Stories of the Bear People

The second part of a series of Anarchist Myths

Raccoon People

The first part of an ongoing series of Anarchist Myths
MANIFESTO OF THE SLEEPING BEAR

A day will come when I can stand
Upright and with my people
A day will come with no more gray
The people will be free

Until then I'll sleep
Until then I'll dream
Until then I'll remember
Possibility

Today I have learned how to wait
and to know myself
Today I have begun to free
myself from all their lies

Tomorrow I will sleep
I will not be surprised
Tomorrow I can wake
when power will be gone
INTRODUCTION

This is the second part of an anarchist mythology that started with the Stories of the Raccoon People. Myth is one of the few places where we get to decide the endings of our stories instead of being disappointed by the reality of fragile people and dangerous times. As in our anarchist dreams this doesn’t mean that the endings are only going to be fades-to-music and happily-ever-after’s but the endings will be on our scale, a human scale.

The Stories of the Bear People are about many of my friends. They are stories about anarchists whose lives have intersected my own. These stories are, by and large, not mine. They are stories I am telling about people that I care for and for the tortured path that leads us towards anarchy. We do not honor the path, or the people, a fraction as much as we should. The Bear People may not wish it any other way but I am not a Bear.

Honoring the Bear People is the way I can come to terms with the voices inside my head that want to fight pyrrhic battles, want to shout down those who tell me what to do (especially when it’s for my own good) and want to stop being polite. The Bear People will not tell their own story and will likely disown this telling but I share them with you. It can be easy to forget that the Bear People are with us against the gray but we cannot abandon them to their own peculiarities.

To a time when all the people recognize the value in each other!

-Aragorn!
Like most stories, the story of the bear people starts with a story about people—a special group of people. During a time of great turmoil when many believed (when it was possible to believe) that the gray could be fought back and that the world could be free of them. During this great time there was a group that was very clear. They were clear about the organization of the gray. They were aware that people had confused themselves and their desires with those of the gray. In a time of such confusion the likelihood of a new world was slim indeed, or so they said.

They were right, of course. The people were hypnotized by the gray. People seemed to prefer the trappings of dreams rather than the dreams themselves. Dead-time-boxes, firewater, and a third of one’s life taken away from one’s friends and loves in the service of the gray.

When this time of turmoil ended and the Great Hypnotism began, this group of clear people exploded. Mostly this happened for the same old reasons that every group ends, petty jealousy and personal failings, but when something as clear, as crystalline, as this group exploded, it sends out shards with great velocity. These shards are what created the bear people.

On occasion, if you catch a bear in the right mood, they will tell you about the time when they found a shard, met someone who held onto one, or how they hope to fuse shards back together to create something new that is totally clear. If you catch one in the right light, you admit hear an admission that Bears are true Romantics, in love with something that is in the past, in their imagination, that could possibly, just maybe, be re-created.
When he left our house my parents stopped speaking to each other. Raccoon Girl hopped from the fire to Great-Plain-Above. She never hummed
shadow, the first one to the celebration and the last one to leave,
but there was Raccoon Girl, the one who would dance alone; the unknown
she discovered the. Everywhere there was only darkness and all was calm,
before this time the Great-Plain-Above was dark. The only light was from

HOW RACCOON GIRL FOUNDED THE WORLD

world of plodding and drudgery.

...Ips of our courage. They are people who make the choice not to be in a
see them at the park. The Raccoon people. They are dream that we find on the

WHO ARE THE RACCOON PEOPLE? A few may pass through your life or you may

people with knowing...

and carefree. Bottles in hands, holes in shoes, scars on joints, these were a
noisy people, running in groups, speaking in code, dressing like explosions
for me because I was looking and they had already found. They were a
Later in life I found more Raccoon people. They usually did not have time

in song and eventually went wicked in different directions.

But the gray covers that land and the Great Hypnotism fills the minds
of most everyone. Bears try, in their way, to pierce this. They shout and
implore us to see the illusion for what it is—this is their great charm.

"If only they could see what I see" is the lament of the Bear People but
doesn't inspire the people to action but to leaving the Bear People alone. For
the Bears this becomes the precursor to hibernation, to escaping the world
of well-intentioned incompetents.

And the remnants of the people who were clear? Some of them are still
grubbing around. They have a haunted look in their eyes as if they have seen
something so beautiful that focusing on this world takes too much effort.
They tend to live in either the distant past or in the past of their memories.
These ancients still have things to share but have largely lost the vocabulary
to talk to those who have come since the Great Hypnotism. Their time is
passing and, increasingly, they are falling silent and passing beyond.

