

ARCANES

by Omar Ruiz

An arcane old man whose life span had exceeded far beyond what is rarely conceded by nature, amused himself telling stories, in which, given their rather nocturnal content, reality's disparities of all kind could be glimpsed at.

At night time, the enfeebled old one walked through a sepulcher-covered avenue, followed by a flock of kids, seeking shelter in the shadows cast by the plum trees nearby. The humpbacked geezer hoisted a small crystal-walled sarcophagus by the shackle. A candle was lit inside. The anemic light, fading beside his sandy face, transformed the children's silhouettes into chimeric adumbrations.

Exultant, the grey-bearded man starts telling a story:

"Of all my living years; filled with both, great scarcity and pleasure, with nomadism and scuffles; I fondly remember my trip to the mountains. There, I met a hermit, who was as ancient as the moon, and as wise as the oldest man in the world could be considered to be. An unhealthy curiosity possessed me, overpowering me enough to make me go across the mountain's deepest scars, all the way into his cave. Looking directly at the anchorite's countenance was like gazing a colossal mirror; mankind's every possible facial feature, every single possible mug was there, carved so profoundly into that face with such an accurate precision that could only be described as cruel."

"Inquire, may it please you", said the eremite, whom, undeterred by the filthiness of the rags he was wearing, conducted himself like a high noble. Before I could even finish rolling my eyes up in a search for a question, the ruinous and knowledgeable ancient man raised a punch, and immediately smashed it into my face... "It is almost our natural-born right"— he said with tranquility, while he meticulously inspected his recently used hand... "to perform every possible atrocity and perversion that justifies and preserves our existence in this world to our heart's content... Morality has no place in hell..."