

TVO

I LIKE TO REMEMBER THINGS MY OWN WAY  
(AFTER LYNCH)

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The pills go down against the back of the throat.  
A thunk: 3, 2, 1

Assisted sleep means blackness comes quickly, with dreams that seem imposed. They used to be of the past. Of you, of things before. But now everything is less distinct; *grey static. Shapes moving amongst them, grey on grey pixels, or worse – black gaping spaces where mouths should be. Formless writhing grey on white on black, wraiths in a snowstorm. And everywhere the sound, like huge machinery sounding somewhere far away. Ears stopped up and muffled but still the thud and clank of gigantic gears under the white noise.*

Slow revert back to wakefulness, and colours bleed back in, replacing the fuzz. I lie still for a moment, feeling the absence on my left for a moment; cold and physical. How long has it been anyway? As always when I try to think back, my brain gets caught along the way, trapped in whorls and eddies. Loops of thought get snagged; thread on barbed wire. I try not to replay them but they stick, like a CCTV playing back over and over, repeating and repeating until the context is gone and only the images remain. Obsessive replay.

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*I'm lying still, held down by a huge pressure across my chest. There's a curved wall arcing around my head, almost close enough to breathe against. The sound is muffled, cotton wool filling canals, but there's a grinding, thinking sound. Irregular, arrhythmic. And bizarrely behind it a trite chorus - daytime radio mixed with industrial rending. I squeeze my eyes tighter, trying to imagine a symphony from the cacophony. Then a voice somewhere underneath, urgent; "...can you hear me? Will we stop the process?"*

My eyes open. The light and shapes of plants and moving blinds make it seem for a second like you're there beside me, eyes open, peering through a curtain of hair. Then you're gone.

Days pass un-numbered, moving by rote. Every now and again out of the corner of my eye, I catch something; a greyness, a fizz. Peripheral vision ragged at the edges. But when I focus, it's absent. A trick of the mind.

Breaking the monotony are the meetings. I sit in the chair. He sits behind the desk, fingers steepled.

Thinking back only fragments of words persist...“dissolution”, “treatment”, “subcortical”. Results are alluded to but never shown. For reasons that are just out of reach of sense, I’m asked to draw squares and spheres. Images appear flickering on a screen sometimes; a weird round blob with patches of white. He asks more than once if I have anyone.

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The voices in the dreams are now little more than abstract sounds. Digital interference with the occasional word cutting in like a bad phone reception.

*“a tawse, kneeling...[indicepherable]...nicks against the flesh...stewards of pain”. Your face is more indistinct than ever; we’ve moved from live action surveillance to 1980s tv crime reconstruction. Locations are blurred but still recognisable; jump cut though, badly edited. We’re arguing in a car and then suddenly we’re on a hillside, standing stones looming above us. Everything moves too fast or too slow. I dimly recognise that one of the figures is myself although he has no face at all to speak of; just shapes that move when the sounds come out.*

When I open my eyes the room is grey – I feel a rising surge of panic. Dark patterns coalesce and I can still hear fragments of static. Eyes jammed closed again, I run to the bathroom, coughing up bile. The streaming tears force my clenched lids open; in the mirror, red eyed and startled, a face I still recognise.

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I dream.

*We'd blagged onto a boat somehow. It wasn't a fishing boat, just a little charter, but you'd sweet talked the three guys crewing it with your standard mix of down to earth bargaining and endearing charm. I sat at the back and scowled a little at your earnest chat as they flirted with you. The sea spray rose up and your hair caught in the wind. You were smiling.*

*We got to the island and made our way to a rocky outcrop. You had your pad in a bag with you and started writing. Absently, lost in a reverie borne from inspiration and words, you stared out to sea. I knew in a way you wanted to be one of the islands yourself. Next to you, I pretended to read but instead watched your enraptured expression.*

*You looked freer than I'd seen you before; like you were part of the landscape, wild and old and rooted in the land.*

*Later we climbed higher and you pointed out markings on the rocks. It was impossible to tell the origin; modern graffiti, 1920s farm code, or something more ancient. I looked out to sea and could see something glinting in the distance, flashing intermittently. It felt like the last dying embers of the real world signalling forlornly, knowing they wouldn't be heeded.*

*At the highest point, we stopped and we gasped as hundreds of seabirds suddenly took flight, wheeling and crying and beating the air. I turned to you and you were standing against the sun, hair streaming out. The light blazed around your silhouette like a corona around the sun and for a second it was like looking at the High Priestess card from a tarot deck.*

A sharp squeal of static. The dream vanishes into consciousness.

Eyes open to unbearable waves of grey static.  
dark shapes in front buckling the fuzz.  
black holes in the hiss like rotting teeth, filling  
with static, emptying white noise eyes and ears  
and no start or end, pixel decay low resolution  
smeared across vision filling every hole. inverse  
synaesthesia. and everywhere a grinding, squealing,  
thudding cacophony overlaid with a rising digital  
shriek i just barely recognise as my own.



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