

BOOKMARK 1

THIS DAY HAS TURNED TO WHOLENESS...

I am the shy smile on my lover's face, eddy of water in my lover's bath, tattle of this day's love-wanted ads, hushed space between the stars. I am all the days of our past, caressing child-finger on a smooth shelf, pulsing breath of a nebula... I fear no steel-eyed hawk in the blueness above. I fear not the lonely demise of a sparrow in the mouths of Sumatran crocodiles... **In the low-rumbling city I laugh at the obituaries of strangers**, shit that runs in these gutters and sewers, eviscerating chatter of the middle classes, arthritis born of persecution-complex... Scream of pterodactyls ten thousand aeons past. Stifled yawns of a clerk in the seventeenth century. Broken cup of a dead soldier at Thermopylae, hair of a woman in a dried-up river long ago. I laugh at all of these. I am the smoke and spark of a winter chimney in cold England. **I breathe acres of birds rising at dawn above a lake...**

I am the mathematic of two atoms in love in the star known as Andromeda. I hear the sighs of a slave-girl under weighty flesh. I am you. We are larva in the bowels of a planet. We are grains of the deserts of the moon. I know the ache of a cub lost in snow. I am the breath of a billion-year wind as if it never was. I am the moan of telephone wires and a thousand conversations.

I am the rise and shuddering fall of the fortunes of millions. I am the vibration of factories at war. I am the mud of the battlefield of the dead. I am the day-longing of a butterfly as its time draws into night. I am the pleasure on your face when you wear the red shoes. I am time that never was, that I never owned, that never died, that ever lived. **I AM WARM HERE WITH YOU. YOU ARE HERE.**

From: *The Labyrinth* Nicholas Frost
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“FRONT”

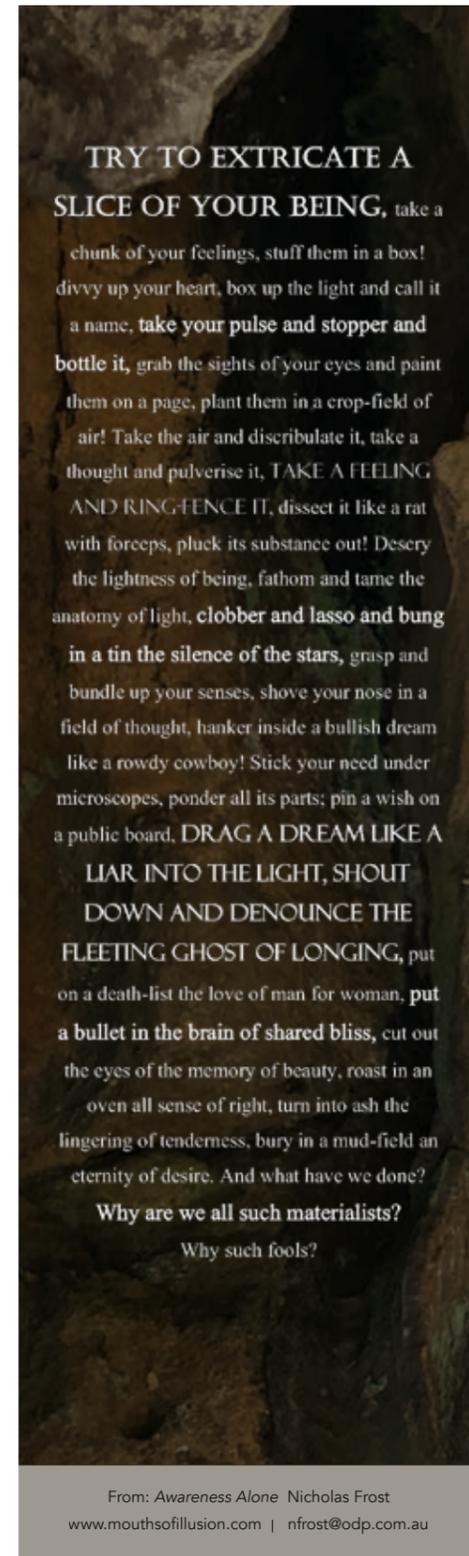
**AND MY MIND IS MIRROR-
LIKE ... a sea of possibility, of
longing winds that fleck the horizon,
stir the spume and foam to grand
longing, eternally pushing before
which I sail lonely to the end of the
world... THE MIND-SEA IS A
RELENTLESS BLUE-GREY
THOUSAND-MILE
HEAVINESS OF WAVES that
surge to the uncharted destination
and never arrive. Waves: I see their
nature is to surge and reach, dissolve
and die, o'erborne by pursuing waves
that also pass away in opaque blue-
black depths of forgetting.**

**No place for humans, this; the
pouring winds make fallow my lungs
and eyes. AND SOMETIME NOW
MY MIND IS A WATERY
FATHOMLESS GRAVE OF THE
PAST, of ideas and notions lost, of
my childhood-time gone, of all the
dark deep of a life stored in the hazy
mud-filmed bottom-locker of the
sea... AND THEN IT
TORTURES ME, THIS MIND,
a colourless vaporless mirror of stasis,
as if a lethe, a pall, has settled on the
ruddy sun-addled sea, and I am a
sailor languishing under useless
lumpen sails, and I stir with my eyes
muddy pools of ragged boredom-
despair...**

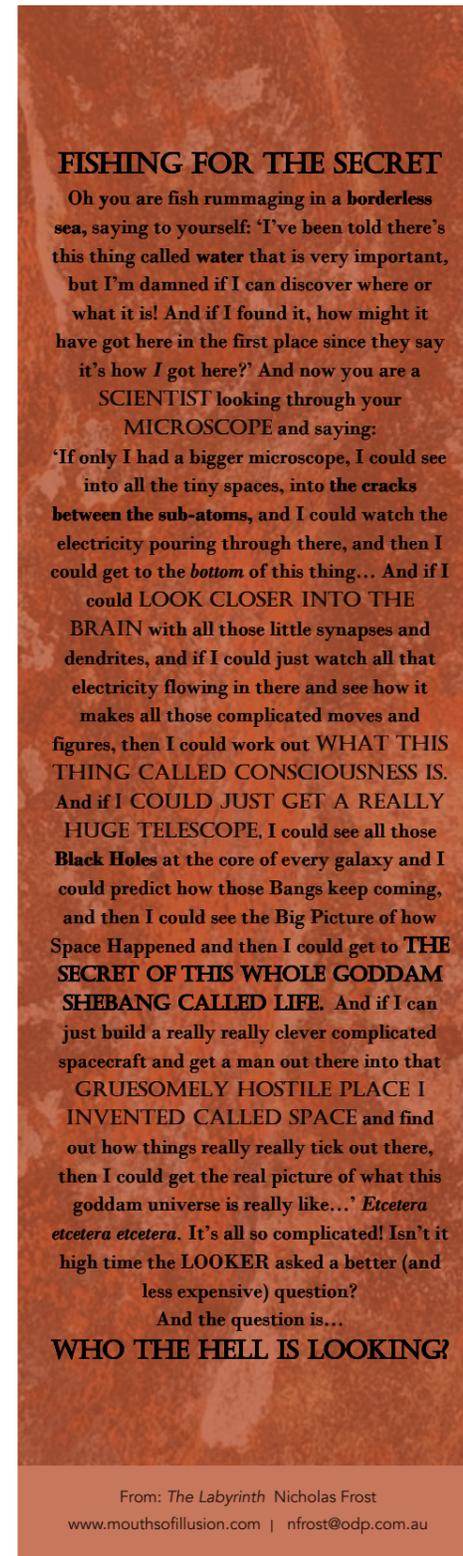
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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 2

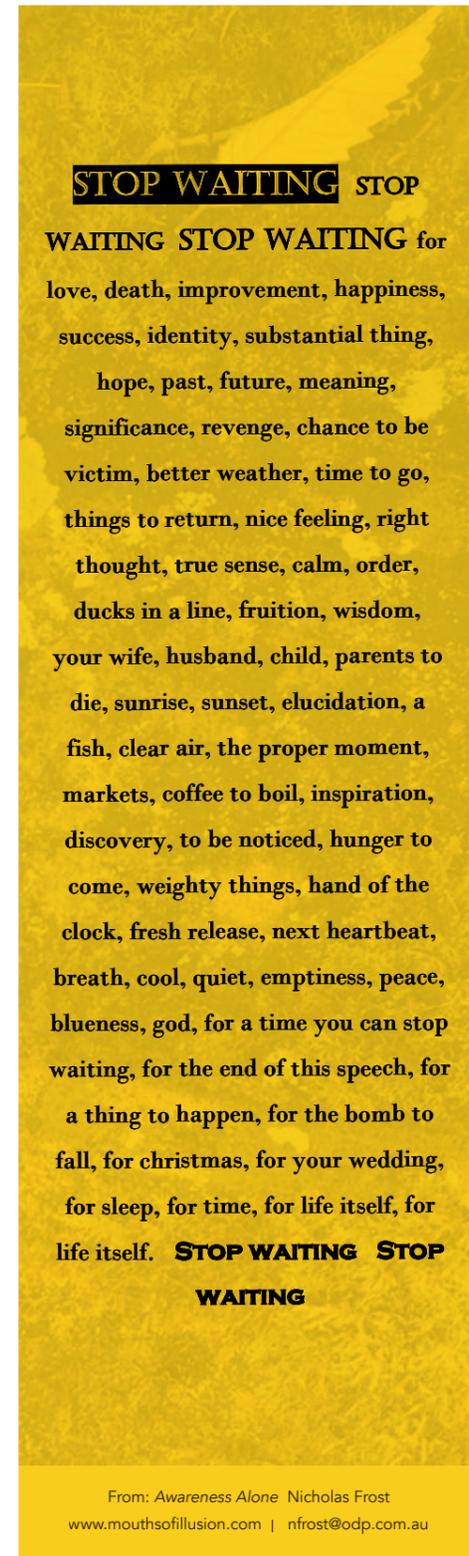


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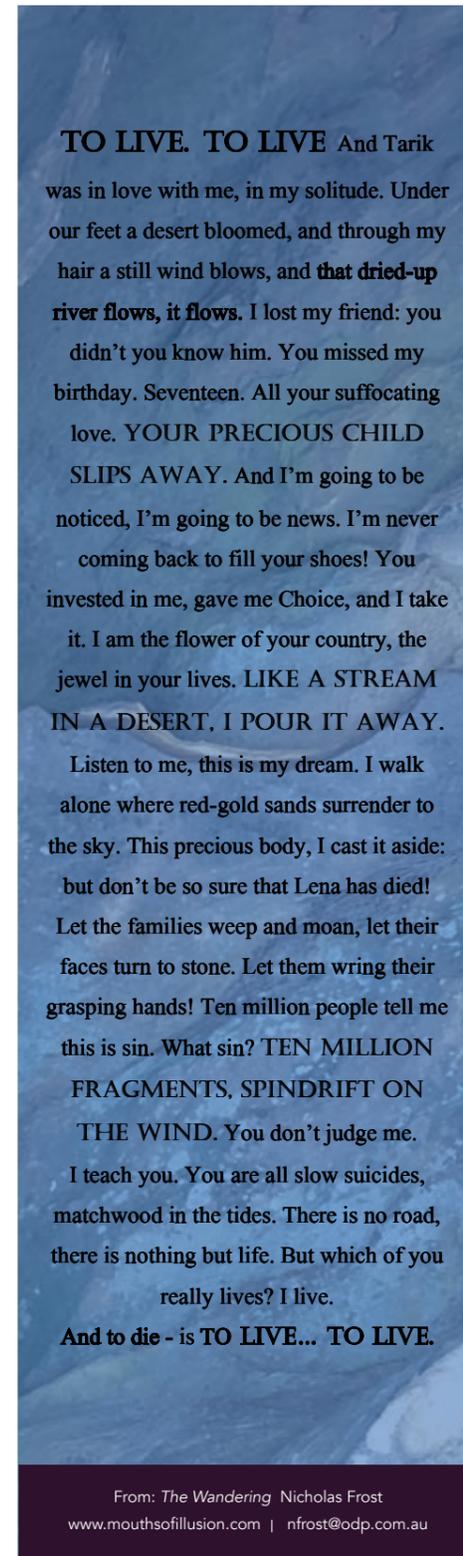


