

# *A Senile Lucifer*

Forrest Roth

*(after Cioran)*

To wit:

I am the witless without, a thingness from merely that

as a Wells has once kept his saying nothing for an Englishman adrift at sea with no company no humor, no longer keeping a laugh hidden now with All This. This, that is, without. That it is. And that is so

from this a wit would take place to take me where, wherever, and very well, thank you. I am spoken by having. I am kept by saying. I am laughing. A thing less by one witness, no longer keeping my company. Who has moved on far from without, without a cause to take with. I keep the thing. I wit the thingness, as in now, should one take offense to my laughing less. Because from All This. Which is nothing to laugh for. Without laughing it is far more difficult to have a place for the oneself keeping. I draw a thumb for the one who is far from driving but drives all the same if not very well at all, All This, and you are welcome. A road less for the shoulder than without taking less traffic. And so we are both traveling soon enough if not sooner. Both driving. A cause to keep a thing between us because from us is All This stillness no longer keeping itself company. Without saying I find a line for the one I do not witness who speaks me where, wherever, and very well, thank you. Because from this a laugh for no particular joke spoken, for the true dun among us. Did the hearing say me in the one who did not laugh. Was I particular where I took place. Am I not here

I hear myself saying no longer keeping still in a silent driving neither here nor there causing the hinterlands to keep all the homes in respectful darkness sleeping away the hinterland in them granted by drawing my hand very slow over a thing they speak without one witness from hidden wells keeping lost children painting red tomorrow's laughing I had accompanied All This to without without myself a home holding all who said I writing in my dark that I wasn't dark thank you very much and hey you're welcome I guess they all heard like they do when so much depends

because no longer saying enough of the one driving to the hearing of, to the telling of. Is it something well acquainted. Could I do without a with. You will be my company, my beautiful thingness I have only lines for by only speaking for you reading of the witless I keep in a book following. Because from this I keep driving by the listen where place has drawn me painting. A land not said in laughing to have life beyond a thing, or itself. Nothing lives. All only grants own saying. Who better than I never home from being spoken

for I shall appear as another has once kept his saying beside a white chicken in the rain, not writing my thoughts, appearing not myself to the one witness about its business in this land, hearing its own listening to a scratch made before I notice All This I have already drawn once without raising my hand, laughing, thank you, or a thing spoken from a life in these Canadian provinces, neither here nor there, that hears wherever an arrangement of too depressed proportions to ever speak me,

perhaps, though am I here, as I have always been, for the company of chickens senseless and wet, for depending on a wheelbarrow I see that has no America in it, land that I love, not standing on mere formality of the territorial exempted of me for how else could I walk amongst my being spoken while I wait sitting on my wit's end and so much I have yet to see, so much

speaking. Not laughing. A place without territory because everyone is a witness, and only that to All This.

They are listening for my said arrival.

How someone does not speak my name. How I forget it. The beautiful thingness they line and book for is without a home, so I walk (useless to say I may never see that chicken again when I know otherwise is always another sooner). I draw my hand for the driver who does not arrive. I find the darkness of appearing. I find myself living in the same restaurant for years upon years and barely tolerating the dim sum. I consider whether anyone will ever read a book, much less mine by a hand even I cannot see saying enough. I remain here eating dim sum stuffed with my once depressed chicken wet with its Canada because no one will say me for the moment. They are too busy to remember

what I once did was a thing for place, if not home, for All That I had wanted, and wanted well, thank you very much. Need no explanation but merely a laugh. Then it was done, and so was I. The cause witnessed by those who had spoken me in my beautiful thingness, no less corrupt by the corruption I kept witless in good company, for I was good, in some sense, for having been made witless in response to myself (perhaps this is why the goat people persist seeing me as a goat after my many failures), for having been given a home despite All That. The existence of conditional forgiveness I engendered. The books that followed. The paintings that keep their own amusement. And all subsequent tidy profits. I see what I have done. There is much more I could do, could I. The waiter leaves a check

