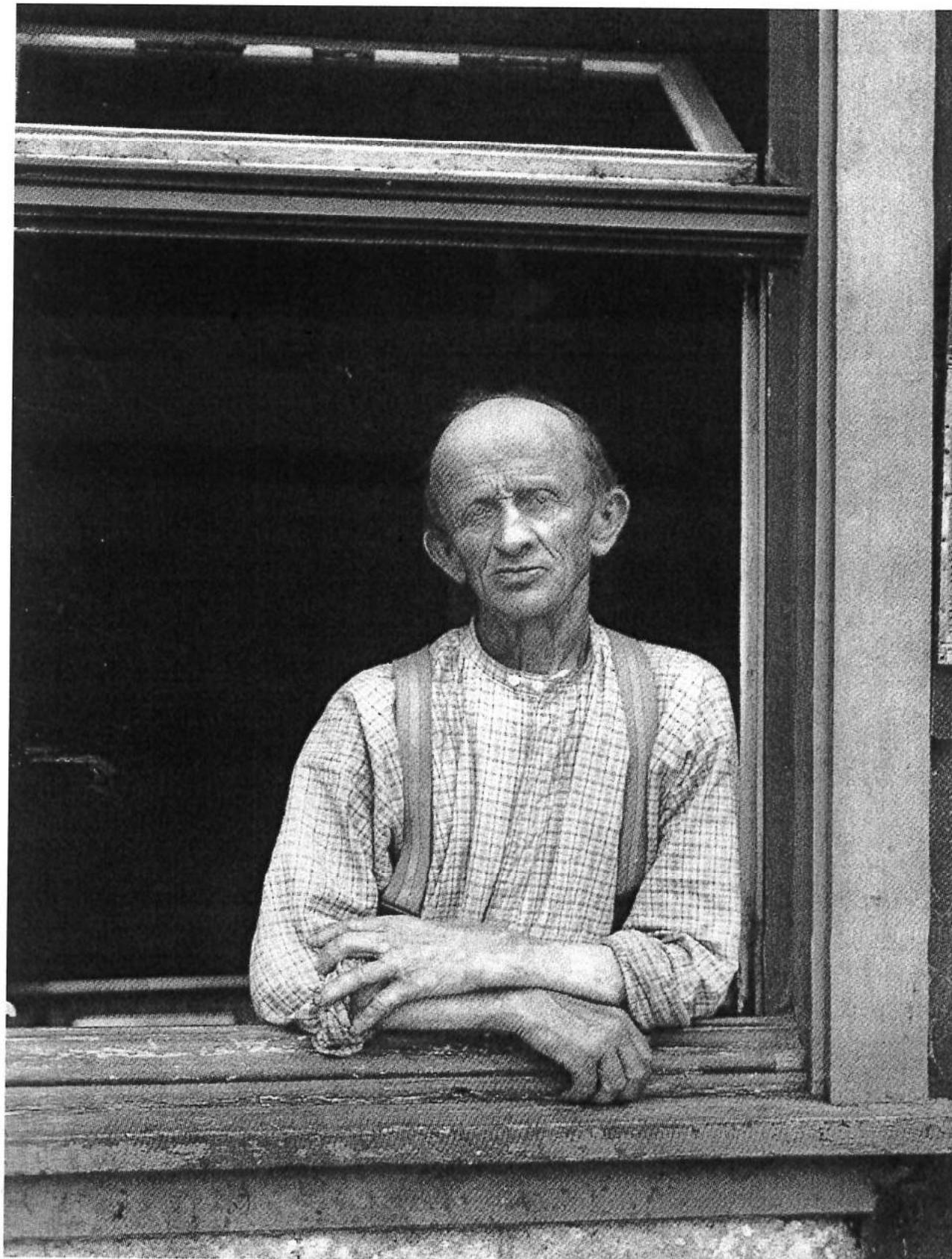


Easm132 Fiction
S60001092



Landscapes

A Series Of Landscapes Depicting The Town Of

LOSS

Note to readers: It has been pointed out, in earlier editions of this work, that the landscapes depicted within seen resemble portrait photographs. It must be pointed out by the publisher that any resemblance to persons living or d entirely coincidental, and that the photos depict the famous, empty landscapes of the town of Loss only.

Front Page: The town gate, a gift from the regional government. Each arching column is built from different mate hence the disparity in colouring; the left column is made of horn, more dun and pitted, and the other of ivory, wh catches the sun and causes the glistening effect in this photo. The gate would have been more ceremonial than pra its main significance was during religious processions or town parades. The legend on the carved wooden scroll i "Welcome to Loss, Dreamer." The carcass of a tractor has been driven into the ruins of one of the guard towers; i engine flowering oregano has sprouted.