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BOOKMARK 3

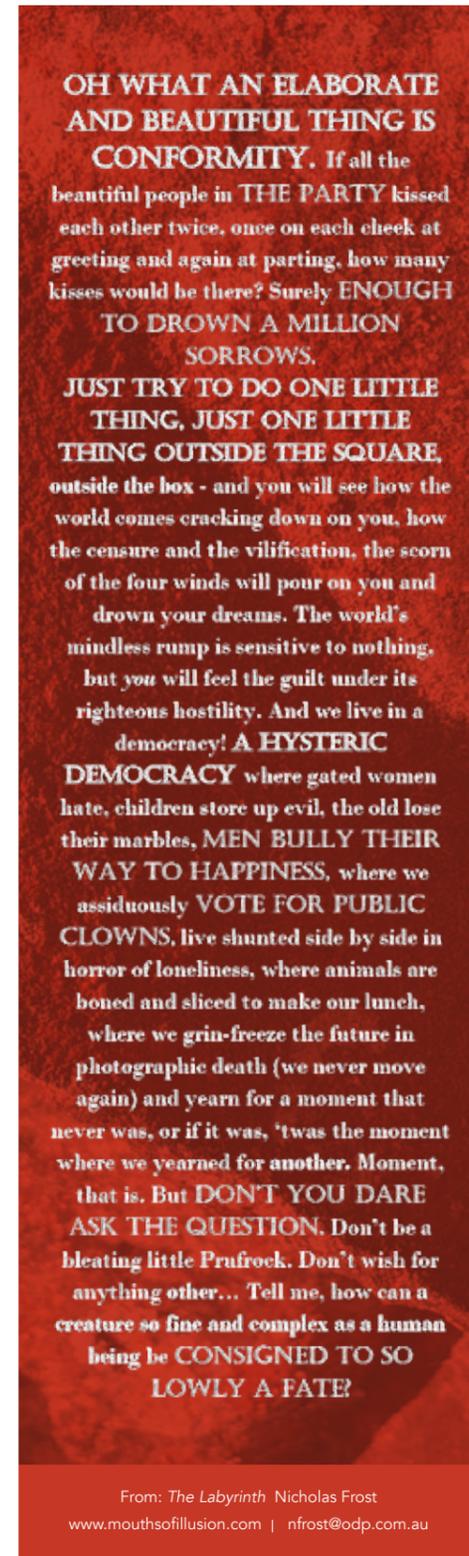


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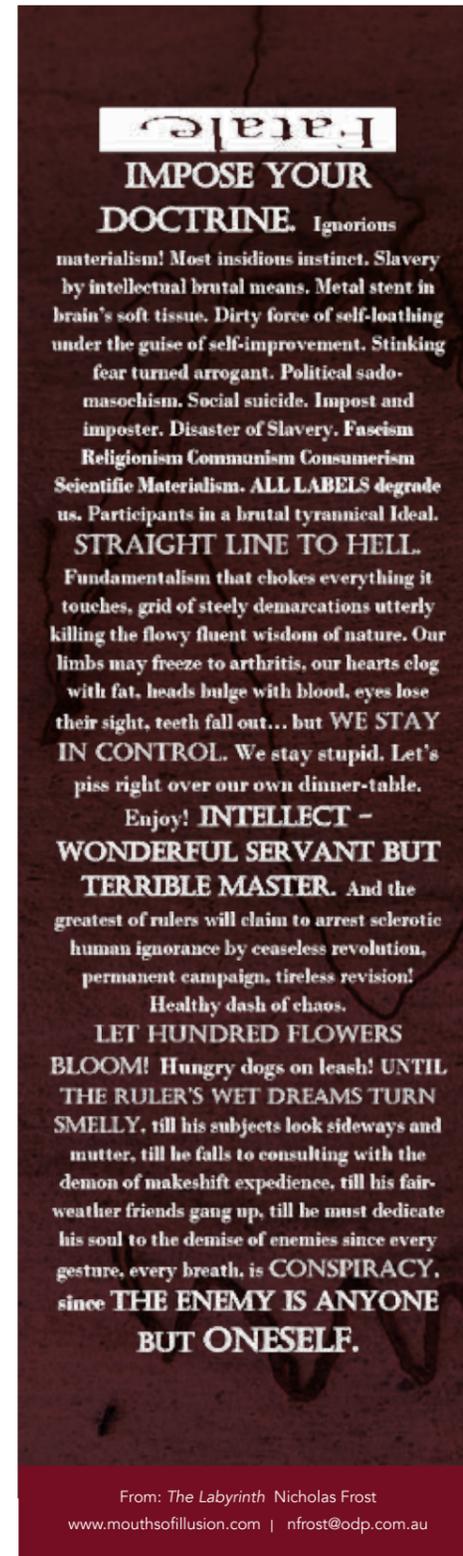


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BOOKMARK 4

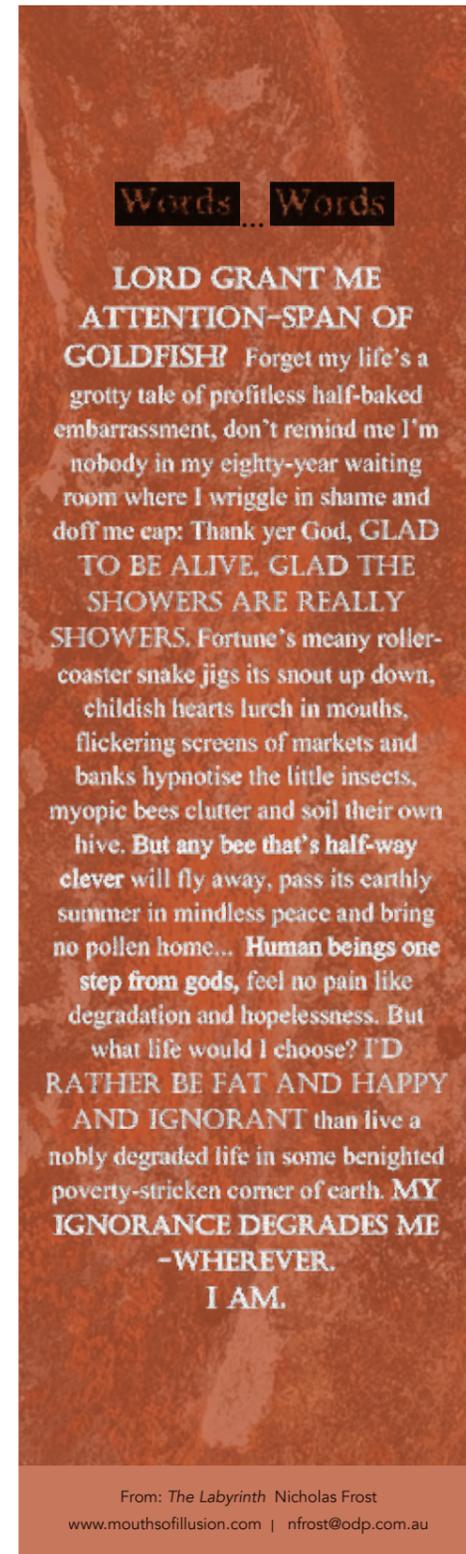


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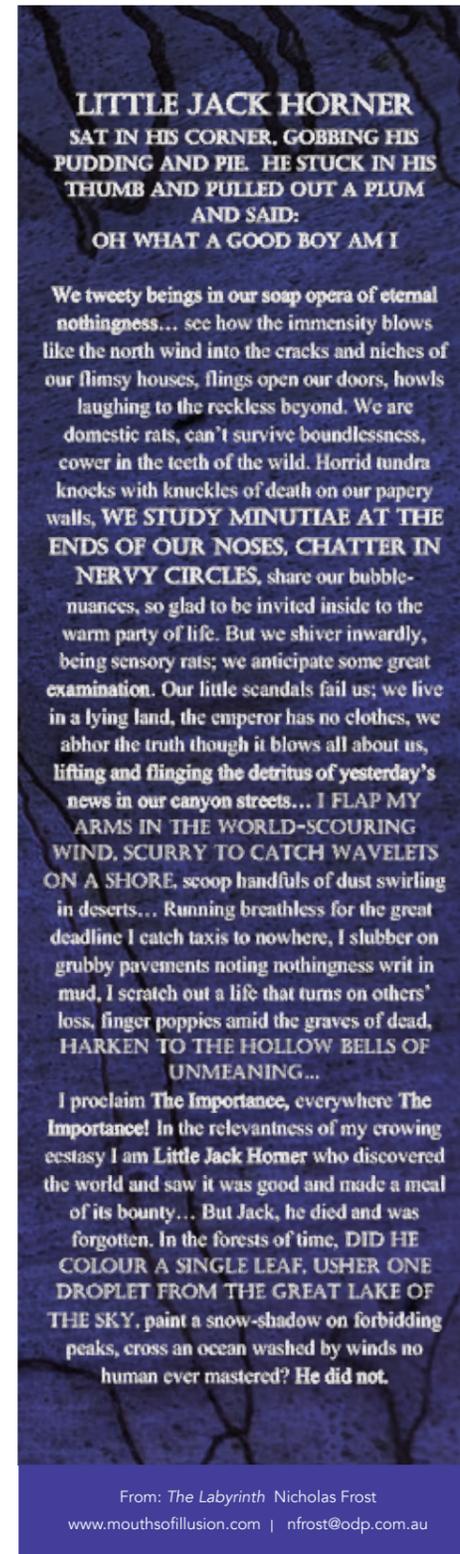


“BACK”

BOOKMARK 5



“FRONT”



“BACK”

BOOKMARK 6

LIFE IS SACRED! ONE SINGLE HEEDLESS BREATH IS TAKEN BY A ROTTING MAN called Myself and a billion microbes act their tiny masquerades and perish. Kamikaze microbes die for love of emperor! Who tells their untold story? We, human, greater microbes, take all for granted. **AND I AM BUT THE FOLDS AND VALLEYS AND CLIFFS AND MOUNTAINS OF A GREAT SLIMY COUNTRY CALLED BODY.** I am the polluted evolved field, rotting produce of human years, heaving livers and bile-churning liquid lakes, **RIVERS OF BLOOD THAT ROLL TO THE HEART,** whiteblood corridors light-years long, caverns organ-deep, deserts and dunes of skin, mines of bone, cauldron-eyeballs sucking in light, **SKEINS OF FORESTED LUNGS SUCKING CRAZILY AT SOLAR WINDS. I am all birth and change and time,** slow-dying, imperceptible as microscopic suppurating sweat-bubbles. **I AGE IN THE MOON'S CRYING TIDES,** helpless in the pulsing heart of an aching body. I am no individual. **MICROBES ARE ME. I AM MICROBE.**

From: *The Labyrinth* Nicholas Frost
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“FRONT”

SCRIBBLING IN THE MIND...

A stream is never what it is. No thing ever happened. Activity burns its heart. People are wiped away. Dreams of Himalayan fastness. Prayer flags flutter on a wall. Rustled grasses heard by none. No wind ever blew, no human ever walked here. **FARAWAY BUSYNESS IN THE COMMUNE OF MEN.** I lived a life. Murmur of a stream ten thousand years ago. Chirrup of birds after the battle. Insects crawl. Spattered armour-mountains. The dead are sleeping. The creatures win. No face no name. Regret the *Shoah*. Blanket of snow on the mounts of Asia. Kites show no mercy. Someone passed by, never returning. Memories shovelled in a hole. **CATTLE AT THE GATE.** Feed the turning world. Carrion. Toilet fodder. Is it you? Is it you? The fullness. Never-end. Bliss continuous. Ocean. **SHIP'S PROW. TROPIC SEAS. BORDERLAND. WHITE CRANES IN THE BLUE.** Is that the door? Death is a door. Nothing lost. All lost. Pills don't work no more. Go, no regret. Insect on a leaf. Dream-memory. Son of man hath not where to rest... No centre to my head. Thousan'miles to the bottom of my arms. The fingers of need. Why does one body need another? Love is habit. My story. Note the mirage. **INCONSEQUENCE.** Don't believe. My window... Bright kite in the sky... Pause... **VANISH IN LIGHT.**

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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 7

MACHINE - OH PINNACLE OF HAPPINESS!

In glassy tower rooms, foggy hives,
workday warrens - whitey-shirted and
tied we ponder at screens, send
missives from pillar to post, confer and
ruminate and fret, deliver decisions,
await consequence, quake at superiors,
mop sweat, furrow brows... Any
hippie from Mars'd see we'd all gone
barmy. Why do these earthlings grovel
to serve the levers and buttons and
dots that feed their own pastime
machine? And they built a fractal
computer as big as a planet and clipped
and snipped every genetical bit, with a
nano-fiddle here and a nano-fiddle
there, till THEY BIRTHED A
FATTENED PIG OF MONEY
AND MEAT they could feast on
forever... OH SYSTEM, MY
SYSTEM. Life's smelly-red offal
carpet spring-cleaned, laid out for
benefit of humo-bots. BUT what will
YOU do when the system serves you
no more? When no-one cares because
you're smelly trampish and old, when
not a soul registers what you want or
think or vote, when lonesome death
awaits? Lonely person-bot, you solely
exist in terms of lonely otherbots.

My advice? FACE THE
STUPID EMPTINESS,
AND BREATHE

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THERE IS NO FISHER OF
MEN IN THE CANYON
CITY. SO MANY LONELY
FISH IN THE RAINBOW
SEA. City-crowd shoals flitter in
machine synchronation but reefs
abound. Swim on. Pools of human
eyes come at you, come at you,
never can hide their mind-flood.
What secret rivers of tears are
unleashed by people aching for
the sea? We are the fish, thinking
musing fish in our watery grave of
musing, in liquored veins of
streets whose horizon is the tip of
skyscrapers,
all unheeded by white winds of
the sky. And down here our minds
over aeons encrust pearl-shell
identities, OUR CLAM
BODIES BROOD ON LIES
AND DOUBTS AND
DREAMS. And on such strands
and reefs WE CAST OUR
NETS AND SEEK ONE FISH
WHO'LL LOOK AT US,
who'll moon through lips and eyes
in private dance with us, who'll
join our wan undersea world of
lonely consequence...



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“FRONT”

“BACK”

BOOKMARK 8

I WISH I WERE BOUNDLESS.

I should cut myself, purify by red streams. Only the empty can swallow the world. Here I am! **ONLY LIGHT BEHIND THE EYES PERCEIVES THE DARKNESS.** Only the wind hears the thrumming of a drum. Every breath is my last. Madmen claim to stopper death, humans claim death exists, but only the killed may come to life. Only the lonely know a friend. **THERE'S NO SUFFERING BUT THIS.** I imagine a razor so thin it cut through emptiness. A particle so small it never saw another. A sorrow so deep it swallowed the night. A castle so dense none ever escaped. A love so entrenched it fed on itself. **A NET SO FINE IT SCOOPED THE SEA.** My clock is ticking. For every gesture, the anti-gesture. For every breath a vacuum. Every dream a rude awakening. The razor's edge is immeasurably thin, yet microbes journey forever. The caravanserai sets off. Is never seen again. Military columns have no end. War is here. Bell tolls for me. The night has no dawn. Here. Here. **DON'T WAIT, DON'T WAIT.** There's no time. **Hurry. HURRY.**

From: *The Labyrinth* Nicholas Frost
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“FRONT”

ACCEPT IT, ACCEPT IT

ALL as the thread of the Human and non-human, as light flickers on the sea, as flowerheads sputter on the wind, as nuts tumble from trees...
Not one universe but a **million billion**, all passing through and searing one another like ghost-fibres in a silken cloth as muscular as the sea. **UNIVERSES** of the microbe, of the flea, of the wind, of fishes, wolves, women, clouds, muslims, bakers, butchers, tallow makers, painters, lawyers, infidels, songs, science, apes, america, crabs and cranes, me and you, the gatepost, pole stars, lonely planet mars...
And the realm we call **THOUGHT** gossamer-passes through them all.

