

Pirate

by Steven Gowin

Control and decorum. Manners. Practice such to protect yourself and others. A civilization for all our own good. Keep curiosity and speculation to yourself.

So. You see a man with an eye patch. Go right ahead. Guess what happened. Was this bad eye defected at birth? Had the mother traveled tropical rivers? Had the mosquito swarmed and infected? Had she barely survived herself? And was the child's birth, with only this affliction, nothing but miraculous?

Or did the bone shard from a butcher's saw mutilate this ocular? And did the butcher's son who the butcher bullied and beat rejoice in the brute's comeuppance and reckon it all as justice? Had the butcher not murdered the beef with a .38 slug to the eye, and had the beef not taken the butcher's eye in turn, so the meat cutter's blows could never again land true on his child's face?

Could it have been the wound of an arrow, the archer unschooled and unpracticed, flown to the eye, a blinding fleche. Did the sibling carry the guilt his long life, culpable over the injury and his inability to shed his guilt, and so did he pour every trouble and failing into that guilt and grow it into a hateful thing that took him too and robbed him of all grace and joy?

Or maybe patch told the story of a lover's ice pick, a jealousy, a stab to the eye. You'll not lay sight on that hussey again, bucko. Or a gaze at the welder's rod, white hot light having seared the retina, or the boxer's jab and the blood, a fight ended in the seventh round. Maybe a sheathed malocchio. Kept to yourself, these barely transcend inane speculation.

But one day, control abandons you; you suffer return to prehistory, the cave. The snake brain does out, dull, lobotomized, primitive. You meet and pass the man in the black eye patch and unthinking mutter "arrrrgggggggggghhhh."

Thankfully, before your conscious understands what you're about, the snake brain has spoken to the legs, and the legs, already at a

dead run, carry you to another chance at civilization, balance,
equilibrium.