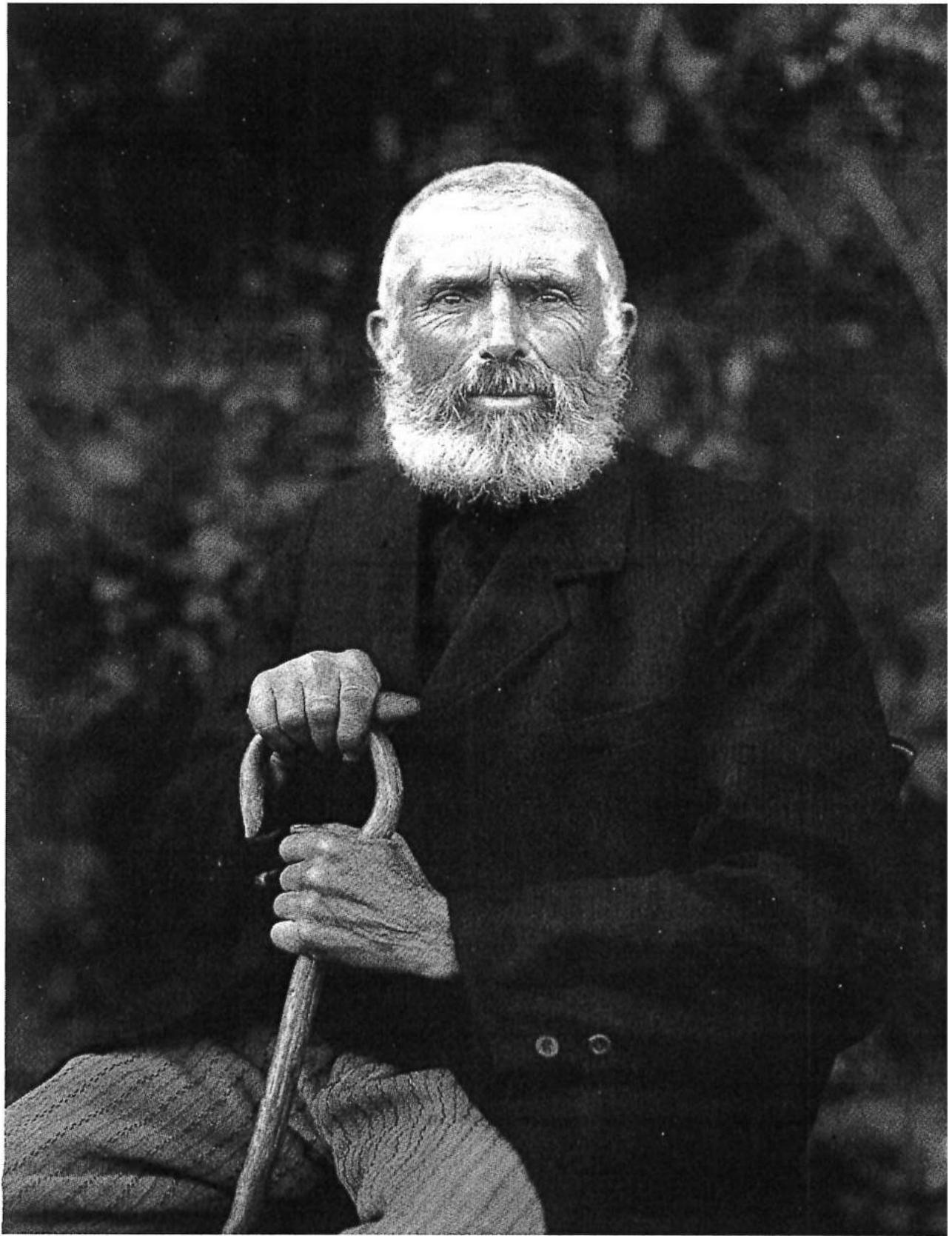


Fig. 1: The goating track from the main road. The tarmac is spread thickly over compacted stone and clay, almost cream, and the trail winds out of sight. A ballpoint pen, the nib chewed and bent, lies precariously, about to pitch the ledge that swings off to the right, down into the valley of Loss. The tracks of goats and sheep are kneaded into ground and fossilised. A thin, melting ridge of snow hugs the cliff face, surviving in the shadow and out of the wind. The mountains are concealed by a crisp haze, blue and green that settles over the valley, full of water from the coastal acacia, its roots exposed, is no longer young, but still is beginning to flower. It is Spring.



Fig. 2: Halfway down the hillside, the path breaks to the left and a collection of hunter's huts mingle in the conifer; they smoked the sea-bird and small, gnarled deer that they caught, stretching the skin into roofs and cooking the meat in squat kilns that look like fat, blackened children. The walls are lined with grass and tufts of fur, serving as insulation and a wide bone saw stands propped to the left of the closest hut, resting on a tree trunk. A pile of old skins lies nearby, being shredded in a large wooden box, under shelter. It rains here often; the ground is dimpled from old puddles, and the tarpaulin over the skins is worn thin with sag. The dark shape visible to the right of the hut is the "mother kiln" a huge, rotund furnace for roasting oxen for the summer festivals. It has a flat, drooping face, not unlike an elephant, a priapic set of tin genitalia, designed to siphon off excess fat.



*Fig. 3: The path descends ahead, and the mountains surround; all are snow peaked, and so steep that no-one could e
hope to climb them. At a certain point the black rock yields to conifer and marjoram, vast swathes that creep down i
the valley through the streets of the town to the river. Their bright verdure renders the pine needles black along with
rock, and the valley seems surrounded by blackness. The yellow and blue tiles of the town's rooftops muzzle into tl
curve along the river. There is still a way to go down the path, and the trees to the left bend out into the empty air
shedding leaves into a mulch which cakes the hillside.*



Fig. 4: A piebald shrine is carved into a hollow in the cliff face to the right; its lip is streaked with calcified bird-mes pedestal holds an unknown effigy; it is wreathed in salt deposits that cut runnels down the wall of the shrine-holl Candles have been burnt here, and the back wall bulges with layers of soot. A small note at the bottom-right request the local dialect, that animal tongues are to be left here twice a week. A wide smile, complete with entirely symmetr square teeth, that of a cow or a man, has been drawn into the soot in front of the pedestal; depressions in front of it s centuries of kneeling and prostration. An embroidered skull cap has been hung on a stalagmite, strange in the open



Fig 8: The town bulletin column. Two mountains rise on parallel sides, distant and blue. The column is made of st and hardened leather, and to the right the blue fluff of asbestos can be seen. Various adverts, notices and news ite have run into each other after years of rain to create a thick plaster that coats the upper half of the column; the o visible notice, at centre, advertises sunglasses. Another poster, the text obscured, depicts a curious beast whose sh and appearance lends itself to the skull on the watchman's gate; its tusks loop over its head, fusing into a hard nou like an elbow above its brow.