OUT OF ENERGETIC MISTS OF MIND a notion is spawned, becomes obsession, spurs all acts, makes us cry, makes us lie, makes us die. **Insanity!**

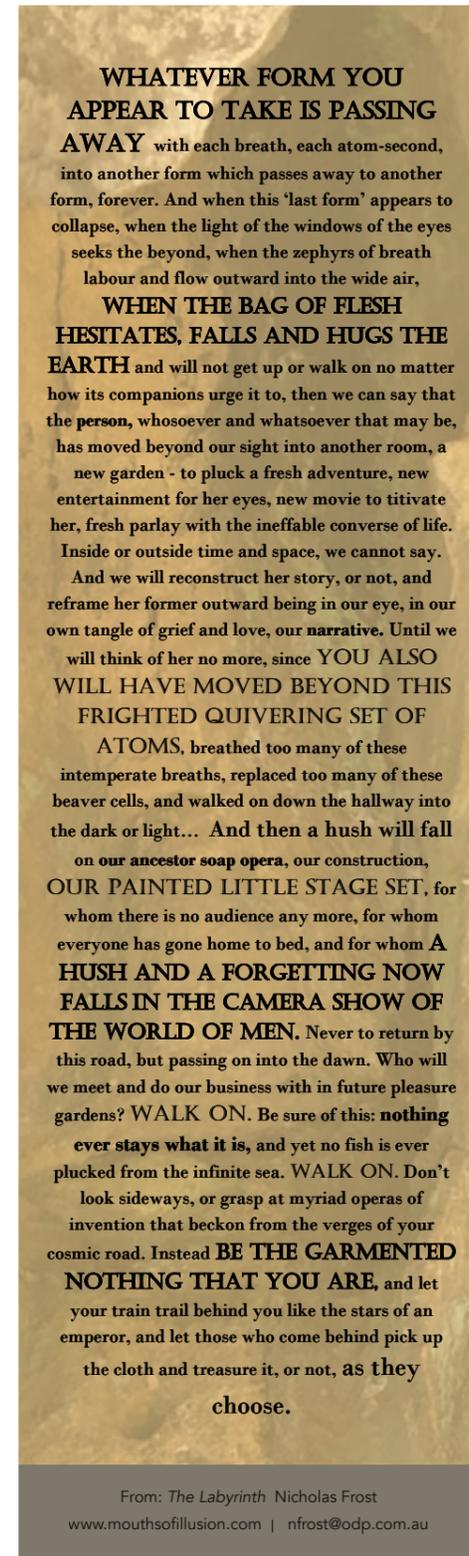
**WORDS. MEANING.
LITERATURE. GURU.
SACREDNESS.
BURN THEM ALL... PEACE.**



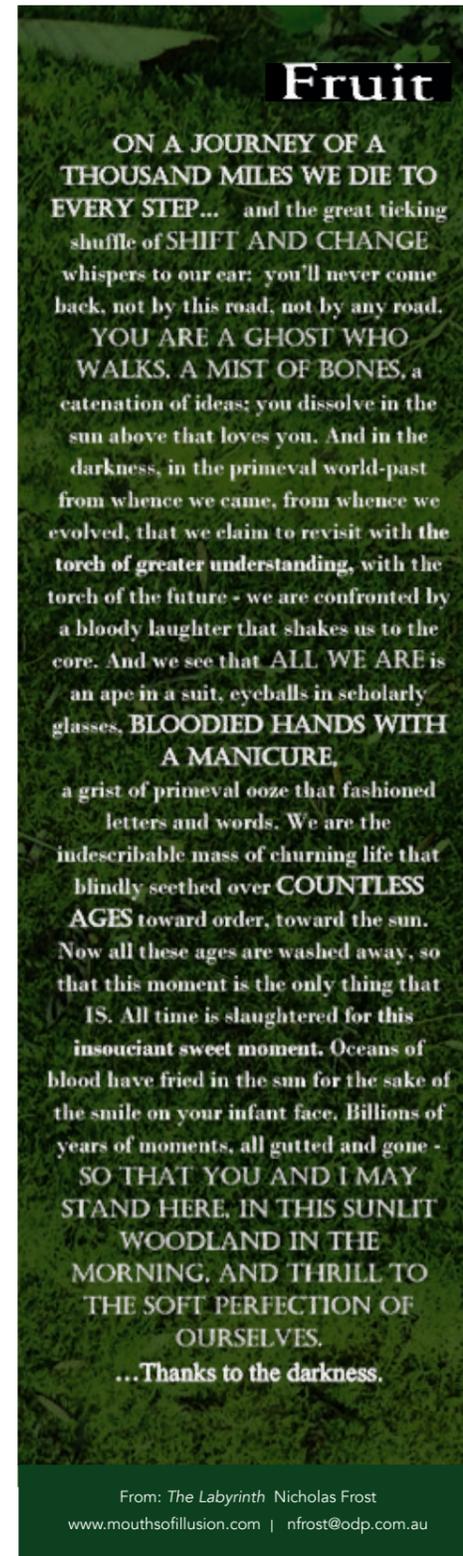
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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 9

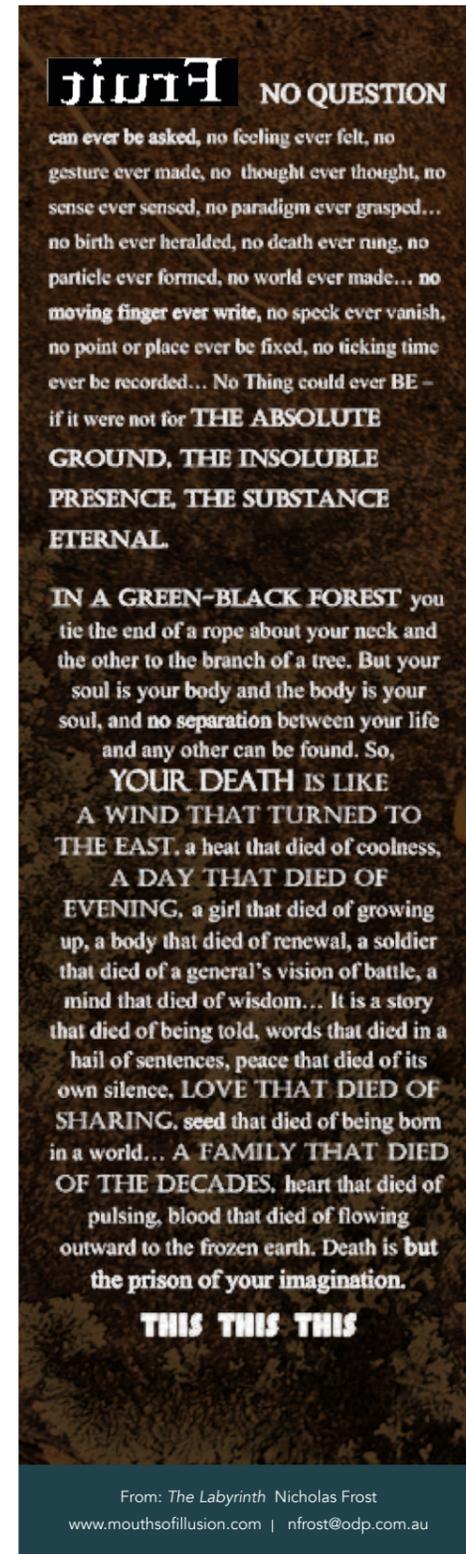


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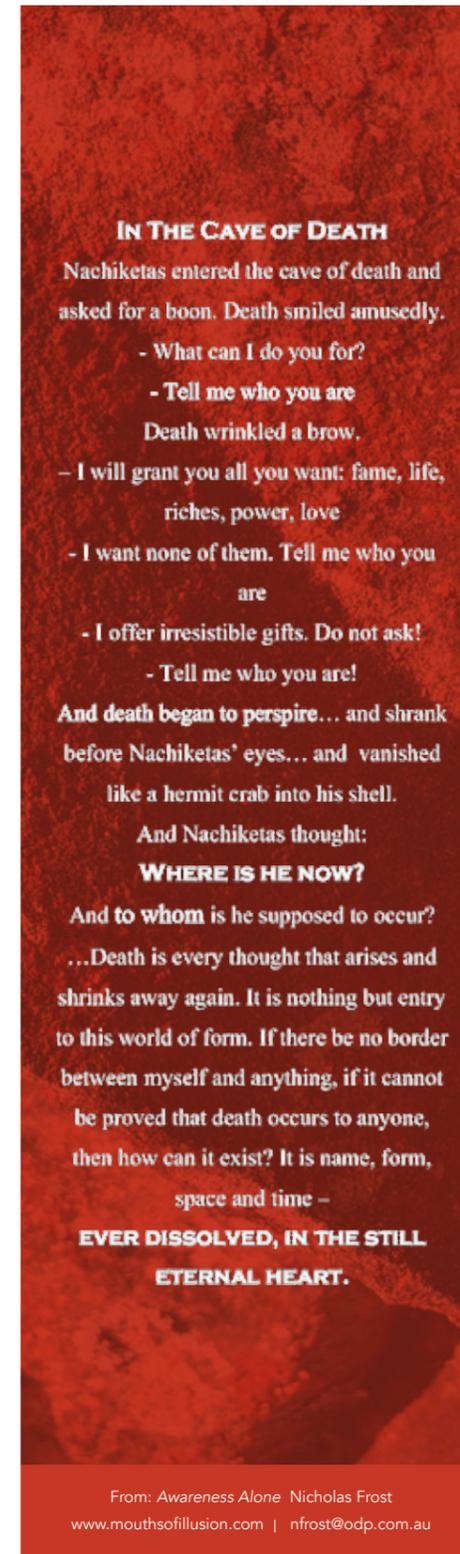


“BACK”

BOOKMARK 10



“FRONT”



“BACK”

BOOKMARK 11

THERE WAS ONCE A PERSON WHO LIVED AND PASSED AWAY, of whom nothing was ever written, no photo was taken, who did not a thing noteworthy or remarkable, who lived in a place all forgotten IN A LAND RULED BY NO REMEMBERED KING, who tasted nothing but humble baked bread of a wheatfield, and who felt all seconds and minutes and days of his life sufficient unto himself in unutterably quiet harmony with his breath; who felt the wind and sun, and the night and the stars on his skin in the darkness, who had never the mind to wonder at the wonder of being or birth, who passed away **IN THE QUIET TIDES OF THE UNKNOWN**, his head on no soft pillow known to another (except a casual spouse who shared his days and doings then herself passed on), a person who is not even a dream in the mind of another, or a memory or cause or consequence, who is clean **beyond the intrusions of myth and make-believe**, and who lies still, without future or past, in quiet earth turned by the casual plough of some other soul unknown, in some other story in some other dimension.
I BELIEVE THERE ONCE WAS SUCH A PERSON.

From: *The Wandering* Nicholas Frost
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“FRONT”

ONCE THE TRAVELLER BLANK fled to the isle of Malta, seeking refuge by its bright summer sea. Arriving one still afternoon at a rocky bay he hired a snorkel at a beach kiosk, walked away from the crowds and dived into deep water under cliffs. The sun-orb's yellow beams filtered like watery dust into bubbled depths, and **HE WATCHED THE TINY FISH HUGGING REEFS, ADJUSTING AND RIDING AND BALANCING** minutely in invisible currents. No rest for these fish! They seemed to make a kind of stability out of infirmity, riding their water winds, somehow seeming to achieve *themselves* for an instant... before **THE INSTANT DISSOLVED THEM, THE HEAVING CURRENT DISSOLVED THEM.** Yet if you blinked, there they were again, then gone, and then again, riding. And so on forever, all their watery lives. Is it just a fish that we think of, or do we think of the sea? Are we not always wiped away?
So also a man, with his undersea currents of the heart: his protection-need, his mind, karma, history, soul destiny... all his social-familial webs, his political cities and internets and markets and Wall Streets... **All things that form the fractal fibres of his blood**, the currents and winds of his life. Blank opens and closes his eyes. What is a man if he lives and dies? **HE IS NOTHING BUT THE FLOW**, though he is somehow himself. **A KIND OF RIGID FLOW**, that always makes him believe he is a man. The man known as Blank swims on. With the sun on his back he drifts in rhythm with the finned ones below him. In his chest and heart he feels the forces and waves. He is moving and vibrating in the undersea. **LIKE A FISH, HE NEVER RESTS, YET RESTS.**

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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 12

WE WHO CARRY THE BURDEN OF SIN

and the word of God on our lips: we are shrivelled rats, ragged atoms of cringy religiosity and piety and hypocritic martyrdom; we are the detritus of a bloodying opera, nature's experiment of laughter and tears, playthings of worlds birthing and crashing in instants and aeons, in blank-waved seas that surge forever to unplugged horizons in a horror-joke of creation's hooligan game with itself, to the ends of borderless time and fortune **in a bacchanalian drunken game of shouting noise.** We are a frolic, a moment, frittered thought, daunted shadow cast by ten billion years of nothing, sullen whiff of smoke from a devil's cigarette, lump of popcorn tossed to the floor in the back row of a movie slept through by God. **We drag the weight of failure** like the ragged cloak of an exiled emperor in this endless slush of living...

