

THE CAT, CARPETED

Paul Becker

SCENE :

The scene to be conceived of as surrounding us is somehow familiar. Within the scene it is deliciously cool, a breeze billowing out the muslin curtains on both sides, a breeze unnoticed out there in the heat of the afternoon. Added to that the room is well ordered, feels homely in an old fashioned kind of way and smells of cornbread, pipe smoke and woodchips. A potbellied stove with an L-shaped flue takes up part of the far wall and over it hangs a small shelf containing what appear to be family photographs, some of them in very old frames, all covered in dust. In the corner, a sink, a large meat safe taking up one third of a kitchen table. There is another large table in the middle of the room, one or two leather armchairs a small, white rug and in the opposite corner by the windows, an old roll top desk, also covered in photos in old silver frames. At the far wall, next to the stove is a framed mirror, reflecting the light. A woman stands staring at the mirror, which is, it turns out, a painting under glass.

SCENE :

The scene to be conceived of as surrounding us appears to be merely a generic white space dotted with several small paintings.

SCENE :

The scene to be conceived of as surrounding us appears to be a boudoir where, amid daintily carved furniture of pale, Japanese camphor-wood, there rises a sort of pavilion of Indian rose-tinted satin, the skin of the woman appears to colour delicately in the reflected lights of the silken hangings. This room, each of whose sides is lined with mirrors that echo each other all along the walls, reflects, as far as the eye can reach, the woman as she stands at the opposite side of the room, considering a mirror set inside one of the large mirrors, which is, it turns out, a painting under glass.

WOMAN:

so she says this is not something I am the least bit interested in talking about which is difficult given the context its odd she seems to be acting as an actor a radio player playing pretending to pretend to speak off mic she is wholly dismissive I wonder why now she says that authentic perversions are perversions nonetheless so granted well ok I mean anyone can see she is definitely for sculpture she even has the appearance of a sculpted object like a bland Roman bust in the middle of a garden maze formal equestrian beauty I should call it a carved nose jugular notch gouged from finer clay but why so porcelained so frigid artists they pass through me like a fucking dose always so wrongheaded always want so much of what they dont know what to do with want it so badly and yet always fear the inevitable erm upsurge of what I ask you an ocean of beige perhaps or a cosmic latte a monstrous uh mediocrity look there from the pit it rises then she says that to know what inauthenticity looks like is not the same thing as actually being authentic and oh I think dear me I think aphorisms stuck in a quiet room with blaise pascal she seems so used to making assertions the sort of poor pitiable person who dominates a space merely by entering it who interrupts my thoughts to say she really cannot think of any reason for the conversation to be had in the first place I mean she says I really hate this idea of failure they talk about I mean she says yeah sure I thought at least to begin with that the more one failed the more one truly succeeded it seemed to me that it was only when everything was absolutely lost and instead of giving up one went on that one experienced the momentary prospect of some slight fucking I dont know progress progress she says then she pours some wine into her glass saying suddenly you had the feeling that something new had opened up and yes thats right she said wrong now now even to talk about failure now seems presumptive a knowing wink to suggest that okay yes in fact there really is something somehow laudable about it after all something butch and glorious as though failure always comes replete with its own capital f as though it is a subject with status gravitas as though it has a dick all of its own well fuck beckett is all I say she

says as though the road deserves its due for merely allowing itself to be walked on modernists paring their nails cooing because as predicted the work is yet again unable to make itself how dare we yknow its disgusting fail better shit better then she mutters halfheartedly that she would tell bas jan ader to go jump in the lake she turns away and drinks some of the strong white wine that I happen to know tastes of ashtrays and she says and you want me to talk about this she indicates the paintings as though I am some latter day havisham a ghost at the feast generations of mice gnawing away at the cake I wonder to myself what she means and then she says but my dear you are quite right though I havent actually spoken at this point you are quite right she says why does it have to even start I blame myself she says the idiot self I really do blame myself stupid pointless and withered on the vine old to begin with look at my colouration the same shade as dried fruits as faded foolscap a defiant fifties shade ah beige I think now its official then I ask her should we cancel if she really is not interested in any kind of discussion and she says why should I be must discussion be a default setting why should everything be discussed ready formed for conversation like some group annotation this is the era of annotation dont you think I nod everything is explained for us to such an extent that sooner or later it starts to bleed in to the rest of our lives that which is inexplicable is suddenly made inherently my italics available sooner or later even our dreams will be annotated but it is all a dirty lie a dirty filthy lie all of it you artists no longer fight against it thats for sure but I try to say she interrupts you are no longer alienated no longer indestructible but I try to say she carries on poor old schwartz is turning about in his grave surely some revelation is at hand your mob are now so familiar with explication you cant drop a shit without unveiling the context the better you get at holding on to it the more it slips through your fingers I was smiling a little to myself thinking rave on john donne rave on thy holy fool when she says my candidates are the birds and I say did you just say birds and she says I see them every day and their strangeness is quite perfect quite untouchable what are they after all sparrows larks tiny fleeting spectres of the day embodiments of dreams

singing and beautiful but quite inexplicable I wonder could this be a performance after all and who but us is watching then there is a slight pause and both of us are left feeling uncomfortable then she continues as though she has been prompted with a forgotten line well she says really I am not even a tiny bit interested in discussion truly and I say whether that is the case or not you have to admit I mean I have to say I find your arguments at best wildly tangential I may have mispronounced tangential I think to myself I have the feeling I am being lectured by some pompous wiry backcombed ass I say that to me nothing is worse than self-hatred when it isnt really you know in earnest for real I mean I say I mean one has to believe in it meaning not draped around a steel armature and at this the woman stops me by holding up a finger not the finger she says precisely what do you offer then what the path to authentic happiness they say it doesnt even show up on the page and I say well dont you find the whole thing is pitiful to watch playing out in a vacuum unconvincing limp dicked and irresponsible I have just as much right to exist as the rest you included I admit I am getting a little heated and I should consider reining it in a bit but there is that about her she the woman that makes my palms itch for the slap my fingers twitch to pull out tufts of hair scratch and castigate I say I dont wish to offend but you know things will get a lot easier for you once you finally manage to rip the bug out of your ass I mean come on your tired debates about art for chrissakes here the woman nods emphatically in absolute agreement which I find a little disarming I admit she says I confess to hating nothing more than artists ah I say now we are getting some place why have they somehow failed to excite you have they overlooked a fallen comrade left a good woman behind then she says the recurring image I have whenever I think of artists is of a cat with worms dragging its itching behind along the floor inadvertently writing its name on the white carpet so I said jesus christ really how bitter is thy cup what dregs of gall and wormwood lieth there I repeated why do you have to hate artists so much and she said dont get antsy with me the only reason you artists exist the reason that you are ever able to scuttle towards the light is because you

are basically ignorant you choose to ignore the past she said and suck up to the novelty of your existence onanism nothing new under the sun everything you can say that you can wipe across that floor has been wiped a thousand times before I say lady that is everything but true the river is moving after all not the shore and she said you should try thinking for yourself which we all know I tell her means think more like me why dont you think my thoughts for me then she says try writing instead of painting then look at all the mess youll make

END