick it up are blinded by a noxious substance applied to its brim.

January 1925 Breton, Artaud
Likely distracted by some undisclosed dalliance, Breton tires of surrealist business. He deposes Artaud, the only one of us whose imperiousness matches his own, to run the magazine and the institute. I predict trouble. Call me oracular.

12 Greenseed 4182 Aragon, Ernst, Thran
Aragon, Ernst and I have taken to gathering at the Glass Steed, a tavern off the marketplace mezzanine, where gossip flies and cops dare not venture. We hear talk of underground factions. Fantômas leads his gang. A rival group has arrived, too, led, they say, by the son who despises him. (A character from the books, though not one we made an effort to introduce. He is Vladimir, as cruelly capable as his father but without the mitigating

streak of sympathy.) The battle between the two further exposes the irrelevance of the king's men. Some have surely already been corrupted. Thus do the forces we set in motion expose the impotence of the system.

I return to the Glass Steed to await Aragon and Naville. *14 Greenseed 4182*
(Ernst grows bored of our revolution in Thran and has canvases to complete.) Choking smoke billows down the passageway, blackening its white surfaces. The Glass Steed has been burned. Some say Fantômas did it. Others claim it was Vladimir. According to a third story, the king's men did it, to kill both arch-criminals as they met to parley. No one believes either of them perished in the fire.

Breton *et al.*

Winter 1925

Our cafe, Certa, is being torn down. We close the place on its last night in operation. Ernst regards me reproachfully. It's nonsense, to think that this happens here because of our operation in Thran, that it mirrors the fate of the Glass Pony.

We have already staked out our next headquarters: Cyrano, on the Place Blanche. A delightful neighborhood, the redoubt of whores, pimps, and circus people.

Ulthar

9 Basalt

Events in Thran having entered a stage of instability, I leave monitoring duties to Naville, whose cold materialism better steels him to the regrettable but necessary consequences of social chaos. A poet of revolution, I decide, should never look at these too closely, lest he lose the stomach for what must be done. Instead I choose to wander, to a place of simplicity and innocence. I recall *Machinegun 4184*

that German-style town of Ulthar, with its half-timbered houses and gingerbread eaves.

Strange plants cover the rolling hills around the town—like Ernst's collages, bits and pieces cut from botanical diagrams, then put together again, devoid of biological purpose. Scissors, spectacles, and masks grow from the branches. Beak-like appendages snap and spear at me. Roots shoot out to encircle my ankles. I fashion a cutting metaphor and slice my way free. Stumbling into the town square, I arrive bruised and scraped. Gypsy carts, wooden spokes torn from their wheels, form a circle in the main plaza. Colorfully garbed nomads huddle together with sallow-faced burghers. They brandish rakes and the tarred ends of unlit torches. I hold up my hands, assuring them that I'm a friend. It is hard to say which of the two groups weighs my words with greater suspicion.

"What has happened here?" I ask. "The last time I visited, it was ..." My voice trails off as I see the battered homes, the claw marks on the walls, the chipped stucco, the upturned cobblestones.

A moustachioed man in saggy green britches and a torn white shirt steps up, not so much to greet me as to block me from nearing the others.

"You're a dreamer, aren't you?"

"Doesn't everyone dream?" An angry groan rises from the crowd. They lack patience for my feeble dissembling.

"You smell like a dreamer," says the spokesman of Ulthar. "Of petrol and cordite, of varnish and turpentine. Of typewriter ribbons and spilled ink."

"I bring you no harm," I venture. The men behind him eye a tree, its sturdy branch reaching across the

square. The tallest of them loops a rope around his arm.

"How can you be sure what harm you bring? You're not like the others who came before. There's too many of you. A deluge of you. With your weird tricksy-tricks."

They're all around me now, pushing and prodding. "Did Carter tell you this? Did he turn you against me?"

"You know Carter?"

"It's a grudge," I hear myself telling them, "A personal animus he bears us. Why trust him? Because you heard from him first? Yes, I'm a dreamer. Maybe I can dream those terrible plants out of existence again. I've if wronged you, let me make amends."

They ease away, but only so much.

I introduce myself to the man in the green trousers.

"You may call me Amarek," he allows.

"We're not here to imprison anyone. That's the job of kings and cops and landlords. Our task is to bring freedom, to our world and yours. Those encircling plants out there could not be more offensive to us. They entrap you as surely as any prison. And here, where thought gains substance and the symbolic is the actual ..."

The people of Ulthar shuffle and grunt; I'm losing them. This is scarcely the moment for cafe ramblings. These are simple folk, in trouble. To win them, I must shift my discourse to the practical:

"If you'll explain what has happened here, perhaps I can reverse it."

"It started when the cats left," says the man in the green trousers. "They have always been protected here. Then one day they were gone."

In the dreamlands, one often hears of cats. But I have never seen one. I will have to ask Ernst and Aragon

if this is the same for them, or merely a chance quirk of my own experience.

The thought distracts me from Amarek's explanation. I nod, feigning rapt attention. "Then the peddlers stopped coming, then the farmers. We went out to see what was wrong. There's been talk of minotaurs on the road. So many more than before. But what we found instead were the wire-weeds, the choking grass, the executioner trees. We hacked a path through them—Omer was stabbed, and Bindiron's lungs coated with spores that sickened and slew him. Nonetheless we kept it clear, long enough for the folk in the countryside to come through."

A skeletal man calls out from the back. "They sprouted in the fields, faster than we could weed them. They've filled the furrows, sucked dry the wells, corrupted the orchards."

A haggard woman, aged past her years: "Our children ate the pears, and died!"

"Berries pucker and squirm in one's hand!"

"Gone too are the pastures," Amarek says. "The herds have either died, or wandered off. We brought a few chickens with us but could not feed them."

"How do you subsist?" I ask.

"On nettle soup and what remains of last year's wheat."

"How long until the harvest?" I adopt the peasant authority of the farmers I knew as a boy, in Lunel.

The men with the rope have yet to set it down. "We are long past thoughts of harvest."

"Never mind that. The rules here are fungible. What month is it now? Basalt?"

"Machinegun."

At first I do not think I have heard him right.
“Pardon?”

“Machinegun.”

I smile. “This is a prank, isn’t it? This entire business. Who put you up to it? Duchamp? Picabia?”

They are not smiling. “I assure you, Monsieur Salem, this is no prank.”

“But the month—the month is not called Machinegun. I may be a stranger in dream, but I have learned your system of months. Moonbound, Frostgrass, Ghastprowl, then, then ... Zephyr, and Greenseed. That would be the planting time, yes, Greenseed.”

He cocks his head to one side and peers at me, as if deciding whether I am touched in the head. “You mean the month of Mechanism.”

“Mechanism?”

Now they let the rope drop to their feet. I’ve revealed myself not as a threat, but as feeble-minded.

With the drawn-out enunciation of a man addressing an imbecile, Amarek lists the months: Hysteria, Hidewoman, Skullbreast, Ordure ... I try to commit them to memory so I can write them in this journal on awakening, but there are thirteen of them, so that plus Mechanism and Machinegun (formerly Basalt) are all I can construct of the list at present.

“You say this as if the months have always been named so.”

“They have. Since time immemorial.”

Dizzy, I stagger over to a stump; the crowd parts to let me pass, then reforms around me. Before speaking further, I consider tactics. By stupid pedagogical instinct, I want to grab Amarek by the shoulders and tell

him that his very memories, and those of all the townsfolk, have been reshaped by outside influence. A section of their mental scaffolding, as elemental as the names of the months, have been pulled out from beneath them and replaced, with none of them the wiser. Yet this is, as a logician might say, a statement against self-interest. If they are looking for one who might have the power to alter their perceptions of their own pasts, they need look no further than myself. The man they but moments ago elected not to hang from a sturdy branch of a congenially situated oak tree.

Might there be other explanations? Could there be multiple dreamlands, each fractionally different than the one it abuts, and might I thus have stumbled from one to the other? Perhaps the dreamer's mental state determines which dreamland one enters. I have been distressed of late, what with my brush with the knife-wielding Scarf Man. Have I tumbled into a darker dream, one where I am menaced and persecuted?

Or is the reality of this place, and its people, a mere mental construct, as we know to be the case in ordinary dream? The group of us have been deluding ourselves, entering into and collaborating to create a place that is no more substantial than any other creation of the sleeping mind? Ulthar, Thran, the dreamlands in their entirety—they are but a hoax we have played on ourselves, a distraction from the true struggle of the material world. If so, I owe no more to these phantom persons than I would to the lines of a poem that have eluded my intent and must be crossed out. To let my gut twist over their wretched straits, which I alone imagine, would define absurdity. We tell ourselves that we can change our world by altering this one. We find

ridiculous parallels—concluding, for example, that Certa shutters in Paris because Fantômas destroyed the Glass Steed in Thran. But if this is not a world at all, we are frittering away lives we should be dedicating to the material struggle, in the only reality we have—the truth of our waking hours.

Three possibilities, then, each calling for its own course of action.

Before aiding the townsfolk of Ulthar, I must understand once and for all what this place is, and what it demands of us.

Breton, GIORGIO DE CHIRICO

Spring 1925

Breton in high gear at Cyrano, perorating a new gallery show while simultaneously ogling a voluptuous trapeze artist who works down the street at the Cirque Medrano. Breton's monologue rehearses an evisceration he'll soon set to paper and publish. I arrive in mid-performance, and also confess to a certain distraction exerted by the buxom aerialist. Therefore it takes a long while before I realize whose work arouses Breton's disgust—de Chirico, the one whose metaphysical paintings started all this, launching Ernst and likely others into the dreamlands. He's changed his style, Breton says, reverting to empty neoclassicism, the pictorial balm of the bourgeoisie. By turning his back on the metaphysical style, which embodied surrealism long before any of us had an inkling of it, de Chirico attempts to refute us, to reduce us to a mere -ism. But it is his own talent and vision he diminishes. Breton assembles a fusillade of his most shattering phrases to demolish this betrayal. What gallery would dare blot itself with such trash, I ask, and thus acquire the needed address.

The next morning I duck in to see the new paintings. They scarcely ape the style of the old masters. Bright with fauvist oranges and yellows, they are, though hardly shocking in their innovation, rendered with a boldness that would preclude them from many a bourgeois salon. It is the subject matter that offends: replacing the mannequin men, the eerily deserted plazas, and the Greek busts wearing sunglasses are gladiators, their tanned bodies inviting pederastic interest. Apples and pears burst from a meaningless still life. Naked on a stump sits a tormented Ulysses, an outstretched arm warning us to proceed no further toward the blue horizon. A dolorous self-portrait announces the artist as a hang-dog, haunted by guilt and doubtful of his accomplishments. Under a mop of unruly hair his eyes shame the viewer for meeting his, as if he has entered with the painter into a dreadful conspiracy, the price of which must now be paid.

Is de Chirico in Paris, I ask the gallerist.

“Over and over I tell him to come,” he says, brushing lint from the shoulder of his suit jacket. “The world will accept the case for his new style only if he presents it here. I have him nearly persuaded. Details keep him in Rome. Next year, I think.”

I will have to search for him at night.

29 *Machinegun*
4184

DYATH-LEEN

Long shadows, their sources uncertain, stretch across the wet timbered piers of Dyath-Leen. Swarthy sailors, iron darts bristling from their turbans like porcupine quills, curl their lips as they size me up, guessing how many coins I might be carrying. Shriveled men gather around a stack of empty crates, smoking spiraled opium

pipes of copper and jade. A sick green vapor rises from their lungs and illuminates their wasted chests.

This is not where I wish to be. Nor am I ready to return to Ulthar, to perform my promised cleansing of its fields and forests.

I slip away from the docks, alert for pursuers. As I press deeper into the grim port city, I bring an image to mind: the abandoned plazas of de Chirico's metaphysical paintings. The black cobblestones of Dyath-Leen give way to an expanse of sand-brown brick. The boulevard opens, driving apart the city's drooping tenements. I keep moving, and thinking of where I wish to be. The brick beneath my soles transforms into a flat expanse, a dull background of brush strokes. The tenements become sections of Greek and Roman ruins, pushed further and further apart.

A dot in the distance resolves itself into a figure. A chair appears, and a table. Whether it is I who furnish them, or he, I cannot say. An espresso waits for me in a simple white cup, perched on an unmarked saucer. I take my appointed seat across from him. De Chirico is as doleful in dream-image as he is in his painting. (Hardly a surprise, that his self-portrait and his self-representation in the *univers onirique* would align so exactly.)

