



Plain Text - Day 25

Wiley Davis

Published: 2009

Categorie(s):

Tag(s): "plain text"

The fishermen are still here. I watch them indirectly, literally, as Zoe says staring will run them off. They are up before dawn watching the ocean. As the blue morning brightens, their silhouettes emerge like a line of squat fence posts sitting in the sand. They don't talk or point or eat or do much of anything visibly obvious. Zoe says they're listening.

To what?

Everything.

She says they listen with their ears, their eyes, their noses, their tongues, their skin, and their memory. She says their listening for the Big Bang. It tells them where the fish are.

The Big Bang?

You know, the Universe, she says. The immutable laws.

Oh.

Her father has studied it. The fishermen who listen for the Big Bang catch thirty-five percent more fish than those who don't. That's how she said it, like a slogan on toothpaste or laundry soap. And why is that?

Because the Big Bang says what is. It's something the fish and the fishermen have in common. They meet the fish on common ground and convert them.

Convert them?

Kill them. Eat them.

Oh.

I've counted eleven of them. All men. But only five fish on any given morning (They rotate the task but I can't tell how thorough a rotation it is. I admit to having trouble distinguishing their dark native faces.) Those who aren't fishing stay in the plywood huts. Huts, I might add from personal observation, that can be broken down in a flash. They are hinged somehow so that they fold flat for transport.

I've also noticed that they don't look directly at one another either and, in fact, seem to make considerable effort to avoid doing so. If a gaze must be passed across a fellow fisherman, they look steeply at the ground, their head tracing a concave arc that swoops low wherever another's eyes would be met. At night they sit in a circle around their fire, eating fish and swaying slightly in time with the flicker of the flames. Again, no speaking, no eye contact.

I've noticed that they are catching more fish than they eat. One of the huts emits a continuous column of smoke from a small metal chimney. Where are the women?

Different places. Each man is probably from a different village. They catch fish until they have enough to feed the village, then they go home.

Who owns the boats and the huts and the truck?

All of them. They pick them up along the road.

Nobody steals them?

They're hidden.

Why won't they look at one another? Why don't they talk? What's wrong with them?

Nothing. An evasive answer. That's just their way.

And their women and children back at the village? Do they avert their eyes and listen only to the Big Bang? Do these fishermen speak with their children?

You ask too many questions, she says.

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Plain Text - Day 12 (2009)

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