

Slaughterings.

An Alphabet of Evidence.

(Extract from a novel)

Translation: Katy Derbyshire

The idea that something was thinking there. The landscape multivitamin juice, but only coz of the autumn. Poppies are red, yellow from straw, soil brown, blurred and: orange, coz of orange, coz of the pumpkins, clamped themselves tight to the landscape, that thing with the pumpkins a bit on the vulgar side, but that was only coz of the autumn, but he just didn't look, but that was only coz trains are wild beasts, but those pumpkins wanted to get through his eyes into his head, but but he just didn't look.

But: was it the speed or was something up with time, was it the landscape or just a mistake, was it the landscape that thought that, was it coz of passing by, coz of: pumpkins, coz of: colour wash, poppy, yellow and soil brown, ultimately coz of orange, that the evening mixed itself anew and the landscape turned to juice, that the thinking came, that something was thinking. The orange blinded him a quick cataract, abruptly: the gaping of depths, he looked into a gradient of orange haze and rapids overtake time and gape something open and there was something thinking of the well, back one May, when they met, where they met back then at the well and how unavoidable when someone takes the sun and throws it in and on and everything turns to juice –

But no, what's raking him up here, looking out helps, helps stop remembering, looking always helps stop the pictures, those pumpkins like spilt pregnant marbles, it makes a note in his head when something's got spilt, in nature, not in nature, in a picture when something's spilt somewhere, when something's not tidy, in nature or not in nature, when something's like sorted into the wrong place and scratched on purpose, what that means he doesn't know, but he can't help stumbling then and wants to

tidy up, in a picture, when for example in a picture, like for example in this picture, once in the exhibition, in an exhibition, he'd gone to the exhibition, to an exhibition and the angels in the heavens, far down there they kept watch, a Mary, a Joseph, an ox and a bull, shepherds kept watch there and Joseph's no father and asks himself why and in heaven, Someone, the Big Guy has sprinkled a handful of angels into the picture like raisins thrown in and emptied, angels in loose fall, head over heels, on a trampoline, in free flight off the trampoline, angels like bric-a-brac tohu wa bohu gobbledegook, the angels ought to float weightlessly, angels ought to actually, coz that's the usual way, angels glide and gleam ethereally, angels ought to actually generally gesture gallantly, angels giggle gong or gripe or was it an F, they finecomb, but what, what do spilt angels have up the fine sleeves of their filaments? Or are they feinting? Do they want to flambé the heavens? A Ragnarök? Is it a feint and what for? Leapt over the earth in a flick-flack, flick-flack for the somersault, fiffliis the salto a flip the turn, the F, the F sees you through their game, those game gymnasts and acrobats! Angels, oh yes, but they were the chaos team, the angels had fallen thrown emptied into a picture, the Big Guy had spilt the angels, a messy heap all a-dither, swirling their arms, holding their filaments neatly and please don't lose the trumpets, trombones, don't lose the cymbals, after this you have to whistle and toot here, after this you have to fiddle and hoot here and always keep smiling! Acrobatics and musical turns! Angels are artists, are all-round entertainers and one-man bands, the Big Guy scattered the raisins or they fell out of his coat, he's in a rush today, rushing with great paces over the land, running today like a man gone berserk, driven today by unease or a new thought, driven by something, the big plan or a guilty conscience, walking in a white chemical coat, always those white chemical coats, when white men –

No, no, he has to brush something off of his head, wipes a hand over his face, over his eyes, he makes ease for himself and it's like this: coz of the