I wince at the drink's bitterness.

"That's your whole problem," de Chirico sighs, chin in hand, elbow on table, tendrils of dark hair drooping over his forehead.

"Perhaps you might expand on that."

"You French," he says, "and your commitment to terrible coffee. Your hatred of pleasure. Your love of the ideal over the pleasures of life, of ideology over the evidence of your senses. Don't tell me. You've come to



FERNAND KHNOPFF, THE ABANDONED CITY, 1904.

ask me to go back to those wretched paintings.”

“Breton readies a blistering notice.”

His shoulders slump.

“But that’s Breton,” I assure him. “The new paintings, I must understand the purpose behind them. You believe you’ve done damage here, and have changed your style, to rectify it. That’s right, isn’t it?”

“*Believe* I’ve done damage? Surely you’ve seen the alterations. Every day it gets worse.”

“You think your paintings accelerated them.”

“Mine, and those of your friends.”

“And our poems.”

He waves into the distance, like his Ulysses. “Poems. No one but the French will care about those.”

I resist the bait. He’s trying to put me off. “Arguable. But why does it matter? These beings, they’re not real, are they? If they were created by the artists before us, and will be transmogrified again by those who follow ...”

De Chirico shudders. “If what you’ve made comes from me, I hate to think what obscenities your generation will inspire in those who come next. It must all be stopped. Before it’s too late.”

“But the beings here—are they phantoms, or persons?”

“They certainly think they’re real. They suffer, don’t they? Experience want, and fear, and greed, and all that makes us human. You consider yourself a revolutionary, I assume.”

“Certainly.”

“Yet, the denizens of the dreamlands, you’d prefer to think of them as entities of mist and dust, so you can twist them inside out, upend their world. As prelude to doing the same in ours, yes?”

"Did we create them, or not?"

"They were here when I arrived. I didn't know what I was doing. I have that, at least, as an excuse. What's yours, Frenchman?"

"And there is only one dreamlands?"

He shrugs. His cup refills itself. "How many do you need?"

"But before you arrived—below the surface, this place crawls with darkness and devouring beasts. You're not telling me you made those. The ghouls and the ghouls and the gugs."

"When I got here, this was a land of beauty and horror. You see what it's turning into, don't you? A land of horror and horror. Ancient terror copulating with modern ills. Some of these beings are no more confined to dream than we are. And you, with your love of Maldoror and Sade, are inviting them into the Waking Lands. And believe me, the revolution they seek is not the one you imagine. But if you're not careful, it will be the one you get."

Spring 1925

Breton, Aragon

"Perhaps the new de Chirico isn't so bad," I find myself telling Breton. I expect an eruption of wrath, perhaps veiled threats of expulsion. Instead my words barely register. He leaves the bar uncharacteristically early.

He's in love, Aragon explains. Lise Deharme, her name is. I've met her: small, sharp, flirtatious. Aragon has dubbed her the Lady of the Glove. When she showed up at headquarters, a smitten B asked her to leave her glove behind as a calling card. Instead she's having one cast in bronze to exhibit at the Bureau. Aragon hints that she's more interested in him than Breton. I see the

truth: she'll eat both of them for breakfast with room for more fool poets besides.

"Does Simone know?"

"Of course," says Aragon. "When she's out of town, he writes her letters, detailing each incremental frustration of his pursuit."

Madame Breton grows visibly weary with her role as den mother and housekeeper for the Surrealist Bureau—visibly to all but André, that is.

His dalliance grants me cover. I am increasingly pulled to de Chirico's point of view. Yet I cannot risk exclusion. All of my friends are in the movement. My reputation, to the extent that I have one, depends on my association with it. I must act cautiously, and covertly. (I am so much the incrementalist that I still have yet to return to Ulthar to fulfill my promises to the people there.) But if Breton's vigilance lapses, I'll have room to move. Assuming none of my fellow dreamers squeal on me.

"Have you been back to Thran?"

Aragon lights up. "We have stoked the conditions for revolution. The criminal subversion of Fantômas and Vladimir prompted police actions by the boy-king and his regime. Ill-equipped of course to battle arch-criminals, they turn their surveillance apparatus on the people. The lower levels of the marble city are dungeons now, echoing the cries of the tortured."

"You sound delighted."

He kills his smile. "Of course not. It is a terrible but necessary step. The price of freedom is always blood. But the proletariat of Thran now sees that their submission as insupportable. Any day, conditions will meet the point of maximum pressure, and they'll rise up. And

when the other tyrants of dream see that even a prince as beloved as Thran's can fall to the people's will, they'll quake in their ill-gotten palaces. Revolution will spread throughout dream. And from dream, to the sleepers of this world."

I order a coffee. Infinitely preferable to de Chirico's muck. "And when the people's committee rules Thran, how do they deal with the monsters we loosed on them?"

"Fantômas and Vladimir? Hang them from the nearest buttress. Simple as that."

5 *Mechanism* 4185 Carter, DOTHER

I have decided. Beginning tonight, I will be a counter-revolutionary within the surrealist dreamlands operation. Such as it is—it is not as if Breton sanctions it or is, for that matter, aware of it. The operation exists only as a series of autonomous actions unratiſied by the decisions of a conscious vanguard. My actions in favor of the de Chirico project, then, can be seen simply as one contribution to an ongoing discourse, made manifest in dream. It does not qualify as betrayal. It is a rescue mission, in fact, of the surrealist enterprise. We cannot use dream to realize our aims if we have failed to preserve it against unthinking influence. From Aragon and Naville's activities in Thran we will learn lessons, which we will incorporate into the dialectic. My actions, contrary as they seem, will likewise be incorporated.

Yes, that is my decision.

Therefore, it is acceptable to return to Ulthar to make good on what I said I would do for them. Several obstacles interpose themselves between me and this aim. One, the relation between time in this realm and

in the true world has come unstuck—the passage of a day in Paris can be a week or more in dream. If I get to Ulthar, then, it may already be too late. For which I cannot be blamed, since I don't control the acceleration of time, do I?

Two, my efforts to reach Ulthar have been thwarted, as in those dreams where you desire desperately to reach a destination only to have it constantly recede from you. It could be argued that this inability reflects an internal conflict I have yet to resolve. My conscious mind wishes an return to Ulthar, but the Henri Salem below the surface has yet to fall into line. Very well, I will struggle against the tide of dream until I can bend it to my will, and render deliverance unto Ulthar's wretched.

Tonight's journey to Ulthar sidetracks me instead to Dother, a settlement placed, with the now-expected improbability, in the middle of a trackless desert. Linen-swathed brown men—not Arabs, but a slumbering abstraction of foreignness made flesh—swarm into action as I appear before them. They set up tables, lay out wares, and call out the virtues of their goods.

It is a bazaar without customers. Their hopes of ensnaring me will bear no fruit. Unless it fulfills an immediate need, why should a dreamer buy anything in dream, knowing that he may never find his purchase the next time he finds himself there? The hawkers of Dother do not know this. They promise me great magic: success with women, victory in battle, a knack for money, and life eternal. I come closer, examining what they have to sell:

An iron with tacks glued to its face.

An unraveled lampshade.

Fragments from a machine of whirling blades, which

clearly exploded the first time it was switched on. I ask the Dotherite lovingly displaying its gears and belts where one might find the electrical outlet to fit its plug. Certainly not here in the desert. I saw no wiring in Celephaïs, or Serranian. In Dyath-Leen, perhaps? The merchant shakes off my whimsy like a sheepdog emerging from a pond. The machine will make me a tiger in bed and a lion among men.

In their midst I see a tent, illuminated from within by pulsing lantern light. A silhouette attracts my notice, because it belongs to a normal height. I part the tent flap and inside, perched upon a folding chair of wood and canvas, sits Randolph Carter. The American contemplates a slim, faceted glass bottle. Inside the bottle sloshes a black liquid, the sticky consistency of blood.

"Carter," I say, moving a canvas stool so I can sit across from him.

"Salem, was it?"

He offers me a cigarette and his lighter. We sit smoking for a while, saying nothing.

"The book," I eventually venture. "You gave it back to Kuranès?"

He shrugs. "There's nothing in it for you." Carter's dreamform lacks its prior vitality. His complexion is wan, his movements languid. He's going bald. If a man can't make a stirring show of himself in this mutable world, where can he do it?

"Perhaps you would rectify my confusion on a certain matter," I say.

"The more I learn, my friend, the less I can explain," he says.

"Why did you send Delvé and his black-scarfed man after me? Surely you weren't under the impression that

I'd smuggled the book to Paris. That would be impossible, wouldn't it?"

"Delvé? Hector Delvé?"

"You heard me."

Carter sighs. "I wouldn't send that cutthroat after my worst enemy. Which you, I can promise, are not. As to smuggling things over the boundaries, there are ways of doing it. But I never thought you had. It's all academic anyhow." He holds the liquid up to the light, which does not penetrate it in the least. "What did you make of all those crazy objects the Dotherites are selling now? Remind you of anything?"

"They are Man Ray's surrealist sculptures, which are famous for suddenly disappearing. Is this where they end up?"

"Your guess is as good as mine." He tosses me the bottle; I nearly fumble it onto the carpeted ground between us. "How often do you consider suicide, Salem?"

I try to hand the bottle back to him, but he won't take it. "This is poison?"

"Killing yourself in dream, generally speaking, is useless." Carter stands and stares out of the tent at the vendors of Dother. They're all huddled together, staring at us, waiting for one of us to come out and haggle with them. "You just wake up with a bad headache, like you got drunk on sherry the night before. They assure me that this toxin is different. Touch a drop to your tongue, and you're extinguished, both here and in the physical realm. Tempting, isn't it?"

"Why would you want to do yourself in?"

Another shrug, this one barely perceptible. "Why would I want to live?"

"You answer questions with questions, M. Carter."

Finally a tremor of emotion. "So does the universe, Mister Salem. I've seen what lurks beneath its skin, and see how futile it is to struggle. Mostly I'm tired. I lost a friend recently, to the accursed ghouls. I might find him here, which terrifies me all the more."

"Despair— isn't that what your enemy, whoever it is, wants from you?"

Randolph Carter laughs. "The enemy wants nothing. It's beyond that. That's the hell of it, Salem." He relieves me of the poison bottle and raises it, as if in a mocking toast. But he does not drink of it. Not in my presence, at least.

20 April 1925

Breton, Artaud, Naville

Artaud writes an article for *Révolution Surréaliste* on opium. In it, he speaks also of suicide. It is purposeless, he argues, because we are all dead already.

As a shepherd of the surrealist flock, he has proven a poor substitute for Breton. He has the will to dominate, but not the dogged persistence to impose himself on such a disparate cabal of malcontents.

Breton hates the new issue of the magazine. It is too Artaud, not enough us. Entitled the 'End of the Christian Era,' which is promising as far as it goes. But inside it consists only of rambling open letters, praising Buddhists and the Dalai Lama, screeching at the Pope and asylum doctors and university rectors.

Breton relieves him of his duties, giving the magazine to Naville (that is, Naville will do the scut work and he'll second guess him line by line) and closing the Institute. Surrealist office hours are over for good.

LA RÉVOLUTION SURREALISTE



1925 : FIN DE L'ÈRE CHRÉTIENNE

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Les 11 Numéros :
France : 45 francs
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Dépôt général : Librairie GALLIMARD
11, Boulevard Raspail, 15
PARIS (VII)

LE NUMÉRO :
France : 4 francs
Étranger : 5 francs

LA RÉVOLUTION SURREALISTE 1925

THRAA

A broad river wends its indifferent, pitiless way across a sandy plain, granting green lushness to a narrow territory along each shore. To the east—or rather, in a direction I arbitrarily designate to be east, rises a quartet of pyramids. From closest to the riverbank to furthest, they descend in size. The largest, nearly five hundred feet at its apex, is comprised of limestone. The next, perhaps four hundred feet high, gleams with obsidian blackness. The third is three hundred feet high and made of gold. The fourth, a contemptible two hundred feet in height, composes itself of crystal slabs. Through its translucent blocks one can blurrily regard the platinum sarcophagus inside.

Along the river dark-skinned men stoop and toil, under the watchful gaze of hawk-faced overseers. They furrow the dark soil with hoes, speeding their pace whenever a boss chooses to emit a piercing shriek.