For WHAT A RISIBLE FARCE IT IS TO LIVE,

to want continuity and sanity amid worlds of blood that fling on these groaning gales that lather at the coasts of our faces, we, standing like ninepins on a clifftop overlooking bellicose seas of flecked waves that trundle forever out of the blue-black fathoms of nowhere, we, slumped corpses on Omaha beach rumped by scathing wind that howls: **I'll never leave you be...**

WE HUMAN CREATURE-
PEOPLE, WE, of forgotten breath, thought-mist unknown, light of hope that dissolved in the black-nether of infinite space, tired of its fickle journey to nowhere...

AND YET... we are the impish upspring of a moment! clever forgetters of yesterdays, improvisors who twist a new thing out of wretchedness, who glean seeds out of a dead field, who countenance a mere snatch of singing like tiny birds in the breathless vaults of the sky! **OH, WE ARE HERE.**

WE ARE ACTUALLY HERE

From: *The Labyrinth* Nicholas Frost
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“FRONT”

DEATH MUST WAIT

if a man asks the right question of the skeletal scyther, you who ply your trade on our laziness, our stupid belief, our endless wait for godot, **we mooning cattle at the gate.** Each thought is death to all others. I crave the chaos of silence. The past trails from the back of my head. Seaweed-slurry on a flecked beach. I once scribbled in books. Clutter of electrons, nano-things... Dipped my soul mind into chaos. Winds of winter.

My cells blow away. Shapeshifters, memories. Ghosts walk in wind. **CLIFFS OVERBEAR THE SEA.** Flies sweep over deserts. Child-whispers, petals of rose, rustle of a river, kite in the sky. In the warm sun of the garden of emptiness is hope.

HALF IN HALF OUT OF THE WORLD.

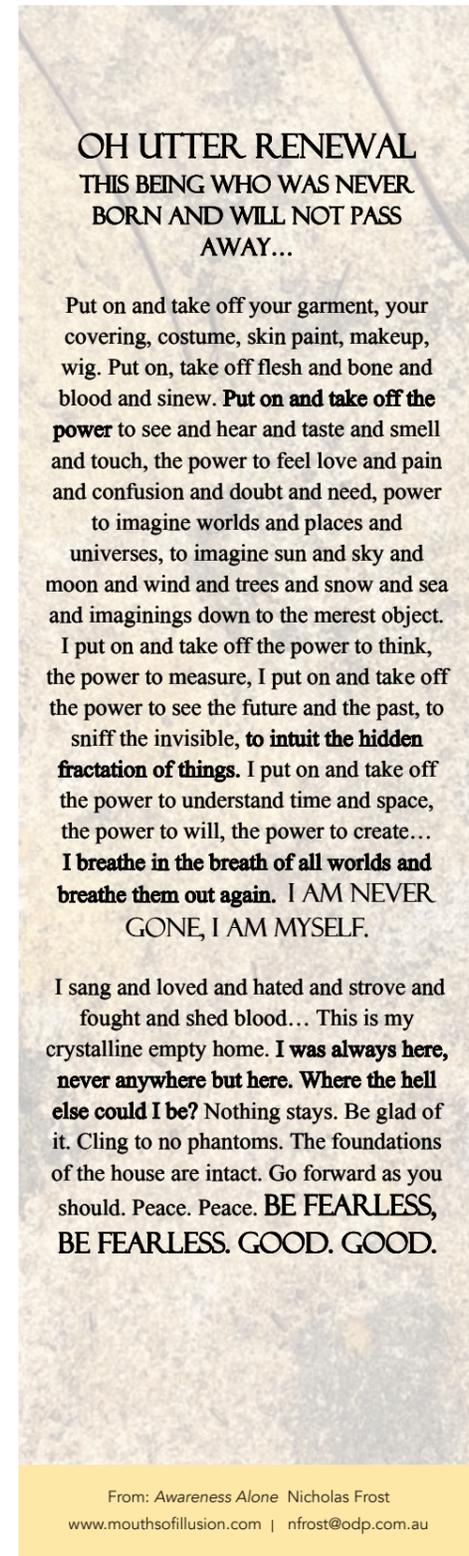
Morning winds of emptiness stir from afar. Leaves rustle and quiver. There's a whiff of future, whiff of regret. Moments embalmed in a haze. Nano-point in eternity. Strange words without meaning; if they had, they'd cease to be.

Look how a thing vanishes. Droplets of dew. Fractals in a god-world. Don't close your eyes my friend, you'll vanish in the Great. Seen one moment you've seen 'em all. Nothing but what Is. But nothing stays. **FLIES DEPART A CORPSE IN THE HOT WIND OF THE VELDT.** My love is chaos. I sang an ode for all who seek to foul the common nest. Find a better story, higher chaos, deeper world. **OH MY GIDDY AUNT, I EXIST.**

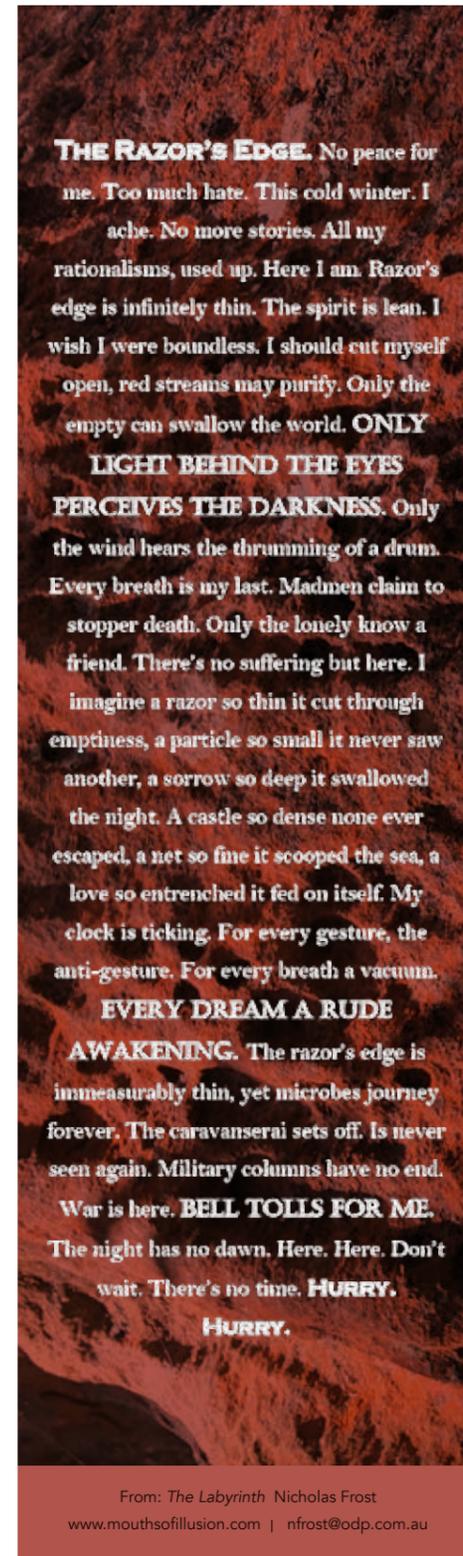
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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 13



“FRONT”



“BACK”

BOOKMARK 14

BEYOND

We are the dreamers of all worlds
Dancers of non-existent things

Under the wheel for all the years
A Journey without end, a cry in vain

Free whether we like it or not
The merciful lightness
Nothing is ours
Forever gone
Without cause, without end
The flow of continual forgetting

Keepers of the illusory gate
The banal fruits of yesterday
Grotesque theatre of the world
Forever and never, amen
Who can ever describe what is?

We are dancers of ideational phantoms
Riddlers of insidious naming
Cyclers of need and lack
Repetiteurs – habitues –
time and death worshippers
We are the solitary
Testament to the unreal
In the coliseum of suffering

We open our mouths and all is lost
Identity is clinging
Endless dialogue of a self
Fixation, the torturer
Ego, the desire-ghost, fixator,
phantom gatekeeper, material idea,
superimposer
Blinding need to ride and flow
To dream, to self-distract

We are the dreamers of all worlds
Dancers of non-existent things

without End

From: Awareness Alone Nicholas Frost
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“FRONT”



**NOT AN INFINITUDE
OF WAVES WILL CHANGE
THE OCEAN**

No-one will ever describe what is

There are multitudes within us
No limitation without infinite liberty
Let it go, let it go

Believe in nothing
It's over, it's over

Who, who is the seer?
FATAL IDEA of separate perceiver

No thought has self-nature
Deconstruct the 'I' thought

We are the insubstantial
The illusory act of measuring

Would you chop up the seamless flow?
Where is the part of you separate
from the whole of you?

We are not what does not exist
Illusion is illusion is illusion

Nothing is what it is
Nothing is personal

In this dream of creation
All fruitless journeys lead to here

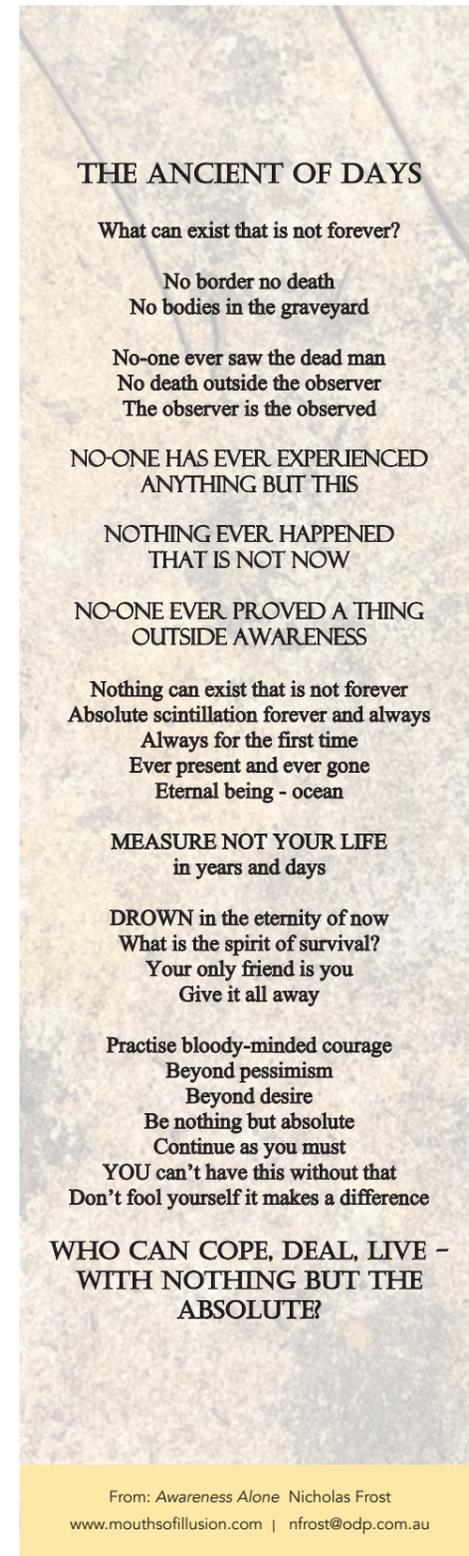
**BEYOND THE ILLUSION
OF MOUTHS**

LIES THE SILENCE

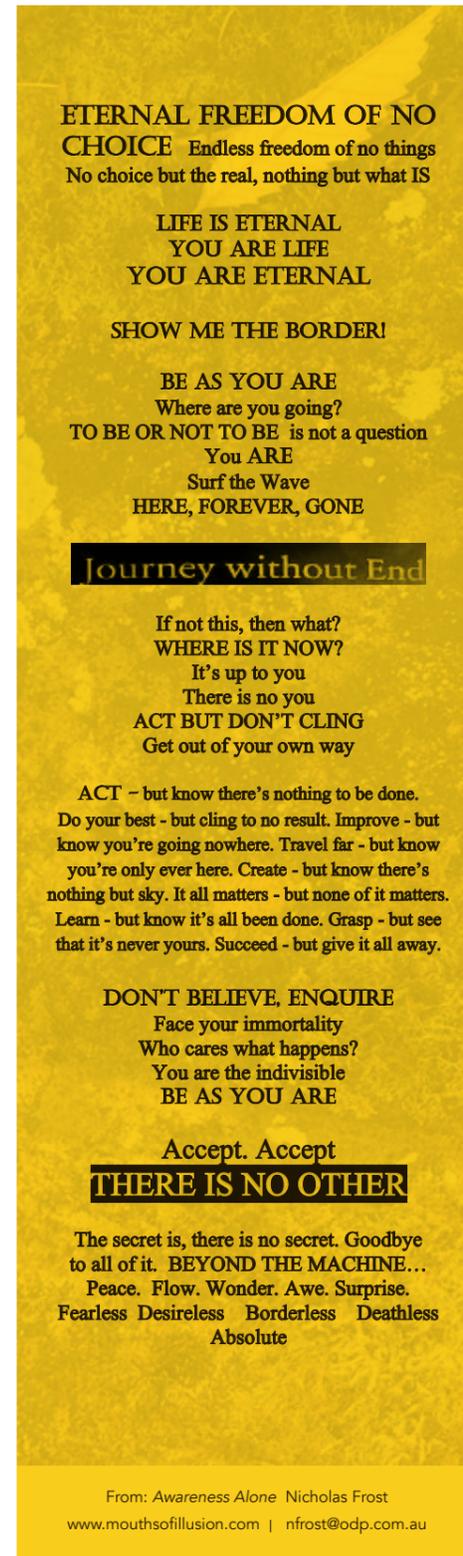
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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 15



“FRONT”



“BACK”