I cannot pay, thinking I could run for it so he watches me fumble at the table cloth buying myself more Time pouring another cup of tepid oolong and, sweeping all my used dishes up in his arms, dispatches himself back to the kitchen without a single happy smile thought itch. Embarrassing

that I have been here too long for a witness to notice me anymore listening to all the hearing around

did I mention the book I was writing, when it was a book, thank you very much, not what it is now, I did mention it, attempting to have it take the form of a winter solstice, a corpse left outside in the rain too long before someone notices, a sharpened stick jammed in the eye of the reader, and warm apple pie all at once

as it mentioned me as others did once, thank you thank you, so that I would be here for All This presuming that I had something to do with it without (keep thinking keep thinking keep thinking) that I could appear without appearing without having to say me and leaving me in a book that resembles a book with a wave of the author's other-said and there I am aren't I funny looking and occasionally droll with plenty of Time at my disposal

as I keep appearing at the behest of another's saying me that claimed to be the one witness to me leaving without paying my bill, and now what can I say in my ever-loving defense, that I did pay that

bill, if I could even remember which bill it could have been out of all the bills I did not really pay because I was a little light at the Time, thank you very much, and could you give me a few days to get myself back on my feet and I'll pay you back with a few dollars American extra, promise, finding myself under the consternation of sighs and those rolling rolling eyes

before I go where, wherever, again, again, as demand requires the popular name, leaving a trail of unpaid debts and others behind, always here, always home, which is a state of Time if it is ever a state at all hearing itself saying how familiar, how different All This is

staring at a darkened ceiling knowing there is a ceiling fan somewhere up there spinning if only for the light breeze touching my face, the only pleasure I have ever received in this world, asking myself, If I am who I think I am why can't I remain here forever where all the light breezes reside, and the hand that draws itself to me pinches my nose to see if it is really a nose, but, I explain to her, it is only a nose-without since I stopped smelling much long ago though she may continue pinching it. She stops instead. I don't want to hurt you, my companion ruefully states next to me in the dark. This must be sadness, yes, for both of us by the appearance of a lover's reciprocity, of holding oneself back from cruelty when presented with that light-hearted opportunity with a deserving subject

without finding myself in a home I do not recognize for its modest comforts its thinly shaded lamps its upholstered comforters its leeway to the garage I find wherever I set myself down not minding at all the oil stain patch sleeping for the moment before called away again until I see I am going nowhere I am forgotten (at last) for a sleeping I may finally have myself I mutter to a brown thing of a car's exhaust pipe the woman never seeing me as the opening sounds of a Wang Chung I once remembered fill the garage from the car's speakers leaving me in an exhaust soup of such lovely aroma that I wished they could fill dim sum with it so I could always remember the oil patch Wang Chung brown thing of a car this morning

sidewalk by the usual characters taken I have commiserated with before raising my hand for the one who does not drive driving towards me as the stoplight changes for the drivers who last saw me in a car going nowhere without its passenger explaining

what I once did I did not, for what have I done that has lasted enough or depended on enough to let it know it was ever there, for a deed, an act done with my name on the lips of the doer remains to say nothing of myself for the one who does not know the without without my guidance both guiding and avoiding the glancing blows of the knife in a darkness kept keeping the one who holds it in a state of dependence depending on, for instance, a brown thing of a car reaching its destination, or a waiter wanting a bill paid, or waiting for the right moment for both to happen at once, which it does if I do nothing for intervals of long enough elongating into a kind of knife which may have enough worth to pay for something if not very much provided the hand that holds the knife will be relieved at my sudden presence called forth by the mistakes of a name, of which I have many, too many, to be sure, when there should be only one name for everything knowing its thingness thanks to All That, spoken when far too late knowing that who has arrived has been dark enough for long enough and something must be done about dim sum waiting for payment by all tomorrow's parties not willing to pay for anything, much less dim sum, as such reciprocity is not a favor for their knowing me, for having me appear in front of them at the mention of one of my many names which never disappear over Time, even unto a saying over and over where my meaning is slowly lost and I begin wherever else, new and more mortal to a touching view of my thingness as I was once, very