EVERY BEAR PERSON WAS ONCE A CUB

Few Bear Cubs survive to join the Bear People. Bears are such solitary
creatures that when one of the people makes an effort to become a Bear
Person they get no guidance. There is nothing to join. There are no rules.
No Bear prevents them from making mistakes or wasting their time in
unfruitful directions. Cubs must find their own way.
It's just as well, as the Bear People are not for everyone. They may be admirable because of their ferocity and discipline but the solitary life is self-selecting. The people tend to be social and to desire shared goals. The Bear People often have only one or two people with whom they spend any time with at all.

Cubs are brilliant to behold. Often times they are have nothing to learn from their elders and present nothing but fang when challenged. Other times they are fine Bear-like specimens properly outfitted in Bear Suits much too large for them but worn with such dignity and respect that it is impossible to deny them their goals.

Bear Cubs become Bear People when they realize that the great ideas of the Bear People are impossible. When they see that the project of defeating the gray will destroy them, will lose them far more than it gives, and isn't shared by any of their friends. When this impossibility is suffered for and still embraced is when a Bear Cub becomes one of the Bear People, but they must never speak of it. Loss is where the Bear People begin and it remains the empty space at their core.

**THE STORY OF A MISCAST SPELL**

In the lore of the Bear People there is the idea of a magical moment. This moment is a switch where frowns will turn to smiles, honey will flow, and the might of the gray will fade away completely. This switch has happened before but only for a blink of an eye. And since most people were asleep they didn't notice. It was only for a moment, and then it was gone.
One day Raccoon Fortune was passing by a never-share-place with a pain in his belly. Instead of leaving the place in anger he decided he would sneak in. Raccoons were known for their cleverness and their ability to find a way to survive, even in the most daunting of situations. They were not afraid to face challenges and would often find unexpected solutions to their problems.

Raccoon Fortune was amazed to discover that the very thing he despised were actually used as a cure for his pain. The gray weed-forest had provided him with the exact ingredients he needed to heal his wound. He had learned to look at the world in a new way, to see the potential in even the most unlikely of places.

Now the Bear People try to chant and stamp and find ingredients for another magic time. They find one in a conversation with a stranger, another in a clever drawing, and yet another in a meeting where songs are sung about magic. These are the only songs that Bears will sing. Songs to make magic time!

Recently a group of Bear People put aside their ambivalence towards each other, and sat down with other people to discuss a traditional incantation of the magical moment. This involved a great deal of timing, bringing together hundreds of people and shaking the gray out of thousands more. Most magic, like love & turmoil, involves dispelling the hypnotism of the gray for a brief period of time. This isn’t as difficult to achieve as you might suspect.

Many who live deep within the gray notice moments of brightness, but the moments are fleeting and unpredictable. To dispel the gray at a specific time is a far more difficult task.

As is the wont of the Bear People, they couldn’t agree with Beavers or with each other about how to proceed. They went in different directions and yelled at each other about timing and method. For many of the people this yelling seemed far more frantic than the energy put into the moment itself. And when the moment passed with some thunder but little lightning the Bear People pointed at each other and the people became wary of doing magic with Bears.

YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME!
Witty Bear was a Bear's Bear. For a people notoriously solitary and self-composed, Witty was famously alone. He was a true believer in the message that the people were but a whisper away from a shout that would knock aside the gray. As many people wanted to join this chorus and Witty had poetic and exciting tales of what was possible, many people listened to him respectfully. But Witty did not consider himself one of the people. Instead he believed that the people were out there. The people were among the gray and did not exist until they screamed out against themselves—and any relationship before this time was a lie.

Again and again he would show his fangs and declare "the people are irrelevant to the real people." In his own mind he saw these condemnations as resoundingly clear. So clear that those listening would stop what they were doing, what they chose to do, and start shouting with him. Instead the people just saw him as another Bear Person telling them what to do.

The Bear People have this problem in general. They believe that they know what is right and how to defeat the gray. They believe with such conviction that they end up telling everyone else (especially other Bears) that they are wrong, stupid, and part of the gray. There are two results to this. One is that Bears are solitary. Two is that many of the people who listen, and try to emulate the Bear People, are chased in to the gray, because Bears lead them to believe that there are only the Bear People and the gray. As very few people are actually interested in being alone, they allow the gray to swallow them instead of finding others.