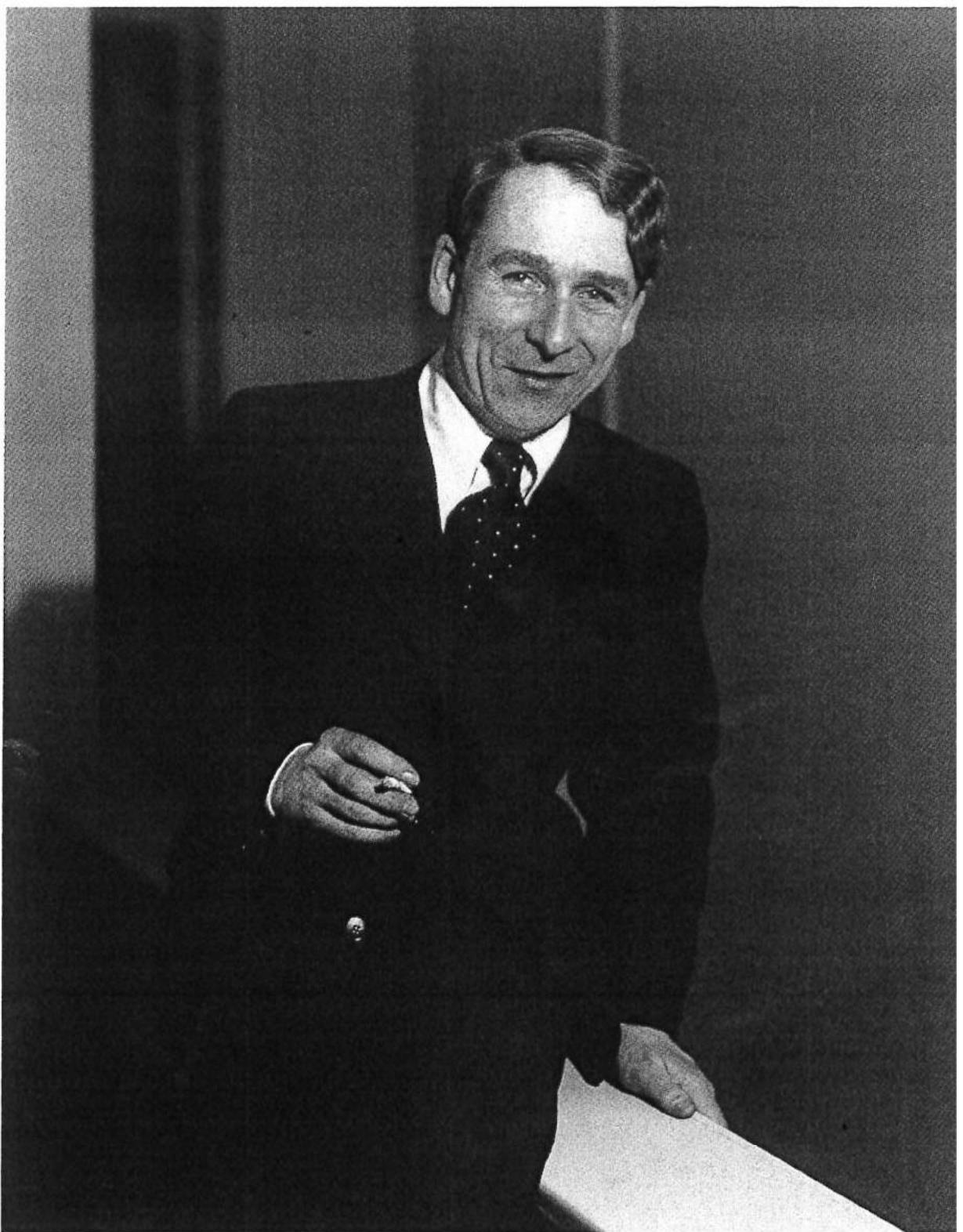


Fig 9: A shop for alternative religions. The windows remain intact, and stickers with phrases from the holy books of several eastern schools of thought have barely begun to peel. Within are lined boxes of incense arranged by flavour, a mannequin displaying the points of acupuncture on a human body, as well as a stuffed owl, its wings raised in a semblance of flight. Tinsel hangs from the roof beams, along with the opening words of most major holy texts, carved into the wood. The air shimmers in places from the hung mirrors; some are grand and ornate, others are small, with portraits painted crudely onto their surfaces.

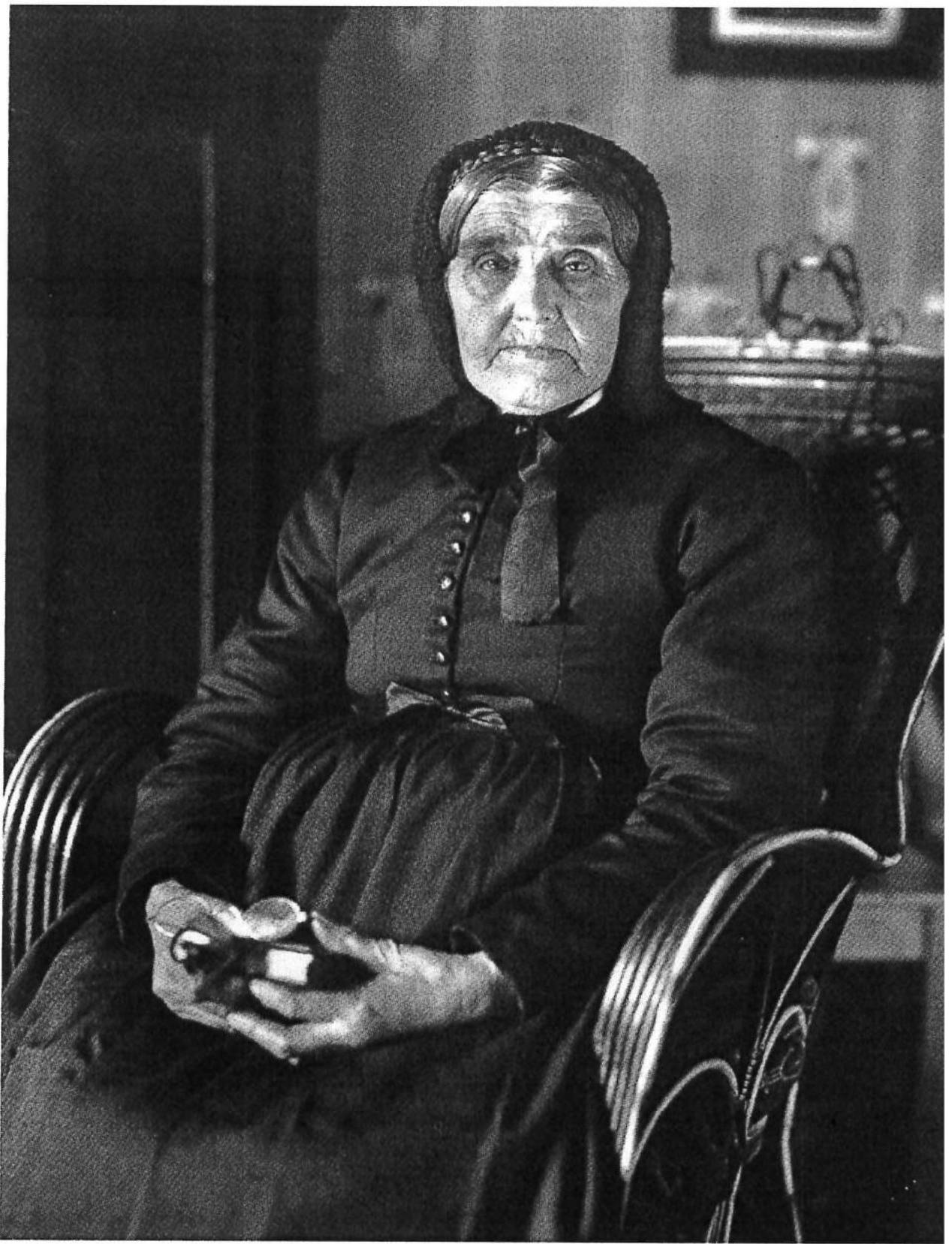


Fig 10: A wide, undulating path leading to the village's dolmens, or burial grounds. Strengthened paper symbols decorate the small gate and fence dividing the path from the main street, along with strands of ivy and horsegrass tied with twine. A string of old mackerel, like thick cigars, hangs from a nail. The path is surrounded by dead woodland deciduous valley trees that have died for winter. Similar paper symbols are strung throughout the trees, into the near distance.

