Benny Knows but He's Not Talking

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ACE IN HISTORY

...on forgotten footsteps.
...walking, we're walked upon.
in the short stride.

ent men can’t hear ——
rolls,
testaments to art that remain.

...stepped on Pithecines, 
...bony bones into sand.
...es, 
...separate strata, 
...d by more.
...in layers.
...er and extinguish.

...steel
...s better
...numental marble.
...ill come too.
...one Sphinxes are decaying.
...Eiffel Towers 
...out
...vitable fate?

...V.
...Another year brings another ring to the tree,
...Another pile of meaningless paper.

...VI.
...No alternatives.
...I'll silently take my place among the cobblestones.
...With heels in my forehead
...I'll join my scattered likeness.

SCOTT WIGGERMAN

BENNY KNOWS BUT HE'S NOT TALKING

A strong and humid early morning wind was desperately trying to pull the old faded flag that no one bothers to take off the rusty pole anymore. Someone's want-ads were racing across the front yard with Johnson's new puppy, who must have broken out of his kennel again, in hot pursuit. The cars that had to have their drivers to work before seven o'clock were forming their every morning chain-like procession past the musty houses on Cleveland Avenue, unaffected by the wind or just defying it. The sun usually by this time is trying to start the vinyl seats of the parked cars on fire, but his morning there is a graphite-gray ceiling over all the eye can see. The wind has carried the whine of the speeding trucks from the highway far away into the window-opened houses, causing the disorientation of waking up in a strange motel.

Benny had already gotten out of his always unmade bed and was at his bedroom window, his nose pressed against the dirty screen in silence. It is a stance very familiar to everyone, much to the dismay of his mother, who was a life-time member of widowhood. From his curtainless window, Benny could see all that went on and all that went by his mother's two-story weathered house. Everyone knew about Benny; where he lived and what he did. Yet, he still could not be reached. Only two people have ever heard him speak and one of them is dead. He
usually is the topic of dirty jokes and tall tales shared slobberingly around the town. Everything said about Benny is indeed fictitious because Benny never ventures outside of 469 Cleveland Avenue. He gives no reason why. In fact, he doesn't give anybody anything except a blank stare.

"Are you going to come and eat breakfast with your famous and popular mother this morning? I've dusted off your throne, Your Majesty, so your royal ass won't get dirty! I even put your old sandpail underneath it so you can beat while you eat!"

It was the same middle-aged-with-curlers-in-her-hair voice that was sent unwanted up the stairs and underneath Benny's door everyday. It has no noticeable effect on Benny; he just continues to peer through and between the tiny squares, constantly in search. He has already found green-backed flies, crickets and cockroaches, his wisdom teeth, and dandruff that somehow filtered through his matted red hair. He has already discovered that Baker's shingles were loose around their chimney and that Nelson's cat loves to dine on dumb sparrows. He knows that the Toffler kids smoke dope behind their dad's storage shed and that Johnson's little girl, Cindy, loves to poke her puppy with her mother's golf clubs.

He knows that the ex-Mrs. Lyonn always waits until after the Dry Cleaning man has come and gone before she gets dressed, and that both Mr. and Mrs. Carstone are alcoholics. He knows who it is that keeps running over Monacan's mail box and why the simple daughter of the retired Police Chief was suddenly sent away to a private school that nobody has ever heard of. He knows who steals McCaller's firewood every winter and who killed Simon's rabbits. He knows when all the kids' birthdays are, what kind of insects circle the street lights, what animals are getting fat from Carstone's bird seed, why Monacan's rose tree died, and the average number of cars that roll by his mother's house between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. He knows how squirrels get into McCaller's garage and where their roof must leak or will leak in the future. He knows that the Tofflers don't return the returnable bottles and that the Simons go bowling three times a week. His eyes have found more that they can hold but they're still not satisfied.

Last year about this time, there was a bad two-car accident in front of Benny's window. Rumor has it that both drivers were returning Benny's stare, but neither will admit it. Benny knows but he's not talking.

"You sure you won't come down and join your fat and sticky mother?! Come to the head of your class Boy!!"

The same senile voice worked its way room and then quickly disappeared.

The graphite-gray ceiling had dramatic threatening mass of black, but aging, pubic stronger. The air was strangely cool, yet the The street lights were winking their light straight but were failing badly. The wind was scream for mercy but the air was filled with abruptly ceased their flirting with the idle people were groping around in the darkness of batteries for their flashlights and for can the sudden donation People were staring at the darkness. He knew that they were looking did, because a Tornado the same cold, dirty window screen, could be seen reflected, charging straight towards his mother's dark he wasn't talking.

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