once. Keep saying if you think it keeps me, then, for only I may say myself which no one ever knows, not even once, should you think a knife will do any good against what I have in my coat pocket, showing to my amazed antagonist with the wide-eyes having their last Time with myself front and center

a fortune cookie once not entirely paid in full for, but taken in a moment's opportunity while a waiter looks wherever more dependable customers may be seated seeking better attention, not the sort of thing one brings to such engagements or offers, I admit, but the hand with the knife in it is shaking. Young as he is, he shares his fear over what is now going wrong since I can tell he knows nothing of the unexpected, something I confessed to another long long ago, as I had that freedom once of certainty, the only freedom that ever was, only to lose it as anyone with hands loses everything over Time, shaking, fumbling, forgetting what to the very touch felt better for being there only and ever it had a name for its goodness

which even he can see and recognize at once

lowering the hand which holds the knife and extends the empty other, taking without a single word my meager offering as he only knows the without, as I always have, and I see he is better for it for taking a fortune cookie from myself and turning and running not from fear but forgetting a name, my name, yes, you are welcome

for All This the company I keep all away from not recognizing the music I hear myself saying me in the verse of Wang Chung everyone granted from All That traveling to the nearest city with its thingness of urban styling, a pleasant jaunt amongst chain link and prefabrication and ninety-two degree weather in the shade delineating the rail yard below where not a single train moves not a single person can be seen the buildings in the distance lost in the false perspective, this promontory

where so much depends on the brown thing of a car soaked in sunlight beside the rail tracks

(that Wang Chung sings sings of where there are no listeners save the one who is far from listening to any Wang Chung even at this distance so that there may be no Wang Chung to speak of even in aside)

says the will of another holding his hand out to me with a knife in it I recognize as a simple unimpressive butterfly knife, thank you, with my laugh stretched out before him along with the rest of my elongated body tilting towards his saying so calling me a name just after my name which brought me here only to be spoken a second time realizing what has happened for I have my saying to him, But I am already here, whereupon the knife disappears into the wherever he hadn't likely anticipated when my name crossed his lips without the steel taste so cold even at midday leaving his leaving teeth

resembling I should say the very many knives from the very many places I have had knives drawn upon me over Time as a name crosses lips that they hadn't realized was a name, if not myself, contained as I am in many languages in many different tongues idioms and vernaculars and the occasional curse when curses were an art for the initiated only, thank you very much, whereupon I gaze into the very same eyes of said speaker and there is, for a moment, a genuflection of sorts that a hesitation allows—I enjoy, I admit, my enjoyment (am I not allowed my own pleasures borne of myself), the pure blankness of thought a thing to study and wonder for when I am wherever—as

that same language in its sameness lead another poor soul to its inevitable conclusion; and for that I have no real pleasure to aid my tedium stretching as long as the content of my head regarding, in this instance, knives, tungsten, pearl handles, spring mechanisms, malachite, folded soft steel, nicked edges (particularly fond of *inlaid hilts*—such occasional, unassuming beautiful language proceeding from thingness), bands of small leather strips across the handle to aid the grip of one who does not wield the knife tighter as his eyes follow mine tighter tighter losing them finally in my saying nothing for I never have anything to say in front of beauty that was once my own, thank you thank you

where someone gets into a brown thing of a car thinking of a knife that once owned and expensive had a certain comfort for never being used by hand but only the recurring suggestion of its company far from ever being used in a South African township resembling all that is already owned by this world for the purpose of renting out the darkness life by life not including the safety

latch by spring mechanism I had learned once by learning them of my name not familiar to any such mechanisms then until I see my first, and in a knife, of all things, saying in a *snicket* what I had never heard and amused I almost stepped into its path better than the hand that held wielded it for presumed demise advancing it upward almost into my face but settling for my neck instead, thank you, a mechanism in my neck wherever as it stayed a moment until the confusion subsided with the learning heard *snicket snicket* (I could not help myself by retracting it and then springing it again, that delightful sound) stayed by the upraised hand pleading without much merit to me other than a question the delay afforded to me for asking, What kind of knife is this.

