

Dear Folks,

I can't remember how I got here. I know recently I've put my hearing aids in my nose, anchoring them by putting the battery compartments in my nostrils and with the actual earpieces wagging ahead of me like boar tusks. I have been attempting to hear what I smell, and vice versa. A dangerous quest. I've been sending letters for a couple weeks to papers and government offices and recently wondered if I was being followed. Is it December still? If it is, Merry Christmas. I really don't know. I have my hearing aids and my charger so there is some sort of complicity ( aka "scheme") going on to keep me conversant. I'm moderately comfortable, have basics comforts, but no freedom.

(I previously listed my amenities but that bored even me) I'm sort of okay, they either want my information or will squelch me. So I really should tell my story. *While I can...*

When I was younger, as I've always been, I had a cat, and had one now. OR at least recently, I think...Cat's are, if you get a good one, a lot better and easier to get along with than most of the people I know. We do (or did) all the things we were expected to do as a feline/human *Duprass* (see *Vonnegut, Kurt*). Senses gets more acute due to listening for edible rodent noises, while I did the big thoughts. And they will eat anything. I won't.

This summer, the two of us, we went back, past my family's backyard fence into the shadowed forest. We knew it well, and could be gone all day. Leap over the underbrush, or go under the over-brush. That was our motto, and it served us well.

We got to the little stream and we greeted the log-turtles, under-frogs and fish, and whatever else floated in the foul smelling water, chemically tainted from the plants built upstream. Nothing new but always interesting. This time, though, we headed toward the late afternoon sun and the vaguely threatening structures at the source of the stream, which flowed away behind us to the sea. Or something.

Okay so where's this going? I've had cats my whole life. And I read a lot. I've read about octopuses too. They have nothing in common? Think again, my friends. Octopuses have nine brains. Cats are reputed to have nine lives. Octopuses have a brain in their head and one in each of their legs. They are something different. But the same, none the less..

Both have a peculiar multiple unity. In Octopuses, is the top brain the Dad? Mom? Boss? and the legs, what? Little feet with brains? And

cats have nine lives, but only one brain, avalanching accrued accumulated knowledge. How? *In extremis*, dumping its mass of tumbling IQ downhill , if you will, into another welcoming but now empty Cerebral Cortex, or something, in cats... The more I read, the stranger it seems.

Octopus legs each, according to different sources, can actually explore on their own, reaching conclusions and then reporting “upstairs”, to the Big Brain, or Top Brain, which examines the report and perhaps delegates additional chores. Like “feel under that rock”, or, worse, “is that an eel hole?”. Could these tasks be refused or passed around to some other leg, a dumber one, with that little curly thing on the end, the tentaclet (smaller, more agile), a proto-hand, or versa-finger, your choice, would then be poked by the dumber tentacle into the eel hole and then get BITTEN! A sad lesson, but that’s how you learn. But the good news is, for the octopus, if still attached, they grow back.

It gets better, or worse..

“Other research found that, when encountering a piece of food, a COMPLETELY SEVERED LIMB will snatch it up and try to move it in the direction of a phantom octopus mouth.” (Smithsonian Magazine)

If true, amputated sashimi-sporting octopi might have kept Amelia Earhart alive after her plane crash. Like submerged car-hops.... looking for tips, in skates.. It did not say that the tentacle had to have it’s applicable brain attached, away from the body of the Mother Octopus, but that certainly stands to reason. Tentacles cannot regenerate past the separation, growing a new BODY, like a starfish, or an earthworm, or god forbid like some new spider from Australia where every animal is poisonous, but now a mutant creature with *nine* legs, the original “smart finger”, now “pointer foot”, having grown eight new legs.... And head, but with a tiny brain..

Worser Scenario.

These indi-mono-tentacles on a beach, in the dark, squiggling around with some sort of sashimi in their suckers, possibly feeling and approaching the faint vibrations from someone’s long anticipated starlight dalliance with a luscious ( or “hunky”) life guard from the resort, while Stumpy advances, wiggling, thinking this might be a chance to get back together with the family.

Still Worser.

“Some species of Octopuses can live out of water 30 to sixty minutes, allowing them to slink from pool to pool in search of food when the tide goes out. Cephalopods typically hunt at night....” (Earth Touch News network).”

They can follow you.

And.... “the sneaky Larger Pacific Striped Octopus uses scare tactics when hunting for its dinner. It creeps up on its prey, taps it on the shoulder, and, more often than not, the startled, say, shrimp, leaps away from the arm that touched it and darts into the clutches of the waiting octopus.”

(anon.)

Moreover.....They have a “radula, a ribbon-like tongue covered with tiny rows of teeth used to shred meat into tiny pieces and slurp clams and mussels out of their shells once they are broken open. “

(Ibid)

And finally...”You can find freshwater octopus in the rivers of North America.”