For Witty Bear this was a vindication. Since the only people who stop the Great Hypnotism were in the gray the more people that he chased back to the gray, the better our chances were of stopping the hypnotism. For Witty the fight against the gray began by becoming part of the gray.
The Raccoon and The Rain

loud enough to scare away the gray and social the Raccoons come to the song and sing along, deiciding and
that every Raccoon must find if happy are and thers. Solitary
In becoming Raccoon boy he didn’t knew that his song was the song

andouting, I will not find myself to dwell with people, you will not see me again until you stop agreeing toformula
when he is difficult to find the pull on his Raccoon coat and lift from forever.
but they were not interested. "Responsibility" was their watch and this was
He tried to sing to family and friends to show them the way out of the gray
mindnumbing phrases showed themselves to be filled with errors and mistake.
around him was nothing grey. Everything was brighter an April and even
did he see the different faces of what he had once suffered. Everyone

The day that Raccoon boy found himself, everything changed. No longer

Tormented as a child, Irascible Bear was scarred by the time he realized he
was one of the Bear People. His scars didn’t temper his desire for another
way to be, for a future where other children would not be beaten and
harassed by family and friends, but they interfered with his ability to find
a place like this in his own life. Instead Irascible Bear’s life was a constant
battle. He battled with friends. He battled with lovers. He battled with
anyone who disagreed with him and only took the battles seriously when
they were taken seriously by those he battled with. He played rough because
the scars made it hard for him to feel.

The numbness reinforced his inclination towards solitude.

One day Irascible Bear was playing with a new friend. His friend and he
disagreed about many things (just about everything, in fact) and it was
turning into a fine beginning. But his new friend didn’t play the same way
and chased Irascible Bear away with Fang and claw. This new friend even
called down the gray onto Irascible Bear who scurried away and spent an
evening hiding in a park.

This would not do! “What is done to me I will do a thousand times back”
says Irascible Bear and with broken claw and chipped tooth he saw that his
only, lonely, recourse was to summon the gray. Naturally the gray did not
follow Irascible Bear’s desires. Irascible Bear stared into the gray against one
of the people and continues to be touched by this.
In the not so distant past there was a day that will live on in memory and song. It is still talked about today as if it happened only yesterday. During this amazing day the air was very crisp, a whisper of the first winter breeze.

The gathering worked out as many do. The people were in full regalia, Raccoon, Bear, Beaver, and Salmon People. People were there who you almost never see except for during special occasions, like when gray attacks. While there was a happy atmosphere because of seeing each other, it was tempered with the fear of the gray.

The people are generally of two minds regarding the gray. They either believe that the gray is watching their every move and therefore they must take every precaution to seem innocuous, or they believe that the gray, out of ambivalence, ignores the people entirely. Either way, the people tend to both over- and under-estimate the gray. The people tend to respond to the gray rather than put the gray into the situation of having to respond to them.

Still he waits. The water and the air are no cleaner

The day is remembered because of a tragedy. This tragedy was a tragedy for the gray and has since been inflicted upon the people as the justification to end all justifications. But on the day itself it was difficult to distinguish between something that should terrify the gray and something that should scare people too. The people didn't help matters much. Always wary of the gray they sent up a great alarm, that we were next, that the end was nigh, and that much more was coming for us and for others. A gathering was called of all the people in the area. On the agenda was the hope that we could turn this day into a chance to work together on a common project, to use this opportunity for ourselves, rather than to just run and hide.

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Like many other good people Raccoon Girl did not know herself, and had

"What should we do?" asked the Beaver person who sat in the center of the
room. Simple questions often have unforeseen consequences and this one
was no different. Just as the people were of two minds regarding the role of the
people in defeating the gray. The question was never whether or not the gray
should end but how.

Simple questions often hide not-so-simple things. And talking about
not-so-simple things isn't easy and is usually avoided, even by the people. This
is where the Bear People come in. In times of difficulty they can be relied
on to make one thing very clear. It may not be the thing that they intend,
in fact often the Bear-person-who-speaks-truth is blamed for it rather than
celebrated, but in times of difficulty Bear People roar and everyone listens.
During this meeting the Beaver People were confused about what to do but
knew that something had to be done, something had to be built, to block
the torrent of the gray, but they were wrong. The gray both couldn't be
stopped, it was only capable of running itself down.

When our friend the Bear Person roared that day no one wanted to hear it.
They chased the Bear out of the room. They proceeded to holler that the
Bear should be ignored, that their confusion was actually far more coherent
than the Bear's protestation. But they didn't end up building anything new.
They didn't stand in front of the gray as it rolled over anything in its path
and eventually the gray slowed down and found something else to do.
The people have found ways to live that are different from the gray. Instead of living in poisoned family units, the people tend to live in groups. This allows them the space to discover the pleasure of each other's company on a day-to-day basis and to make a little space outside the gray. One of the consequences of living this way is a certain kind of formality. Instead of telling one another to clean up after themselves or that repairs need doing, an event would be called for. This event could be comprised of many things, like discussions about feelings, about things better said to each other (but instead said about empty ideas); about things the people need to do. These formal discussions would often be remembered on special pieces of paper used for nothing else. This formality hides the ways that even the people have a hard time with the Great Hypnosis. Most everyone who joins the people brings the gray with them.

