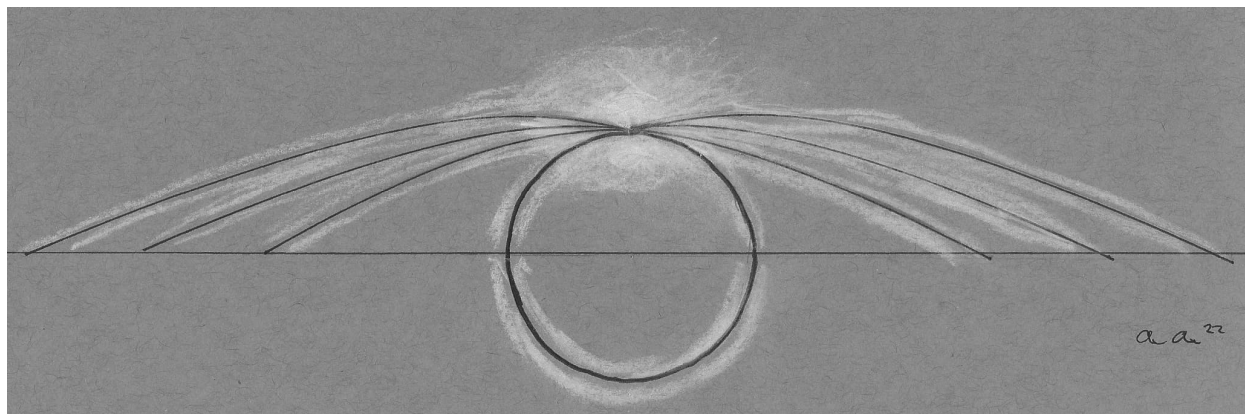


Oneiric Odyssey

by Andrew Arthur

www.TheCollidescope.com

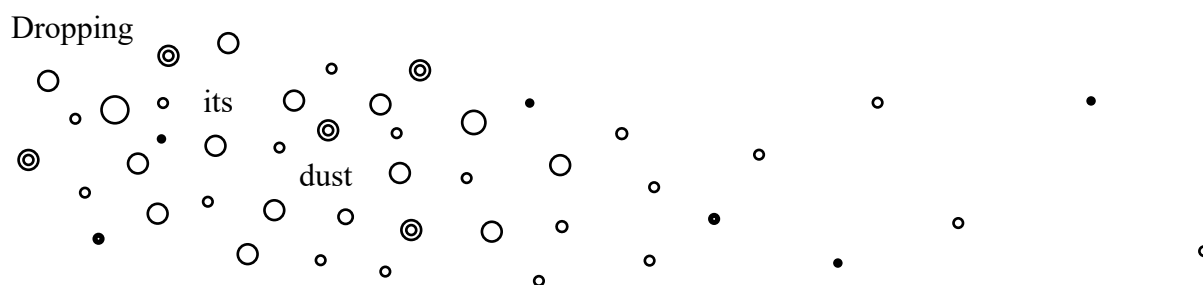
Here you are
at the intersec+ion
of everything



A dry leaf lays on top of another. Covered in white, powdery mildew.

Like a dead moth that is shocked to life after seeing me.

It flaps its wings and is flying.



along the concrete walkway that leads me between acid green grass to the cafeteria. The
squat beige building with a flat roof, slanting. Next to the thin, red tree with the bark that peels
away from and in on itself, in strips, like yellow ribbons.

Then I'm taken up steps, into

The Cafeteria,

with the window-walls letting in the purple-yellow-gray light from outside,

like the time when my father died.

How sad it was, remembering now, how he did forever go and die.

Look up now:

As Zander

the salamander

wiggles along the

fuzzy gray

ceiling,

creeping,

leaving behind

a slime

sheen,

he's the one

that can survive

burning,

walking along

a flaming log,
 actually getting
 rejuvenated from
 his jaunt,

 still stuck
 upside - down
 on the spiked
 ceiling

 by the
 cafeteria lights,
 the circular,
 unlit, cloudy
 plastic.

Inside here, on the yellowed ochre linoleum floor with no tables for me to sit at, and no one around. How I remember it never being, except, no, because now it was always this way.

When and where The Livebearer floats in and appears, with flowing corn-colored hair.
 She breaks in half around a point of light like a spiked star, shining off the gold door behind her,
 so white it's all I can see. She bellows out a felt scream, breathing life to her child, The Codling,
 its first words being:

my mother isä fish!

And now, with their faces touching, holding, nuzzling, two halves of the one, sharing warmth and love, where there's no fear or anger or thoughts of future or past, with skin always touching with eyes closed because there is nothing to see, nothing needed but what is already there and always has been. Infinity in silence and never-ending possibilities.