A hawkman loops his studded leather whip around his brown arm and strides to a water bucket. I sidle up to him as he pours the contents of a ladle into his beak and down his gullet.

“What river is this?” I presume to ask him.

Evidently my dreamform grants an air of authority here; the slavemaster ducks his head in deference. “It’s the Oukranos, sir.”

A jackal-faced guard barks in derision. “No, you cretin, it’s the Ai.”

The hawkman snaps his beak at the jackalman. “All my life this has been the Oukranos!”

Jackal-face shakes his head. “Moron.”

Doubt comes upon the hawkman, visible as a slumping of the shoulders. “It’s the Ai now?”

The jackalman ignores him, instead choosing to snap his whip at a blameless slave. I consider manifesting a sword and slashing at the guards, freeing the slaves. That is a job for many of us. Perhaps we can borrow a clanking monstrosity from Vaché, Ernst and Aragon and I, and commence a rampage of freedom against these alien imperialists. We should also return to the moon and do the same.

Then I see the army of wooden mannequins approach, soundlessly nodding their lightbulb heads. Robed viziers and muscled sentinels stand by, acquiescent, as the column of wooden men—de Chirico's creations—march in perfect rhythm, three abreast, toward the limestone pyramid. Like ants they launch themselves onto it, scuttling up to its apex. The first three position themselves around the top stone, which, in its pyramidal shape, is a miniature copy of the entire structure. The climbing mannequins tug and adjust and reposition. With a series of near-imperceptible movements they loosen the ancient mortal keeping the stone in place. Finally they fully dislodge it, sending it sliding down the monument's side. It lands with a dull thump at the structure's base. By this time the three vandals are already easing themselves down after it. The next three mannequins grab their own stone and commence to work it loose, with their comrades waiting motionless behind them. When they pull their stone loose and down the side, they scramble after it, and the next team of wooden, lightbulb-headed men get to work on another stone. Meanwhile, the first trio has arrived at the bottom to improbably lift the capstone on their spindly frames. Arms fully aloft, the three bear it toward a sand-colored horizon. Behind them comes

a trio carrying the second looted stone, then the next, then the next.

The hawkman watches. Whether his look truly is wistful, or I simply imagine melancholy in his inhuman eyes, I can't venture to say.

"I thought we'd have more time," he says.

"We're lucky we got this time at all," the jackalman yips. "We're a memory of a reconstruction of a memory. It was a gift, to get to return from the Western Lands for even a while. Ungrateful bag of feathers." A pair of slaves take advantage of his inattention to slink away. The jackalman sniffs the air, seems to weigh the point of pursuing them, and turns to me instead. "I say good riddance to us. This is a poor excuse for an existence, if you ask me. Maybe whoever comes to Thraa next will have more to say for themselves. If there is a Thraa. Let those wooden men sell the place for scrap."

"Blasphemous dog," says the hawkman, in all seriousness.

We watch the progress of the wooden men as they dismantle the Great Pyramid of Thraa. Their speed is surprising; more than a third of it is already gone.

I venture to ask a question. "Will your gods—Thoth and Anubis and the like—depart from Hatheg-Kla when these are torn down?"

"How the hell would I know?" shrugs the dogman.

"Do you want that to happen?"

The hairs on the back of his canine neck stiffen. "Your questions hurt my head."

Ignoring the signal, I press on: "Does it make a difference to you—whether they depart when you do, or remain here, or are destroyed?"

He bears his teeth. "Get away from me, dreamer."

I stand my ground. "What do you understand that to mean? When you call me a dreamer?"

"You're the swine who dragged us from our sleep and brought us here." His aggression softens. He furrows his lupine brow. "Not you, perhaps. Your forebears."

"You existed elsewhere, and possess an individual will, and existence, and what dreamers do, we—they—merely influence you. They do not create you from whole cloth. Or do we. You acknowledge your absurdity, yes? A jackal-headed creature of ancient Egyptian myth who complains and postures like a Parisian bricklayer. Our influence made you more like us, like what we are familiar with. But one of us, unknowingly, without bearing responsibility for what we've done, might have dreamed you to believe that you had an existence independent of our will. You see the conundrum, don't you? The ethics of what we do here vary enormously, according to the core nature of your existence, as either malleable dreamstuff or autonomous intelligences. Yet you might be the first, created to give all the appearances of the second. What is inside you? It is vital that we understand this before proceeding further."

The jackalman grabs me by the lapel, pulling me close to him. His breath reeks of raw and rotting meat. "Does it prove anything if I kill you?"

I tear myself from his grip, leaving ripped fabric in his hands. He and the hawk-faced man chase me into the Nile. No, not the Nile. The Oukranos. Or the Ai. As I plunge beneath the water, I pity my pursuers. Whether self-willed or not, they are trapped here—at best, they will soon be trapped somewhere else. I, on the other hand, face no such fate. I will wake a free man.

24 *juin* 1925

Breton, Desnos, Ernst, Aragon

At Cyrano's I wish to corner Desnos for his reaction to my encounter with the jackalman. Was he aware, or did one of his dream his awareness? Yet I can't get a word in: that old bag of effluvium Claudel²³ has claimed that surrealism, like dadaism before it, means only one thing: pederasty. Pronouncements are made, and literary vengeance plotted. Even among my fellow dreamers, cosmic questions fall on insensate ears. Instead we remain mired in the pettiest of earthbound nonsense.

13 *Mechanism*
4187

Hatheg-Kla

Desnos finds me at the foot of Hatheg-Kla, the allegedly insurmountable mountain, whose peak is the home of the decrepit, yet still dangerous, old gods. To my mention of the Claudel discussion he responds with distracted surprise. Yes, I was there, I tell him. At Cyrano's, trying to get your attention all night.

Whipping winds steal his words before they can reach my ear. In silence we agree to ascend. We haul ourselves up on peculiar climbing gear—like a wash-erwoman's clothesline, but vertical, with a squeaking, creaking unseen pulley overhead. At intervals small objects, affixed to the line with twine, appear: a tuft of feather's, or a clutch of barbed wire, or a baby's skull. We crank on the line and they disappear down into the depths.

With spiked boots we—Desnos above, me below—maintain contact with the mountain's gnarled, rocky surface. A pair of zoogs point sharpened, twitching

²³ Dramatist and diplomat Paul Claudel (1868–1955) whose staunch Catholicism and right-wing views left him an odd man out among the French literary establishment.

noises from a fissure in the stone. Don't go up there, they cry.

We fear no gods, I tell them.

That's the problems, the zoogs say.

They are obsolete, I say. We have come to issue them their walking papers.

The zoogs have a reply for this, too, but we are already too far above them to hear more than a generalized, plaintive cry.

Fog swirls in, impenetrable, clammy, smelling of piss and ashtrays. I can no longer see Desnos above me, or my own feet against the mountain stone. I pull on the line and keep on going. An eternity passes, shrouded in mist.

We reach the summit. At its peak Hatheg-Kla reveals itself as volcanic; the top is a crater-like bowl. Desnos and I clamber up the lip, untying ourselves from the climbing mechanism. I now see that it is a concatenation of pipes and gears, an impossible object Picabia might have painted. We pull ourselves onto the lip of the vast crater and half-run, half-tumble, down the other side.

From the crater floor rises the city of the gods, comprised of spires, obelisks, facades to nonexistent structures and staircases to nowhere. A low electrical hum rumbles beneath our feet.

The place stands deserted.

Where are all the gods, I ask Desnos.

They knew we were coming for them, and fled in fear.

We hear a coughing sound, and round a corner, where a bony beggar, clad in rags, spits out a cloud of dust. A hood conceals his face.

Who are you, we demand.
 Go away, he croaks.
 I pull the hood away. His head is that of a mummified falcon.
 Horus, says Desnos.
 Go away, the dying god repeats.
 Where are the others, Desnos demands.
 Horus points a bony hand skywards. The ones above, they withdrew their protection from us. They seek to replace us. You needn't have come here. You have already won. But mark my words, you'll wish you hadn't. It isn't an easy or pleasant thing, to be a god. And when your eternity finally elapses, you'll find that dying is harder than it looks.
 What can we do, Desnos asks.
 He will come for you. Refuse him.
 Who will come?
 The one who looks and talks like you. The one in the suit.
 The sky shudders. Something moves inside it. Glowing globes appear.
 Or stay, Horus caws. Stay with me and be torn through the gate, and forever dissipated.
 We get out while the getting is good.

2 Juillet 1925

Breton, THE MYSTERIOUS SWARTHY MAN
 We have achieved our hard-earned ostracization from all save the most radical elements of the Parisian art establishment. The banquet for the venerable Saint-Pol-Roux²⁴ crawled with chaos as we stood to vituperate

²⁴Pierre Saint-Pol-Roux (1861–1940) symbolist poet.

the vile Rachilde²⁵. Breton tossed a napkin in her face and called her a camp follower.

Throughout the evening a peculiar foreign man of swarthy complexion sat nearby our contingent. He took in the others with a hungry gaze. Me, he regarded with evident confusion. I intuited that he was a man not easily given to surprise, and wondered what about me prompted this atypical reaction. But in the hubbub following Breton's provocation I was unable to draw him into conversation.

Aragon, Breton, Crevel, Desnos, Éluard,
Soupault, Vitrac

Late Summer

Two waves crash in from opposite directions, competing
to sweep us up. 1925

The political: Breton, having finally read Trotsky's book on Lenin, wishes to encase us in doctrine, commit us to the struggle. Now any revolution will do. The one most readily to hand takes class struggle as its starting point, so let us take that up. Éluard and Aragon devour it, immediately transform themselves into fervent Marxists. Crevel, Vitrac, and Soupault want no politics in their poetry and so are out. Naville's Leninism gets him back in. Breton himself now wears a worker's cap.

The clairvoyant: Breton sees a new medium, Angelina Sacco. He and Desnos now spout spontaneous prophecies. B sees war in 1939. Desnos predicts a schism between himself and B that will commence in 1929.

I spot Desnos in a cafe on the rue du Chateau with the swarthy man.

25 French author, real name Marguerite Vallette-Eymery (1860–1953), of idiosyncratic but decidedly rightist political views.

THORABON

The vanishing city of Thorabon has imploded into a scattering of glass cubes strewn across a wet and sandy plain. Inside the cubes are the residents who did not flee in time. As I approach they bang on the sides of their tiny prisons. Lassitude prevents me from interfering. They should have gotten out. You didn't see me tarrying on Hatheg-Kla when the sky bled glowing light.

I find Desnos contemplating the cubes, also reluctant to interfere.

What were you talking about with that Egyptian, I ask him.

He's startled. Stop doing that, he says.

Answer my question. There's something wrong about him.

He's the one the falcon god warned us about. He wants to make us gods.

You mean, he says he'll make us gods.

Well, not you.

But you, I say, and some of the others.

Desnos nods.

Has he spoken to anyone else?

I'm not sure.

He accidentally steps on a cube. People spill out of it—tiny at first, but growing to full size, as they pour out of it and sprint for the horizon. Shantaks flitter overhead, swooping at them. A woman in funereal finery is snatched up in reptilian jaws and borne up into the clouds. We hasten away, lest the creatures select us for their next snack.

You have to keep him away from Breton, I say.

Breton hates gods.

Because he isn't one.

I have no way of stopping him from approaching anyone, Desnos says.

Then we'd better steer Breton deeper into Marxism and further from mysticism.

Steer Breton? Desnos laughs.

What if your foreigner can do what he cannot do for himself, and bring him here?

Desnos materializes and lights a cigarette. We've already done enough harm. Imagine what André would get up to.

I am imagining it, I say.

Desnos tosses aside his match. It sizzles on the wet sand. The other day Breton told me of a dream, he says. He owned a large book with pages of heavy black cloth, its spine formed by a wooden gnome.

The book, I thought. The swarthy man can't get Breton the book, can he? There's at least one copy in Paris, maybe two.

Up in the sky, the woman taken up by shantaks screams.