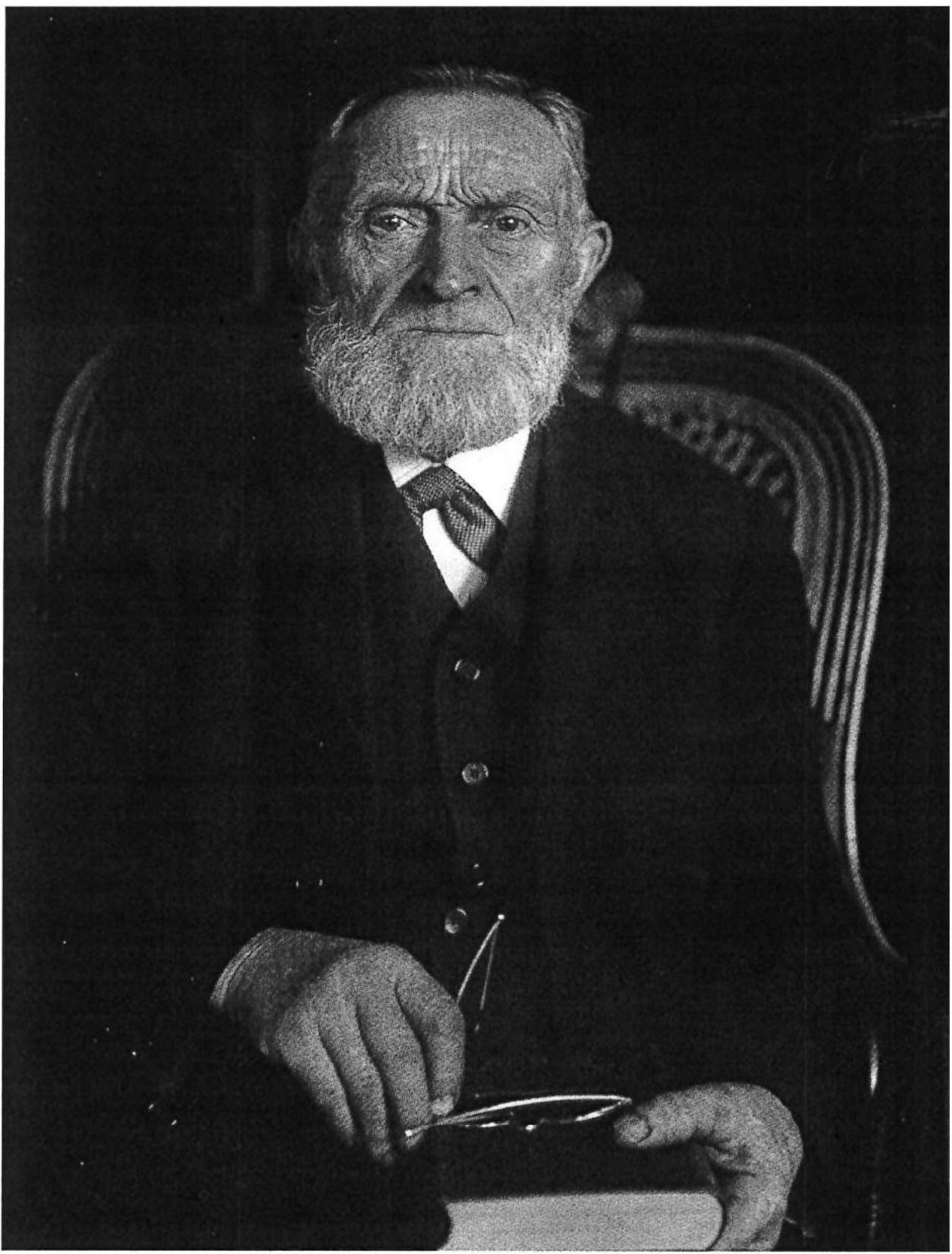


Fig 11: The dolmen field. Removed from the town by over half a mile, it is set at the northern end of Loss' valley, surrounded by tumbled boulders from the scarps above. Upright monoliths mark the tombs, some carved with letters and exclamation marks, as is the custom in the valley. The tomb at bottom left, with the over-hanging rock and wide doorway, contains four huge pine cones and a leather-bound copy of "The Wandering Jew" by John Galt, translated into the local language. The hunched shape in the background is a vast statue whose name, when translated, means "Chernobog, Broken and Voided."



Fig. 12: A mortar discovered on the path back to town. The stone is clearly volcanic and crystalline, and the remnant of an unidentified leaf sits in the bottom. The root visible top centre is from the *Staphylea Pinnata*, or European bladdernut tree, a common sight in the area. The billeted sunlight caused by the proximity and density of the mount is visible here, streaking across the centre of the image. The item is accompanied by an old satchel, containing a local newspaper. The headline is news of the birth of the Mayor's ninth son.

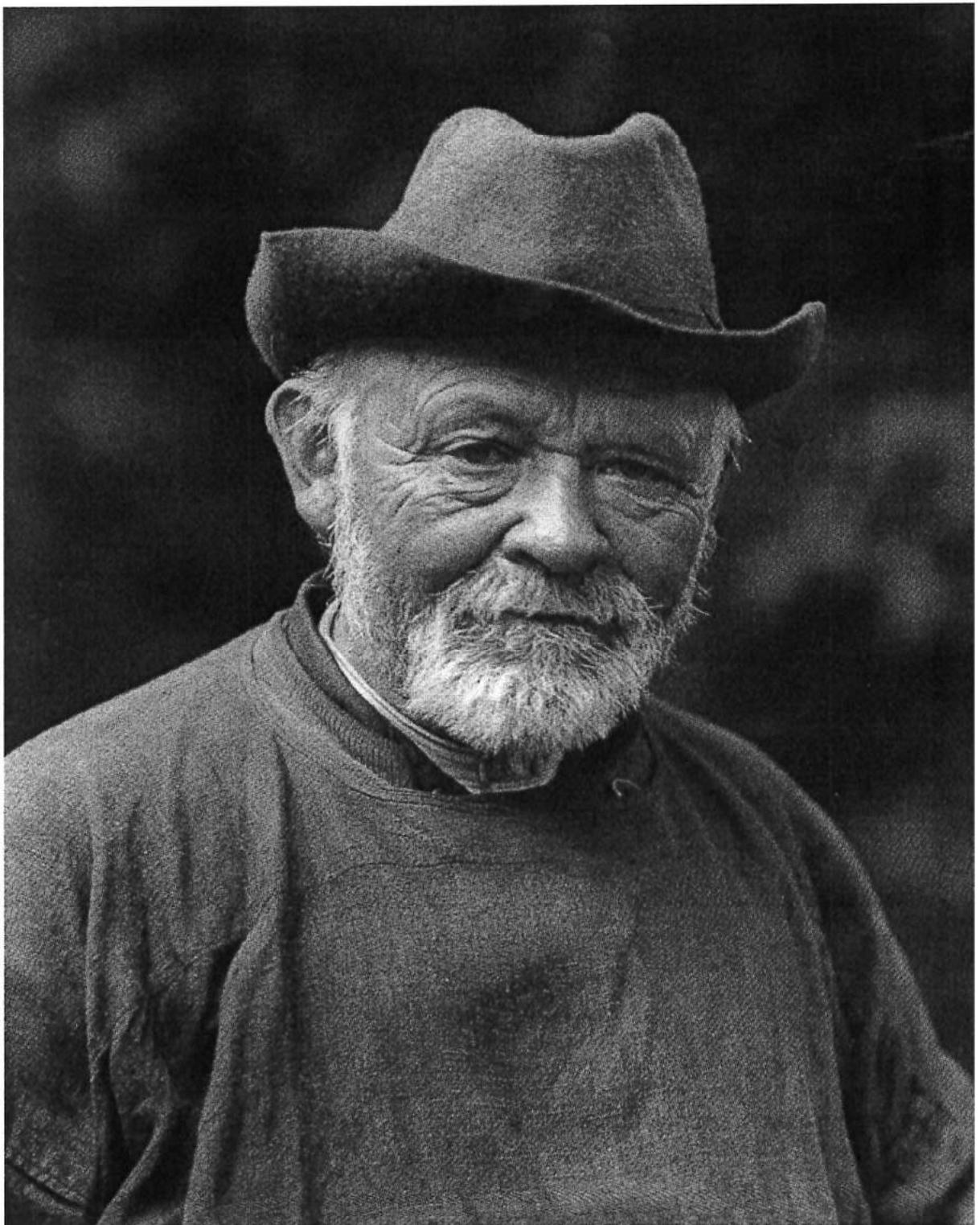


Fig. 13: The Fountain of Perun, a local thunder god. The karst scenery of the valley floor means that water still flows through the tubes of the rock; it can be seen gushing forth in the background of the photo, streaming down the thick channels that run to the town square. The foreground depicts the long, hollow steps of the fountain, carved with cavorting Panic figures, and where the ridiculous, broken half of a cello lies floundered, marked with tide-stains and grot of years of exposure. A purple sash and a long, green stain, seemingly produced by the brass of a trombone, lie next to it. The steps are hollow to allow the wind to blow through them and produce natural music for the public, a mountain visible to the left of the photo is known as "The Deep Horn" in the argot of the surrounding country.

