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The Dust Speaks

Where did all this dust come from? What did it used to be or who? Dying flowers falling from the trees. All of us falling away and trampled underfoot. Let time run backward till the dust stands up and speaks. I was Lenny Gold, head crammed with images, memories, ideas, desires, and words by the bushel, by the carload. High on fine Moroccan kief, floating down the wide steps of a moonlit Tangier street all those swiftly moving years ago. I could pull that memory up so clearly, rekindling the airy floaty feeling in my chest mingled with mystery as the street took me curving down into the night shadowed depths of the city, a hide and seek moon following me down. Same moon that shines over New York, so they say, but this was a moon apart, a Tangier only moon that illuminated the merchants sitting on their piles of rugs, smoking their sebsis and sipping mint tea. I had millions of these memories stuffed in my head. But never again will that moon shine. I was Lenny Gold, an obsessive collector of memories. Drinking wine with Darla in our cheap Paris hotel room after hours of romping and rolling in bed, the moon pouring in the window making lovely patterns of light and dark on the curves of her face and body, the rumped sheets like twisted dunes whose moon-painted flanks were interwoven with a mesh of shadows. A Paris moon transformed our shabby room into an enchanted chiaroscuro engraving. Long afterward my memory would restore her dark eyes, her coal black hair, her beautiful moon-tinted skin. I have been a baby drinking in the world with my mother's milk, a boy blowing up rocks with my chemistry set, a youth full of hormone energy and world-saving ideas, a full grown man riding the wind at the apex of my arc, feeling immortal while knowing I was not, a round shouldered, bent over curmudgeon shaking my fist at the universe when not down on all fours kissing the earth, licking the dust of the king's highway, el camino real, that stretches from can to can't, from yet-to-be to used-to-be, from zip to zot. I was Lenny Gold, all those moonlit memories ago. The wind has blown away my dust.

Your Fingers

You play your flute, a sad Brazilian melody, um samba triste stealing note by note into my heart, your fingers dancing over the keys, making breathy music soar out over the dark water. Your fingers. Your touch tools. You have touched everything with those fingers from squeezing the melons in the market to gripping the handlebars of your bike. You've wrapped those long fingers around a pencil and written your grocery list, patted back your long lovely hair. Same fingers holding the greasy corn as you chewed the kernels and licked the corners of your mouth. Same fingers that hold the tennis racket, the towel, the doorknob, the wine glass, ski poles, telephone, steering wheel, teacup, knife, fork, and spoon. I've seen you make a fist, wave goodbye, give the finger to the jerk leering at you from the red sportscar, lick the mayo off your fingers and smile with your eyes as you make sandwiches for our picnic. Your fingers float over the piano keys and a melody flows out behind them, swelling the air. Your clever fingers arranging the cards in your hand, tapping the computer keys, sliding the mouse, advancing a pawn. You touch my face with your fingertips, sending waves of warm feeling thru me. Love fingers. Lady fingers. Long strong fingers that know their way around my body, zipping down my pants, undoing my buttons, reaching under my shirt, smart caressing fingers that find my sensitive places. You press your fingers to my lips. I grasp your hand, kiss each finger and deep in the valleys between your fingers, I lose myself in a frenzy of adoration.

Where All My Comic Books Went

Then I'm stepping out of a movie house in Paris, feeling that momentary disorienting shift as the world of the film dissolves and I reenter the so-called real world, to see hundreds of people running down the street chased by gendarmes wielding billy clubs. I try to get back in the theater, but the attendant locks the door. I bang on the glass. He gives me a no-no sign. I stay under the marquee backed up against the door as far from the street as I can get. I glance at the posters. Coming next week. Gregory Peck in Moby Dick. I hear the sailors singing Go down, you blood red roses, go down. Oh you pinks and posies. The ship glides away from the wharf, first moment of the voyage to the great white whale and the bottom of the sea. Up pops a memory of a long lost comic book of Mickey and Minnie Mouse in their cute little open cockpit plane. Black night over the ocean when they run out of gas. Gosh, Minnie, it's been swell knowin' you. They lose altitude rapidly and suddenly their descent is halted, but it's too dark to see what has stopped them. In the next panel the sun is rising over the ocean. You see them sitting in their little plane in the rigging of a sailing ship high above the deck. Saved! But wait. This turns out to be a pirate ship and the nasty pegleg pirate chief has eyes for Minnie. What happened to all my comic books? If only I had known and kept them in mint condition in plastic bags, I'd be a millionaire today. But they are gone where everything goes, where the girl in the green suit went, where Edward went, where we are all going, to that place we call the past which is not a place at all. It's nothing but some spongy gray matter laced with holes and stuffed with frayed memories. The holes grow larger the further the memories recede, till there's nothing left but disconnected fragments, like images in a shattered mirror.