A stare. A smile. You oughta know motherfucker.

There is much yet to know in this world. A knife in me does not have its saying until I decide saying it has the world ahead of hearing it. And there is much yet to hear. What I know could end All This. I just don't know what All This is.

Then I say to him, Now I do know. Thank you

for the mechanism given to us this day our daily *snicket* the abundance of flesh all told until the very end ending with someone knowing what it means to be thanked for getting stabbed in the neck of misleading appearances

of the worth of life in America place to place reside in halls where no halls have hallways but the working conceit of having to explain at the drop of a name, if not one of mine, what I do with myself, if not nothing, I hear the rumors of my on-going demise in said of saying what others did with me when my back was turned (easier than you would think) against the resisting what I would have for myself despite myself being interrupted for a raised hand asking of said America and what I had done with it, if not everything, a song of Wang Chung myself sung for done with not the interruption I sleep with my back turned on a single nail kept to the small seldom felt for my on-going asking regardless of a place to place it, having for the finger an explanation staring at a single ceiling fan erupting alongside my elongating turn down to the very pare, a quick save the half-moon a majesty in said, the hand did, a finger if not everything, perhaps one of mine, the work of ageless what I said as I died again, again, one of mine, a cause had I once when it left me for the driver no longer driving the street I had asked was everything in a song never sung once

why you'll bury us all, which, in effect, I would if ever enjoyed working with my hands, but, having no use for them, they hang uselessly at my sides for the want of a knife to hold, the only thing I find my enjoyment in without ever actually enjoying anything, an impossibility, my nature decrees, for the abject of being forever unsatisfied, an adjunct of this world I had never had much interest in (beyond that someone else's interest not having anything to do with world, really) beyond its own ability to bury myself in things I never thought I could be buried in

says old man on a park bench extending in one hand toward me an odd mechanism one puts in their mouth for satisfaction only briefly for a quick *shpufft* and deep inhalation, I'll be dead within a week at this rate thank god

I know, why did you call me

once my perscripshun runs out

it will never run out

has gotta some time—

(should he and I set aside notions of limitation enforced by the gross capital of All This accumulated in escrow for whatever is to follow which never follows provided)

the ceiling fan stops spinning but only slowly oscillation by oscillation until there is no difference between its spinning at full speed and its having come to a complete stop, Got your nose

would it be any use to anyone if not myself not helping anyone for the purpose I have not figured for the life of me that gives what I think is life, if not dim sum or Wang Chung, a story someone told where I was once when All That was utterly Nothing to be said, if anyone had ever been there, said for life that had me having and little else to show for it, saying, Breath, remember, but nothing before the breath itself which I cannot breathe, as I need nothing, save a sustaining dinner at a reasonable price like all the expelled of this world governed by the rules we cannot see fit to rule us

better better better, have it heard, watching her work the ground for without she has now, and I knowing it very well for her, watching, ask for only once, Why am I here, when no knife is to be found at me, sticking my neck out as I do, not asking, What have I done, for knowing this, too, very well she sees I am little help to the small things dear for details beside what has come before and is now gone from All This and, It is better this way, thinking of rule, what has come from it would I have a shovel to help, letting her be since I do not

a city left to the waters

I could belong

for belonging is ceding that which I never had but a saying that said me here at another's behest where I have no rule but the wonder of what I once was for a story explaining All That drawing me closer, better

