

have questioned the boy had he not been wearing the pith helmet. He was playing the flute as another man listened and gave his dunes.

I took out a sheet of paper and wrote:

July 12th, 2010, that evening.  
Still young? Am I still young?

I was sure that I was getting older. Sometimes I looked at my hands and they were okay, but the skin seemed to be sagging. I pulled up my pantleg. See, it all looked so much older.

I walked down to the flute box to look for Herbert. The room was busy with activity, but I saw him against the side of the wall, where we had sat the night before. I stooped down to check him and he was dead. I stood back up and watched the men intently heating up their cups of hot metal. Slowly turning them in the flame. I sat down by Herb and took his hand very firmly and kissed it. Then I went to bed.

That night, my discussion with Amanda came back to me. How previously I had criticized the kinds of small talk discussions, particularly discussions about music, because they revolved simply around “Did you like this? Have you heard of this?” and how they never went anywhere beyond that, you could never keep track of what you were recommended and there was never anything to talk about, maybe a scene, maybe a lyric. Those pointless discussions that had always left me empty, never able to talk about the beauty of music itself adequately, just the names and the styles.

But now I longed to have this kind of idle discussion. To talk to Amanda about “The Happening”. Maybe there was much more to this kind of talk than I had thought. Why would anyone want to have a deep, meaningful discussion all the time?

The little boy died the next afternoon and I took his pith helmet. I couldn't get myself to wear it so I gave it to a new boy, who asked me, in