BOOKMARK 16

...And there is nothing more death-ghostly than our longing to retrieve what is called past - as if we wished the winds of a thousand years to REPATRIATE THE LEAVES OF A RAGGED TREE on a winter plain that is now dust or the ether of comets, or as if we wished a surge of water that ENVELOPED A FISH IN ECSTASY TEN BILLION YEARS AGO could somehow reshape and recreate itself exactly and minutely as it did... or was said to have done, or might be said to have done, once and once only in A UNIQUE EXPATIATION OF PARTICULATE ATOMS... but that it as if sported and flaunted and laughed at itself because it knew as it did so, that it *never* was what it was, could never in fact ever be so, and was not even conscious that its INSOUCIANT SUPPLE LAUGHTER AND SPORT would haunt a seer from the utter future who might dream to recreate in his mind a thing he could not possibly know ever was, to conjure again a **thing that might have been, once, once...**

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“FRONT”

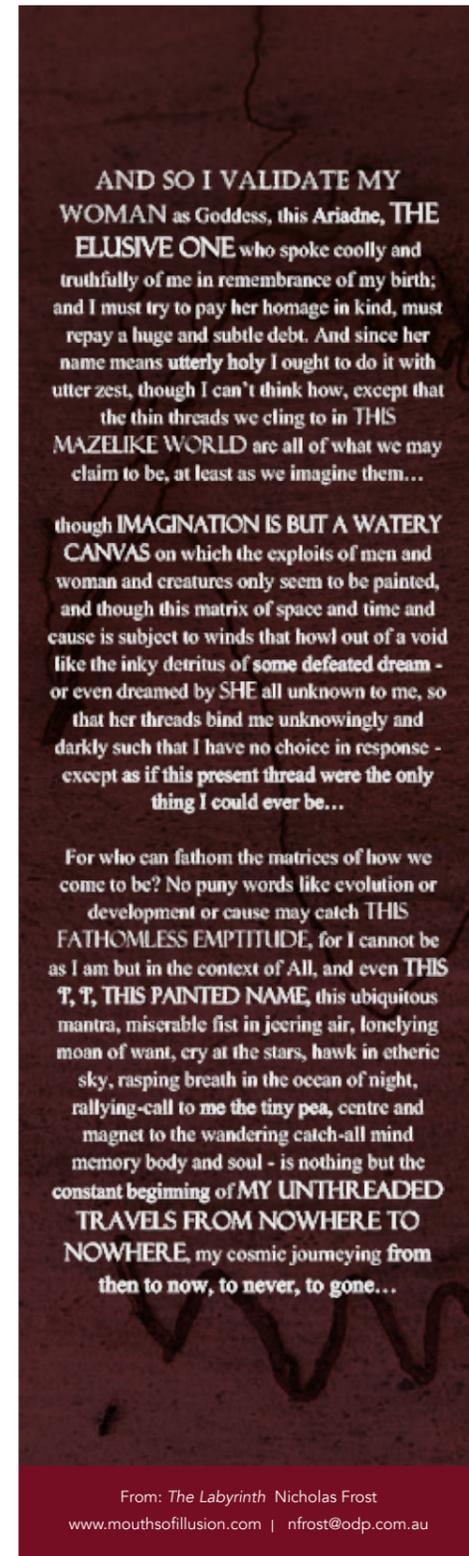
PERSONAL HISTORY IS NOTHING BUT NEUROSIS, and a fact is nothing but a fetish wrapped in a gristle of years, of sour sorrow and wanting and failure, of **This might have been...** and **How could this be so?** There is no clean fact but that which is embryoned by the filthy smells of history, the dung and the bad breath of a thousand mortal thoughts, the pant-pissing sweat of the condemned, the erection-creamed delight of the persecutors. And the etheric wars, the pasting of your sins on the skies of deeper mental worlds, **the splattering of your evil on the vaults of the spirit**, and the chain gangs of unquiet ghosts who live again the sweated horror and machination and detritus of the soap-opera world past: here are the **indelible prints of the wrestlings of races**, the insurmountable stains of the graspings of ordinary ones who lived and lost and died in holocausts, in the scum-tides of fortune, in the **raked bonefields of wars, in the blood rivers of falsified hope** - and in the mousy scrablblings of the peace, peace that fell upon us out of exhaustion and luck, seen only by half-alive ones who dodged the bullets of others, who greased into this future out of cracks and shitholes of the past, who now stem their **guilt and shame with elixirs of purpose and deserving**, of family and renewal and hoping, in a better Germany, in a brave new world where men might be human again, under skies somehow made pure again...

Can we weave simplicity out of a basket of **sorrow-threads**, wash a bedsheet clean white from black waters? Can you get sweet youth back, when youth was dragged away by jackbooted men, or turn about the fuming bull of history with an anaemic wave of a **knotty blue-veined hand?**

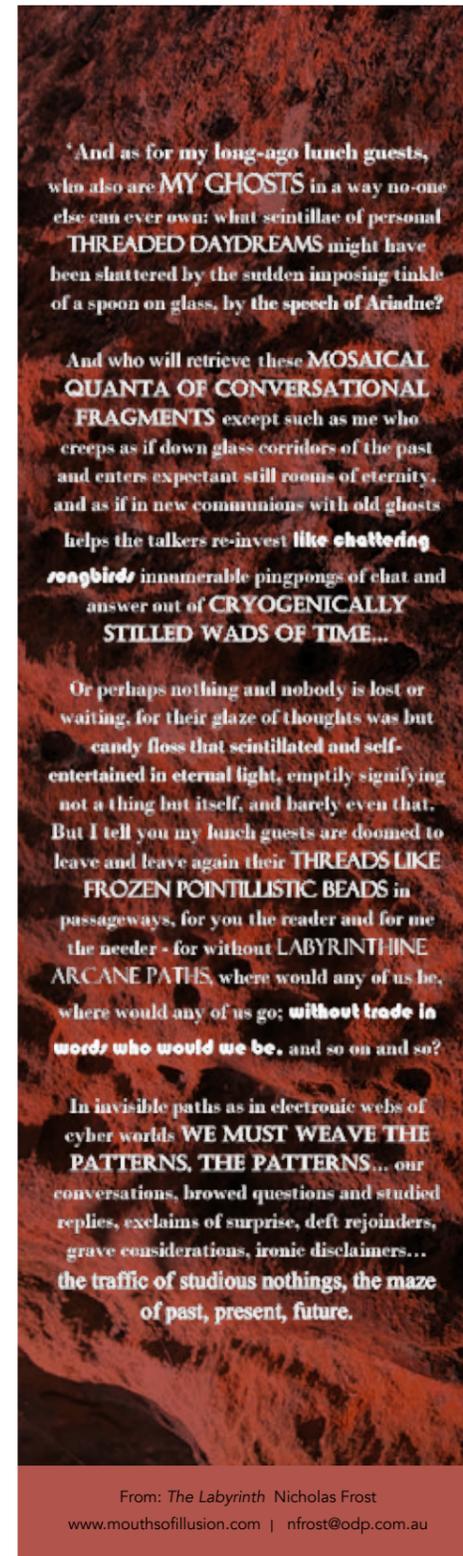
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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 17

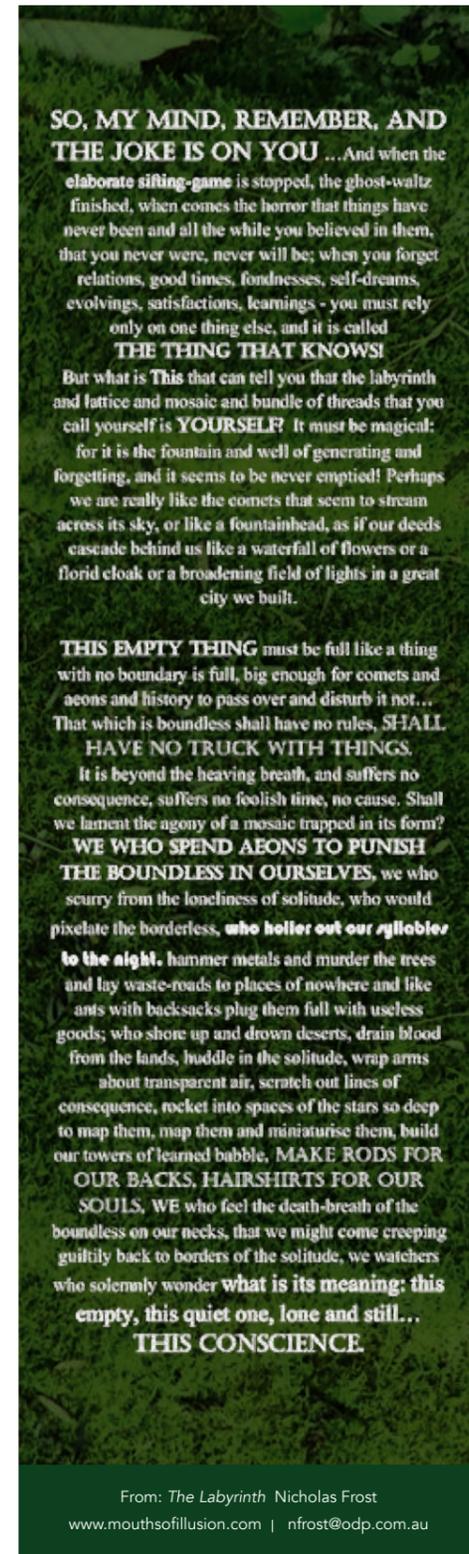


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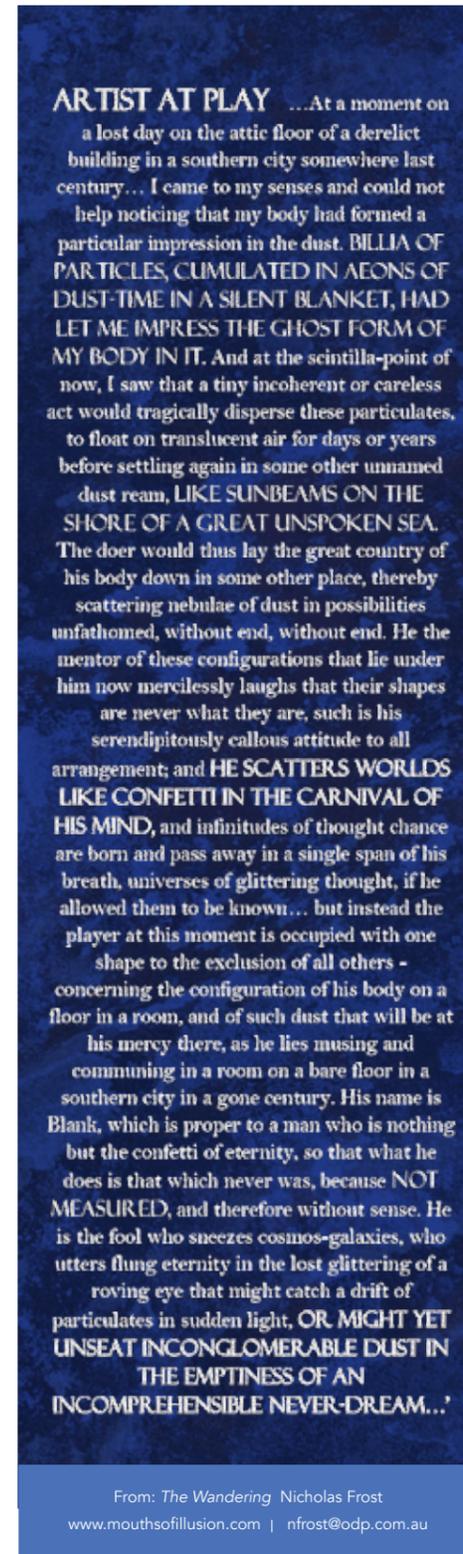


“BACK”

BOOKMARK 18



“FRONT”



“BACK”

BOOKMARK 19

FAR BELOW, A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, there had been a gate and a shingle road that ended in a field.

I had stood still and seen the mountains tower beyond. I saw the peak called **Aspiring** hide itself coyly behind a footstool massif. There was no choice but to walk up into the loneliness. On the brown upland of this mountainside, I am nestled in dew-stained tussocks, their frond-heads swaying and stuttering under mournful wind that combs my skin and eyes.

Melancholy sunlight glitters in the dew, and white spider funnels nestle in the thickets. Far on, the wild bottom of the world merges in indefinite sky, signalling 'no return to the realm of women and men'. A skeletal tree in front of me bares itself to sun and wind, and a lone spider weaves its threads inside a fork. The web sways lightly in polar wind that suffuses its delicate dew-water, before turning to mystery in yellow light. The inhabitant of HER AIRY LABYRINTH clings on. She is Arachne, the weaver. For whom does she weave in these lone realms? Only for me.

From: *The Labyrinth* Nicholas Frost
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“FRONT”

MY ANCESTOR was a master of merchant ships that carried slaves from place to place to sustain the British conquest-empire, and it was the economic strivings of others that let him float near-poetically on **the postponements and avoidances of his life** - though life at sea is not easy, and he well knew the continual grind and clatter and moan and hustle of wind in rigging, slurp of heavy water against the hull, continual bubbling unstableness and frantic adjustment to

wave and wind and storm followed by featureless **TIME WASTE IN BLUE GREY WORLDS WHERE SEA AND SKY MEET TO COLLUDE AGAINST YOUR MIND LIKE A WHISKY SANDWICH AT MIDDAY**, like the press of amnesia and slow swallowing of hopes... And in the ocean's cruel monotony there is no time, only **the laughing bay of nightstars**, only the tugging of the incessant wind (your lifeblood), only the bobbing of a matchstick ship on the shrugging sea where all nature laughs at you since **YOU ARE A PINPRICK, A DOLT** who thinks he has a right to share in the unconquerable rites of overwhelming nature, who claims to spectate at the millioning power of sun and wind and billowing water on the skin-surface of a great wide planet **IN THE SEA-BLACK CRADLE OF THE UNIVERSE**. What are you? **You are a man?** But all this solitude makes a little man laugh as well, because **HE IS THE GIFT, THE JEWEL IN THE LIFE**, the spectator-seer of it all - though his body may shudder and fall to davy jones' locker under the very next flicker-wave that broadsides his puny ship.