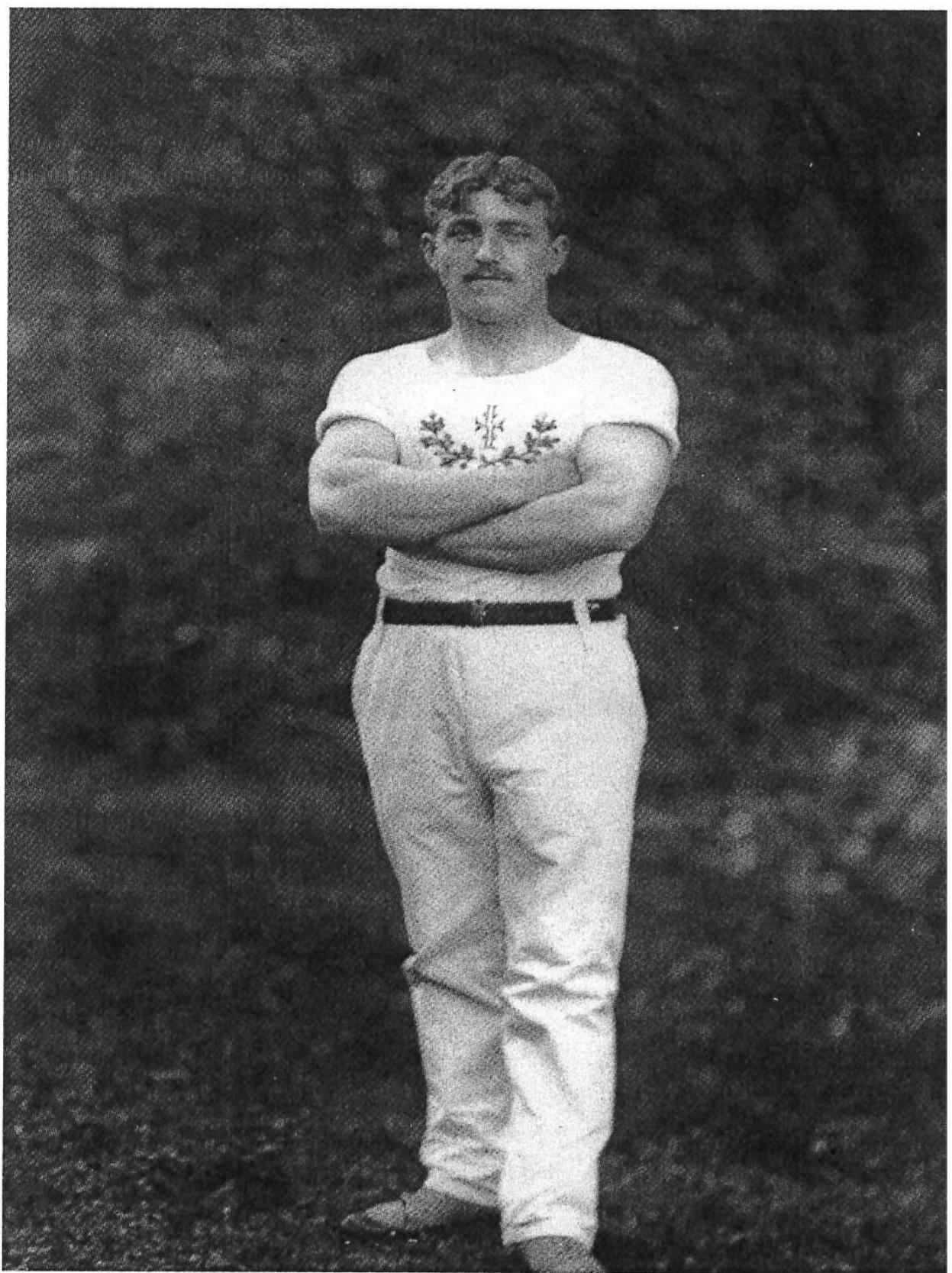


Fig. 14: The beetroot field. Evidence of crude irrigation remains in the knotted pipes of iron shooting out from the ceiling of the plot, though the beet plants, fed by water and seed from other parts of the valley, have grown to over eighty inches and cover the field with a green canopy. The tanks of wine, bronzed steel and studded with rivets, are visible by the willow in the background. Large vines of mutated, irregular Angelica spread between the beetroot, giving the impression of a tropical rainforest pockmarked with snow and ice.



Fig. 15: A pair of confectioneries, inexplicably grouped together on the main street. They are the tallest building Loss apart from the churches and the Hotel, and the edges of their roofs are tiled pink and red, like lips. Dessicated cakes and the corpses of buns slouch into the windowsills; the numbers one and two are painted respectively on window, and to the left the clean copper of the kiln can be seen extruding from the brickwork. Strangely, the la arrows composed of flashbulbs riveted to the brickwork point at the other shop respectively, advertising it as the tl sweet shop in Loss.



Fig. 16: A line of outdoor baths. An avalanche has passed through here, and several of the tubs have been broken into planks and redistributed as far as the treeline. A crude sauna, bowed like a Turkish yurt, stands squat against the woodland. The strange paper symbols seen in the trees, like lightning bolts and the figures of witches, hang here also. small dell, visible here at bottom left, reveals something of a spider graveyard; huge corpses, some as wide as a dinner plate, lie mummified next to the bones of their enemies and eventual meal, a small bird similar to the starling.