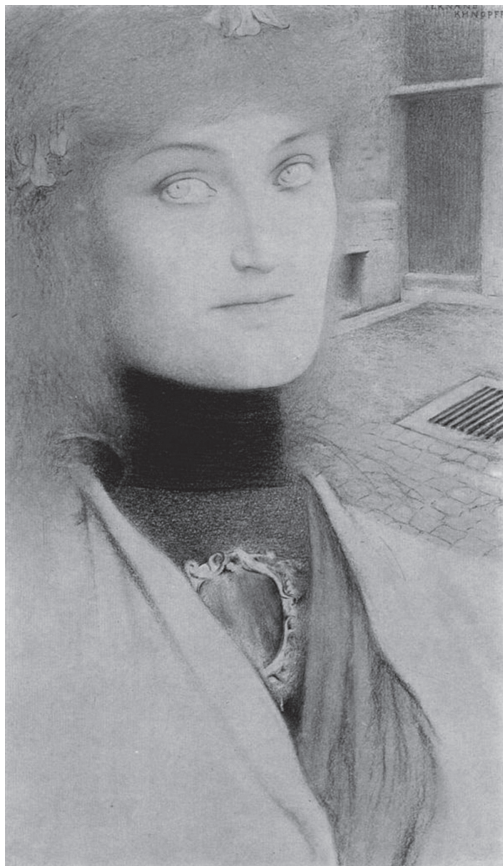
Desnos, Georges MALKINE

1926

Desnos has taken over Masson's²⁶ studio at 45 rue Blomet and entirely blackened its interiors, turning it into a cave of dreams. His painter friend Georges Malkine has moved in with him and paints landscapes of the *univers onirique*. They can launch themselves from this dream cave studio directly into dream.

Has he constructed this at the behest of Nyarlathotep, or in defiance of him? Desnos avoids me in the

26 André Masson (1896–1987) surrealist painter and printmaker.



FERNAND KHNOFF, WER WIRD MICH ERLÖSEN? 1891

dreamscape and ignores me in Paris.

He loves a singer, Yvonne George, who sings at Chez Fyscher. The mooning is one-sided; she prefers women. His yearning has made a dream form of her. I meet her in Inganok, at the court of the king. The dream version won't have anything to do with him, either. If she did, it would cease to be her.

HLANITH, THE PLACE OF FIRST DREAMS

3 Ordure 4189

Dream-Yvonne needs more heroin. Since I killed that ghoul's brother her connection has gone to ground. Hlanith, she says, let's go to Hlanith.

That old granite place? Dullest place in the dreamlands. Why there?

She pets her fox stole. It happily purrs. It's different now. Poor Robert took me there. (Poor Robert because she loves him no more than does the real Yvonne. Both of them rely on him, though.)

So we start off for Hlanith. We cross a loamy expanse. Bioforms rise from it: cells, amoebas, swirls of biological matter. What is this place, I ask.

Dream-Yvonne shrugs. You've been here longer than I.

I concentrate for a moment and then know: this is the place of first dreams, echoes of the thoughts of unicellular creatures that first willed themselves to being in the primordial oceans. One of the floating jellyfish things darts over and tries to feed on us. It juts piercing feeding tubes into us, but it finds no nourishment in us, and drifts away.

Stony Hlanith rises from the horizon. We are there, entering its gate. A river slices through it now, and we

walk its paved banks. Workers in proletarian garb gather by park benches to smoke and play cards.

In its great market, minotaur butchers stand guard over hanging slabs of moonbeast flesh. Mustachioed fishmongers stick handling hooks into the flanks of slime-coated albacore. The heads of fish-like men turn to soup in bubbling pots. Segmented and armored worms crawl across a heap of urchins, slicing at them with pincered heads. A fishmonger deftly grabs the worm, squeezes the juice out of it, and serves it up to a nightgaunt.

Office workers in bowlers, umbrellas and briefcases at their feet, sun themselves on the steps of a medieval museum. A sign advertises an exhibition of impossible objects, including a cup and cutlery covered in fur.

We cross the bridge of gear and metal that spans the great river. On the other side, bourgeois ladies lunch at an outdoor cafe. Dream-Yvonne, drawn by her nose for these things, pulls me deeper into the city, toward the sound of gaiety. I look up; the sky divides neatly from blue to black, telling us that the district we're about to enter shrouds itself in eternal night. City lights dance and pulse; we pass a circus, a whorehouse, and a cabaret. Men with melted faces mill outside an establishment called *Enfer Ouest*²⁷; the archway surrounding its entrance is sculpted as the parted buttocks of a farting devil.

This place has certainly changed since the last time I was here, I mutter aloud.

A fat matriarch carrying a basket full of fish guts sniffs in indignation. You are mistaken, sir!

²⁷ West Hell.

Pardon me?

Hlanith, she insists, jowly face turned upward in offense, never changes!

We shrug, and venture toward the entrance. A melted bouncer steels himself as if ready to bar me entry. Then, seeing that I am with Dream-Yvonne, he stands aside to let me pass.

Once inside, she scans the half-deserted bar, spots a crippled man sitting alone in a corner, and makes her imperious way toward him. She snaps her fingers, and I hand her a purse of silver coins. Dream-Yvonne makes her transaction.

Soon I am watching over her in a squalid hotel as she shoots up.

Already I plan to secure for myself a permanent domicile in Hlanith. For the first time in the *univers onirique*, I feel truly at home.

Breton, Yves TANGUY

Early 1926

In freewheeling squalor in an apartment at 54 Rue du Château Breton discovers three promising young prospects living the dissolute life. They are what the rest of us might be without his oppressive discipline. There is a poet, Jacques Prévert²⁸; an actor, Marcel Duhamel²⁹, and most key to our purposes, a painter, Yves Tanguy, wild of eye and haircut. The three show Breton a new game. Called the Exquisite Corpse, it starts by folding a sheet of paper into long sections, so that only one portion of the page is visible. One player draws something on the first section, then the next on the next, until

²⁸ Poet, and later in his career, a screenwriter: 1900–1977.

²⁹ Later famous for popularizing hardboiled American crime fiction in France with the *Series Noire* imprint. 1900–1977.

the page is filled, by people not knowing what was on the rest of the sheet. Breton immediately becomes more enraptured by it than any of them. This overcomes the near shipwreck of the first meeting between Breton and Tanguy, which occurs with the younger man electrified to the back molars on a heavy dose of cocaine.

Moreover, his canvases excite Breton's surrealist tastes, and his nose for collectible work. They depict the surging bioforms of the Place of First Dreams. Before any of us met him, this Tanguy fellow has already crossed over. We have started an epidemic, and like cholera, its tendrils travel far from the original well-spring of infection.

18 Mai 1926

Breton, Ernst, Éluard

For this ridiculousness I must return from Hlanith. Ernst has been engaged by Diaghilev³⁰ to design costumes for a ballet performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Enraged at Ernst's sickening commercialism, Breton decides to stage a protest at the debut.

I surprise Desnos by arriving direct from dream, through his cave-like studio, and make my way to the hall just in time to see Breton send his leaflets hurling through the hall. He is then beaten and arrested. What fun!

Ernst, who naturally needs the money and did an interesting job with the sets and costumes, reacts with severely ruffled feathers. Éluard acts as intermediary, attempting to smooth the fury on both sides.

³⁰ Sergei Diaghilev (1872–1929) ballet impresario and founder of Ballet Russes, famed for collaborations with Balanchine, Nijinsky, Stravinsky and others.

Breton

Summer 1926

Word reaches me that Breton has embarked on another effort that might use the Paris streets as a back entrance into the dreamlands. Now he practices objective chance, wandering randomly from place to place in search of transcendent coincidence. Did Nyarlathotep teach him this? Desnos swears that he sent the Egyptian packing, that he has heard nothing about an approach to Breton or anyone else. Still it nags at me. With Hlanith becoming more a mirror of Paris every night, the ease of jumping from one to another while awake has surely increased.

Hlanith, OONAI

20 Flacidity, 4189

From the steps of the Hlanith opera, which tonight performs Berlioz's complete *Les francs-juges*, I decide to replicate Breton's objective chance technique here in the dreamlands, in search of insights I might use to combat him should he come here and start flattening the place under his pitiless intellectual boot-heel. I stride down laneways in the shadow of the Bastille—long razed in Paris, newly installed here, echoing to the yelps of tortured moon-beasts—over the Pont Neuf, past the cloying bookshops of St-Germain-des-Prés and down the sticky cobblestones of the Ghaſt Quarter.

Then suddenly I am in Oonai, percussing incessantly to the outmoded cauterwalings of Tzara's Dada performances. It is a parade day, so the mob parades the king about on a tumbriel, his eyes sewn open so as not to miss the stilted acrobats in their cardboard tubes. Two children in angel's wings made from crow feathers periodically soothe him with eye drops. Otherwise he would have gone blind months ago.

Lurking at the mouth of an alleyway I see him—Breton, with his circular spectacles, his green outfit, his obscene cane. I launch myself his way. Fortunately I thought to place a rapier on my hip before embarking. (I have had trouble materializing objects of late.)

Breton flees. I run the length of the alley. He's gone. With the thundering drums of Dada ringing across the city, I can't use his footfalls to determine whether he's turned to the left or to the right. Then I think, it is Breton, he can only turn further left. I turn, speed up, and there he is. My shouts drowned out, I pell-mell after him, finally leaping upon him and smashing him to the ground.

He holds up his hands to protect his face. I slash at them with my sword. Now seeing him closely for the first time, I realize it isn't Breton, but a waxwork replica. A crude approximation.

I yield, it cries, I yield! But already, now that I've understood it for what it is, it slowly dissolves into a puddle, green suit and all.

What the hell, I say out loud.

Think about it for a moment, says a man stepping from a warehouse doorway. It doesn't look like the man I saw before, but I can tell from the silkiness of his inflection that this is another form of Nyarlathotep. You know what this is, he says.

It is my fear of finding Breton here, I say. Rendered in pseudo-flesh, by what remains of my dreamscaping prowess.

Have you come to destroy me?

That would be redundant, he says. No, to take pity on your wretchedness. Don't worry. Some of your friends I might bring over, but not Breton.

I squint at him. Why not?

This place will freeze over soon enough. Until then, we need it. We like it here. And will like it again, even more, after it thaws. As walking contradictions go, Breton is interesting enough but scarcely a footnote to our requirements. In the end, he will vanish into obscurity, as all but a few of you do. More will remember him than you, Henri Salem. But I assure you, there is nothing you need do about it.

The more I try to focus on his features, the harder they become to discern. I hear a tone of childish affront fall from my lips. If you're here out of sympathy, I say, it certainly doesn't sound like it.

He shrugs. It's my best approximation. Better than my Fathers and Mother can manage.

He holds his hands over his ears. Let's get out of here. Go back to Hlanith. We'll have some Pernod.

Now I understand. He wants my insights, to help him recruit whoever it is he's really looking for. With that I shan't help him.

But it is lonely here, with Desnos popping by only so often, and Dream-Yvonne nodded out most of the time.

Very well, I tell Nyarlathotep. But you're buying.

Breton

13 Octobre 1926

Breton's random wanderings through the city have not brought him into the dreamlands, but they have conjured up a wraith, for which he has conceived the maddest of passions. He calls her Nadja. A waif, her eyes glazed with drugs and second sight, her mouth a babbling brook of nonsense and prophecy. She could tell Breton everything about his wife simply by staring

at him. He bumped into her a little more than a week ago and already he schemes to support her—thus joining a small queue of other men.

She wanted Ernst to paint her but Madame Sacco warned him it would set in motion a psychic ripple he would live to rue. So he will not. Sacco warned Breton too but he won't hear it.

Late 1926

Breton pitches woo to two lovers: Nadja remains receptive, but the Communist Party keeps its distance, wisely unsure of his fidelity. To demonstrate his rigidity, he commences a round of excommunications. Artaud, cast out for wildness. (He shakes his cane at Breton, little fazed.) Then, Soupault, cast out for novel-writing. (Crestfallen!)

...

Nadja on the outs with Breton. She took her alluring madness several steps too far, placing her hand over his eyes while he was driving. He pulls away; she has never longed for him more.

...

Breton's efforts to keep his distance from Nadja are faltering. I overhear him tell Naville that fucking her is like making love to Joan of Arc.

I half expect to run into her in the cafes of Hlanith but so far nothing.

7 Skullbreast, 4190 **Zais**

I meet Desnos in Zais, where a vanguard of birdmen have arrived to depose the cruel, diversion-seeking ruling class and liberate the proletariat. We watch from the outdoor tables of a ransacked tavern as cudgel-wielding laborers, battle instincts honed from forced

gladiatorial matches in the amphitheater, run to ground a feathered dandy and beat him to a pulp.

Was this Ernst and Aragon, Desnos asks?

