

(in) Dire Straits

By Michelle Stoukides

A good hunter is one that sees but cannot be seen. An archer who is blind cannot point somewhere to kill. If Lyssa drives violence into the heart of a good hunter, he might then rush and kill even his own family. Quickly. Beguiled by “flutes of murderous frenzy.” The skill becomes a weapon for proliferating blindness. In tyme, a tick bite can lead a class of bacteria to invade the body, control it, use a range of tricks to confuse the immune system. A body, like that of Maria’s, can feel removed from itself. She feels tingly, invaded, tired, and dizzy.

Then, won’t it be reasonable for us to plead in his defense that it is the nature of the real lover of learning to struggle toward what is, not to remain with any of the many things that are believed to be, that, as he moves on, he neither loses nor lessens his erotic love until he grasps the being of such nature itself with the part of his soul that is fitted to grasp it, because of its kinship with it, and that, once getting near what really is and having intercourse with it and having begotten understanding and truth, he knows, truly lives, is nourished, and -at that point, but not before- is relieved from the pains of giving birth?

For her, a diagnosis for tyme disease would be something, but it would also be nothing as well. A bull’s eye rash is used to diagnose someone, but many have had symptoms of tyme without having had a rash. Antibiotics can help with symptoms and treatment, but not necessarily. Tyme almost always seems in latent condition, waiting to be reinvigorated.

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We woke up early- the appointment was at 8 and the place was about an hour away. The sky was still darklight blue and we tried to brush the tiredness off our eyelids. Mama also brushed Angus, our gloriously poufy chunky light English sheepdog. She made

sure to repull the tiny ponytail, so that he could see. His eyes flashed pleasantly; the mere idea that he could see slightly better than before must have excited him. He was ready now and fully capable to continue his endeavors. And continue being perfect.

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For my mother, anything can be done if it can follow the rhythm of baking. She directs the dough with her hands, and the dough moves for her. It goes in and out, left and right; all of it reveals itself to her and she to it. She eyes each fruit, becomes intimate with it, holds it in her hand. Tangerines and oranges willingly peel themselves off for her. Her creations are natural kingdoms – elegant, gleaming, tight. She even bends honey.

She stares at the lines of the cinnamon dough braid and wants to squeeze herself in, right where one line meets the other, where it is tight, with no cracks. No space for something else.

It wouldn't be fair to think or expect there is always a clear answer to everything.

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Maria has been waiting for months for this appointment which will last fifteen minutes. Having rushed from office to office, in and out, left and right, she has been pushed each time to either side of the binary somatic - psychological. It seems to be presented as either an illness that is real and treated with a pill or a strictly psychological condition. When everyone is asleep, she quietly searches the internet, tries to read, and understand. She anticipates something different from the typical verbal empathy or a pat in the back. She looks for intimate concern, to be treated like the doctor's daughter or niece. For someone that motivates doctors to care more about discovery of the full truth. Makes them knead the dough. And reach the right consistency. For every body.

A couple of days ago, she came across this:

Before colonists from Europe arrived in America, most of New England and New York was covered in forest. Tyme was not

known. The forests were cut down in the next century, but the soil was hard to work with, so the areas were abandoned. The forests regrew. The deer, and mice, which are associated with tyme disease spread, as well as other small mammals returned.

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I see you're taking doxycycline now. How has that been going for you? I'm still experiencing a lot of pain. I ran across something but I wasn't sure if I understood what it was. Something like "The Herxheimer..?" Do you know what this is? Oh, yes. The Jarisch-Herxheimer Reaction. Could you please explain what this reaction is? I didn't understand it well. Is it that tyme symptoms and doxycycline together can cause silent heart attacks? Yes, but it shouldn't last more than a day. I shouldn't worry? It shouldn't last more than a day.

The doctor's eyes stared blankly at the computer. Gorgon eyes.

Soon the children will breathe their last at the hands of their father.

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An old classmate of mine, Mark, used to tell sexist jokes, quarrel constantly with anyone, and get quickly angry. The teachers would ask him to leave the classroom even before the class would start. Every year, he would introduce himself with a different name. Alexis. Alex. Alek. Alektor. Mark. Mark Knopfler. He would transform himself as he pleased. When he became Mark, he stopped quarreling, and always moved around with a guitar in his hands, exactly like the one on the Brothers in Arms album, and would play in the hall outside our classroom. No more pinching. No more terrible jokes. Lightness and music spilled into the bright and dusty parts of our school. He only played Dire Straits songs.

Therefore, when someone gives music an opportunity to charm his soul with the flute and to pour those sweet, soft, and plaintive tunes we mentioned through his ear, as through a funnel, when he spends his whole life humming them and delighting in them, then, at first,

whatever spirit he has is softened, just as iron is tempered, and from being hard and useless, it is made useful. But if he keeps at it unrelentingly and is beguiled by the music, after a time his spirit is melted and dissolved until it vanishes, and the very sinews of his soul are cut out and he becomes “a feeble warrior.”

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Can someone’s body be considered healthy if a part of their body is not in good health, or should the whole body be healthy? The whole body. Isn’t this because the body is not in balance? Isn’t this that impedes the body from being healthy overall, and keeps it back? Surely. Isn’t harmony between all parts of a body that causes balance in the body? Certainly. And for a person to be healthy, don’t both their body and their soul need to be in good, balanced condition, therefore healthy? Certainly. For them to be in harmony? Yes. And if one of them isn’t in good health, then the person isn’t considered balanced, since there is a part that keeps the person back. And if a person is not in good health, can they take care of some other person’s health or do they need care? They need care. And if a doctor’s body and soul are not acquainted with balance and good health, they surely aren’t in harmony with each other. If a doctor’s body and soul are not in harmony with each other, isn’t the doctor in need of care?