But now:

My attention is attracted to this beautiful black leather ring on the floor. Perfectly fitting around my spread-out hand. Grab and lift it while it unfurls itself into a tube—a portal for me to reach into.



≡ Great and powerful noise, now though. From the corner of the room is The Trumpeter, blowing pulming his plumbing-like brass horn.

With wah wah bee wah! ≈ blasting out ≈

from the instrument's opening,
sharpointed sound, like someone hammering hard on an anvil, time to stir (myself) up and away from all the ear pain.

Over to **The Center of the Floor** to

The Cobbler, with his bluenose

stained from all the shoe polish

that he's used, scrubbing and sculpt-
 ing the soles from underneath us,
 with his head bowed in between
 shins, and his sock-eye always
 staring at his work. The rest of
 us sitting on the pulpwood bench,
 high as a throne, from here to the
 world's end, wrapping and curved
 around The Earth.

The Cobbler takes my leather tube, and shines the outside with brushes and cloths, as he
 would a shoe.

He hands it back to me and then he side-steps so he's underneath The Sleeper's feet.
 While he's sitting aloft, with his eyes closed and slumped over, his rugged snoring blocking out
 the horn blowing.

Spending his time this way because it's either sleep or live. To live to sleep, as sleeping
 is the only time he's forward looking.

And behind him is The Poacher sitting casually at a café table reading *Modern Ghoul Magazine*, always silent but seeing everything. He slinks, like smoke, and saunters around, he
 takes all The Sleeper has, keeping an eye on his resting face and the other on his pocket.

But he's only waiting and seeming busy, for the real prize, the regal things, the buried
 boastings of The Graveldiver. Who's now scurrying throughout this cafeteria place.

. .

The Poacher waits for The Graveldiver to sneak away to show him his hiding space, because he's the collector of everything. He sees his reflection and shadow in the same Zigg-zagging accordion door of shiny gold folds, as he walks by, hugging the wall, and now he thinks he's being followed.

But oh! here comes The Grenadier blasting in, oblivious, bumbling and breaking everything, shooting bomblasts at anything moving. He's pure and green, dumb and blundering, but trying to do the right thing.

The explosions shake The Graveldiver as he's sensitive to sound so he goes down to the safety of The Soil, entombed among the stone, where the cold is the only thing that can make him fall asleep. Where it's dark enough for him to see clearly and quiet enough for him to hear, where he's out of everything's reach. Feeling immaculated, he interlaces his fingers with the roots of the plants and trees, they grow around his hands and feet and reach along his spine, cradling him and offering itself, separating part of the system to his mouth to eat, becoming his mother-queen.

And here I am in

The Cafeteria

again stood up, waiting hours,

hours

hours hours hours hours

at the same time instantly, as The Tailor needles black threads through my loose leather sleeve at one end, making it into a bag.

A bag that holds everything.

Everything most meaningful and precious to me.

I need to keep it safe

but The Poacher sees it all and sweeps in saying,

how are you, Old Chum?

You bucket of rotten fish guts.

With his pointed chin pressing

on my shoulder, like he's really here,

speaking straight into my ear.

All while snatching the bag with his other hand.

& off he walks with what's mine.

No!

The thing I need most.

Chase after him,

but no, I can only run so turtle slow,

But it's only a dream so why don't I run free?

Knowing doesn't make me move any faster.

With a soft feeling under my feet, looking down into

The Reverbed Riverbed

that eecchhoo echoes

waterdrops in spots, with satisfying liquefaction, liquifying satisfaction.

Except I'm stuck, standing on this aching tread of my feet, breaking the current statically.

On the logs and rocks, creating their babbling archipelago arpeggio. Sinking my feet into cold

mud, making sucking sounds when I lift them up. With so much strength needed to bring them
up only to do it again for hours hours hours hours hours

of sluggish snail speed, legs burning, stuck in mud holes, and staring into the dark woods
on the other side of the river, where the trees go on forever. The gray ~~stained~~ columns vanishing
down into the blue-green blackness of eternity. Sensing a branch of a forest behind me, though I
can't turn & see.

But, genius me, if I *kick* my legs I can fly!

Up and out, to this new and familiar place.

Somewhere in Europe,

I think.

Over a red-brick stone-orange cliff on the ocean, set in blue shadow only now I fly with
greater speed, leaving light behind, the light moving backwards in time.

Where everything is **black.**

And Avony, a voice, says to me:

Somehow:

out of the bag I don't have:

Being alive: sitting, walking, eating, talking,
and that's what we all want to be, alive and not dead. To feel and
move and hurt and cut our hair and shave our bodies. To show
ourselves inch by inch until we find someone who can handle it all
ha ha! We strive for The Unattainable Ideal that we want for
ourselves and others that none of us are or will ever be.