Tireless Bear hated formality. "I will never wear fancy clothes and I will never do something written on special paper" Every time another formal occasion was called Tireless would make sure to travel. Every time the people would remind Tireless about the special paper Tireless would make a joke about freedom. "For the people to be free we must burn the paper. We must talk, yell, and scream!"

The people grew tired of Tireless' proclamations and during their next formal occasion used a new special paper to make a list that everyone would sign. When Tireless Bear returned and was told to sign the paper he pleaded with the people to understand that this was against everything they claimed to want. He gnashed his teeth and yelled, stomped and pounded, but none of the people would listen.

The next day Tireless Bear left. Never to return.

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cave: On a sickle guarded
there was a fire. Did the bear notice the correct way to have a fire in a place? Instead of the smoke surrounding the gray and thus making the bear why play and not take seriously the bears below to carry the goods to the fire. This drove the bear to assistance because the bear continued to

cheese Raccoons away for the sake of things and quiet and blocking the Raccoons in the past and this time spurn that the evening in the same place as a particularly quiet bear was thrown for everything. One evening at the pond all the local Raccoons were playing and shouting

The Bear people are not the Raccoon people. They can be interesting and

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BEAR

HOW THE RACCOONS TRICKED THE BEAR

Next-ear-peece and was gone

After some time and after her face had died Raccoon Chin jumped from the

what was going on. You should let's get down off here and talk about it. Never understand the

top of the next-ear-peece. The gray tried to show her down. You will hurt

to change. Her dance was fierce and dangerous at kicked up Heard on the

be led where to do. This is what my body wants to do? She said and began

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Deliberate Bear was well known around these parts. When she would come around, it was always a treat. The people would come together for a great meal and hear stories about where Deliberate had been and where she was going. After the meal everyone was happy to clean up after Deliberate, she was a guest and she offered far more than she took with the stories she told. But after the third meal the people would wait for Deliberate to clean up her fair share and usually she did. Or at least she tried.

It was not that Deliberate was a malicious Bear Person or even unusually incompetent. Deliberate was a Bear who wanted to be a Raccoon. It was a funny thing to watch because when the people would make plans for a task or a meal Deliberate would never be around. She would be absorbed in Bear People things, making plans of her own. When asked to participate or to contribute, as often as not Deliberate would say “That is not a Bear thing to do!” and usually she was right. When the Raccoons would sing Deliberate was sure to listen in. But Deliberate would not share under conditions other than her own because that would not be the Bear Person thing to do.
The thought that keeps the Bear People awake at night is that all their efforts are for naught. That the gray will keep on being gray. That the people will not make true on any of their promises. That the knowledge the Bear People have collected and stored away will never used by anyone. That when they are gone they will not be remembered.

The Bear People divide on the question of their own project. The Sleeping Bears believe that their efforts stand on their own. The conscience of the Sleeping Bears is clear. When they sleep it is a dreamless sleep.

There are also Prowling Bears, who are restless. Since they do not have enough numbers, and are not strong enough to shake the world, they spend time with the rest of the people. This can be frustrating as the people tend towards play and do not maintain good focus on the projects of the Bear People—but they are the only ones who seem interested at all.

The world turns and the Bears who would fight the gray must sit down with the rest of the people. They must party with the Raccoon People. They must work with the Beaver People. They must dream with the Salmon People. It is an unusual Bear who can stand such a fate, patiently waiting for the time when the fight commences and gritting their teeth until then.

Bears that would rather have friends than be right

The nameless friend believed

only those who live in an opposed to having shadow will be free. Or so our

one day and wanted to band against those by doing unrecognizable. If you have

his
time to take on a new name. They knew that the gray would come

This

necessarily be removed in the same way. His heart was so full that everyone she

Hearing deeply bruised. However believed that was was hurt her had

The

nameless Raccoon

nameless Raccoon has been talked about by generations of Raccoons who have been

This is the people and we can fly opperations in shadow and rain. The

that time. The time of escape will be over when the gray will be of the same

She continued to move from place to place and spread the word of the
As it turns out, having no name can be a real challenge. You cannot be
Thanks to Artnoose for the artistic help.

Thanks to Leona and Ariel. Without your help I wouldn't be capable of doing a fraction of what I am doing.

Thanks also to the Raccoon, Bear, Salmon, and Beaver people I know and who helped, in their ways, to inspire and infuriate me.

You are still my people.