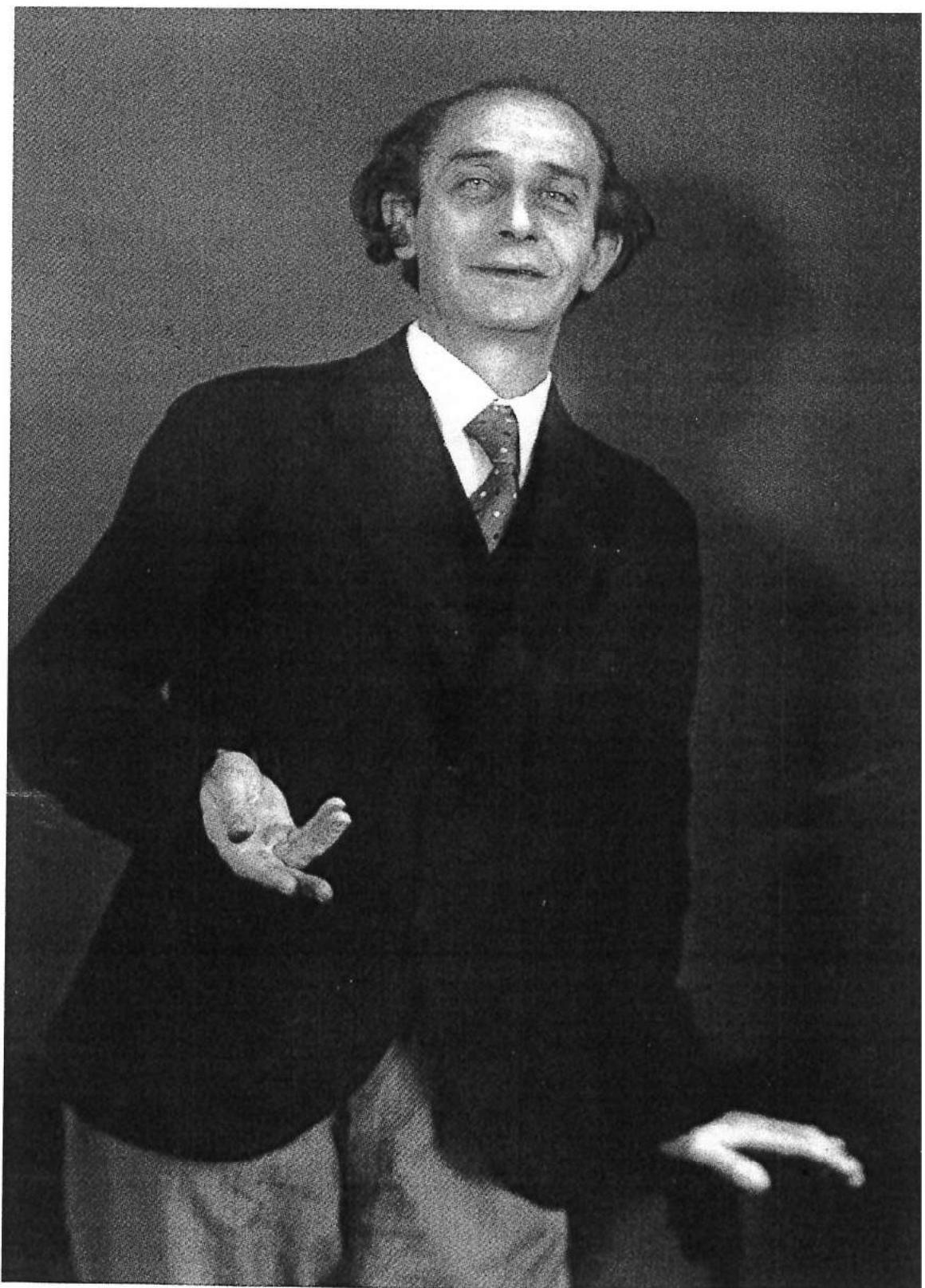


Fig. 17: A door to the First Church. It is set back from the road, and appears suddenly on Main Street after around hundred yards. The vast wooden doors are pulled tight, though a cord runs from them up to the side of the church, the graveyard. Attached to this cord is a local coin, showing a dead tree, and punctured with a hole to allowed it to tied. There is no way into the church, because of the vast bar across the portal. The gargoyles on either side seem to be positioned immediately above the effigies of saints; the latter are streaked and calcified by the detritus flowing through the monster's mouths.



Fig. 18: A view of Main Street from the smashed window of the Memory Casino. Another religious icon shop, more orthodox in its produce, is visible across the road. An unidentifiable number of books and papers lie amongst the broken rubble, as well as the antiquated wooden gambling apparatus. Dark marks, dried and smeared almost to invisibility, are visible around the door portico at centre.



Fig. 19: The River Walk. The road sign at top left translates as this, and the three exclamation marks at the end signifying the presence of salmon. The road is cobbled, though the cobbling looks new, an obvious attempt at quasi-anachronism. A wisteria runs all the way along one wall, down to the river, which at this distance looks green and algaed, though in reality it is fast-flowing and alpine.



Fig. 20: Though easily mistakeable for a pair, the above is actually five seperate heron roosts, spread at integers along middle of the river. Small icebergs cling to the far banks, where cabbage fields extend to the sheer cliffs of the surrounding mountains. A railing has been erected along the riverbank, though the emergency lifejacket is missing its housing. A strange, unidentifiable species of tree, almost like a baobab in its girth, hangs over the water, and the shapes of boats, secret in their shape, bob in its shadows.



Fig. 21: The corner of Main Street and the main residential highway. The original name has been obscured by graffiti; the graffiti could either translate as "Goblin House" or merely "Sprites Here". Painted onto the brickwork in a fan style is a picture of various agricultural tools, along with the following devotional koan (translated): "As I travel through snow/the holes my feet make behind me/look like the nostrils of my enemies/upturned and skywards/their heads rolling in the fields."



Fig. 22: A bear den in a ground floor apartment. Note the scattered bones, probably those of mountain horses. There are smaller ones that show signs of the corrosion of rabies; if these are goat bones, than in eating them the bear probably doomed itself to a painful death. The scratchings on the wall seem to form a concentric pattern of interlapping squares; this was probably the bears sleeping space, and any pattern is incidental. The grandfather clock at top left has been used as a toilet and birthing den; evidence of cubs is minimal, which suggests that they died at birth.

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Fig. 23: Here the residential highway is bisected by a thin recreational canal. The brickwork shows the strata of rooms and the hangings of old paintings. A thin, humped bridge leads over the water, and on the corner of one of eviscerated buildings the standard of the town is seen; the yellow owl against a black field, and the conifer sprouts from the its head like a cornice hat, or a wig. A sign makes it clear that no urine or corpses are to be dumped from bridge. The corpse is painted to be on fire, and a thin dotting of ash rises from it. A canal boat, flattened and of we design, is moored at a small dock; its prow is in the shape of an owl's head.

