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Diverse Facts

French newspapers have a term for random, everyday happenings: *faits divers*.
They might be called smaller, miscellaneous news items.

A mixed race child is kidnapped by her father.
A black grandmother, needing a cigarette, freezes behind her nursing home when the door locks behind her.
An African infant wins a better baby contest in a small English town in 1965.
Scant detail is given. The story is almost as thin as the headline.

In the French newspaper, life is reduced to facts that live nearly anonymously among the diversity of human doing.

Most of these are never recorded at all.

What if we reported on all the minor events?

... A young African mother discreetly gives birth and leaves the baby to be raised without her to keep her scholarship in Europe.

In a society where most children are tied to their mother's backs, their heads bobbing as they navigate the market, this one has no mother's body.

Who steps in? What relative or friend allows themselves to hold him? Who dares to love that warm, sacred new person? Who offers him security without condition?

Of course! The maternal grandmother will take him. And raise him and give him the attention that makes every child thrive. But this is Africa and she's a businesswoman, busily making-do.

She cares for handfuls of people who are always slipping through her fingers like sand—away to England, to Canada, to Cold.

She must have paused at the silt of his skin. Kissed him, to make him laugh. (That we do not know.)

But here, road deaths are the real cancer. And one day she is hit, and who is there to care for her? Who will nurse her back to health and teach this little boy that, with support, life rebounds?

His father, also once on scholarship, is now a surgeon near the arctic. The precision of cutting and extracting he perhaps learned first by cutting himself off from his country, extracting himself from his children, and them from him.

There is no refuge in his house of rooms.

* * *

This is brain drain and exile, and fear, and no doubt
adventure, and equalizing medical education on a planet
where the very atmosphere consists of elemental inequality.

These are also familial bonds and the breaking of bonds, of
love and promises.
And so many more diverse facts.

Eugenics

We want the best fruits.
If possible, we choose the best seeds.

But human lives are not produce.

Tell that to someone who thinks they know more than you—
more than all of your people and all of your ancestors.

They named the Redwood tree the symbol of the great race.
So your nature ... wouldn't destroy their nature.

They pruned dates, and planted oranges in California's living
laboratories, the flowers perfumed my own college campus. It
was innocent enough cutting, or so it seemed.

In Sonoma and Los Angeles, and no doubt countless other
counties, hospitals were the ultimate *nocebo*.

Doctors sliced women's bodies where babies are supposed to
grow. The prescription: humanitarian hygiene.

In El Paso, Mexican bodies got a racial cleansing at the
border, with kerosene and DDT. (Google the 1917 bath riots,
or Bracero Workers Fumigated.)

Some were tattooed like objects to work land in the Central
Valley that should belong to no one.

Seemingly set apart from slave drivers and prison guards, and
border patrol, University people implemented intelligence
tests in English
... to Spanish speaking boys, which led to their internment as
unfit.

These are the lines from the history of eugenics in my country.
The present is even more complicated.

Now scans for unfit DNA are routine.
The earlier the better.

Some dream of taking the blood of all infants at birth. Pieces
of this project are already underway.

Healthy people today map their own bodies for defects and,
nucleotide markers of difference. But how to even conceive of
global concepts of baseline, or genetic normalcy, in our
human population?

Difference. Difference. Difference.
The hunt is on.

In our own ways, we all participate. Just by looking, just by
being, just by been seen.

This is a deleterious one.

This one is normal ... the “wild type,” the standard.
Only because on so many occasions it maps to the genes of
so-called Caucasians.

Genetic content is everything, and here the white body is
nature, merely by being.
Overrepresented in the culture of medicine, that is, in studies.

Today Others fight to be included in this cultural game of
high stakes wilderness.
Yet the fruits of the garden are manipulated to yield artificial
flesh and the promise of invincible skin.

All of these alleles, for the greater good.

The greater good what?

Greater good genes.

Eugenics.

Genes and Sleep

“I cannot sleep. Does this gene cause insomnia?”

— A question asked by a Senegalese
mother with sickle cell trait

... It is only supposed to affect the blood.
And, um, red cells, and some of the organs.
Well, maybe all of them ...

And symptoms might be triggered by stress, or dehydration,
or fatigue.

Oh, and the smell just before it rains, you say? Do you have a
word for that? You do. I see.
Well let's add that to the list.
And eating hard-boiled eggs, you say?

And extreme sadness? That too? Can you explain?

Your husband lives abroad, you say. He hardly comes home.
It's risky. No papers. He sends money. He's hardly ever seen
his five-year old son.

Wait, the intake form is only so long. Some of these words
don't work for medicine, won't fit in the boxes.
Yes, I'm afraid so. The lines are predetermined.
They are given.
No, no ... not as gifts. Just as receivers.
Receivers of only some bits of your life. I'm sorry. We simply
can't fathom it all.

I'm not sure how best to say this, but science doesn't think
you have a disease.
If it had a voice, it would say, you are merely a carrier. Your
son has the disease.

What is that you say?
Your body knows?
I see.

It has pain crises, just like the boy.

I'm sorry. Your story does not fit the boxes.

That's painful you say?
That's a crisis that makes any aching body want to cry.

You feel more alone than ever now?

The forms are incomplete, you say?
Yes, I'm listening.
Yes, your life feels much fuller.

I see the way you hold your child, find your mother, and take
her hand.
I see how you feel her pulse, just by breathing.

Keep listening to those bodies whose forms are familiar.

Continue to fill your forms.

Pain Planet

So, there's this planet where everyone is in pain.

It seems normal enough, the trees are green and their leaves dance in the wind, just like any other planet with life.

But, as I said, on this one everyone is in pain.

And the pain has language and powers. It's almost like earth but people can't mask discomfort of any kind. They don't bother because, like I said, the pain has language. So it just blurts out. No one even thinks about hiding it, or playing it off, or saying it's ok, ... when really it just isn't.

Pain says things like "I'm burning here, can you put ice on me?" Or, if you don't want to be cold because that might upset your pain, it will ask, "can you at least hold my hand and try to make me laugh?" (My pain likes the way my brain lights up when I laugh.) Then the person, in their own pain, happy to give it some space, reaches out to the other's body.

That very reaching out, before there's even touch—just the intention—that can dissipate some of the pain.

For some unknown reason—oh, there are still lots of unknowns on this planet—the pain will momentarily just disappear when two people touch. It always comes back though, and here is where the powers come in.

When two people touch and breathe together, their pain stops for a few seconds. And then one's pain starts to enter the painstream of the other.

Because someone else's pain is technically foreign, it's not quite so personalized. This is all very subtle and somewhat

mechanical but mostly based on an equation that solved the theorem of the magical. Oh, and on this planet, people have scrapped the need for explaining everything, since pain makes you realize that life and time are precious.

The short of it is, that shared pain hurts less.

That is why you rarely ever see anyone completely alone on this planet in pain.

They are rubbing nice smelling balms on each other, making loved ones feel better (and all are pretty much loved in some way because no one can afford to be an ass and not share pain).

So that is the common sense, which, I should also add, is the highest science: solo pain on this planet can just be so painful, but moreover as the unmasked, pained people show us, it may also just be morally unnecessary.

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