Anarchist Myths

The second part of a series of

Stories of the

Raccoon People

People

Stories of the Bear

The first part of an ongoing series of Anarchist Myths
Oh come dance with me, Raccoons
We've feet and the time to share
We are the people who have chosen life
More than they would know

Oh come run with me, Raccoons
they can't understand
grayness and the death of routine
from which we run away

Oh come sing with me, Raccoons
We've been quiet for far too long
we must sing the stories
of our passions and desires

Oh come search with me, Raccoons
food and rest aren't easy to find
Let's find the world beneath
where we would rather be

(We dance) because we are alive.
We are not of shadow or gray
but of bone, fur and high spirits.
To life!
INTRODUCTION

This is the beginning of an anarchist mythology. We live in a world haunted by other people's gods and stories. Stories of leaders and subjects, victories and defeats, jealousy and malice, may frame this world but they do not frame us.

Mythology is an important part of culture. It is the way that true stories can be told without getting distracted by the fact that nothing is ever as simple as truth. I would argue that anarchist mythologies have suffered by being confused with anarchist history.

Here are the first of several (at least three) sets of stories about anarchists we know. At least half of these stories are about real events that I have first or second hand knowledge of. The rest are about the Raccoon people generally. While I am sharing these stories they are not mine. My deepest goal with these stories in particular are that they pass into the hands of the Raccoon people themselves and are shared through song and transform through the memory of the people into the truths I can only peek at.

I only ask to be invited to dance along.

-Aragorn!
WHO ARE THE RACCOON PEOPLE?

Much like us, the Racoon people need food, shelter and each other. You have probably seen them around: in the corner of your eye, racing to or from one shadow to the next, or in some industrial setting scavenging metal or food. When your eye rests on one of the people you will notice a few things. The Racoon people have a fashion that is both sensible and flamboyant, layers of cloth that wear well, can be covered up for blending in and that scream at the lines and cut of normal fashion. The Racoon people do not like straight lines, sharp corners, or cold floors. This does not mean that they do not suffer these things; they just don’t suffer in silence.

The Racoon people live by simple rules: live life to its fullest, no concession to a world of misery, and run to fight another day.

I first met one of the Racoon people when I was only a child. He was visiting my parents, dressed in the fashion of the time, and he treated himself to our food and our company. I had never met a happier person. I alternated between bouncing on his knee, wrestling with him over the last piece of bread, and racing around the jungle of our backyard with him, an adult unlike any I had ever met before, or since.

He left behind a little buckskin figurine to remember him by. “Rub this between your palms and say my name. I will not promise that I will come back to you but I promise that my memory will, and often times that will be enough.”
When he left our house my parents stopped speaking to each other. Something about his visit reminded them that they were not working out the way that they expected and each of them began to look for something else. Other people passed through, glass was broken, voices were raised not in song and eventually feet walked in different directions.

Later in life I found more Raccoon people. They usually did not have time for me because I was looking and they had already found. They were a merry people, running in groups, speaking in code, dressing like explosions and carousels. Bottles in hand, holes in shoes, scabs on joints; these were a people worth knowing...

Who are the Raccoon people? A few may pass through your life or you may see them at the park. The Raccoon people live a dream that we find on the tips of our tongues. They are people who make the choice not to be in a world of plodding and drudgery.

HOW RACCOON GIRL FOUND THE WORLD

Before this time the Great-Plain-Above was dark. The only light was from the unknowable fire. Elsewhere there was only darkness and all was calm. But there was Raccoon Girl, the one who would dance alone, the smiling shadow, the first one to the celebration and the last one to leave.

Raccoon Girl hopped from the fire to Great-Plain-Above. She never burnt, she never stopped. She did not tire. Her delight at the leaps and shifting of
light and dark was such that laughter rang out. Her leaps would push the
fire into the shapes of baskets, bears and oaks. Her breath was fire across
the sky. Her only thought was on the beat of feet against the flame and the
Great-Plain-Above.

Over time the dance changed. There were more things to bounce off of
and to listen to. The sounds became more complex as echoes, melodies,
and rhythms began to materialize. As she danced, Raccoon Girl searched
for these sounds and would move in new ways to reflect what was new in
what she heard. At one point the new movement caused Raccoon Girl to
stumble and fall. Where her head fell she called horn for a time. She named
it Resting-Dance-Place and learned how to climb trees, cool her feet in a
stream, and make acorn mash.