men and the rush the chemicals bloat – he makes a: it's like this, wipes a hand over his face over his eyes over his head, when: the Big Guy divides up the heavens, then the angels fall out of his white coat like raisins to the land and: there sits Mary keeping watch, keeping wait for a child and further explanations, for a father to turn up and a room for the night, for angels fallen quite incidentally into the picture and for the musical entertainment, the Big Guy had mercy or he's pulling practical jokes, everything's always easier with music, the whole world's a-dancing, a heavy belly, the angel'll show you a flick-flack, handstand and somersault, someone's making English excuses, an absolute shambles, English excuses. Excuses? Excuse my French. Is that right? If it's right. Then comes young Gabriel with an indecent proposal, then the Big Guy sends him out, Go, says the Big Guy and he's too busy right now, things to do, in the chemistry lab or the flowerbed, thinking on splitting the atom or synthetic pantyhose, who knows, raking the beds in the garden coz spring is awakening and March winds April showers bring forth May flowers, so Go, says the Big Guy to young Gabriel, and give Mary a message, tell her, says the Big Guy, no, don't come out with it straight away, break it slowly, you know, break it to her slowly, first you give her a little something, a, well what? He's standing in the lab, it's a beautiful reaction in a tube, a bottle of chloroform, a molecule as symbol, the little in the big, the fruit in thy womb, a molecule would be beautiful and chloroform practical, coz the message is bad, perhaps best digested in a bit of a daze and a bit of a wooze, take something along, he says to young Gabriel, take her flowers, that's how you do it, and then tell her I haven't got time, coz of the lab, coz of the garden, tell her the lab's work for upcoming centuries, the garden's for yesterday's papers, tell her – oh no, don't bother, what does Mary care about chemistry, about my vegetables, just take something along, say hi from me and think something up.

Right-o, says young Gabriel, picks pretty flowers and thinks up a nice poem. He does what the Big Guy told him but he does his own thing, young Gabriel goes and disappears in F, flick-flacks down to earth and excuse my French, coz he's still young, coz he's a kid at heart and a greenhorn, coz he's full of the joys of spring, coz it's March, coz excuse his French, coz he can't help it, coz he doesn't want to, Mary, Mary Mary don't be contrary, hail Mary, the Lord is with you, come with me to bed, I'm with you be with me, don't be contrary, lie with me, visit my tent, G for young Gabriel, for glorified accursed, G for full of grace, H for Hail Mary and Hallowed be thy name and F for the fruit, trumpets for the music and flowers for the romance, a lily for love, come to me sweetheart, come close to me, I've something to tell you from the Big Guy, I'll tell you a story, I'll tell you a real incredible story, come sweetheart, let's make a baby, you know, the Big Guy says the way other people do it is easy for him, it's hard for him, I don't know why he's not coming himself. Why? Well, you know, it's like this, maybe he's busy, held up, too much to do, a date at the lab, he plays around with stuff there, he likes a big bang, he invents fireworks, dynamite, nuclear fusion, and then one day he says the word and puts it out in the world for someone to find and admire, try out, maybe he sent me coz he couldn't find a form, no costume to suit, what disguise should he choose, he can't come as a swan, he's not a great bull, he's not playing at zoos here, that's just ridiculous. D'you like brass bands, sweetheart? Coz listen, when he speaks it's a droning a jangle, it's the hard noise of trumpets, but lean down to me, I'll whisper in your ear, I'll tell you tenderly what he said to make the earth move, come to me, a tent is an inner ear, a magic cloak for disappearing, they'll paint us but nobody's looking, they'll tell of us but nobody's seen, I'll say I said hi like the Big Guy just said, I'll say you were surprised? Yeah? Appalled? Aghast? Something beginning with A – Agog? Yeah? An A's good for affecting and actions reactions, an A for afterword, but we're right in the middle, coz you're ripe or the time is, look, I'll make

you a baby, it's all his idea – more or less – and his ideas are good, he thinks and he says and he looks and: it's good.

The only thing is, he'll admit, what about this appalled reaction to the annunciation – shall I tell him like that, yeah? Appalled? I'll tell him later: I said hi, I told her everything and she was appalled, aghast, shall I tell him that, that absolutely appalled face, appalled through and through and deeply aghast, I've never seen such an appalled –

And why then, he'll note, why then does Mary, when something's announced, when I send my special angel with important information and joyful news, when she gets such an interesting visitor, why then such a face and: why then does Mary look like something's been stolen, like someone said: Ragnorök, why then her a face like she'd seen the devil, when I specially sent young Gabriel, why then such an incredible face like someone shat in her brain, when it's just getting interesting, but no, there's that appalled aghast look and Mary's face like: you're kidding me, right, and: I must be hearing things, and: say it again, kid.