But I ask them:

in my mind:

how do you show what you don't know?

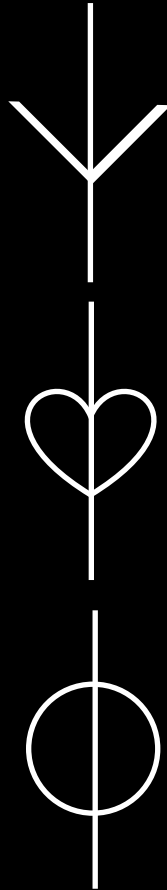
and another one I caint see speaks:

Aociv:

silently screaming out of my bag opening:

How fashionable to wear your head around your neck like a noos.
Our minds are the places where we are the most free and also the

places where we are most imprisoned. By others electrical
chemistry



I stop flying and land onto an

Elementary School Blacktop

I've never been to.

Hard under my feet as if I'm really landing.

Here you are again, the girl I used to know, with the thin lips and eyes, who would stare
and smile blankly at me.

And she's smiling slightly again, showing me the small gap in her teeth, before yelling
out my true name:

Walleye the Stargazer!

She stands inside a white circle with a blank, colorful line bisecting it towards me

vertically.

You're so much thinner and more beautiful than before, but only a little bit older,
standing among rusty green metal picnic tables.

When did you get a ruby rose tattoo on the left side of your neck

no right.

And I'm compelled to her as she turns and runs, and I'm propelled slower than I usually
move, around a classroom corner to

The Playground,

her with Grouper, the bad boy who still makes me nervous, even now. There he is
looking exaltly like he always did.

The two dec hi, waving hello, on the playground's second level.

Greeting me from behind a row of bars, pressing their heads between the two thin
columns they're holding onto.

Looking up with dark green fabric laid out between them and the sky I say, I see you! and
wave back.

At the girl with her torso and legs covered in a dark leather tube. Which she
shrinks inside of and into. Until she's all gone with nothing taking her place.

I go to pick up the limp leather, but Grouper comes in s l i d i n g

on the floor and scrapes and takes it before

I'm

In A Factory,

that houses everyone on Earth, all doing the same menial thing. In
the industrial park part of town, with the crumbling, oxidized buildings
outside the open garage door.

Me
standing between
distant friends
Jacks Crevalle and Dempsey,
in these round voluntary prisons,
divided down the middle
with flooded concrete carpeting,
gray and wrinkly
all of us marching
advancing on each other
brother to brother
a civil war of the mind
under a ceiling way up high
with columns at each corner,
not connected by walls or anything
when

The Gulper spectates us all in the dark, in the only stadium seat, altogether riveted to the
ivory metal wall. Stuck up high, somehow, watching constantly (anything and nothing) and
continually eating, but from where is the food coming?

Where is my bag? Something in my bag will tell me.

I guess I'll just play with this black bean bag sitting here on the lumpy floor. Toss it up, underhand, up fifty feet to the attic rafters. Crisscrossing wood beams, storing covered things, but the bag gets stuck up there, oh well

and this makes The Grunter wake. He rises from the dirt, carried up in a burnt-twig tree, piked up in his perch, yelling: that's bad they'll need that! but he just wants to hear the sound he creates.

As the black bean bag drops back down to the ground, finally. It hits the floor and rips open at the seams, spilling out all the beans

On The Freeway.

Because now it's me and my brother riding
along a highway, our black SUV blurring
past the beige and khaki buildings, with us
reflecting in the mirrored green glass.

When a pigeon flies gliding
in front the car, just ahead of the hood. It
flaps its left wing then its right. It rolls
over in the air and The Sun shines off its
iridescently every-color underside. The
bird dives down to the ground and gets
crunched ka-thunk! ka-thunk! under the
driver's side wheels and bumps us in our seats
up! and up! On leather-ring tires, driving out to

one winding path

In the Middle of the Ocean,

the blackstreet sagging up and down on wooden stilts,
 with my brother driving me, turning sharply, too quickly
 in this car too big for two beings,
 the rollercoaster road turns but we don't
 into the ocean by a remote Hawaiian island chain.

\ S PLAS h !
 — 0 — 0 —

Remember to open the window as a way to get out.

Don't panic and I remove my seatbelt
 as the water rushes in, and out we all swim.

Except for my brother, The Croaker now, tangled in his belt
 pounding on the window, with his underwater screams stuck
 in bubbles, clear spheres blowing up in the ocean.

Hearing voices through the water and turn to see

Fierasfer diving down and swimming to
 the black boxcar, which he enters and takes off

The Croaker's seatbelt as she's drowning.

But Fierasfer brings her back again.

And she's swimming—dancing
 through the water & can't see me

I wonder: Who is that?