(Anon, Op.cit)

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At first, it was just another day of exploring. It was later than usual, and soon we were heading back. For some reason we hadn't followed our usual route but went had gone upstream, to the source of the river, usually a snowy mountain but for us it was to be a NO TRESPASSING sign and barbed wire fence. The sky was clouding over a little. My cat attempted to chase a squirrel up a tree and gave up. I poked some soggy trash with a stick in hopes of finding some thing interesting, and didn't.

Then the surface of the the water showed some initial sprinkles and then more and more and the sky opened up. We both started looking for shelter. There was lightning.

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I have wondered about cats. And their tails. It always seemed like they could surprise the cat they were attached to, whipping around during adrenalin rushes, or in filial comradery, at rest, sharing a moment. Questing tails, standing on back legs, getting a get better look. Sort of like an excited little brother or sister. Separately aware, or, calmly sweeping, in moments of calm, furnishing momentary twiddles in time. Do tails think? What do their motions reveal, while sleeping? Are “cats” really just “dreaming”of running, and vocalizing, and battles, when they “nap”?

(This is no time to go into the theory that cats, while sleeping, or sometimes even at death, go to an alternate universe, where they are larger, fiercer, battle-beasts, fighting the non-rational flesh of non-euclidian geometric realms in which, really, they are our only defense. God forbid the scabrous inhabitants ever cross the Dimensional Bridge ("*Dimensiva Pontis*") and appear in our own, relatively peaceful and comprehensible world. When in that realm, which reeks of fetid odors, what we see as their charming, innocuous "tails" operate as SEPARATE INDEPENDENT ENTITIES, and are also huge, and prehensile, and rippling with muscles. They can wield varied, somehow abhorrent, slashing and thumping ectoplasmic manifestations and levers. This was written in the Necronomicon, sometimes referred to as the Book of the Dead, also known by the original Arabic title of Kitab al-Azif, a supposedly "fictional" grimoire (textbook of magic). This is universally not spoken of in more than a whisper....

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We got to the oldcabin and stared in horror at the ruins. While never much, a ramshackle shack holding forest ranger stuff, shovels, etc along with camping supplies, lawn chairs and the like, it had now been badly battered. What could have done this? A bear? Juvenile delinquents? Part of the roof was missing, windows were broken, and litter and refuse littered the tiny lawn. My cat and I squeezed into what remained of the building and the roof. The rain and thunder continued as wind buffeted the trees. I knew things would blow over and they did, turning into a dreary drizzle, as we tried to make ourselves comfortable. We camped beneath a musty tent tarp, draped over some cabinets and tables. Drier, and warmer, under the canvas, we dozed, on moldy lawn furniture, in the late afternoon. Listening to the rain.

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Waking, I noticed the foetor immediately. The quiet early evening was disturbed by flashlights in the distance, and helicopters above. More concerning was the hideous, gelatinous slurping noise coming from what appeared to be, and I swear this in the name of all that's Holy, a giant, walking (I assume) what, polypus? Octopod? A GIANT OCTOPUS! I know it could not be even squid-like, as it had no pointy head, like a Catholic Cardinal. It could have used a censer, though.

It seemed to shift in size, and shape, yet seemed translucent in the dusk. I sensed a sudden vertigo as it gazed at us with eyes the size of dinner plates, while gesturing with a strangely supple outstretched arm, motioning for me to come forward. Demanding that I come forward. I tried to resist, but the otherworldly compulsion was proving to be my master as I felt my feet draw me forward. The thing made a hissing noise, the stars and sky whirled, glowed like the Northern Lights, and I knew I was lost.

I suddenly sensed an even larger presence behind me. Bounding over my head, a monstrous black panther attacked the squamous vision, with claws and teeth, followed by what appeared to be a giant furry snake, whipping over both our heads. It was fanged and lethal, brandishing swords and the mysterious levers, mashing, slashing - the two of them transubstantiated our visitor into a sashimi paste. I swooned.

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And that was all I remember. I awoke being shaken by a member of some rescue team, I assume, out of the "facility" that said that I was very very lucky and would receive the help I needed. I was not taken to a hospital, but ended up in this building, I think in the research complex. They pretended to laugh at my story! They didn't believe me and now I don't believe them, and I never saw the walking octopus or my cat, again, either. I have only dark suspicions where they might be now. Life goes on, the winter getting colder. It seems like a long time ago, and yet yesterday. I just wonder what it all means, where I am, and if and when I will be released. So much for shopping. Oh well. Merry Christmas, if it still is coming up. Oh well.

*God Bless Us Everyone*