I haven't been able to follow it all, I say. Dreamlands cities have been toppling like dominoes.

But the birds, that's something of a tip-off, yes?

Yes, that does bear Ernst's signature.

A chant, setting a rhythm for the ongoing beating: All hail Lop-Lop, king of birds.

Lop-Lop is Ernst's dream form, but like others it has attained autonomy when he is not using it.

We prowling behind the abandoned bar for more to drink. We find a bottle of Lillet Rouge. There is no ice, but then, there is. I produce the glasses and Desnos pours.

Thus refreshed, he reaches into his bag for a pair of books. Breton's *Nadja* turns his affair with that little madwoman into poetic myth. Desnos tells me that Breton lost his friend Dr. Fraenkel for asking him to have Nadja committed. Months later she wound up in the madhouse anyway after a hallucinatory breakdown.

Then Desnos' book³¹: the adventure novel *Liberty or Love!* Flipping through it, I see that it is a scarcely veiled account of his dreamlands activities. Though its hero, Corsaire Sanglot, gets more in return from his heroine than Desnos does from Yvonne, or Dream-Yvonne for that matter.

Don't you worry about revealing the secret, I ask Desnos.

What secret?

31 Contrary to the impression given by this passage, *Liberty or Love!* and *Nadja* were published a year apart—the first in 1927, when the second was still a work in progress.

This place, I say. I gesture to the street as a tumbrel rolls by, imprisoning a shrieking woman in silken garb. Perhaps sensing that we are strangers here, she calls to us for help. Desnos half-rises in his seat, as if mulling an intervention. But there are many of them and two of us. And revolution is revolution, even if comely women are endangered.

Aren't you afraid that everyone will learn to come here? I ask him.

He shrugs. What if they could?

What if this world collapsed into ours, and there was no distinction between the two?

Isn't that what we've been fighting for all along, Desnos asks.

I look forward to reading your book, I reply, turning it over in my hands.

11 *Hermaphrodite*
4190

Kadatheron

Gray snow falls on me as I approach slumbering Kadatheron. As it lands, I discover that it is not cold and does not melt. It smells of rotting paper—in fact, this is what it is. Exfoliated fragments of a vast library, carried off on the wind from the city's flatted spires. The smell reminds me of Monnier's bookshop.

I hear a familiar coo behind me and turn, expecting to see Dream-Yvonne.

You're not Robert, says a mass of tentacles, waving gently in the breeze. Suckers adoring the underside of each fibrous tendril. It speaks in Dream-Yvonne's voice, so I know she's talking about Desnos.

No, it's me. Salem.

You're a poor substitute, it coos.

What happened to you, Yvonne?

It doesn't answer.

Insight strikes me: something terrible happened back home, to the real Yvonne, and this is the ripple of that. Dream-Yvonne has become this monstrous beast.

You think of time as transitory, and people as fixed within it, sings the tentacled creature. In fact, both are non-linear. Give us a kiss.

With regrets, I tell Yvonne, I have someplace else to be.

We are at all places at all times, and in no places, too.

I flee, hoping that Desnos will never find this thing.

Ilarneke

9 *Roseblood* 4191

A shantytown sprouts around the great rock where once the god Bokrug received the worship of the Ilarneki, and before that peoples more ancient. Men wear the lizard masks of Bokrug, subsuming their identities to the cult of New Bokrug. With a sharp rock in hand, I stride the darkling fringes of the marshy plain. From this distance the stone statue of the Lizard God near-vanishes in the gloom. Face shielded by a hooded robe, I stalk a pair of Neobokrugi as they gather yarrow stalks for use in a ritual of divination. Eventually nature makes its demands, as it does even in dream, encouraging one of the masked men to peel off to find a place to relieve himself. I sneak up behind the other one and smack him on the back of the head with a rock. Then I scamper off toward the town, having taken from him his mask and robe.

Arriving in the city I am challenged by a great ogre of a man, also in a Bokrug mask. I tell him I am Gaston

Naville, a poet of Zar, newly converted to the old faith.

When did you swear allegiance, his dark voice booms.

When Jacques Vaché attempted to consign me to his furnace. These accursed interlopers must be resisted. We must sniff them out, round them up, and feed them to the ghouls. If the ghouls will not eat them, we will drag them back through the catacombs to Paris, where there will we slay them with knife and gun.

This muffled declamation contains more detail and passion than I had intended, and confuses my challenger. He shakes his head and lets me pass. Looking at the spikes on the end of his club I am grateful not to have given myself away. I must take greater care when presenting myself to the *muftis* of this cult. I will learn who they are, insinuate myself into their inner circle, and achieve leadership over it. From this position of authority I will direct the cult to expel the contamination. Who better to inoculate the land than a deadened sample of the contagion?

22 *Roseblood* 4191

He wears a lizard mask, but his voice is unmistakable—it is Aragon. He is lucky that it is I who stands guard to challenge entrants to the town. Were any of my new comrades on duty, they would have heard his modern cadences and bludgeoned him on the spot. I tell him to meet me out on that stand of tree-like weeds, the ones in the distance that look like Ernst painted them.

What are you doing here, he asks, when finally I arrive, my shift having ended.

I should ask the same of you.

Counter-revolutionary cells have attacked the rightful governments of both Thran and Teloth. I am here to investigate the enemy, to find out who we face,

so we can buttress our people against them. But I see that you are already on the case.

I shrink behind the tree-weeds as a quartet of lizard-masked men depart on the back of a great sightless worm. Spears held ready, they're off to hunt for dreamers along the banks of the Oukranos.

Ignore their provocations, I tell him. Let me continue my infiltration effort. To gain their confidence I may need to win their trust, by staging a successful operation. Have you taken up a permanent headquarters?

Yes, in Thran.

Then I'll send a message there before I strike. You can offer me a pawn to sacrifice. I will rise in their esteem and you will have your double agent.

How do we know we can trust you?

Trust me? Louis, we have always been brothers.

You are more of this place than you ever were of France.

You sound like Breton.

That hits the mark. He flinches, as if I have struck him.

That bastard. He demands tighter command over the movement than ever, because he can't control his women. He has another new one, you know. An ex-whore named Suzanne. This one wants him to divorce Simone.

At least he's no longer putting it to your Nancy³², I say.

But this is a verbal lash too far, and Aragon bristles.

³² Shipping heiress and political activist Nancy Cunard (1896–1965) linked, romantically and otherwise, to a long list of the era's key artistic figures. The reference to her and to Breton's mistress Suzanne Muzard date this entry to late 1927 or early 1928, in waking time.

I try to steer us back to safer ground by ripping Breton some more. If André's tightening the reins, he must have installed a new lieutenant and whipping boy.

You're talking to him, Aragon grimaces.

You'll always have the last laugh, though, Aragon, because you're here, fighting a revolution he can't even perceive.

Finally that seems to settle him. I supply him with crumbs concerning the counter-revolution of the NeoBokrugites, and extract from him a promise to follow my lead here. That should buy us time.

The exchange leaves me troubled. I still can't picture myself taking active measures against my old friends. My hopes of ever being recognized as a poet have long since leached away. Still, I can't entirely shed my affection for them, my interest in their absurd intrigues and messy affairs. I don't think Aragon is right at all. Now that I am largely exiled to Ilarne, I am more than ever a Parisian.

As soon as I rise high enough, I will spur the New Lizard Priests to assign me back to Hlanith, which feels somewhat like home.

22 Engored 4191

I have achieved enough of the NeoBogrukite's trust that I may erect and dwell within my own shanty. I am not yet within the inner circle but on its periphery and know the names of several trusted lieutenants. So far they are all natives—aristocratic and bourgeois dogs driven from Teloth, Thran, Thraa and other fallen cities. My certitude wavers as I draw closer to them. As much as I fear the changes my friends have wrought here, those proposing to reverse them are the sorts of people I have always despised: cops, judges, priests. If they retake their cities they will do no good for the common

dreamlander. I remain a double agent, but for who? If only there were a middle ground, where the proletariat could be free both from the revanchists and from the freedom's scorching wheel.

A missive arrives from Aragon. This appears against my express instructions to let me choose when and where to initiate contact. If anyone searched my belongings, I'd be the next sacrifice to that lizard god of theirs. The bigger New Ilarneek grows, the more its ancient patron stirs, accelerating its demands for food. I have seen low-ranking wretches hauled to the altar for the slightest infraction. One man they beat down and carried off simply for letting his mask slip.

The message manifests as a copy of Aragon's recent under-the-counter pornographic opus³³, an extract from a larger novel he conceals from Breton. Inscribed on its flyleaf is the following:

We have discovered a group in Paris which refers to itself as the Big Game. These enemies of surrealism are also its offspring. They profess supernatural power, enter trances, and claim to astrally project. They invoke not only Jarry & Lautréamont but Hindu philosophy and the Theosophists. When hallucinations do not come unbidden, they provoke them with drugs. They take ghost walks around Paris—are they using them to cross over to the dreamlands? These are the children come to castrate us. Their leader is a 20 yr old pup calling himself René Daumal. Another is Roger Gilbert-Lecomte. They may also refer to themselves as the Simplists. Imperative that you determine their role, if any, in the Bokrug cult.

Aragon.

P.S. Tell me what you think of this saucy trifle. It is part of a larger work, though I will not be able to publish it with this bit in it.

³³ Title unsuitable for English publication. AG

The careless fool! Does he mean to have me fed to the Lizard God?

1 Flacidity 4191

I take the risk of mentioning the Big Game and Daumal to my immediate superior, Yantheon of Thran. His incomprehension appears absolutely genuine. Alarmed by the thought of a third force, he takes me to the cult leader. He does not remove his mask but from the voice I think this is the younger brother of the Thranite king. The High Priest, as he now styles himself, quizzes me on the origins of my insight. Unprepared to dissemble, I claim that I overheard prisoners in the stockade near the altar speaking of them, but could not tell from their words whether the Daumal gang were friends or foes.

The High Priest has had one report of them, from Inganok. I have earned myself a promotion. He deputizes me to go there and investigate the activities of the Big Game. If they are with the Bokrug Cult, or can be recruited, I am to bring them into the faith. Otherwise, I am to arrange their downfall, if possible, or at least learn more about them.

Departing the city, I dream up a passenger pigeon, its wings crystalline, its beak a fountain pen, and send it to Aragon.

Like many who have left the surrealist fold, or been excommunicated, it turns out in the end that I was only on sabbatical.

14 Flacidity 4191

Inganok

The war to shape the dreamlands has left distant Inganok so far untouched. Even with the quicksilver shifts of dream travel it has taken me weeks to get here, skirting along the way the Plateau of Leng. (On the way

I met explorers who assured me I could get to Earth from Leng, but if I surfaced in Thibet, how would I get back to Paris?)

Inganok, all onyx spires, towers over the landscape with a pretension Breton would envy. Its grandees—and here every man and woman is a noble, claiming descent from the gods—receive me haughtily. To them I represent a grubby curiosity. In gem-studded robes, their elongated ears twitching, they compete to incorporate me into their households as a ridiculous guest. In the end I am assigned to the Chancellor of the Treasury, one Fusair. He throws a salon, not exactly in my honor, but as one would do when one newly acquires a chimpanzee and wishes to show it off to one's bedazzled rivals.

In a city where each building looks like it was made to intimidate those constructed previous, one structure dominates all: the sixteen-sided Temple of the Elder Ones, where dwells a forbidding Priest-King whose visage may be both face and mask, or neither.

Fusair's daughter, disdainful and with cheekbones that could cut a steak, proves herself more bored even than her compatriots. She takes me to bed. Despite her show of disinterest she does deign to tell me that other strangers were here not long ago. One of them, who might have been Daumal, gazed constantly at the Temple. He called it Mount Analogue, and also the Holy Mountain. They spoke of a seer named Blavatsky, who wrote of ancient races predating known humanity. The idle rich of Inganok agreed that these theories must refer to themselves, albeit in garbled form.

Here they procured drugs which they said they would take back home with them, to remind them of

this place.

How would they get them there? By going through the realm of the ghouls. They weren't here as dreamers. Though perhaps speeded by esoteric means, they'd come through physically.

I send two missives, one to the Lizard Priest and one to Aragon's headquarters in Thran. Aragon's warns him to be on the lookout for the Big Game both here and back home. To the cult of Bokrug, I say, if you come across them, kill them.