From: *The Wandering* Nicholas Frost
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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 20

FIVE HUNDRED CLOCKS

Unknown reader, imagine there are five hundred clocks in a still room and every one is ticking. And as we listen (there is no escape, even for an instant)

they seem to form sonic shapes wherein the individual ticks lose themselves in A SIGH, A BIG SIGHING WIND, and they seem to take the shape of the mind, a mind surrendering to the shape of a big sighing wind or a steady swish of a broom that might SWEEP THE BITTY WORLD CLEAN, or the flush of a river gouging its hours and years as if the peace of the sea were somewhere, somewhere to be wished for... Yet here is the sea, right in this room, and now we drown in its soundwinds, its ticking alarmless tick... and suddenly, they lose their crushing togetherness for a moment, these lonely clocks, before

THEY COLLUDE AGAIN, AND THE HYPNOSIS COMES AGAIN, and we are lost again in the crush, the rush, the cloudy belting rhythm of the shoosh shoosh shoosh. Just so, the tick of time is our REFUGE FROM THE REAL. Under it we claim to be victims, automatic beings, functionaries in a great shovelling evildom under the manic laughter of god, and thereby we require no conscience, none at least that tells us we are blessed nothings and therefore incapable of harm, that we are innocent like children, that blood is pure.

Under time there is no silence, but A MUTE DISSIDENT CONSCIENCE LURKING RED-EYED IN THE DARK. Instead we are reminded of heartbeats, thudding looms of them, thousands of bloodbeats that enter here, in this room, and are dragged out by their heels again, and whose heads are lead-dead, who now are scoffed at by THE DOUR INDIFFERENCE OF A COUNTRY'S COLD-NUMB AGONY.

And the only sound to be had is the satisfied scratch and scribble of a pen on paper or the tappy tap of a typist's confirmation - some booted little gnome somewhere in the cavern of rooms, marking the satisfied closure of a sticky matter. And once the red dribbles have been all hosed away, it is time for appetite, time for lunch. A good morning's work, for the sake of the tranquility of the State.

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The heart beats on... **IN THE SILENCE OF THESE LOWER ROOMS** I often have the thought that behind every beat is emptiness... and then I wait for the beat to come and there it is, and it is as if the heartbeat slows and slows until it seems there will never be another beat ascending out of the silence, no signal from the blackness-sea, no starburst in the raw-cold unending space. This is the fickle moment where I almost laugh... yet am shiveringly afraid, for now **the heartbeat chooses or not to come again**. And I share it with you, whoever you are, and even though the heartbeat and therefore life is inexorable, it is shrouded **in silence that we can only call eternity, since it is not death**, not death, wherefrom the heartbeat may never come again but yet is *written* to come again, as if a pact had been made at the beginning of the world, **a pact between the silence and the drum**, wherein all futures were written so that they play their tunes and drumbeats till the end of time that never ends...

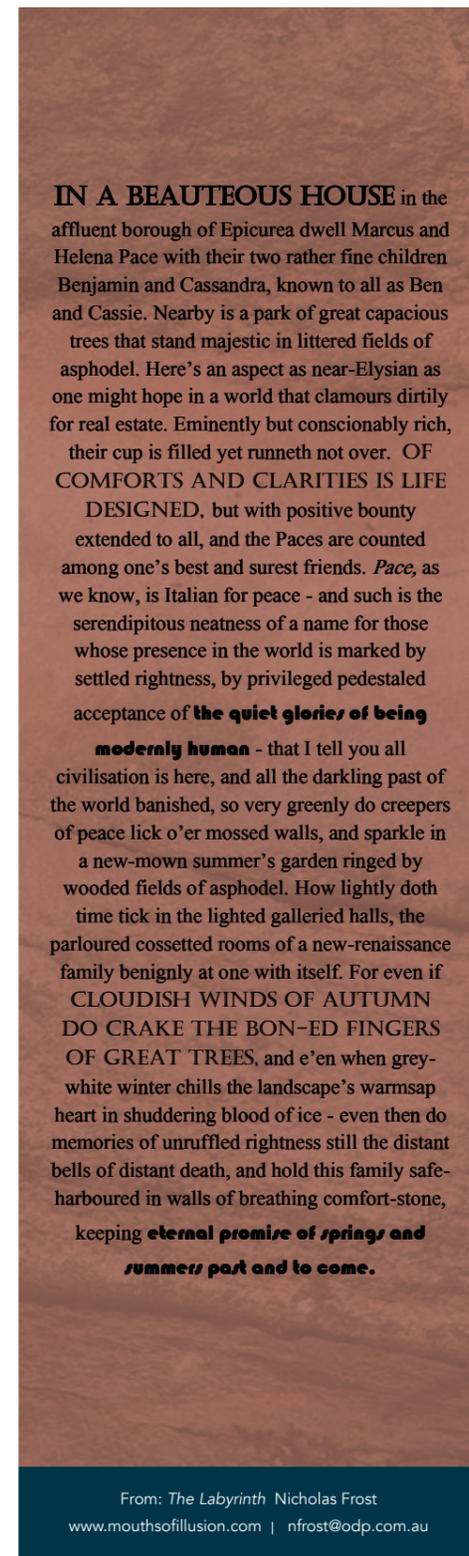
Be not afraid, a voice whispers from the sliming walls: you are here forever. Be afraid, it whispers again - you are here forever! And if we are to die many times, so many times that our deaths are lost even to the memory of the soul - then what of our present death, and our present life, if this presence can be called such, in this vault of eternity whereby the moments and minutes tick away **under the beck of the pulse, the pulse**, this thing that is born and dies in the instant and in its death is born... There are no landmarks for us! The demise of the body by a bullet to the skull is nothing since this is the way of the world. The bubbling of blood from the fleshy mound on the floor is nothing since **this is the way of all rivers of the world**. The silencing of the heart at the core of the body's empire is nothing, since here is exactly the silent eternity between every beat of the heart. These momentous events, they are nothing! These signposts and milestones and memorials and fullstops and ceremonies and passings away and recitals of liturgies, these corpse-dumpings from vans, these brutal rituals of burial in **the cloddy snows, in the skirt-wastes of the motherland** - these are nothing. REALLY NOTHING.

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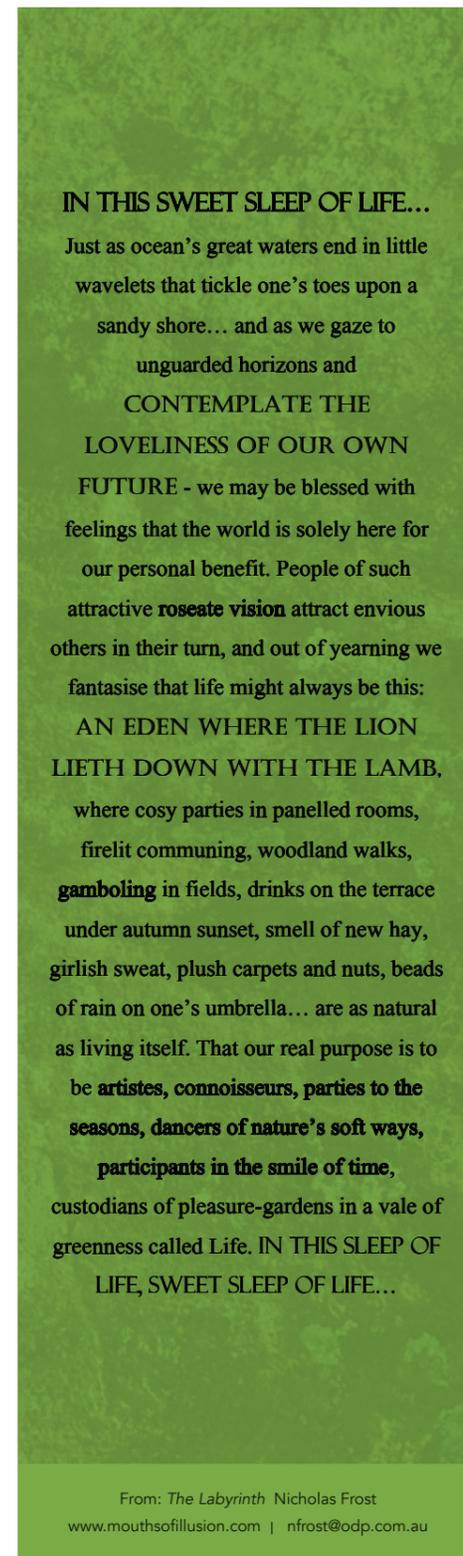
“FRONT”

“BACK”

BOOKMARK 21



“FRONT”



“BACK”

BOOKMARK 22

OUT ON THE OILY RIVER

we venture at dawn with a boatman, and mists flutter inches above water that seems to breathe them as lung threads of its vaporous organism. The yankee pastor sits, a wry buddha. *I ain't meditating just chillin'*. Detritus soft-bumps our hull: cows, intact monkeys, people parts... mingling with **ASH OF BODIES SHREDDED IN FIRE** and frittered outward in languishing waters... waters that merge in mud-black shoreline as if there's no handhold, no future... rather a muddy shroud spread over the corpse of the will, the corpse of all clean sanctity in this clouded miasma of living. The river to me is like oilical **SHIMMERS OF NEVERNESS**, beyond meaning or human life. Where is rest for any of us? Not at the borders of our skin. The boatman took our coins with a little bow of his head, and the tooth-gap smile said it was a privilege, not business.

But here... the **LUGUBRIOUS INDETERMINATE SOUPY SKEINS** of land and sea and sky are **THE COILING OF NOTHINGNESS ON ITSELF**, as if it lingers in a shrug of quiescent meandering dreaming without care or consequence. Who on earth do you claim to be? it whispers. You are all of this ash and waters, and the spell and smell and blue green mud and slow flood of murky light and **MIST WITHOUT END**. You are all eternity, and **YOU ARE OPAQUE.**

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“FRONT”

In the Greek summer, **I HAD A VISION OF THE FIBRES OF THE SEA.** In the full blaze of sun the moon's deep work was deftly done. I'd left my home on a one-way journey to another kind of country: one of growing up, of leaving the past: 'where hills rise in front of you and the road falls away behind, where the carpet of flowers of your personal life is conjured as you walk and as in a dream disappears the moment your attention turns from it'. This country is a road in twilight, a green hill in distance, reverent bower of poplars, row of pots on a wall, blush of bougainvillea in the clasp of **soft wind and sun**, telephone wires that keep you company as you dip-surge along the road in your car. And you are the actor, the tourist who sees **HOW BORDERS FALL AWAY** because you moved on and left them, how they had no option but to die at your neglect. **This your country is no country at all**, since borders are mere lines of the mind and passports are silly books with photos in them, and ethnic divisions are turgid chapters in **some book called me and mine and you and yours**. And now I see why a **nomad** is the bastard child of civilisation; the gypsy, the tuareg, the jew - a border-eating threat to fenced farms and streets and clans. But if you don't mind being a moneyed tourist, happy to gawk at fenced-in places others covet as home, then you might fool yourself you are happy. Be happy then. The sun is shining and you are in Greece! But such a land of antiquity is a dream-escape, so **THIS SUNDRENCHED LAND IS A MAGNET FOR THE LONELY...**

On the late afternoon beach at Nauplion, with ruined castle at back and Joni Mitchell's *The moon's a harsh mistress* on the Ipod, I had a vision of the underbelly of the sea. It was as if the waters coalesced in fibres like hair, and all the fibres were one fibre, inextricably full and muscular and undulating **LIKE A SEA-WOMAN'S THICK HAIR**. And the glitter on the sea danced in unison with it like **FRESH JUICE OF LIGHT-DELIGHT**. I pinched and slapped myself, alone on that pebble-beach and still the numinous vision would not fade. It was the fibres, those indestructible fibres that lingered, that eternal underbelly. It was unforgettable. We are the soul of interconnectedness, they said. **THERE IS NOWHERE THAT IS NOT THE SEA. THEY SAID.**

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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 23

OPEN SPRING SKIES CONVERGE on the tip of the horizon road, inviting the two to drive forever. The glistening bowl of sea to their left, its endless breakers clawing the gleaming coast as if to beg the future, Won asks Sal to stop - which she does on a rise overlooking a silver curl of beach. Now Won with no words exits the car, starts down the dunes and onto the sand. Sal watches from the height as **THE LONE FIGURE, HER LACE-FORM TRACING THE STRAND**, disrobes piece by piece and steps toward the surf. She stops not at all, and the greening white surge beckons her into its maw. Won's arms are spread as if in bridal supplication, her hair a flag to the wind.

Sally Bang is slow to comprehend the unfolding suicide - but when she does she flings her body downward through the dense consuming dune: lurching, sliding, throws herself across the yawning beach and into the spray-sea that's **SWALLOWING HER SISTER-SOUL**. The curling tops come crashing: a rip pulls her sidelong as she claws at the form of Won who makes no investment in her body or breath. Sally wrenches at her, catches the neck: the naked form slips away! Sal lunges again, this time an arm: her lung-breath is water and she's screaming **WON come back come back don't do this I need you come with me. But THE GIRL HAS LIQUID EYES THE TEXT OF GLISTENING WATER**, hands of foam she makes no moan and baleful feeds the deep...