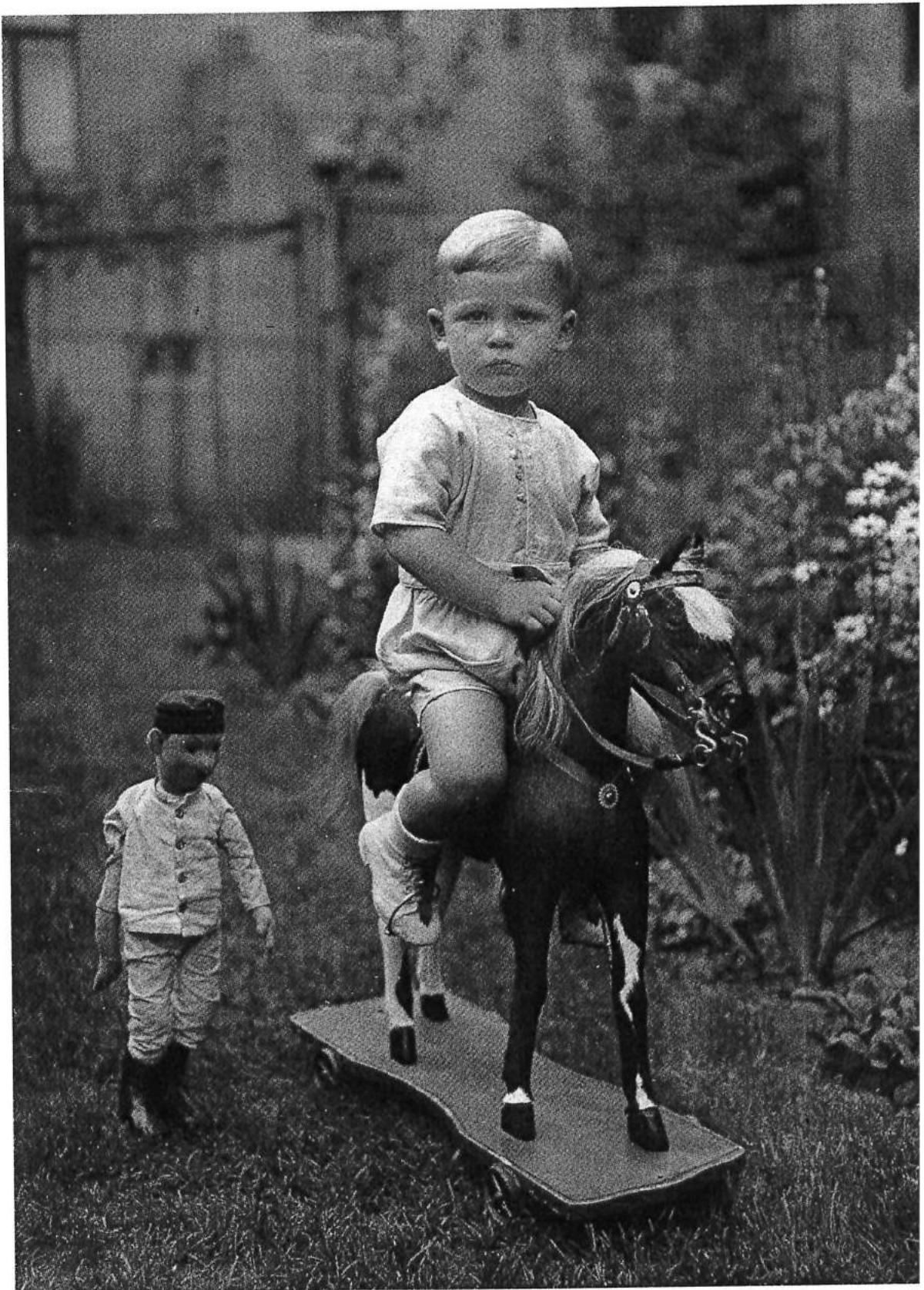


Fig. 24: A knife-sharperner's block and lathe. The bluish-green effect is from iron particles in the air; they fill the street. Underneath the tanning leather, at bottom left, is a colony of termites and a mouse nest. Most termites are decapitated, and the only remaining mouse has been mostly eaten. A small harmonium is set against the wall, with a line of chairs next to it and the words, painted in the local tongue, "Entertain yourselves, villains."



Fig. 25: The local swimming pool. Seismic activity has caved in portions of the roof, and it is clear a pack of dogs have been living in the dry depression; their dung and the blood of numerous territory battles is evident. A parasol, such one might find at the beach, has been jammed into a locker at the side of the pool. Another mural, similar to the one at the corner of Main Street, is seen, though this shows the entire village, young and old, looking up to a black mountain wreathed in sunlight. Most of the words of the accompanying poem are chipped away by precipitation, apart from words that can mean "destruction" or "hail" that can clearly be seen picked out in large Cyrillic lettering, more typical of a Communist pamphlet.



Fig. 26: The interior of a meat silo. This is where the people of Loss would store their slaughter for harsher times. small, archaic form of guitar amplifier is seen at centre, left by the previous occupant. The whole place has lost its sri and now only the metal remains. The ladder down into the silo is dangerously corroded, and the only light, that illuminating the amplifier, is from the sliver of outside allowed into the space.



Fig. 27: The side of an apartment block, neighbour to a small park. We can see the remains of floors and stairs from i presumably demolished tenement that was attached to the surviving building. The demarcations of walls and stairca are clear, and someone has taken advantage of the sheltered position of the place to draw the silhouettes of people, soi alone in the old bathrooms, others congregated in the larger rooms downstairs, all picked out painstakingly in coal



Fig. 28: The courtyard of one of the apartment buildings, its name obscured by smearings of thick oil or dried defec. The snow began some ten minutes before this picture was taken, and has begun to settle. The airborne snowflakes cr a rather blinding flash effect, though lines of wooden chairs can be seen, set up for a meeting, facing a podium tha rather than the coat of arms of the town, holds a brass motif of a goblin-like creature tied to a stone, with a large sn rearing over him. If one looks closely, one can see a woman chiselled inexpertly in the background, her nose snapped by a passing vandal.



Fig. 29: A souvenir shop at the end of the residential highway, nestled in the lee of the First Loss Hotel. The moss ground water carpeting the floor gives the appearance of a paddy field or a plain river. Of the racks of products still available, we see framed pictures of the town from a nearby mountain peak, as well as a strange, cigar-shaped toy spaceship with the word "LOSS" written down it in red lettering. The crumpled postcard on the table at centre shows an unidentified man, wreathed in oak leaves and with a pair of antlers grafted onto his skull. The motto merely reads "Born."



Figure 32: A traditional farmer's hut. The fluted, flamboyant thatching rising in an arcing formation is to drive off weak rain. All across the eaves and beams appear to be carved crude, translucent cubes, though these are in fact the "thunder marks" designed to stave off storms. The branches of a vast basil plant can be seen breaking through the window frames; it is growing from the exact centre of the hut. A mongoloid scythe, far too big for a man, rests against the roof of the hut, tied with blue satin.