28 *Flacidity* 4191

Ghoul Crag

I give myself a version of Breton's fake spectacles to see in the lightless vastness of the ghoul plateau. I step over a shattered sarcophagus, then trip over a gnawed but otherwise intact skeletal ribcage. As I recover, a familiar complaining, musical voice drifts from the darkness. It's Kiki! With her comes Desnos, and behind her, Man Ray, lugging a movie camera. A fourth figure shambles behind them. Rubber-skinned, with an elongated, vaguely canine snout, it is unmistakably a ghoul. From their unwavering solidity I intuit that Kiki, Ray, and Desnos are all present in their waking forms. The ghoul of course is solid too—there are no dream ghouls, but merely the same creatures who move back and forth between the two realms.

Kiki drops her picnic basket in surprise.

Ray rushes up to greet me. "What the hell are you doing here?"

How about I ask the same of you?

"We're shooting a film."

Here?

"Think of the eerie effect. A film shot in another

world, the land of dream.”

You’re not going to tell them that’s where you photographed it?

“Of course not. It will give off a strange feeling, but the viewer won’t know why.”

Are you a party to this, Desnos?

I don’t like it here, says Kiki.

I wrote the script, Desnos tells me. We’ve come to shoot a very special actress.

My blood freezes. The fools are going to get themselves killed. And poor unilluminated Kiki with them.

Don’t tell me. You found that creature. The one with the tentacles, who is Yvonne twice removed.

You’re such a worrywart, Salem. I didn’t let her cuddle.

The ghoul scampers up to sniff the air around me, then draws back. Apparently he doesn’t much the smell of me. I, in turn, recoil from it.

“This here is Pickman,” says Ray. “I knew him back when, when he traveled in New York art circles. A painter with a specialized audience. Not surrealist on the surface, but surrealist underneath. Wouldn’t you say?”

The ghoul emits a snurfling noise.

“He got too close to his subject matter, and now look at him.”

The ghoul sadly lowers its snout.

“Never you fret, old friend,” Man Ray says. “We won’t get too close to our star. Our starfish. That’s what I’m calling the film. Starfish. People looking at it will think she’s a starfish in a tank, in close-up. Rich, huh?”

I bury my misgivings in a mumble, which Ray and Desnos take for approval. The ghoul looks around

anxiously. Spotting a promising bone, it ducks down, plucks it up, and examines it for scraps of dried flesh. Meeping its disappointment, it throws the length of femur over its shoulder.

I question it about Daumal and his associates of the Big Game. If they've been entering dream physically, it can only be with the collusion of the ghoul gatekeepers. They guard the way between realms, in the Paris catacombs. Pickman struggles for human speech.

"Give him a break, Salem," says Ray. "He's only been this way a few months. Poor bastard."

The ghoul's black-bead eyes glitter in annoyance.

"Fahh-llaaa-mulll muh-muh-muhsst hahh-haave lull-lu-let huhh-hiimm thr-thru."

Flamel must have let him through.

Can you communicate with Flamel?

Pickman nods.

If he was letting these young men through, would he tell you?

"Duh-duh-dohh-don't nuh-nuh-nuh-know."

Don't know.

And if he is, could you convince him that they're dangerous?

The absurdity of this question strikes me as I speak it. Are Daumal and his group more dangerous than us? In several ways, for example their traditional mysticism, they resemble the generations of aesthetes who journeyed here before us. It is we, by introducing our readymades, our machines, our Fantômas and Irma Veps, who have altered the place's complexion, perhaps irrevocably. Perhaps Flamel should be keeping us out and letting Daumal through to repair the damage. If Breton hates them, is that not the most sterling of

recommendations? If they have penetrated the Bokrug cult, should I not be seeking an alliance with them, as a third force, with agents in both existing camps, to win the Big Game on behalf of a drowsing populace?

Nevertheless, Pickman agrees, for whatever ghoulish reasons—friendship with Ray, who represents a bridge to his lost humanity—to keep an eye out for Daumal. I will come back later for his report. In the meantime, I will accompany Ray, Desnos and Kiki, to watch the filming. Should the Dream-Yvonne-Starfish lunge for her, I might perhaps pluck her from its tentacles.

Breton, Desnos, *et al.*

11 Mai 1929

Big brouhaha at the Bar du Château. For months B's divorce battle with Simone has been a matter of inch-by-inch trench warfare. She's moved out but keeps coming back into the apartment. During an absence last fall with Suzanne she sold some of his valuable paintings. As always, when B's personal life spins into disarray he tightens his control over the group. He's insisting everyone show up for twice-daily cafe meetings, as if they are office workers. The more dictatorial he becomes, the more young avant-gardists flock to him, as the man who can make reputations, or shred them. To join now one must submit to a cafe examination, half interrogation, half job application. He has sent out questionnaires to all, determining what territory they stake out on the borderlands between Trotsky and Stalin. He's given the Big Game crowd the chance to earn their way in, but only if they all submit their answers as separate individuals. They expressly disobey him, replying as one, turning the process into a



showdown over his credibility.

(I don't care what sub-species of communist they are. I still want to know whether they're controlling the Cult of New Bokrug.)

So now all have been summoned to a bar across from Tanguy's place to once and for all prove their bona fides, or be cast out (until the next round of recriminations and reconciliations.)

The supposed matter of the meeting is Grand Jeu member Roger Vailland, who took a commission to write a laudatory newspaper profile of that fascist pig, Jean Chiappe³⁴. Vailland was ejected from both the surrealists and the Big Game before all went a cropper. Simone showed up in a stunning dress to shriek accusations regarding Suzanne's occupation of the Breton apartment. Desnos and Leiris³⁵ depart in disgust; back at his cave-studio Robert says this time it's for good.

Georges BATAILLE, SUNKEN CITY

17 Ordure, 4194

The Man with the Scarf pursues me through coral lane-ways of the Sunken City. This island, emerged from the ocean like a whale coming up for air, teems with gasping nautical life. Starfish and barnacles cling gasping to its colorful walls. Fish flap and grimace in tidepools. Cerulean crabs scuttle beneath my feet, tripping me, as the knifeman comes near. Through the city's windows I catch glimpses of its finned, batrachian residents. They gaze at me glumly, oblivious to my terror.

I round a corner and a shotgun blast rings out. The head of my assassin explodes into red pulp. Bloody

³⁴ (1978–1940) Authoritarian director of Sûreté générale, later Paris police prefect.

³⁵ Michel Leiris (1901–1990) writer and ethnographer.

brain matter oozes down a wall. The body, scarf still wrapped around its shoulders, seems for an interminable instant supported in the air. Then it loses volition and crumples to the ground.

Holding the smoking shotgun, proud smirk on his face, stands a black-haired, round-headed, pointy-chinned man somewhere around thirty years of age. A half-grown downstroke of a mustache hangs over his lower lip, a construction project subject to a permanent work stoppage. He wears a rumpled jacket over a shirt and tie.

I regard my slain pursuer.

Thank you, I say, he's been after me a long time. I thought it was over but here he came back.

It's over now, says the dreamer.

I appreciate your intervention. The city is soon to sink again, perhaps we should repair elsewhere?

Never mind that I'm going to wake up soon.

Oh, well then, I say, for lack of anything better.

I just wanted to meet you, Henri Salem.

You have done that in spectacular fashion. And you are ...?

Bataille, Georges.

I've heard that name.

Breton's days are over. He is a priss and cannot dream. Would he wield this for you, he asks, brandishing the gun. Or for anyone?

It is safe to say he would not.

We have Leiris, we have Vitrac. We have Masson and your friend Desnos³⁶.

You're asking me to jump ship?

I'm asking you which ship you're on. Desnos tells me

³⁶ This list matches the masthead of Bataille's anti-Breton surrealist publication *Documents*, placing the earth date of this entry as sometime in April 1929.

you're still in the cult of Bokrug.

I maintain a foot in that camp for investigative purposes.

That's what I thought you'd say. Look, I realize it's impossible to write here. I don't expect a submission, on this short notice. Otherwise I would ask for a piece. Quite a coup that would be! Instead I ask for the support you can provide. Here in the dreamworld, you can watch our backs. No?

I glance again at the corpse. Something's happening to it.

Don't worry about that, says Bataille. That's all well in hand.

You're opening up another front? I ask him.

The two worlds must be cleansed with acid and bile.

I'm not sure I like the sound of that.

The truth chimes [expletive deleted] harshly, says Bataille.

The isle rumbles.

You can wake up if you want, I tell Bataille, but I'd prefer to return to my boat.

I steal another look at the corpse. It's stirring. Fissures open in its palms, sprouting teeth. With trembling forefinger I point this out to my new savior. I don't think you finished him, I say.

That's because you won't let go, says the dreamer.

A heavy jolt sends us off-balance. Seagulls descend to feast on the crabs and fish before the island returns to the sea.

Come on, says Bataille. I'll walk you to your boat.

Bataille, Desnos, Hlanith

I arrive at our table at Neo-Certa drenched in sweat. Bataille and Desnos sit there drinking blood-red espressos, as if nothing is amiss. The stuffed minotaur in the corner seems to glower.

Did you bring your shotgun? I ask Bataille.

To a cafe?

He is still pursuing me, I say.

Bataille reaches into his bag. That method you showed us. For moving small objects through Desnos' studio into the dreamlands. How handy this will prove. We can now reliably transmit texts. If only we could do it the other way around. You don't think you could try again, could you? Concentrate like a beast, and maybe the method will come upon you.

I pound the table, rattling the cutlery. For the first time, I notice that the silverware here has a crustacean theme. Don't you hear what I'm saying? He's still following me. He probably followed me here.

Who?

The man with the scarf. Y'golonac.

Bataille tut-tuts. He only became Y'golonac when you wouldn't stop obsessing over him. That blast killed him in the waking world. Massive coronary. We watched the funeral, from a hill opposite. Didn't we, Desnos?

Desnos faintly nods. Bataille's combativeness wears on him, a bit.

Delvé won't [expletive] with us again, Bataille says.

It's not Delvé I'm worried about.

Stop worrying, and this Y'golonac of yours will vanish like so much smoke.

Easy for you to say, Desnos tells him.

Bataille slides me the publication he removed from

his bag. Breton's Second Manifesto of Surrealism³⁷.

You'll laugh yourself silly, Bataille says. He insults everyone. It's vituperation from start to finish. He slags me, Artaud, Vitrac, Masson, Naville, Soupault.

Desnos chuckles. He thinks Philippe spilled his Suzanne problems to the gossip columns.

I get several whole pages, Desnos laughs. André is so disappointed in me. I have committed the crimes of journalism and formal verse.

I join in the badinage, forgetting the Headless One. Which is worse, in his estimation?

Our crime, Desnos says, is not being in our twenties anymore. We have to earn our livings. He can't bear that.

Bataille chortles. He's also excommunicating his old influences. Rimbaud is out, because he did nothing to stop later critics from seeing Christianity in his work.

After he was dead?

Breton is a categorical man, Bataille says. Death is faint excuse. Baudelaire is excluded for even mentioning God. Poe, for creating a sympathetic policeman.

Bataille signals the barman for another whiskey and flips to a dog-eared page. But here's the concerning part. He calls for a "profound occultation of surrealism." Do you think he's finally twigged to all that goes on here?

No, says Desnos, he just means there's no point trying to be popular. To be loathed is to prove your profundity. To stew forever in prolonged adolescence.

But there are esoteric references. He praises Nicolas Flamel. Has he learned who the gatekeeper is? Is he

37 Placing this entry during or shortly after September 1929.

sucking up to the ghouls? Also he mentions Charles Richet³⁸. Is he active here? And an Alphonse Rabbe³⁹. What do you know about him?

A keening of alarm rises from the street. We stand to see the well-attired citizenry of Hlanith fleeing in panic from a scuttling black tide. Ants have entered the city like a tidal wave, swarming over every surface.

Bataille waves his hand to dismiss them, but they are scarcely fazed. Desnos joins in, but falters, clutching his head in agony. Bataille redoubles his efforts, and I join in, too. A trickle of blood leaks from Bataille's nose and drips onto his shirt collar. The ants keep coming.

9 *Fire Piano*, 4195

OUESTEBEL

Pursued by Y'gononac, pursuing the dreamer behind the ant attacks, I enter the tiny hamlet of Ouestebel. Constructed of concrete and lace, its steepled houses recall the shapes of bayonets. Here it is a crime to be taller than one's fellow man, and so one must walk stooped and hunched if one is to avoid offense. Naturally the shorter men press themselves down even further, to force the tall to contort their spines. I suspect this place was dreamed into being by some ridiculous rightist, as a clumsy metaphorical attack against social justice. Yet the people here hold to their customs with great fervor and show no less reality than any other occupant of the dreamlands.