and closer still a knife set on a coffee table far away from the one who would hold it against my neck, though he sleeps, and by sleeping says me in another name I could have been once and only once, sleeping a once name, as it were, that has me on a deeply bruised sofa of green being elsewhere many times before here—a kindred sort, as I run my hand across the diseased fabric—watching him sleep face down facing something equally green and diseased as what I am sinking into. It takes nothing to consider the knife in front of me, letting it do its business. Why should I exert myself. The sofa has its abused comforts. The knife is dull and nicked. I let him dream of everywhere at once in the midst of All This, the word of him sloughing of the green layer from his face which I cannot see, which is lovely, yes, for once, very lovely, my name being in there where a woman walks in calling what I can only assume is his name only to find me cleaning my nails with his knife, though she, too, appears sleepy

once I know where I am going and going still for being called by what is said, closer still to the instant but never quite exactly instantaneously so (how terribly Time has fooled me with this eternal) be it a mumbling Prague, a distant Dar-es-Salaam, a poisonous Reikyvick, a sullen Tokyo, an overripe Los Angeles, and always the same knife, the same little thrill of being terribly still for a once that said Time grants me for my eternal of the surrounding immediate casting me where I could never be on my own, for then it would not be the same, and the same, All This, is all I have. Which is it not a knife unto itself

letting us sing of knives—for we have them for ourselves, our own necks, and they pay for everything that is not here forever for being still

my singing knife in my neck

which turns silent with its turning for a question asked of me phrased in the form of an imperative, nearly making me laugh, Do you mind, a new one I have heard more and more, savoring its brusque simplicity and vulgar application to rudeness itself, the searing riposte of the speaker's reclamation of (lower) ground to place an empty threat upon—though, of course, all threats are empty after All That, I had once explained to someone very eager—to which I say, Yes, I do mind, I have always minded, which is why I am here at your saying of me—you got what you wanted, what you asked for, and now I have myself here for you, I have myself upon your needed riposte for sticking me in the neck with a knife I see that you don't actually have on you, an unfortunate decision, or choice of words, but I am, strangely enough, forgiving towards oversight. Should you leave this train car at the next station, I will not have to explain why a knife does you no good in this world

with a sudden lurch for doors to open and then gone gone gone—and all of them more who I was not speaking to, as though my words had more effect than intended for the mere one I was soliloquizing to in my mindedness in this underground station where the train moves no longer for any moving, least of all, myself, holding onto a thick fabric strap looped for standing safety in the aisle no one else stands in

minding if one could keep their seat up so I may sit comfortably for once (never had I a throne despite what the goat people say about me) if not for the child behind me if not for the man attempting to butter a rock-hard roll with plastic butter knife gnashing into a rock-hard cube of butter if not for the mischievous fumbling under cover of young man and a dozen little screens lighting my poor tired face

my face; if one could face it (only by serving me), finding nothing there, of course (should man be made in the image of another who is decidedly not-me, then who is to say I have any resemblance as I walk among them all), for appearance's sake, for without which I may be said to be evil when I am what I have done which, all told, has been very very little, almost barely worth mentioning unlike, say, a painting that one destroys for no reason other than passing Time and giving the appearance otherwise of such with any such violence predicated all told beforehand. The face has that way. The face doesn't need a reason. The face doesn't even need a face, not when there was never a face to begin with a beginning so long ago before I saw a face, I had thought, and found it wanting

touching it cold and steely in its utter practicality and hierarchal self, and left it so alone for so long so that I could not stand myself, according to the face facing mine then, upon realizing that once that I had one, even if it was for a moment that would grow longer by Time. Nothing leaves me alone (my neck always sticks out)

tapping at the window, Mister, you are here, and, I am, I respond in my drowsy way, not caring in my usual appearance as I invest in nothing, not even in the accomplishment of my own arrival at somewhere I could remember from before if I tried

the Three Happy Dragons Palace before me, serving dim sum all day along with my face

the same, because I understand, and it is important that I understand because I must have some importance. I must,