But the idea that something was thinking, the thoughts going walking as if his head were a fairground, a cabinet of curiosities, a playground with seesaws, that fiddling and swinging, the unceasing running, it messed with his mind, that tempo of constantly running seesawing jumping children, making everything rush in his head, it's coz of the spillage, that makes a note in his head, there lie the pumpkins spilt out and pregnant and clamp themselves tight to the soil or the brain, someone ought to sort them out, sort them into a shelf, it's clear that the colour wash can't be healthy, coz of the sky like petrol, coz of an orange haze that got it wrenched out of his head, that something was thinking of a well, it was in May and as if the sun had got drunk but all he wanted to think was: pumpkins, or: orange, or: that remembering was falling, and then –

No, that's wrong, not that, that – looking out helps, looking helps, galloping trains across the land, that storming of gargantuan beasts, the velocity

multiplied by the landscape, that calls for use of the colour wash, outside someone applied the autumn onto an oiled wall with great rollers and wild beasts scattered all through, running on legs much faster than wheels, and he looked out of a tiny cell of a wrenching womb, the carriage a honeycomb cubicle a scale in a shell a stone in a mosaic, looked out at the exemplary autumn, they'd made the sky interesting with sandpaper, dropped shavings from the sun, it was such carved-out light: naive art, sun like Saint Christopher's fingers, Saint Joseph, Saint Francis –

No – no he thinks. When someone brings Christopher out of the wood, Saint Joseph and always a child on his shoulders, when: not subtle – naive, someone brings all his fingers out of the wood, his ears, his face, a light like that: carved, embossed, curved shavings, like: naive art. We need someone who thinks about naive art if Saint Christopher's to have a baby Jesus sitting on his shoulder and the whole world, a baby Jesus and not one you know, coz it's a matter of principle not of details, if Saint Christopher's shoulders shoulder his child – but where is he walking, that's coz the naives in art like to be children at heart and that childish heart makes the shit happen, the naive in art's not out of nowhere, it's the peasants with minds like a chopping block, so naive they don't know what to do with them and they knock down the trees to make art, to chop out a Saint Christopher coz that's who they like, heaven knows why they've such a liking for that skinny malinky who crosses the ford, knows naught about nothing, no plan, no idea of the world, presumably coz he knows so little, the brain of a sparrow, thick as two planks, coz he's so naive that's why the naive so disgracefully love shredding away at his rough-hewn limbs, coz they think: one of us. And then there's Joseph: another naive one. How naive must you be to let someone plant a son in your wife's belly, made of nothing or English excuses, created in tohu wa bohu and higgledy-piggledy, but they feel a childish joy when a simple carpenter smiles out of the enslaved former tree,

a tiny light in a big big story, the man from next door, cuckolded outright by an all-round entertainer, but –

Where a context remained, his thoughts just came as fractals and people went in and out of his mind; if only he could bring in some structure, then there'd be: a cauliflower, cleverly compassed and primped by geometry, a romanesco and rose after rose, it makes the romanesco understand the problems of fractals and the thing with the indices, what he means to say, the thing he means to say is like this, a like this: if he brought a numbering system in and an alphabet, an architecture, a staggering plan: then there'd be something like a murder and its course of events and evidence by evidence, young Gabriel'd be a vegetable rose, a floret, Saint Christopher'd carry a romanesco on his shoulders, the whole world, vegetables like a great city, a fortress and inside the house, all laid out, the key to the big in the little, in the evidence the course of events and his murder or vice versa, the common thread and what's to be discovered, suddenly looking at a picture and diving into its geometry, cauliflower tastes good and it's healthy just like colour wash isn't healthy, it's cauliflower for understanding fractals and architecture, naivety and art and romanesco's its most beautiful child.

On the fields now lies frost, the cold like grief, when something turns crooked and sober, when – what he means to say, he means to say something. When it's May? No. When it's evening, no. When the sun's got drunk, no, when it's a well, no, and a war's raging inside it, not that – when that comes, then: no, that you work your way in, to deeper layers, that you have to think: no, but is it a rhythm, a beat, is it the way of the world, when that lurching turns to wailing, a high tone, rapid pictures, when: bodies brim over the milk boils over heat rises time spirals, when: the heavens topple time squared one horse mounts another, a flip book, a fast hand. Outside something falls, something falls over out there, the day falters, someone spills out the evening already a hard night, the sun paints its face crisp, that detailed idea of crisp rolls like crisp light everything crisp and a hoarse morning, the sun yellow as breakfast,