I ask about the Ant Maker. Piles of insect carcasses

38 1850–1913. Nobel Prize winning physiologist (for his work on anaphylaxis), spiritualist, coiner of the term “ectoplasm”, who at one time served as president of the British Society for Psychical Research.

39 1784–1829. Disfigured, opium-addicted minor writer who traveled in the same circles as Hugo and Dumas.

on the road brought me here. I am told that he did in fact pass by. He was tall and made no effort to hide it. Neither did his muscular bodyguard, who called himself Buñuel. The Ant Maker, residents of Ouestebel report, was at once absurd and terrifying, simultaneously arrogant and terrified. They regret offending him, and punished him by sending him on to Thalarion. They described it as a place of wonders, which is true, but omitted a crucial detail—that no one who enters it ever exits. They describe him swaggering through its fabled gate, Akariel, as if they were there to see it. Meek, forgettable Ouestebel, they assure me, rid the world of the Ant Maker menace.

THALARION, Luis BUÑUEL, THE ANT MAKER

10 Fire Piano, 4195

Thalarion is a nameless, safe city, encircling a named, definitively hazardous one, where no one dares intrude. Granite walls of impossible height push past the horizon. Black spires spiral up as far as the eye can see. Outside the walls a community of traders, and those who serve them, has sprung up, living in tents and ramshackle wooden structures. No one builds too high, or too permanently. They fear that, if they do, the city will creep up on their homes, annexing them, expanding its deadly boundaries.

Across a great pier arches the carved granite gateway called Akariel. It provides the only visible point of entrance into Thalarion proper, the City of a Thousand Wonders. A cult of helpful blind women stands duty near the gate to warn visitors against entering. Go in, they say, alm cups outstretched, and you won't come out again. No one hereabouts shows any sign of requiring

their warnings, but just for luck, every so often someone pops a sou in their begging vessels. I imagine myself having a gold doubloon, divided into pieces of eight, and distribute it between them.

Has anyone gone in recently? I ask them.

Don't go in there, they warn. (Evidently, they don't hear too well, either.)

I won't go in, I shout. I'm asking if anyone else did, lately.

Very sad, they murmur, very sad.

We told him not to go in.

But he did, but he did.

Was he followed by ants?

They shrug. How would we know that?

He spoke in a funny foreign voice.

With every warning, his yen to enter increased.

We told him, we told him.

I shrugged. The Ouestebelites had guessed right. They sent the Ant Maker to Thalarion, and even though the blind cultists told him what the villagers had not, he went in anyway. End of tale.

If he was a dreamer, I wonder if he died back home, or if he has merely destroyed his ability to come here, and now lies abed in Montmartre or Bloomsbury, wondering how he might resume that wonderful lost nightmare.

Casting my gaze over the pier-side market, I note a man in modern clothing, and remember that the Ant Maker had a bodyguard. Slim silk sellers with dancers' hips flirt with the man, draping their wares around him. Besotted, he grabs for them; they elude him expertly.

I make my way over to him. Monsieur Buñuel, is it?

He spins, fists clenched, ready to box me. Who the

hell are you, he demands. A Spanish accent clots his dreamsspeak.

I can't resist cheap theatrics, and bow. A longtime traveler of this realm. You are new here?

Damnedest thing, Buñuel says.

Did your friend go in there? With a jerk of my shoulder, I indicate the Akariel Gate.

He said he'd be right out, but I'm sure he got himself sidetracked. Those old crones said not to go in, and they seemed like they knew something we didn't.

That they did, I tell him. I'm afraid your friend is lost. Are you in the same place? In the waking realm, I mean?

Wary, he wrinkles his nose at me. We're both in Paris.

In the same room?

Buñuel squares his shoulders. You take me for a *maricon*?

I hold up my hands, placating his anger. That's not what I'm talking about at all, Monsieur.

I have my place, he is in a hotel.

Perhaps you should wake up and go to him. He may have had a heart attack.

What are you talking about?

If citizens of this realm go in there, they die. When dreamers suffer shocks here, they usually wake up rattled but alive. But some never wake up. So if he's really your friend, I advise that you will yourself back to Paris, run to his hotel, and make sure he's still breathing.

Furrows crease the Spaniard's wide brow. He grimaces, as if trying to pass a kidney stone. I turn away, his embarrassment infectious. The bluff drains from him, leaving only a young boy's sheepishness.

You don't know how to wake up?

He hooks a thumb toward the great gate. He brought me here. I haven't worked out the rules yet.

I feel myself softening toward him. Well, you'll awaken naturally sooner or later.

Before I can console him further, a shout arises behind us. Striding from the gate is a skinny, absurdly dapper young man, all bravado and nervous energy. His slightly bulbous eyes bulge out; a pencil-thin mustache quivers below his nose. His dreamspeak, like Buñuel's, vibrates to a Catalanian rhythm. But while his friend chooses his words with caution, those of the newcomer tumble from his impertinent lips in a mad torrent.

BUÑUEL THERE'S NOTHING IN THERE BUT DUST AND BONES SCATTERED ACROSS THE COBWEBBY STREETS I WAS EXPECTING SOMETHING QUITE REMARKABLE BUT BOREDOM BOREDOM NOTHING BUT WHO HEY WHO IS THIS YOU AREN'T ONE OF THESE FELLOWS ARE YOU YOU'RE ONE OF US WELL NOT ONE OF US SPECIFICALLY BUT FRENCH YOU'RE FROM PARIS AREN'T YOU ALARMING ALARMING PARIS WHAT WITH ITS TAXICABS AND METRO AND WELL YOU'RE FROM PARIS BUT ALSO NOT HLANITH HLANITH THAT'S THE PARIS OF THE DREAMLANDS NOW ISN'T IT DID YOU MAKE IT THE PARIS OF THE DREAMLANDS WHAT'S YOUR NAME I GET NERVOUS WHEN PEOPLE REFUSE TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES IT MAKES ME SUSPECT THAT THEY ARE PUTREFACTOS OUT TO GET ME YOU AREN'T A PUTREFACTO ARE YOU THERE NOW?

The blind women scatter, terrified at what he must be, to enter Thalarion and emerge again unscathed. Behind him swarm a legion of ants. They run up the walls of the city. They skirt around his ankles. Their scouts skitter into the marketplace. Their queen, her

abdomen swelling with milk, climbs up and down his leg, then settles in his pant cuff, working her mandibles.

I've been looking for you, I tell him.

Face spasming, he leaps up straight into the air, like a cinema comedian. He lands with aplomb, straightening his perfect pomaded hair, crushing a couple of his ants. They curl up into vellicating balls and die; as they expire they sing him a song of love.

LOOKING FOR ME I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT WHY ON EARTH OR WHATEVER WE CALL IT HERE MIGHT YOU BE LOOKING FOR ME SURELY NOT SURELY NOT

You are the Ant Maker. You've wreaked considerable havoc in your short time here, I say. At least, I presume you've been here only a short time, as we would have noticed you otherwise.

WHAT WHAT IS THERE TO NOTICE YES I HAVE BEEN HERE ONLY A SHORT WHILE BUÑUEL AND MYSELF WHAT OF IT THESE ANTS I DID NOT MAKE THEM THEY CHOOOSE TO FOLLOW ME

You underestimate your power, Ant Maker.

I DENY THE IMPUTATION I MUST SPEAK TO MY LAWYER I MUST SPEAK TO THE CONSUL GENERAL THE FOLKLORIC MUST BE DESTROYED THE SENTIMENTAL MUST BE ERADICATED THIS ENTIRE REALM IS BUT A REPOSITORY OF NOXIOUS SENTIMENTS THE INANE TOOTLINGS AND DAUBINGS OF THOSE TOO HUMILIATED TO CELEBRATE THEIR VOYEURISM SUPPURATING MOUTHS THIS PLACE NEEDS MORE SUPPURATING MOUTHS

A pair of vast red lips appears on the walls of old Thalarion, and puckers obscenely. I point at it. He leaps into the air, turns around, and leaps into the air again.

DID I DO THAT

Why yes Ant Maker I believe you did.

DON'T CALL ME THAT

Then what shall I call you, young friend?

I look at my hand. A hole opens up in the palm. Tiny ants crawl out. They run down my arm in a stream to join the giant ants, growing larger when they hit the ground.

DALÍ MY DEAR PUTREFACTO YOU SHALL CALL ME DALÍ!

April 1929

Dalí, Buñuel, Éluard, Desnos

Dalí and Buñuel have been shooting a movie together. The image of my hand, with the ants crawling out of the hole in the palm, features prominently. Buñuel, who has been in Paris for several years and knows some of the outer circle, has been introducing him around. He and Éluard hit it off. They met in a cafe with Paul's mistress, sparing the poor boy the shock of meeting the monstrous Gala.

Desnos has met him too—bought a painting from him. He reports a far different waking man than the devil-may-care magician encountered outside Thalarion. He's shy to the point of paralysis, his word-deluges vomiting from him in short gouts, the rest of his time spent in furtive silence. Perhaps I worry unduly; his diffident manner may hold him in check, preventing his visions from arresting the minds of unsuspecting dreamers.

Miró⁴⁰ thinks him the genuine article, and invited him to dinner to give him a quick course in the business

⁴⁰Joan Miró (1893–1983) visual artist and exponent of Catalan pride of occasional surrealist affinity.

of artistry. He told him to buy a nice suit and to learn how to flatter rich patrons.

Breton has heard of him but maintains a wary distance. His nose is out of joint—the two Spaniards describing their film as surrealist, without seeking his imprimatur. That they will meet is inevitable. It will be like the fall of the walls of Thalarion, which now anyone can enter, willy nilly.

André MASSON, FORBIDDEN LANDS

27 *Ordure*, 4196

Thoughts of Dalí and the catastrophe he will wreak haunt my reveries. He has the power Breton has always yearned for, and in his grasping way will wield it with greater abandon than the Owl ever would. Breton cannot be enlisted in the battle to deter him. We haven't kept knowledge of this place from him for years to throw that away now. That leaves Bataille's group, staring unblinkingly at an indifferent universe, to take up the fight.

Masson, I have heard, scorns Dalí's paintings. His literal renderings of actual dreamscapes, he says, represent a retreat into the academic. One must aspire to be more than a landscape painter of the sleeping world. So I arrange through Bataille to meet him.

I pass Kuran's weeping sentinels, reduced to madness, cuts of meat spilling from their cuirasses. They flop on the ground like fish on a pier. Turn around, they say.

This place is full of lands you're not supposed to enter, I scoff.

There's a reason for that, the guardians cry.

The paradox slows my step: is it not the barriers of the dreamlands that I wish to preserve, by somehow

blunting Dalí's march? Yet when the merest barrier presents itself, I step over it, as imperiously as the gabbling Catalan himself.

Volcanic heat distracts me from my self-reproach. Ahead churns a landscape of skin and bone. Pillars of shattered bone rise from a ground cover of eczematic flesh. Flayed creatures assault one another in a frenzy of mutual devouring. If only they can eat each other fast enough, some of them will live. Their desperation to survive becomes a wind, which buffets my face. I stride through the mass of creatures; apparently I do not qualify as even a morsel to them. At the burning horizon, atop a hill made from an enormous skull, André Masson surveys his handiwork. The broiling temperatures faze him not a jot. His eyes are deep-set, his nose straight and sharp. I dream that I stand beside him, and therefore am. He does a fine job of concealing his surprise.

So Bataille sent you? he says.

I nod, and tell him that I need an agent to undermine Dalí, back in Paris.

Not worth my time, he says.

He is going to burn everything down.

If that is so, Masson says, and I dispute the probability of your assumptions, then the effects of his art exceed their aesthetic interest. I consider myself a vandal, Salem. If I could burn it all down, I would.

But events here change the real world, I plead. They leak into the thoughts not only of the genuine dreamers, like you and me, but into those of ordinary men. The plague of the twentieth century will not be cholera or influenza. It will be madness, a collective, self-willed insanity, a willed psychopathy. I see that now. Dalí seems

like a fool, which is why he is dangerous. He is a prophet of this madness. If we are to refashion mankind's mass consciousness, we must do so with ideological rigor. With Gallic chill, not Andalusian fancy.