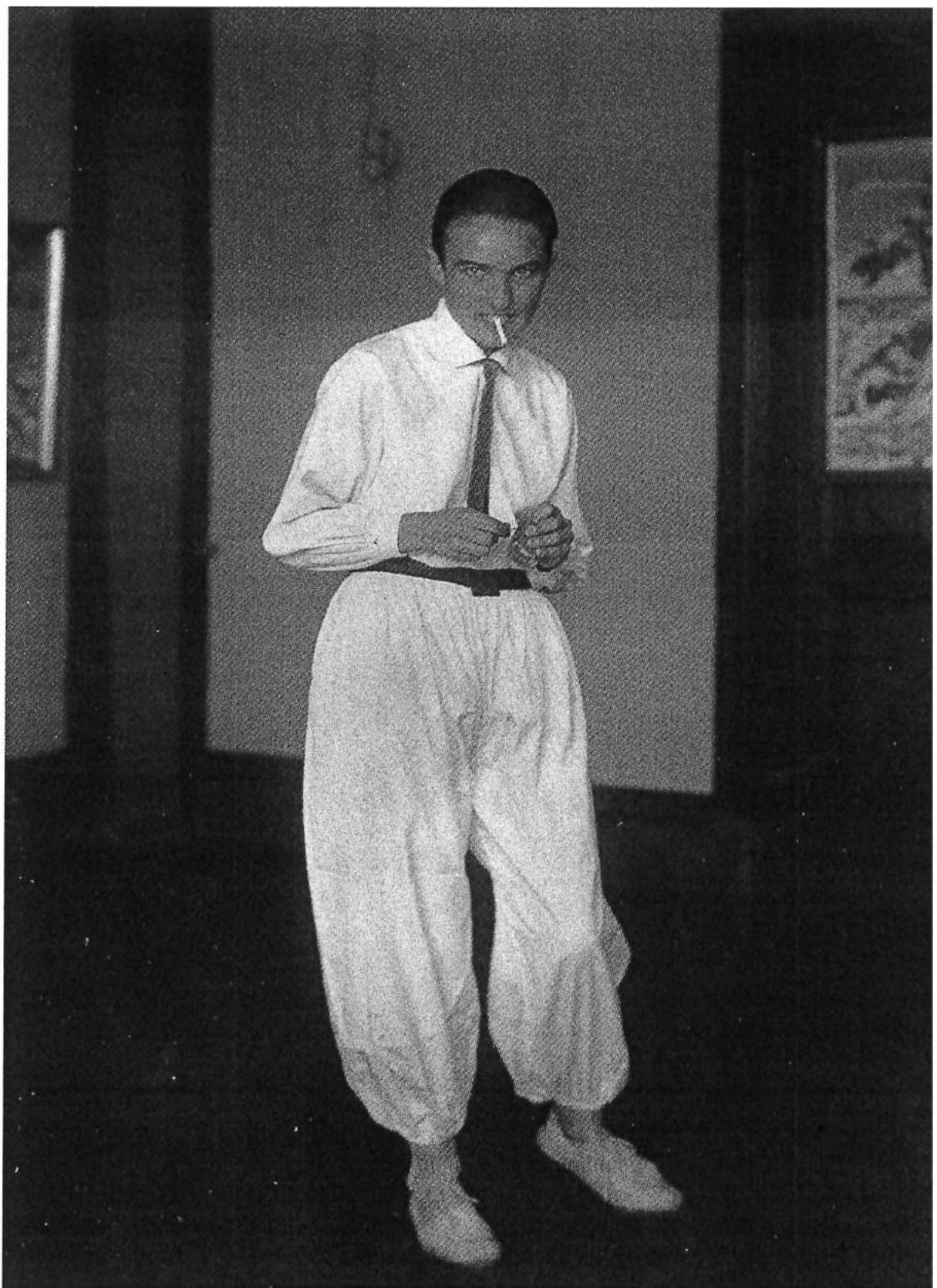


Fig. 33: A witch-doctor's tent on the outskirts of the town. Though more of an anachronism, many townsfolk would have relied upon her for aid in times of dire spiritual need. The various tools of her trade can be seen; the ever-present paper symbols, the fire cups, the tongs, and the skeletons of wild boar, long since starved in their cages. Note that her knives are hung, rather than left on the table, which is terrible bad luck in local superstition.



Fig. 34. A flattened circle of grain and wildgrass, part of a large field system in the valley whose use is still a mystery. The height of the mountains mean that Loss has never been photographed from the air, and the configuration of the fields remains unknown. The earth is scorched so that the crop cannot grow back, and footprints, sheltered from the wind by the tall wheat stalks, patter across the nearest field. The left-most spire of the Hotel is still visible, as are Dorian columns of the Town Hall. The trees here, a small copse, are all carved around with circles, going up the trunks as if many people began to cut them down and decided against it.



Fig. 35: The female restroom of the Theatre of All Souls. The window shows a view of Main Street, including the site of the police station, now occupied by a gaping sink-hole. Like most of the town, all of the plug holes, toilet bowls and shower heads have been sealed with wax. The tiles, incidentally, are patterned in the shape of the I-Ching; given the Oriental décor of the theatre, this is not surprising. The lack of carpeting means that snow has built up here from the smashed window and skylight; mushrooms, tall and bioluminescent, grow behind the cisterns.



Fig. 36: The entrance to the town sewer. Proper excavations have not commenced, though the level of electromagn interference and residual radiation means that it is not likely to occur soon. Note the stylised lion's mouth around sewer entrance, as well as the remains of a gallows and an old-fashioned sewing machine. The gas escaping from sewers, an all-pervading foul, sweet smell, has blanched this photograph almost beyond original recognition. A throughout the town, there is a legend above the lion's mouth, though it is unreadable with the centuries of filth & effluvia that have gathered there.



Fig. 39: The town zoo, illuminated in the rays of the sinking sun; sunset comes early to the valley because of the heat of its mountain belt. The patterned climbing frame of the chimps is visible, along with the tall, gibbeted cage used for giraffes. The overgrowth of plants and weeds rising above the visitor's centre in the background is the tiger enclosure now reclaimed by nature. A large, iron housing, shaped into a pinnacle not unlike a Thai Buddhist temple, reads me "Dragons".



Fig. 40: A view of the Loss Town Hall. Its construction date is marked in the local, traditional calendar: it read "Akhet!!! DuNe!", which translates into the Gregorian Calendar as the third week of winter sometime after 1750. Dorian columns are beginning to crumble; the original blackwood underneath, patterned and whorled like a Cel burial copse, is becoming more prevalent. A conifer's branches appear through the left-hand bank of windows, and rear, not visible in this photo, is completely caved in. Sheltered from the rain and other elements, a heap of pamph petitioning against the opening of a water-park further down the valley are preserved, shrink-wrapped and entirely



Fig. 41: The interior of the Town Hall is hardly recognisable as an urban space; conifer seeds have stumbled on the sheltered spot and taken root, along with a thick, downy rug of moss and wild flower. Some of the electric lights still occasionally flash on a backup generator hidden somewhere underground, and between these flashes, as seen here, the figure is bathed in an odd glow, some by-product of the trees and their urban environment. To the left is the centre of the Town Hall where patches of a mural celebrating Koschei, the legendary founder of Loss, show through. In the centre of the room, with vines and bay twining around it, is a tall, wooden statue, depicting a man with four faces and one, giant hand. The statue depresses slightly if one presses upon it, though nothing happens.



Fig. 42: The Mayor's office. The wall-length fungal growth is actually the remains of a book shelf, the paper has been synthesised by algae and has morphed into a giant spore. An atrophied fig tree has made its way up from the lower levels. A number of papers and magazines, the print long since washed away, is held down by a large, smooth river stone, the faint blue tinge marking it as one from the valley. The stone is etched with a picture of a tall, slim female form, holding hands with a squat, almost amphibian male; he appears to have horns, and claws. An inscription below reads "R!salka do Vodyyanoy", though this has no direct translation. The marring of the left side of the photo is from the extreme heat radiating from the door on that side of it; it is completely sealed, and its origin is unknown.



Fig. 44: A child's room within the Town Hall, likely that of one of the Mayor's sons. The carpet is scorched and burnt; the wood visible at top left is that of a smashed bed, which was evidently destroyed along with the other furnishings. The subject of the photograph is a tall, elegant volcano, made out of plaster and decorated with poster paint, with the legend "D!m!trl, Sukhet D!ne '87". It has long since bonded to the floor, and the ooze leaking from within has stained a large circle around the model, resulting in more mushrooms sprouting in the damp, dark confines of the room.



Fig. 45: A pile of thousands of conch shells. Their identity is not immediately obvious as they have been burnt and blackened; the gold radiating from their base is part of the town square. There is another small pile of shoes, all those children, in the background of this photograph. The ivy-webbed rear of the Town Hall is visible in the distance. The had turned black at this point, and the conch shells project a strange mother-of-pearl effect onto the camera lens; the impressions of ghosts, or clouds, fill the frame.



Fig. 46: The town square, viewed from the bell tower of the Laughing House, the rather affectionate name for the town church in Loss. The piles of conches and shoes are visible even at this height and one sees the odd, curving nature of the streets, almost redoubling like a Japanese keep. The gold inlaid into the paving stones is set in long, concentric rings and the motif of a great dead tree and the ubiquitous owl of Loss sit at its centre, facing north, towards where the people of Loss said the sun really rose. The red ring marking the execution ground is visible in the background; anyone stepping into this ring, accused or not, would be killed.