late day - the thinking, if he could think strictly enough then something'd come clear, it was like this, a like this: outside was an autumn and the sun in the evening like breakfast. That's right. Like breakfast like crisp, like a hoarse throat, a word like: woman, a woman, if he thought it said it saw it, a woman, time files down his face, now he's rough, the heavens a jam jar of redcurrants, moist, shining, what's time doing here, time was going walking or getting lost or just standing still, time was passing and it was May, the heavens, standing, summoning strength, then someone screws on the lid, a memory a picture a May day, preserved in a jar like a curiosity on a shelf, a boiled-down puree out of a well with mermen and nymphs and hold your horses Neptune, in the well where they met, the horses are rearing, everything's rising, when: a nymph's skin is so smooth and green with algae, with licking, coz the water there's always licking and soaping away at it, when something gets slippery and slick, that's where he met her in May, come here to me, now he's rough, skin lusting, now he's raging hungry, a desire like moist, it's bridled and horses have hot foam, the nymphish heavy green and then just her scent, he couldn't go on, he had to breathe it in like devouring the stuff, then he heard the time passing or just setting the beat, sorting something, coz it was all so confused, he'd have liked to tear and devour her then over and in the well, he'd have liked to dunk her and swirl her in, he'd have liked for the waters to deport themselves, for the seas to rage and the nymphs to rise, those solid bodies to snake and turn, to look, in his face, for her to look him in the face when he took her, he'd have liked that, always that deathly fear, coz it's always everything at stake, always everything at stake, and at stake is: everything and always, it's so quickly everything at stake. What has to happen goes quickly.

It ought to have been quick and even quicker, it ought to have been that a wave breaks, a backbone, a brain is a nut, that you break it, that he bends her back until something clicks flips out cracks and dunks, takes, he ought to have taken her quickly, for that captivates, he ought to have captivated her and cracked nuts till they sang, he ought to have captivated her then or



wound her up on a loom for weaving and with the mechanics, he ought to have used the mechanics and stretched to the utmost, coz: everything, that's what's at stake, everything, always, wind her up and like for weaving a carpet and look at me, look at me always, give me your fear, a need, beg me. The orange in the well, a water rent by rage, the sun making blood or slitting a nymph, green, red, there comes the eagle-eyed night in the water, falling, submerged in a hole and the noise so deafening you have to scream, when the lust eats you up so you can't stand it any more, coz then the bodies grow too few and what's cut up hacked up with a sinewy axe, so that someone sharpens a scythe, a knife for filet for hearts for the slitting of bellies, so that someone drives the machine and grinds something sharp, so that the sound remains of the grinding and grinding and someone arches the heavens into cloth for a moment and pulls down the corners of the tent, punching them in place, that someone makes a room and no escaping, time's going walking or getting lost, there they stand and look at each other and there he demands. Her body, that he wants everything, coz any less is ridiculous, shrill shivers pass over backs like showers over land, giving you desire and making you dark and afraid, making you think you have to go and snatch, snatch a woman and rip her apart and tear her open, so greedy there's no holding back and no guarantees against turning wild and turning round, come here to me, come to me, give me take my dissolve yourself, turn around I'll bring you round.

He looked outside, a feeling like thunder and lightning, but that was just the feeling, what's thinking and where to, it just messes everything up and makes a tohu wa bohu like trumpeting angels in free fall, poppycock, poppyseed poppyfish poppyhead, that's right, P for pumpkin, he used to have, these, tables, he'd drawn up such lovely tables, with the numbers, letters for the order he likes, so: here are pumpkins freshly lacquered, the autumn soil on fields poppies beautiful as brides, the pear falling, grapes ripe, a magpie cawing, black the elderberry, wings, flying – no, where was he, at P for pied