A cancerous liver bubbles from a steppe of cracked teeth to do battle with a roping coil of viscera. Masson remains impassive.

Bataille told me you were a romantic, he says.

NAMELESS ROCK, René MAGRITTE

*September or
October 1929*

Despondent, I wander across the dreamlands, until I go too far, into one of its possible futures, one reshaped by Dalí. I see advertising posters hung in galleries and canvases smeared in monochrome paint, proudly proclaiming the end of all meaning.

Masson was right. I am a sentimentalist. I wish to undo this soul-denuded future and so turn back. Reversing chronology, I wander to coastline near the Nameless Rock. I dream up a boat and row through gelid waves to an island surrounded by vast cliffs. I am so tired of this place, with all its competing vastnesses. Giant this, enormous that. Maybe it should all flattened and reduced to ugliness.

Another vessel like my own, but painted in a pattern of bright blue sky dotted with puffy clouds, bobs in the water near the island. A man in a neat suit sits in it, drinking tea from a China cup. A bowler hat covers his head; a floating green apple obscures his face. As I draw closer, I see a slogan painted in neat white cursive on the side of his boat. It says:

Ce n'est pas un bateau.

The dream-figure takes my appearance in stride. I recognize the dreamer from his canvases. This must



ARNOLD BÖCKLIN, DIE TOTENINSEL (III), 1883.

be René Magritte. And indeed, as I address him, his dreamspeech drifts back to me in a Belgian accent.

I climb into his boat; mine sinks into the dark waters. We swap anecdotes of mutual acquaintances. He conjures up another cup of tea; it is hot and fragrant.

He knows Dalí. He thought himself completely mad, Magritte says. Succumbing to laughing fits and who knows what else.

You say this as if he no longer thinks himself mad.

The green apple nods. My wife and I visited him in Spain, at his family's place in Cadaqués. They are positively medieval, says Magritte, and treat him like a child.

I draw him out on this. It transpires that his dealer, Camille Goemans, was there, too, with his girlfriend. Buñuel was expected back to write another screenplay with him. Also present: Éluard and Gala.

At the mention of the name, the apple lets out a meaning-drenched sigh. I tease the gossip out of him, my heart constricting by the minute. Dalí, normally uninterested in contact with women, conceived a passion for the despicable yet magnetic Gala. She scorned him; he lacks the manliness she seeks in her distractions from Éluard. Yet throughout this increasingly uneasy vacation they were pulled closer together, as if by malign outside force. Finally he demanded to know what she wanted from him. She shouted, "Kill me!", Dalí confessed he'd been thinking of throwing her from a tower. Abracadabra, they fell into each other's arms, and Dalí declared his madness terminated.

Immediately I perceive the threat. Éluard likely doesn't yet, but his goose is cooked. Dalí's paintings already sell. Paul is a poet. Gala will switch horses and

ride Dalí until he expels the fame and money for which she has always hungered. She will change him. Her transformation will give him the last thing I need him to have—the confidence to alter both worlds.

If it's any consolation, Magritte says, when Buñuel showed up he tried to choke her to death.

Magritte has been painting a study of the Nameless Rock, capturing its contours and shadings with realist precision. Deciding he would like to view the underside, he causes it to rise from the ocean and hover above it. Moon-beasts fall from their watchtowers atop its cliffs and drop like tiny dots into the surf.

You're one of the sane ones, I tell him.

The apple laughs. Now that's judgment by a low standard!

I rise, sending the boat shifting recklessly from side to side. Destiny brought us together today, I implore. You must be the one to stop him.

I won't stop another artist from making pictures, he scoffs.

But you must! The sanity of two realms depends on it.

Magritte shrugs. We won't be living long in Paris. Georgette doesn't like the people here. They are needlessly cruel.

Moon-beasts swim toward us, keening for help. A ball of tentacles explodes from the deep to drag them down. I brace myself for its assault on Magritte's boat. But then, it is not a boat, and how can you attack a boat that isn't?

Magritte assures me: nothing is what it seems.

VALE OF PNATH

3 *Hermaphrodite*

4196

I crawl through a valley, where light cannot be admitted or even imagined, across bones the size of fallen trees. Ghouls and worse scuttle through this place. I try to remember if I am friends with any ghouls. There was Nicholas Flamel, in the catacombs, and the ex-painter called Pickman here. They either promised to slay me or threatened to protect me, one or the other. Naturally the difference between these two conditions is pivotal but I cannot drag it to my awareness. Something pursues me. Is it the Man with the Scarf, or Y'golonac, Kuran's men, or the opium-addled assassins of the Bokrug cult? I have made so many enemies here. I resolve to investigate myself, as Arsène Lupin would one of his murderers, to determine what I have done and how I might escape from my predicament, whatever form it might take. I will retrace my steps, interrogate witnesses, determine who I was, and identify those I betrayed. From there I will either resume the quest I have now forgotten, or walk it backwards, unweaving it, so that my crimes vanish in time.

On the other hand, I could just flip the pages of this journal back and read what I wrote about my past. Yet I feel this would be an error. Maybe I can find a better truth out there than here in my hands.

I bump into something warm—a leg clad in wool trousers.

HENRI SALEM the visitor exclaims.

I sob.

DO NOT CRY SALEM IT IS I DALÍ HERE WITH ASSURANCES AND BONBONS I AM HERE TO INFORM YOU THAT YOU MAY SHEATH YOUR SWORD AND RETIRE YOUR GAUNTLETS IT IS I DALÍ TO TAKE UP

YOUR BATTLE

Suddenly I remember it all. No, I say, faintly. You are my battle. You are the foe I must destroy.

NONSENSE I AM DALÍ AND THUS NOT AN OBJECT TO BE DESTROYED BUT RATHER A HERO TO BE VENERATED I AM HERE TO ALLAY YOUR CONCERNS I HAVE DECIDED TO DESTROY FROM WITHIN THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT I HAVE MET BRETON SHAKEN HIS HAND AND BEEN DECLARED THE FUTURE

Little does he know, I whimper.

HA PRECISELY LITTLE DOES HE KNOW I HAVE MET BRETON AND WILL BECOME AND SUPPLANT HIM EAT HIM FROM THE INSIDE LIKE A CREATURE THAT EATS OTHER CREATURES FROM THE INSIDE A CARPET BEETLE PERHAPS DO CARPET BEETLES EAT ANIMALS FROM THE INSIDE LET'S SAY INSTEAD THE SPAWN OF A PARASITIC WASP YES YES A PARASITIC WASP BRETON'S GROUP IS BUT THE HOST ON WHICH I SHALL FEED THE SOURCE OF NUTRITION TO BIRTH DALÍ INTO THE WORLD

Did Gala tell you that?

OH HO THE WHITE GODDESS OF DEATH SHE IS AND A CLAIRVOYANT PROPHETESS BESIDES I BROUGHT HER HERE, YOU KNOW I SHOULD INTRODUCE YOU

We've already met.

YOU HAVE OH GOOD

A ghoul snuffles our way, catches a whiff of Dalí, and flees in terror.

THE WAR I WAGE IS FOR TOTAL INDIVIDUALITY DO YOU WISH TO FOLLOW ME

I believe there's a paradox in there somewhere.

VERY WITTY SALEM YES BUT PARADOXICAL MEANS ARE EXACTLY WHAT I MUST DEPLOY

DESTROYING FIRST THOSE WITH WHOM I SHARE
THE GREATEST AFFINITY DESTROY THEM WITH
THE FLAMING SWORD THAT IS THE PARANOIAC-
CRITICAL METHOD CONFUSION SYSTEMATIZED

Breton will spot your ambition and exclude you as
he does everyone who might eclipse him.

YES YES OF COURSE HE SUSPECTS BECAUSE HE
ALREADY DID TO TZARA WHAT I AM ABOUT TO DO
TO HIM BUT FOREKNOWLEDGE ISN'T FOREACTION
IS IT SALEM BRETON PAH A PETTY INQUISITOR
ORATING TO HIS TROOP OF FOLLOWERS LIKE A
BIG TURKEYCOCK

Have you just soiled yourself Dalí?

WITH DELIGHT WITH DELIGHT MY FRIEND
AREN'T YOU TIRED OF THIS PLACE WITH ITS
VASTNESSES ITS PLACES YOU CAN'T VENTURE
INTO WITHOUT WANTING TO LEAVE ALL THOSE
BORING TOWERS REACHING BEYOND THE
SIGHTLINE ITS STUPID JEWELLED EVERYTHING
AND CATS I KEEP HEARING THERE ARE CATS BUT
THEY NEVER SHOW THEMSELVES

That's it, I think. The cats. I will investigate the
mystery of the cats. In that will lay the key to reversing
what I have done, and defeating Dalí before he so much
as arrives on the scene.

KADATH

29 Mechanism

I trudge across the squeaking glacier wishing we had
not killed so many of the petty gods. Does the one I seek
exist anymore? Has she been transformed into a great
cat festooned with drawers, or flayed into her constit-
uent parts like one of Masson's paintings? Another
boring vastness rises before me—good god, Dalí is right
about that much. Maybe I will like this place again if I

4197

just see a cat somewhere. I can take it back with me to Hlanith, open a bookshop, and develop an opium habit to while away the last days before the apocalypse.

Etched in the snow I behold the cuneiforms and hieroglyphs of a dozen civilizations, some known to waking archaeologists, others yet undiscovered, a few best left forgotten. Zeroing in on the Egyptian-looking ones, I see the sigil of Bast, now wrapped in the white fur needed for her unlikely hiding place. Pursued by Carter, who has transformed into an alien beast, chased by Y'golonac, with its long black scarf ...

9 *Hysteria* 4199

UNDERGROUND SEA

... I swim salty cold waters, dreaming myself impervious to hypothermia, until I emerge in Greenland. Encountering a band of doughty Esquimaux I pose as a ghost, their child-stealing Qalupalik, and demand to speak to the white-furred cat spirit who recently came upon them. Fearing that I serve Ithaqua, the Wendigo Chieftain, they tell me that she could not live here, that she sickened and had to leave and instead went to ...

10 *Hermaphrodite*
4202

XURA

... falsely lovely Xura, whose monsters shy from her divine power, as faded as it is. Bast, once assured that I oppose Dalí and Aragon and all the rest, says that the cats will still not see me but that it matters not. What I seek is the loop to the future which will return me to the past, so that I might avoid what felled me.

1 *Headbowl* 4205

VAULTS OF ZIN

Beneath the Gug City, with its seven gradations of darkness, I find what is left of the time loop. It has melted like so many stopwatches. Dalí has been here.

The architecture reminds me of another place.

LENG

8 *Machinegun*

The time tunnels take me nearly a decade ahead, where Ray says there will be no war, and so you know there will be. Paris empties. The dreamlands freeze. Ernst in danger in both places. 4208

GREAT CATARACT

20 *Astrog* 4211

... is made of my tears.

SARNATH

20 *Skullbreast* 4558

I find Desnos on the plains of Sarnath, the powder of shattered diamonds glittering beneath our feet.

What year is it for you, I ask him.

1925, he says.

Things will get better for you I say. (Before they get very much worse, I do not say.)

You're dead, he stammers.

Shh, I reply.

Stabbed by that man with the scarf.

Shh, I say again. I've known all along. I try not to dwell on it, yes?

We investigated and found out it was—

Delvé. I know, I know. That's beside the point. Here, I have something for you. You need a way to get it back to the waking world.

I hand him the box containing this journal's stray leaves. He squints to read them.

You'll be able, I tell him, to read them if you get them back to Paris. The real Paris. 1926, you say. Do you know Flamel yet?

I don't know what you're talking about.

Ask Ray. Or Bataille. Or better yet, Masson is about to give up his studio. Turn it all black, like a cave, and it

will become a gateway from here to there. I'll be able to bring you the pages that way.

Desnos backs away. I'm not so certain about that.

The mist of Bokrug's annual reappearance begins to swirl around us, issuing from fissures in the ground-glass earth.

No, Desnos, do it. Wake up, do not remember who suggested it, but build the black cave. So I can come, though dead, and give you this. I shake the box, pleading. Forget Dalí and the rest. Maybe they will sort it out. It might be me who is wrong. Never mind the cosmic preparation. Receive it as a friend. When I get back to you in 1926, take my writings, the only evidence of my existence.

Before they also disappear.

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