Around her Raccoon Girl found many dancing partners and proceeded
to share with them her breath and time. The turtle is a slow partner but
produces lovely sounds and never complains. The beaver is a dutiful dancer
learning only a few moves and doing them well (before stopping and
returning to beaver tasks). The bear only dances if prodded and poked and
then only for a moment as they had other concerns. The salmon made
wonderful dancers as they would fly higher and never forget a dance move.
But it was the other Raccoons who kept Raccoon Girl from flying off
Resting-Dance-Place altogether.

But the time did come to stop dancing, and when it did many forgot about
the time when the Resting-Dance-Place resounded with song and the joy of
moving. They made decisions about when the right time to dance, play and
eat would be. They believed that they owned things. These people became
the gray and appear to cover Resting-Dance-Place with their weeds and
trash but feasting below, often out of sight, are the Raccoon people waiting
for the gray to walk away, to return to where they are from, to remember to
dance.

Above us all is Raccoon Girl spinning about and bounding from place to
place leaving trails upon the sky and shapes to remember her by. Raccoon
Girl has promised us nothing, but the rhythm of her feet is still under our
feet reminding us of what she found.
There was a time, when passing through the gray-weed-forest, that Raccoon people had to endure the orders and sermons of the gray in order to eat. Threats of fire, exclusion, and an eternity of pain made associating with the gray an obviously dangerous activity. Many of the people wouldn’t even take their food because the flavor was too gray.

The ones who refused to endure this would beg other gray for scraps and take what they got. Scorn, coldness, pity, fear, and an occasional boot was what the gray exacted for the meager gifts they would bestow. There had to be a better way!

Finding objects was always a talent that Raccoon people had, with an eye out for shiny, useful, and edible things in the world. Sometimes this would be in a never-share-place where they would be chased after the simplest taste or attempt at sharing. The gray had all kinds of rules about how to behave and seemed particularly averse to sharing. This could be particularly hard for Raccoons passing through.

One day Raccoon Fortune was passing by a never-share-place with a pain in his belly. Instead of lamenting the fact that the gray had a guard (along with noise makers and fire) placed at the entrance, he decided he would sneak in the back. Because after all, if they face in one direction you must come at them from another. In going around the backside of the never-share-place Fortune was amazed to discover that the very things he desired were actually piled up in the back. They were inside a hard-basket placed next to his goal.
Every seven suns it was the same. Dress in white and stand with other boys and shout about how much higher and better than you someone else was. Obey an old man who wasn't very nice and a lady who kept everyone in line.

One day was different. Nothing would ever be the same. Instead of singing someone else’s song, our friend decided to sing his own song. The words were about how no one is higher than anyone else and that the dead should stay underground and not live fuller lives than those who sit in rows and kneel. The rhythm was to the sound of the other boys hollering and fussing because he wasn't following along and because he stepped out of line. The punctuation was pushing the old man out of the way.

Why bother going inside if what you want is right there for the taking?

And take he did: piles of food, enough for himself, his friends, and every stranger he would meet throughout the day. At the end of the day he would return and more food would have replaced what he had taken earlier. He brought his friends to this place, and to other similar places he would find, and called these places the basket-of-plenty and all was good.
The day that Raccoon Boy found himself everything changed. No longer did he see the different faces of what he had long suffered. Everyone around him was uniformly gray. Everything was brighter at night and even mundane places showed themselves to be filled with secrets and treasure. He tried to sing to family and friends, to show them the way out of the gray but they were not interested. "Responsibility" was their refrain and this was what he left behind as he put on his Raccoon coat and left them forever. "You will not see me again until you stop turning everything into formula and routine. I will not grind myself to death with habit!"

In becoming Raccoon Boy he didn't know but that his song was the song that every Raccoon person must find if they are to find themselves. Solitary and social the Raccoons come to the song and sing along: discordant and loud enough to scare away the gray.

He told of how he had been hypnotized by the Beaver people as a young boy. How they convinced him that happiness lay in the building and
controlling of every little thing; controlling food and shelter and working. How he was learning how to build when the gray captured him. The beavers did not like the gray but, with tears in their eyes, let the gray in to capture Charming Revenge for fear that the gray would destroy Beaver dams and waterways. If the gray had noticed the Beaver projects they probably would have destroyed them. Instead they just took Charming Revenge.