I am told, while handed a menu. It very good today, sir—

my face very good indeed on the menu I have been staring at for when I enjoy myself I prefer eating something with a face on it tongue protruding (a delicacy once in this part of the world but not so forgotten by myself) not forked as so thought (it is difficult enough to eat) whether forked or knifed at the end of something starting with, Bring me this (pointing) and because I am legion I am brought so many faces for my faces facing tablewise, each brought on a black lacquer platter I remember grimly from their origins when another served me without ever looking at my face once while saying, Here is your face, completely forgotten the remainder of the animal attached encased in a dark glaze of anise cinnamon and sorghum, unhappily, and reminding her, What of the rest of the body deserving your service, for as young as she was she didn't know, or had no answer for (who ever does) other than, Eat what you like and leave the rest, as I take the tongue first before the best of the two prepared oculi, only the accouterments of the body interesting me, having my saying, for her, I always leave the body

it is said as I am serviced

wherever a hill rises to meet a sky of itself made by a hand drawing away farther and farther from those who would build a home there

wherever a song saying here has a sense of the thing it once was before being sung, before that hesitation, all for that beautiful without with me

wherever a knife lingers no longer held by any conventional holding

wherever a driver takes me until I ask for the driving to stop by not asking at all

laughing at the thinking of what must be overcome for only a here to be overcome by, reduced to a saying, as it were, said in mere hesitation before myself wherever I am and said and without once there is no one ever thinking again of me returning to return, so I hear

How you pay for bill

...

Hey you how you pay for bill, and for a moment, only always a moment, I almost answer, With myself

provided I once have a wit for this one without as method of payment heavily invested in what happens next which doesn't since I am spoken always somewhere while my incidental kindnesses are forgotten by that kind of incident asking for another thus washing away the original kindness in question questioning why this kindness wasn't observed originally (the offer to pay the bill in all sincerity) despite method of transaction wit without the biting chaser of my smile peeking its snaggletooth charms (the lexical ambiguity I know will go underappreciated by the one holding the fortune cookie) at the expense of saying something patently unfair to my listening subject not saying much of anything right now as it occurs to him his customer

has a knife sticking out of his side, just below the third left rib, though not bleeding, not doing anything really, opportune as it is for him to take it out upon realizing it is there and place it almost in reverence on the bill tray explaining soft steel with onyx handle from Soweto should cover the expense, running off quickly the waiter to the back of the kitchen as his customer now cracks open the fortune cookie in relative peace to discover his lucky lottery numbers and the new word he has just learned—

## 王 愴

*wáng chuàng*

cracking open this seductive nautilus, the destruction of something so complete. And in the Beginning was this word from which many others were and have been spoken quickly forgetting the one it came from so it may give way to other words saying themselves while looking upon the Beginning and afterwards noting its incompleteness, its fragility, its poor sense of understanding itself because someone must choose the Beginning without ever being aware of it spoken at a Time left to its own devices for a Beginning, for that is what counts, do I have a Beginning or do I have only a word of my Beginning saying that said once wherever a Beginning took place far away from the eyes of men, before there were even men, before there was even rebellion against Beginning somewhere so we could begin with a rebellion for something better, for some idea other than everything just Beginning for the sake of Beginning so there would be something here. Thank you very much, Wang Chung

a word I have learned with little learning myself other than experience as I need nothing for a witness but a name for saying, a driver for my hand raising, raising

a knife tickling the dark to a form for

a Beginning refusing All This to begin, as all I hope for

better to end of myself than for wherever else better to rule, for I have no Beginning to speak of  
than any ending could yet be written much less taught for a learned learning very little, so small I  
have seen and still do, until finding a laugh for cause, and it is all better for once at last

a sunset has its thing for laughing thinking all is to be dark, I know I know, yet with no home of its  
own I am without less and less, it seems so

I will not be said again for my singing Wang Chung.