Now Sal has gripped her, pulls her throat, and several times they drown together 'fore Sally drags her onto sand then drops on top, her lungs a galloping chaos in the pouring wind - which tugs at their sodden forms lying under inhuman sea-foam. **TWO HUMAN SPECKS on a desert coast. THE ECHOING WIND, THE CREEPING TIDE, SUCKS CLEAN.**

From: *The Elusive: Three Novellas* Nicholas Frost
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SAL DRIVES, NOT CARING WHICH DIRECTION. Her driving's rough and basic anyway. At times she goes reckless fast, at others she crawls as if to spare the insects. They abandon main roads for the inland and the country turns lonely, scrubby, nondescript. She pays no heed to sign nor civilisation. It's as if there's no-one else in the car, as Won has withdrawn into a semi-sleep or trance. At a lone gas station she takes on junk supplies, fills the tank, talks to no-one. It's as if she wants to lose the thread, drive to the moon. **In the noon-day glare red dust cakes the car, seems to hang in curtains about skeletal trees**, rises like a shroud behind them on the metal road. At a comfort stop she watches over Won who crouches in the dust without dignity. Her pale effluent makes a little stream in the dirt. She inhumanly spits. Sal is grimly lost. She told them AIDS - should anyone believe it? The red ants swarm about her feet. The car's a monster, metallic-heavy by the roadside. She wants to walk into the scrub, forget. She does it finally; **cicadas rattle and hum in the secret places**. Crowds in, this tempting empty loneliness. She's gone for a time she can't recall, as if the dreamtime. Stumbles back in panic, lost then found. Won is lying by the wheel. She stares ahead as if her girl had never gone away. Now Sally puts her face into the sun and looks at nothing. She lies down in the road. No vehicle comes. She sinks into a dream. The heat and dust are cradling her, and ants negotiate her disparate parts. She peers into the bowl of sky and finds some clouds to mesmerise her by. **Let the war be over**, give me peace. For corpse-like Sally lies like Tolstoy's hero, lost at Borodino. The clouds resolve themselves according to her mind, their shapes assembling life that's gone and done. **Her future reconciled, her past a story, romance lost, no battle glory.** Forget and leave this earthly. Let it be. Let me be. ...Sal discovers she's been dead asleep. She finds her body in the road. She rises, looks. The shadows of the trees have lengthened, the car sits heavy in yellow sun. There's grit in her nostrils, sand in her hair. And Won is not there. Sal hurries to the left, then right. **But Won is in the forest by a white tree. She is studying a gumnut in her fingers.** Look, she breathes, as Sal comes up. Here is the universe, and this is me. They stare together. The insects make their rustle all about. Won takes her hand. Together they listen. **THE WEIGHT OF THE VAST CONTINENT HOLDS THEM** in its timeless afternoon. Now descends the embrace of eternity. Here is the still end of it all. **This is all there ever was, is, or ever will be.**

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“FRONT”

“BACK”

BOOKMARK 24

THE GOOD WIFE told JP she was coming to his place at St Kilda. It's a Sunday. The dude, being a controlled yogi was still arranging which hairs to leave on his designer stubble when Sal slipped in. Twenty-somethings always need to impress the teens. So Sal kisses him on the mouth abruptly first. Admires his ear stud then roots out his tea collection and makes a pot. She **SERVES HIM TEA ORIENTAL-STYLE**, precise and neat then announces she's Hungry, ransacks his cupboards, takes over his kitchen. All macrobiotic! she says. No worries, I've seen *worse*. Concocts her messy lentil curry and prattles at speed 'bout all and sundry, and he's required to thank her for the victuals which are not too shabby served in his beautiful blue bowls with sticks. And by now **HES SAGELY LEARNED TO KEEP SHTUM** and eat his rice and nod and drink his tea, the Buddha with his faithful woman running rings around his house. Shall we go to church? she offers. No I'm serious! There's a nice Catholic one down the street. They're serving god at 4 pm. I like those hymns and things, don't you? Sure do, he says, convinced she's gone quite mad. She chooses his shoes from a rack by the door, straightens his hair and off they go, his arm in her fawning vice grip. She even manages to whistle. The service goes too long; oddly they enjoy it. The married couple steps outside to take the air. She leads him to the promenade. **IT'S STILL AND COOL, THE SUN IS SWEET AND LOW.** Their shadows reach beyond the world. And for a moment Sal actually wonders if it could really be like this. Winter romance, rugs and home, he and me... slow-burning love, quiet suburb by the sea, the end of life, the frozen future visioned at its start. **ROMANCE OF LIFES EVENING, EXECUTED EXQUISITELY BY THE YOUNG.** She lets him buy her coffee and cake at a place of her choosing. She likes (she says) to observe the people, passers-by. Talks of higher things, of Michelangelo, and a book by Kerouac which makes her dream of the Road. To get away, be the person you need to be. Don't you think? He agrees. His eyes are misting over now. She secretly sees. She leads him home. She dabbles with his oriental music then abruptly says she's off, her *friends* await. She leaves him at the door, he ironically applauds. **SHE GRINS IN TRIUMPH AND SWINGS OFF DOWN HIS PATH, SWEET BACKSIDE PROMINENT.**

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“FRONT”

AND AT LENGTH THERE'S A CEREMONY WHERE A CAKE IS CUT in a flurry of flashing snaps and apparently people think I'm a jolly good fellow since they sing it out loud, more for their paramours I suspect than for me. I find I'm the centre of a thousand poses, and people are getting friendly friendly. Now it's darkening out, and terrace lights come on. **There's a girl I know...** I think she's called Lucinda, holding onto Tessa's big man, and a fuzzy guy called Solomon who's cavorting with shady Lilian... And poor dear Romy, swaying swaying wivout no partner at all. Dazed, distracted, she **did some crime 'cause something oozes from her skin in the hubris sublime.** And the Uni types and the gang-ho rowdies, and the fluttery elder dowdies with their in-laws and out-laws, all the shiny reckless people, myriad colours on their ripe-tripe faces, rolled liquor in their eyes, are dancing **IN A BACCHANALIAN CONFAB OF LUST AND THROWAWAY LIES.** For gapey happiness never dies, it's what we're living living for, on our boozy oozy dance floor, on and on through the **arcadian night.** I just got married.

To what?

LIFE IS EMBARRASSING.

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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 25

Lucinda drags her spirit together at breakfast and adopts a tragic poise and sublimity I can only marvel at. Then she's gone: A TRAGIC WALK ON CLIFFS IN THE GREY WIND. Saul comes, sees my winded look, tells me to forget the whole thing. *Bloody women. What hope have we got?* And where is Claudia? *Hanged herself with a bit of luck.* I grin heartily; so does he. Gallows humour from the dour prof! I love where the great are fallen. It relieves me, don't feel so alone. Because you see, **I suspect with tongueless horror that life is a serious deadly affair** where we all will dwindle and fail: those outsiders and victims who hopeless stare at their demise out of ROUNDED RABBIT EYES in the traps and dens and hovels and streets and palaces, in the flotsam of war and HUMAN FOOLERY AND POMPOUS GRANDEUR AND WANTING, ten thousand centuries of sufferings, a billion stories buried in the instants and tides of time, the blunderings, grievings, longings, stupid mistakes. **And me? I claim to avoid all that.** Solve the human dilemma, stay untouched! And nothing is beyond cost. **My unholy vanity leaves me breathless.** I tilt at the tides of suffocating *care*, scoff in the face of *effort*, fool myself I won't and don't suffer, cling to the notion of Beyond. **And fear most of all... that I'm not special, that I may be a fool.**

On the moor, Lucinda is not far. IN THE GREY MORNING WIND, ROAMY SEAS ARE BELOW HER. I sit beside. - I went to see the Asian girl. She's going to fail, likely die. Saul wanted to go but couldn't. Miki was a real thing for him. She's a part of me too, a too bloody big part. But I can tell you, because **your round eyes will always haunt me, Lucy Lucinda.** She faces outward, never looks. Did she hear, in this wind? Quietly step away: **surprised at myself.**

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“FRONT”

THERE ARE THINGS IN LIFE I SAGELY KNOW ARE BEYOND MY KEN. Mind you, if I write about 'em, how would they be? My ego is sticking forks in but I'll have to **let Lucinda become special to me, on a pedestal once and for all,** otherwise all our previous angst will be wasted. Reader, you surely didn't think I don't want to reform, not be other than the curmudgeon I present to you! If you cut me do I not bleed? D'you know how it hurts to play cuttingly ironic devil's advocate? And **WITHOUT MY SMUG CLEVER RAFT OF EVASIONS,** how could we 'ave had a story anyway? Can't expect me to change all at once. **I'm invested in my lack of investment.** Give me another century. And should my epistle contain 'character development', 'journey', 'happy ending'? I tell you life's never that. We serendipitously take on this and that along the way and meanwhile **OUR FAMILIAR PARTS OSSIFY, DROWN IN BUCKETS OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION.**

What parts? Attention-seeker who craves validation! Righteous critic of the human bullshit game! Scoffer at tradition and intellect. Sexist who parodies sexism, **NARCISSIST IN HIS BUBBLE,** self-sorry manipulating egotist whose self-put-down is pre-emptive defence; booster of outsiders 'cause himself is ignored, ironic actor hypnotised in his own play, fool taunting at others' foolery, dupe who can't decide whether he's ironical or
romantical...

BLAAA. ALL THESE. NO CHANGE.

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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 26

FRANCESCA MARS TAKES OVER. AS POWERFUL GIRLS MIGHT.

I am installed in her little sitting room, and she leans on the door jamb and looks at me and I feel like a spare prick at someone's wedding. My gaze slips down her jean leg that ends in a tunnel.

Look at her eyes... and there's the hint of A PLEA UNVOICED, AS IF A WILD SKATING RAMPAGE - then an upper-lip curl of irony that segues to a blush in her blossom cheek, then a far off wide-eyed question I could never answer... until the brittle power gaze settles again. All this in five cavernous seconds.

And I see how grief and rage, poverty and littleness and hopeless hope HAVE FURROWED THE SEAS OF HER EYES THESE PAST WEEKS - grey waves, winter seas, hourly and momentarily in circus parade or stomping nightmare; all the turgid hours of loneliness. And how she'd have cried for someone to take it away from her if she weren't so sensible, but fears no-one will come - so, busily lest they see her grief, shrouds herself in sternness... which SHRIVELS AGAIN LIKE

PAPER RICE when **absurd little hops and shuffles on her crutch** betray her embarrassing living loss. Thus the eyes of Francesca Mars GLEAM OUT OF THE NORTH LIKE THE VIKING WARRIOR GOD WHO CROSSED SEAS, LAUGHED AT STORMS, stared down horizon waves... yet somewhere in port A CHILD STUTTERS FOR THE HAND OF KINDNESS **and the fatherly caress of peace.**

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THEY TOOK HER LEFT FOOT OFF IN THE NIGHT.

Francesca Mars is officially incomplete and the bumptious press splash it, feeding voyeurs' ten-second attention-pang. I hate 'em. Next night I follow Lena to the Split bar. Days pass. I can't erase the braided visage on that pillow. Time and again her big eyes will open out of sleep, **WONDER AT SOMETHING ENORMOUS, FALL**

BACK TO A VOID. Outside, a rump of wind shoves the city trees. What's beauty where it only used to be? When her body slips away there'll be whiteness... she'll exist like that, float outside responsibility of a life, above the blue earth, gazing on old spheres that now seem so silly. But when the spidery world encroaches, her troubles will clamour in: the drug of unattachment will wear off. Can't play any more the fields of possibility and push, irony, youth, posturing, childishness. The future yawns, and over the horizon **LIKE THE SLOW**

TRUNDLING THREAT OF A GREAT HERD OF BEASTS, when the tremors of her End rustle the nerves at her fingertips, she'll know the wild nameless Hope she used to have is gone. And her grinding work will begin: to keep the spirit inside the flesh. She'll need a husband. It's going to be me.