She looks like Mom.

I know: That's my sister.

Do I have a sister?

Wait till Dad hears about all this,

while I'm suffocating and breathing fine, bound up floating to

The Dusty Sand Road

An old place, the beginning of a big city.

Everything looking like a black and white movie.

Where Grouper, The Musselcracker, drives his own

old black boat of a car with My Love

riding in the passenger seat, wearing

a leather band across Her forehead.

The Musselcracker parks at the outer edge

of the road's bend, as I'm watching from

just inside the tree line. He cuts the leather

from My Love's head, like my heart ripping

in half. He leaves Her and the car behind

and walks into a sand bank in front of a forest

with wooden stumps on the roadside. o

Weathered in at the top ends, o

grooves in between o

each ring, from years X o

of weathering. O o

Spl/it along the o

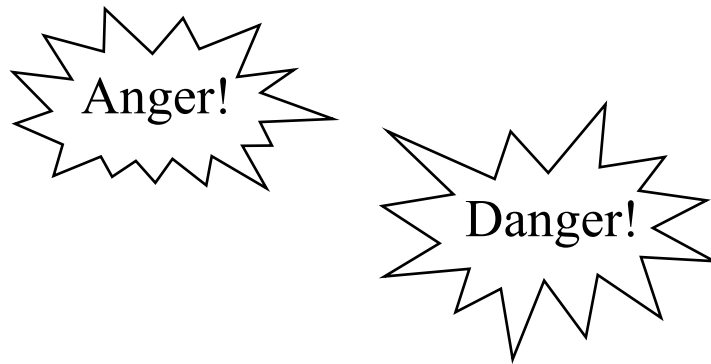
sides. Sealed o

in rot by the o
elements. o

Now in the sand, O he aims to take down The Ghoul,
who has no strength or physicality, but solely relies on being unseen.

It's no contest as The Musselcracker is strong and can see The Ghoul from within the
elliptical sand outcropping.

Punches then start to land all across The Ghoul as he pleads for The Musselcracker to
stop, but he never does until the fight's won and done.



The Musselcracker throws punches and knees within his baggy suit, flapping, attacking
The Ghoul, who's kicking up sand with see-through feet, like water splashing.

& The Ghoul's life finally ends after a last barrage capped off by a Musselcracker foot
stomp and twist, into his evisable body, with no evidence now that he was ever there,

doing everything in eternal invisibility.

But The Ghoul has always been dead, & it's just a matter of time before he'll wake again.
A blank slate, ready to do all his imperceptible meandering, to play his part in the scene, the

same as The Musselcracker, who exits the dream.

Lying down, dead, reaching in a feeling inside the bag I don't have.

And this occurs to me:

Theater is all this is. A way to describe both the genre and setting. The type of stage and the way of playing. All for an audience, whoever you are. Whoever I am. Audience-critic-actor—all of it some roleplay we've made. All once we reach a certain age. We play it all at the same time. Laying out in the rooms we design. Forecast the future, perfect the past, waste your life.

Hiding inside.

I can't see past my own eyes.

. .

And now:

It's raining, but where is it coming from? where are the clouds? under this sky of blue.

My bag should be here to tell me, to show me,

The Ghoul,

shedding his transparent hide

and is now reawakening by breaking out of his old body.

Slime darkens the sand in the spots touched by the discharge of his skin, flattening the sand behind the weathered stumps. He wriggles, writhing, disturbing the ground with no seeable body, making the sand splash and dust crash again, as he remembers who he is and where he should be.

The wind blows and covers him in sticks and leaves.

But it's OK, because he'll be The Weever eventually.

He stands & gazes upon the ground,

at a flat stick and a curved, orange leaf wrapped around it,

like a dead robin that can no longer fly.

He walks, a stickman covered in feathered leaves. He joins a procession of other children, marching along on our preambulatory parade.

All walking to

The Cafeteria,

bright and white and sunny,

again a new beginning,

me waiting within, without my bag or anything.

And, look, Dad's alive again, sitting in his brown leather armchair with cracks and creases along the armrests. Thankfully not deceased, he's not dead again, good, so he can

D

R

O

P

a jar of pickled howl^{-of-pain yoh!s.}

Crashing glass dances, twinkling on the floor, and I don't want to, and wish I can't help but step on it and feel the hot sting, burning my feet like real glass and peppery heat.

Lift my foot^t and see Zander the salamander, back, wriggling around my feet. Shiny and black, speckled with red, pitter patter on the dusty, beige linoleum.

And now despondency, knowing this is how it'll always be.

My story.

My history.

Unchan∞ing.

And Acveo says to me from my bag again:

in your eyes are two rings touching. In your mind, you choose the color and speed, as the friction moves them forward, then back to the beginning.