bird, coz it was autumn, coz of the combinatory logic, coz it's clever – now he's had an important thought, now he's lost that important thread, he'd already got it all through the eye of the needle, he'd already had the common thread in the eye and could have sewn something up nicely, what was it, was it pears grapes elderberries, but that's, is that a common thread? No, not a thread, not a thread and nothing in common, you can't sew anything with pears and grapes, there are no threads, fruit is no thread, fruit belongs to the order of fruits and threads belong to the order of the wool-like, you can't mix and match everything in the categories and make it fruitful with one another, that makes your thoughts into squinting cripples, that's why there's the fruit-like on one hand and you put them in bowls or on a lady's hat, and the common thread you wind on bobbins and tidy it into sewing boxes like harmonicas for order, there's the thread and it's common and red, common and red like memories, common and red like blood, like love and brave courage, red is everything that aches and hurts, it's red when the shelves in your head fall over and the jam jars smash, when the heavens tower up to a tantrum, red is destruction and wailing and all the important common red threads, bobbins lying around are dangerous for falling and stumbling over and breaking something, if you follow the bobbin and flush out the magpies from ravaged fields, a brief blackout, the heavens darken, you lay out the thread and it must have been one late autumn and with the cold the swarms of crows that come over from Russia, where they'd otherwise fall from the heavens frozen into bitter cubes like elsewhere angels raisins poppycock, frozen or devoured by the Russians, coz they eat them, the Russians snatch at the crows like elsewhere young quails, when the cold grew too great and the Russians too hungry the crows came in huge swarms and when they came. When they came. Then a darkening and a rushing sound and a cawing, when suddenly the light choked and the world collapsed, then a wild crow chase right across the heavens that whipped itself up, crows drinking at abandoned souls and a screeching a screaming to make you want to lock up your face,

your right mind, your heart, a thrown rage, no, a taunting conscience, shaped out of dangerous inklings, suddenly there were these masses, these many, it was a black many, pixelated out of thousands of tiny bodies, when the crows had descended on town you could always come across one, sedately and breezily hacking a squirrel to death, hacking its face to pieces, watching, looking so peacefully and with a sawing certainty, hacking away, always at the face, sour blood coming out of its eyes now, its soft cheeks, crying now out of its delicate mouth, the crow hacking the beast quite calmly closer, and no one knows why, but there was no talk of fleeing by then, the tiny beast just stood up straight and looked face to face, looking its end in its two mocking eyes, a crow hacking forth a death with no compromise no contradiction and no moment of doubt, two creatures knew what was at stake and no escape, that was what happened when the crows had settled on the town, that he met her again, when the thousands of birds ate away the light on these weather-beaten evenings, it's a time like a murder, a murder of crows, when that transition to night looks at you like a clenched fist and something grinned at him, a fat tongue licked across his face and leaves him in bad fear, it was on an evening like that that he saw her, that he met her, crossed her path or had he flushed her out sought her out hunted her down –

But, but, if, if thinking won't work now coz she's scribbling in the columns of his tables or spilling something on the alphabet, a tea or an idea or raisins, putting down a cup or a joke, if she makes alphabet soup of his words and eats it all up and repeats and nothing's right now, coz her digestion's all wrong or coz she can't cook, coz alphabet soup's dangerous and unhealthy, coz colour wash can't be healthy, coz it washes all the colours together, then he loses like that, then something comes inside him that's like: red, wild blood courses inside him and a ghastly fear seizes him that she'll always spill something and he won't stand the spilling, not in the pictures and not in nature and not where there's no nature, nothing ought to be, nothing may be spilled and a working in his head like playing a piano, did he lie in wait hunt her down shoot her

down, no, but no, always this falling into the pictures and sometimes a flash and like dreaming that he grabbed her, that's strange. That he could hit her like that, that he strangled her like that, threw discarded spilt the child, that it was a gutting a dismembering a slaughtering – he doesn't know if that's true, coz it almost couldn't be, it can't be and now the land goes past, a train always strives for its goal and the darkness come ashen-faced or is the outside only in the window panes, silted corners, he doesn't get up, he's like listening and the uncertainty whether it's true. Whether anything's true. Whether everything's only a web and like mechanics in motion, when you reach in your fingers break. The thinking, the remembering, the woman, whether she's true, the woman, the child, but it's a mixture in his head, damn it, a head, a head's not a fairground, but there's the thinking of the child and his head's like fluff, a woman and his wife, that a woman was his wife, that a pain rakes him up hot like this and throws the dice anew and there's nothing that passes, it's a gutted tunnel and a glass slide, someone pulls something out from under his feet and if he could he would reach out for something, it'd be in the world, but there's nothing, there's nothing in the world that remains, there remains: nothing, a working in his head like playing a piano, that something was thinking, but he didn't like that. He didn't like that.