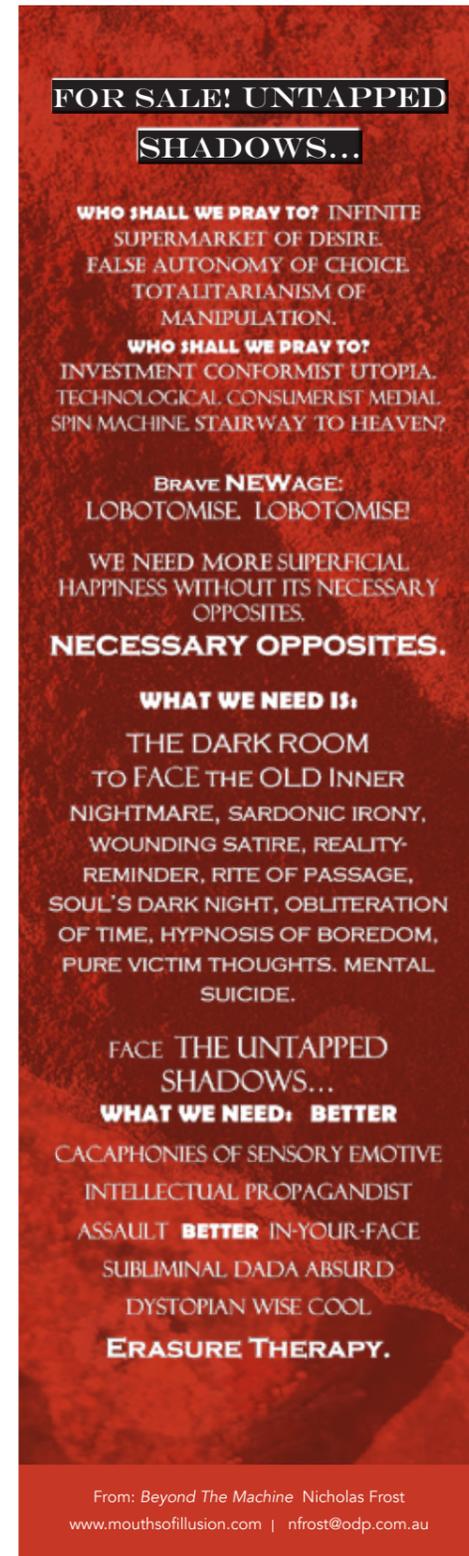
We enter and she is sitting up. At the bed end a single bump under the cover. White smock, estuary of hair. **Lady Shalott in her boat, drifting in a river.** We sit on either side. She says: 'an old man came and talked to me. He lost his wife. He told me to shine again since I was an angel, and I told him I would, but now *I'm not at all sure*'. I see a rim of tears ripple, patter on the snows of her face. **SHE SWALLOWS - AND THE EYES STAY OPEN.** She will not stand atop the mountain so soon, but water valleys below. Lena brought a bunch of yellow flowers. Can't ignore *them*, Francesca says. I've stacked a phone with classic works. Choose your mood: slash wrists, melancholic, heroic, peace, clear thought, classic temple, surging seas, holiness... Mars looks at me. I witness deserts and skies in her planet eyes. I pray it won't age her, make her hard. I laugh, but she and Lena don't laugh. They're holding hands, as girls do better than boys. I feel like a stranger. We're all strangers to Francesca Mars **UNLESS INVITED, INVITED INTO HER RUINED HOUSE.**

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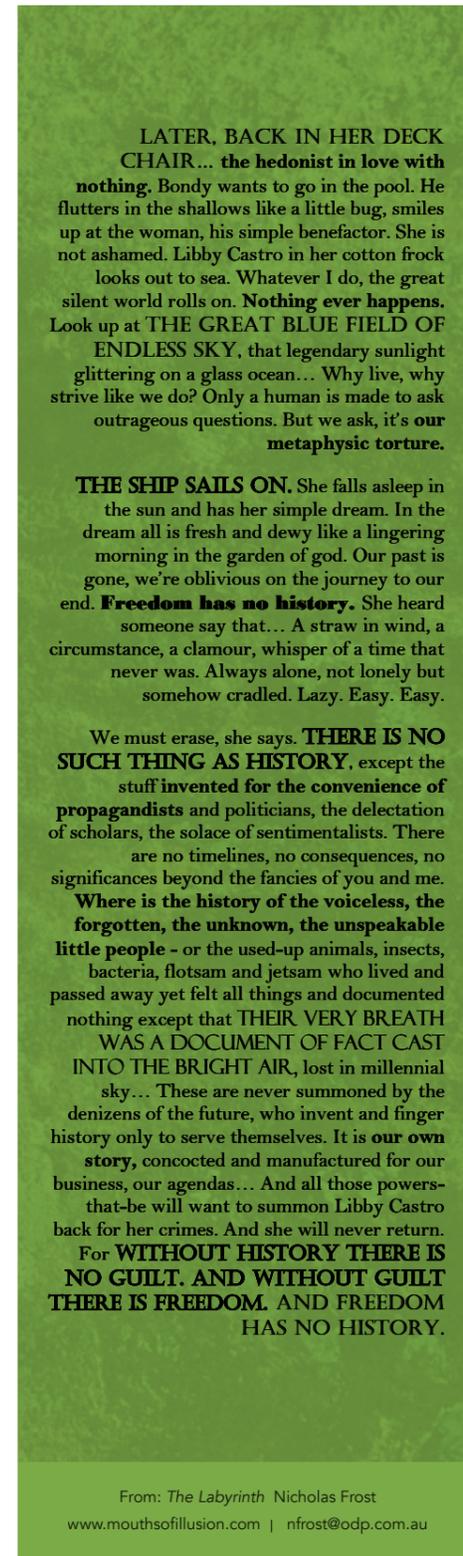
“FRONT”

“BACK”

BOOKMARK 27



“FRONT”



“BACK”

BOOKMARK 28

Surface Paradise Visible for unbroken miles on a great arc of coast stretching north and south, the clustering skyscrapers of Queensland's Gold Coast thrust upward in audacious hope. Their sandy roots grasp at the cusp of land and sea and sky, and crinkling strangely in their walls of mirror glass are yellow-blue bands of strand and sea. **Their climax of hope** comes all at once, and behind is an unclimax of water-suburbs, nestling flatly amid canals and inlets, replete with subtropic palms of lucent green that flutter in ample Queensland sun - each with a little village of smooth pink roads and calming humps, cake-and-coffee shop, plump office of real estate. **Deep sleep suburbs** and no city in sight, a great body without a head. Here the folks come **to live their long late afternoon**, to hunker down to life beyond the old struggle pits of sweat and need and false hope - those things that happened before we made it, before we entered lucky-country heaven while still on earth. At the boat harbour, **tethered white hulls sleekly tilt and drift on imperceptible tides**. They never leave shore. Golf links greenly breathe in yellow private sun. Avenues of Hollywood palms, their serrated pineapple trunks curling upward in **California movie dreams**, bring the nostalgia of maritime and sunlit places, the feeling that there never was a place or time not like this, where we retreat into child days of sand and loafers, leathery tans and carefree tennis, salad and terrace drinks. And at day's end we gaze out at white birds wheeling and diving for fish under a dream-orange purple sunset **on a darkening glitter sea**. This, in our last few clustered years, is **the timeless heaven of reward**.

From: *The Wandering* Nicholas Frost
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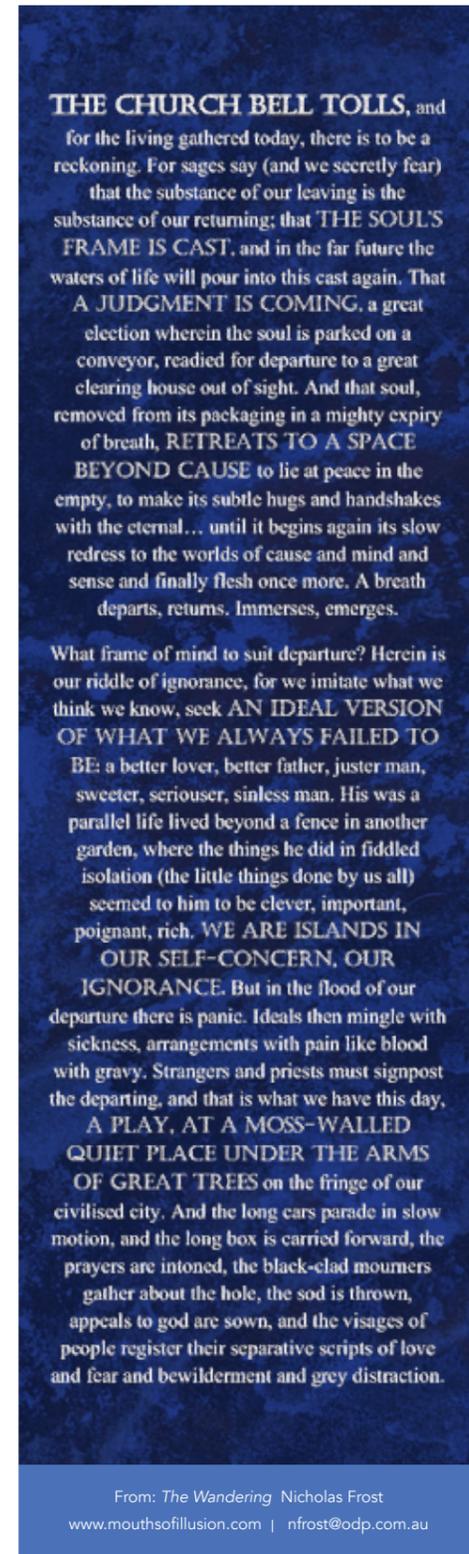
“FRONT”

On the beachfront at midday I watch the faces of Indian or Muslim tourists hovering over the strand, sporting their unbeachy bling and their button-eyed kids, and I see in their eyes a familiar gleam: the legendary golden strand at Surfers' Paradise! Their expressions signal a kind of arrival; **the brochures didn't lie!** They drink the blue with their eyes, gaze left and right down the duned arc of coast before turning to goggle at **blue towers that dream glassily over the mirror ocean**. At last, the arrivistes whisper, the gate to a dream we always lived in the wanting of it. There is nowhere else to ever go, all other places are erased for this is paradise... a promise that things might always be this, **in perpetual sun under perpetual sky**, the green gleaming breakers surging and curling on the yellow strand at our feet, **a sketch of eternity by the shores of a great sea**, our little chance to believe we're a thing that matters, creatures at peace, that our short days in the sun are really eternal days and fruitful-filled. Heaven is really a place, a place where nothing need happen ever again. We render quiet applause to those who made it. No cause for envy, we all can make it! The great sentinel towers call to us, **we denizens, who gather behind in lower green heavens, invest our careful moneyed life, pass on, unperceptible and undisturbed**.

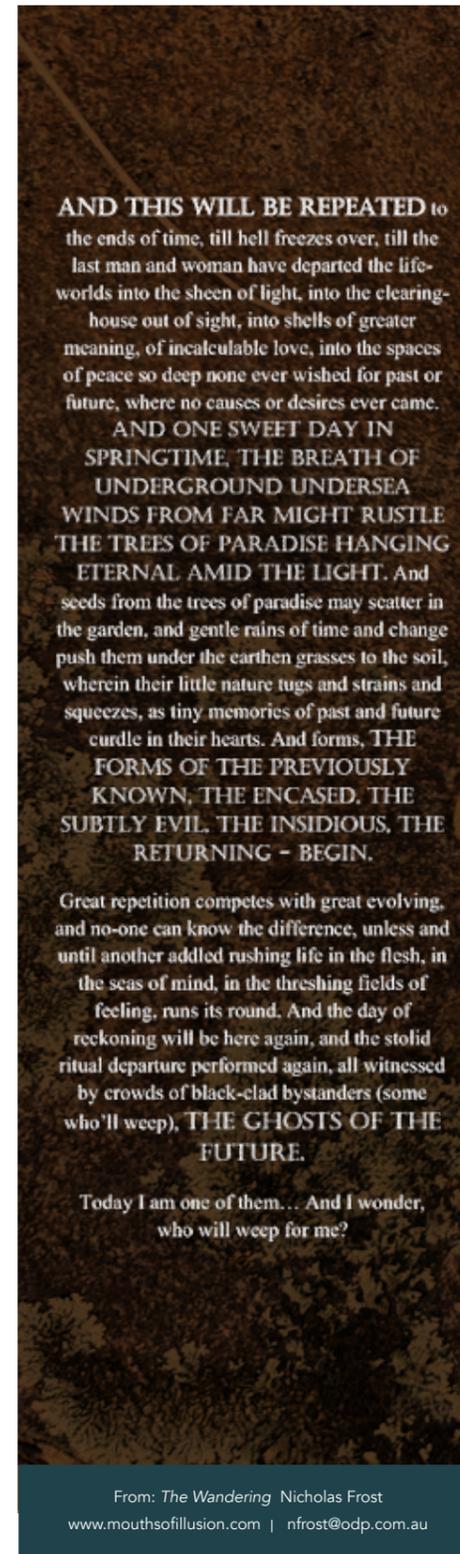
From: *The Wandering* Nicholas Frost
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“BACK”

BOOKMARK 29



“FRONT”



“BACK”

BOOKMARK 30

'ONCE UPON A FOREVER TIME
in a forever beginning, **an inconceivable**
Emperor conjures out of himself
THE OTHER. Willing a guileful
forgetting in his own heart, the Emperor
says 'Can there be oneness without parts,
light without darkening, emperor without
dominions? In me is the source of all
streams that flow forever, and I **am**
inexplicable power, pulsing energy, light
that thickens, conjuror of name, atom,
time, space. I am all creatures of the
darkening, the maker of relationship and
cause and effect, of ALL JOURNEYS
BACK TO THE HEART. I initiate the
unstoppable descent into fiction, and just
as **in the beginning was the word and the**
word was with god, so through language as
name and form I generate all that can be
grasped. I **create the individual** who
embeds himself in KARMIC
RELATIONSHIP by channels of
intellect, imagination and sense, and since
these channels are nothing but ideas in my
eternal mind, **they are doomed never to be**
fulfilled. Thus I affirm that no substantive
thing ever happens... so that this
wandering, **this strange seeking of a home**
from whence the ego falsely appears to be
exiled, is BUT A POETIC
DALLIANCE, AN EDDY,
A BECOMING.'

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“FRONT”

'**Between light and shadow there is no**
reconciliation, so that my wandering into
all channels of the possible, into all corners
of the empire of experience, is an
abnegation, a **fleeing of the Other.** Here is
the alpha and omega of all wanting, of
sparring phantoms, filial objects, arch
enemies. I am Faust's desire, Lacan's
mirror... Yet how could I ever seek
myself? **How can that which is, be exiled?**
HERE IS THE RIDDLE OF
SAMSARA THE WANDERING!
I am thus a wanderer in my own fiction, I
am Faust who drunk in wanting drinks his
soul away, I am the ascetic who dissects
and murders worlds, fundamentalist who
erased a thousand victims. I negotiate
oceans of dark uncertainty, oceans of
pitiless light, and having drunk red oceans
of blood I nestle again **in sunlit innocence**
on soft-heaven planets, gazing into **new**
streams that lead far away... and always I
want to follow them where they go! Yes,
even by streams of paradise I follow the
waters to plains where they spill in dust, to
mines where they are boiled in fire... and
again **TO THE SEA, WHERE ALL**
STREAMS END IN ME. I do this
because I can. I **am free to wander,** and in
wandering I **am (never) free'.**

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“BACK”