

Snatch 7 (come 11)

by Mathew Paust

The instant of his knowing lasted barely long enough for the sense of recognition alone to adhere, that he knew the scream and the face, falling shy of particulars of what he knew. No more than a flicker of insight that leered just beyond his reach like a vague itch or a scent so nebulous it might well be illusory. Yet it remained, with its promise of intimate revelation nourishing deep within him a seed of unholy dread.

He could avoid the face now. This was in his power, to exclude sight. He could ignore the visage, but not the scream. The scream allowed no diversion, no denial. It was shrill, swelling in volume and authority, invading, enveloping.

In desperation he parsed nuances in the accosting decibels until he found aloof one faintly audible frequency combination, a pair streaking high above the others in an apparent duel for supremacy as, entwined in primal struggle, their nearing the very edge of human detection torqued a frail valedictory tremolo which of a sudden rattled the cap off a conditioned psychic restraint and loosed an explosive geyser of such maddening ironic appreciation that under ordinary circumstances would have burst forth in foot-stomping hysteria.

As it was, as he attempted to communicate to the shrink something to account for his apparent distraction, hoping by this to release enough of the emotional pressure to return to his stoic posture, as he began to pronounce with great care the name *Mad-e-leine*, getting out only the *Mad*, the full counter-interpretative weight of the hyper-falsetto squeal still gripping his distilled attention, now, without the grace of transition, rendering utter pathos, the intolerable, unthinkable agony of its significance to the human soul, forced out of him a scream of his own, a wail, more accurately, a raw, wretched, verbless testimony of unrequited sorrow and grief scraping up from his intestines and through his abdomen and throat and out into the room and the world and further, further...

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