

Legend of All Saints' Day, 1755

There was once a tremor, with no knowledge of itself or why it moved through the mantle in the way it did. The tremor did not take this lack of self-awareness to heart. It continued to fault creep through the world when something set deep—consciousness some might say—certainly an impelling, insistent itch from within, bid it do so.

The tremor lay still for weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, millennia in an inert state, snoozing and awaiting motivation from the itch to bid it to act. At such times the tremor tried to sleep. The tremor is almost certain it couldn't sleep last night, that it writhed and twisted into sharp wakefulness, but the tremor isn't sure: this is a familiar feeling.

And when the tremor does finally sleep what does it dream about?

I will tell you: The tremor dreams of icebergs.

Of free-floating multi-dimensional frozen water forever consolidating melting into sea. The tremor dreams of the joy of just such liquefaction, such simplicity of movement between tabular and non-tabular forms. Through its dreams, for the very first time, the tremor experiences envy.

But there's something else, a feeling more troubling than envy. The tremor is mystified as to how the iceberg actually feels. The tremor knows it cannot gain such insight, worst still, the tremor knows it does not have the means to even reason how to even try to know more.

If the tremor were a little more self-aware it might well wonder at how it even knows what an iceberg is. It might well try to remember the time—as the holocene blossomed—when it first got to know an iceberg personally. And, maybe to be fair, these frozen forms the tremor dreams of are not icebergs at all, but simply resemble icebergs to us in the telling.

So, the tremor dreams of icebergs, always the same, secure in sleep yet full of spleen in the knowledge that something else exists with ease.

The tremor is not unhappy, it wouldn't know how to be. But, in dreams, it does know a little of what it is to want to be something else, to comprehend how something else feels. The tremor is sure of this feeling of dissatisfaction, but it is not sure of how it knows this.

The tremor shrugs off dissatisfaction with each new call to action rising from its itch. Such pruritic demands dispels the tremor's worries, returning it to a fulsome sense of purpose and place in the world. The magnitude of itch the tremor experiences is epicentric; so profound and so persistent that, as a clarion to act, the itch is superlatively efficient.

Shear stresses ensue.

This itch for otherness, this profound experience of desire to scratch wakes the tremor at intervals across time, wakes the tremor so it may scratch its dissatisfaction. Having no hands or nails to scratch of course, the tremor must shiver, and quake, and rub itself violently against earthly materials. Dip-slip. Relief is instant, but sadly also instantaneous, the tremor continues to quake, amplitude increasing.

The itch continues but the quaking cannot, and so the tremor must try to sleep to forget. And then, in sleep, is when the tremor dreams of the iceberg. We can't be sure how long this dream lasts, but we can be sure it endures until the tremor wakes. The tremor rouses in order to forget the dream of the iceberg, and in order to forget its dream, it must scratch.

III

In a prose-poem entitled: *L'espace aux ombres* Henri Michaux writes:¹

SHADE-HAUNTED SPACE

(Space, but you cannot even conceive the horrible inside-outside that real space is.

Certain (shades) especially, girding their loins one last time,

¹ Henri Michaux, *Nouvelles de l'étranger*, Mercure de France, Paris, 1952.

make a desperate effort to "exist as a single unity." But they rue the day. I met one of them.

Destroyed by punishment, it was reduced to a noise, a thunderous noise.

An immense world still heard it, but it no longer existed, having become simply and solely a noise, which was to rumble on for centuries longer, but was fated to die out *completely*, as though it had never existed.)

¹ Another poet writes: "To think that a mere word, a name, suffices to make the dividing walls of your strength come tumbling down." Pierre Reverdy, *Risques et Périls*, p. 23.