

LITTLE MEN

Grandly I stepped down a long, red hall filled with mirrors and tinflowers, into a space I knew was hell. In “Fairyland” I saw two of my best friends, little people—one still eager, the other aloof and scared. They perched on the bones of an elk, a long curve of bone they took for some amusement ride. “No,” I said, “you are riding on death.” “Oh shit,” said my one little elf. “But still—even though our lives pass in the realms of hell, we try to have some fun.”

I had no answer to this. In three mirrors I saw my face, me, Pinocchio—first a little snub nose, then a fullsize regulation *rod*; then this big misshapen root I could hurt you with—if I didn’t like you—so watch it! I used to look at myself in a mirror hoping something would change. At the mirror’s edge my vision fractured into realms of spray—a token of my own love of myself, a gesture toward Walt Whitman. “Who’s the fairest,” I demanded, with full confidence the reply would be “You, Kevin.” In this case the reply appears as an image—my own image, big dick and all. Well fuck that.

I’m like this little fairy in a big hellish world I never dreamed of. There are these two foxy guys in Robin Hood jerkins. According to them I’ve got a few days to live. Don’t want them to think bad about me! Layers of vertical stripes of paint top us, and the light here is spooky, maybe—but you know how it is. We’ve been damaged, but Aesop or Malory or Grimm or Perreault is still writing about us. Fable’s got the strength of a rumor; or a virus, *mais non?*

I guess.

When I was a kid I thought there was poetry inside the frame, a cage, a capture, a bar set. I'm mooning over him, I'm a wax figurine. He's so flexed and haughty—he makes my jaw weak. I'm in this club, and what we do, is, we go to bars and try to pick up guys? It's funny when they come home with us and we can't even understand each other except you know, the universal language of love.

Then when I came to S.F. the gates clanged shut, once, twice, three times. This archetypal number that was—that was AIDS. Remember in *Bambi* when Bambi's mother died in the fire? Well, that was nothing. Here are these big old fawns, hooves of cast-iron, trotting above me in this forest glade; but as I look closer the blue butterfly's a stick of carved wood, Ladybug's red shell's brittle like Faberge, spotted and dotted. I'm about to get hoofed right in the midsection or balls if I had any.

—We were not really boys or anywhere near it; but crafted animulcae, fetiches from world culture. Our old-time outfits came not from The Gap but from the imagination of 19th century illustrators, Disney animators, all that is false we were dressed in and smiled through. I can't even remember did we ever have sex or if so with what as I haven't seen myself naked. A smell of resin and pinewood comes out of my body as it would from an empty coffin. We're adorable, sure.

I went up to Brett Reichman in his painter's studio, a colorful place like my workshop in the North Pole. His pale face, his bangs, his glasses. He acted a bit defensive, but not overly so considering he had put me in Hell, into this hell of not-belonging or being. "Cut me some slack," I pleaded, "don't be such a *mensch*, night and day, you are the one."

Impassive he looked at me as if to say, *suffer*. Tonight, some of us elves and imps and pixies—we held a demo outside the studio but failed to attract KGO and the other networks, I don't know, maybe we should have used bullhorns instead of faery pipes.

“We never belonged to ourselves, but now we are his,” we chanted in these fey high-pitched voices, all in unison, practically, except for Squeeker—the lamb whose wool was replaced by plastic, white and pink, long ago, before we came to this red room and met *all these incredible guys!* “Now we are his,” we repeated over and over, raising our fists into the night air beyond which beckoned the branches of these cruel, half-human trees that wanted to eat us? Well, eat this.

for Brett Reichman