The stories of how the gray treat people in the name of sameness were horrible indeed. They would force solitude and the carrying of weights. They would berate, insult and inflict physical punishment. The gray actually would try to break living people from their dreams in order to make them gray. They would call this education.

A sweet boy, a little too distracted by the stars in his eyes to notice the ground beneath his feet, Charming Revenge had to escape the gray when he took on the cloak of the Raccoon people. When Charming Revenge finally got away and took the cloak he refused to ever take it off. He would wear nothing but his Raccoon cape. He would not even acknowledge the color gray, there was only black, brown and dirt. Over time he began to show signs of wear. Others would say, "jump in the river, fill a basket with water, or at the very least jump into the sandy banks and settle down the smell!" But this would not do for Charming Revenge. Like many of the Raccoon people he still lived in the gray-weed-forest and was limited by the way they did things. "I will not hurt the water by forcing it through the gray-creek-that-runs-home. I would rather offend the gray sensibility than bow to the way that they would force us to live!" This quieted most of his friends, but satisfied few of them.

Some Beavers said to him "If you do not bend your knee you cannot come into our home because you offend us with your smell." So he sat outside. It would rain and he would say, "Even the rain is corrupt in a gray world, filled with gray waste and their death-worship-life. I will wait until they are gone and the rain is clean enough for me."

Still he waits. The water and the air are no cleaner.
Like many other good people Raccoon Girl did not know herself, and had to be found. She marched to the never-learn-place along with all of the others that she knew and didn't know. She was punished when she would jump out of line or move to the rhythm of the world. She was forced to move her body by rote and order. She found her face wet from sadness because what she had to do was so different than what she felt. She was told that being sad was a normal part of learning and that she just needed to get over it.

When she did she was rewarded with gifts and smiles. "You are special indeed!" exclaimed her teachers and together they hatched a plan to make Raccoon Girl (who was known by her dead name at the time) a performer. She would move her body for other people and everyone would appreciate her skill and grace.

One day she had a performance for important people. These are people like others except more so. Special indeed was this day, everyone made a great fuss, but Raccoon Girl felt nothing. She went to the roof of the never-learn-place where she was to perform and cried and remembered her sadness. When they found her they made a great cry "Important people are waiting on you. The performance must begin now!" "Why?" asked Raccoon Girl. "I don't want to dance for them. I don't want to dance for you or anyone but me. I want to dance. I don't want to wear uncomfortable clothing and
be told what to do. **This** is what my body wants to do!” She said and began
to dance. Her dance was fierce and dangerous as it kicked up gravel on the
top of the never-learn-place. The gray tried to slow her down. “You will hurt
yourself. Let’s get down off of here and talk about it.” Never understanding
what was going on.

After some time and after her face had dried Raccoon Girl jumped from the
never-learn-place and was gone.

HOW THE RACCOONS TRICKED THE BEAR

The Bear people are not the Raccoon people. They can be interesting and
they are fierce fighters but they are not particularly good companions or
much in the way of dancers.

One evening at the pond all the local Raccoons were playing and shouting
in the same place as a particularly gruff bear. He was known for growling
and blocking the Raccoons in the past and this time spent half the evening
chasing Raccoons away for the sake of fishing and quiet.

At one point Raccoon boy set a fire with low flame but much smoke.
This drove the bear to nuisance because the Raccoon people continued to
play and not take seriously the bear’s bellow to carry the pond to the fire.
Eventually the smoke summoned the gray and they asked the bear why
there was a fire? Didn’t he know that the correct way to have a fire is in a
cave? On a stick? Gated? Guarded?

These formalities hid the ways that even the people have a hard time with the Great Hypnosis. More everyone who joins the
Bear people bring the gray with them.

The next day Tireless Bear left. Never to return.

The people grew tired of Tireless’ proclamations and during their next
formal occasion used a new special piece of paper to make a list that everyone would

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there was a fire? Didn’t he know that the correct way to have a fire is in a
cave? On a stick? Gated? Guarded?
The bear was flustered and tried to explain that Raccoon Boy had set the fire for no good reason but there were no Raccoons around to confront the gray. They had already gone to laugh and sleep, and tell stories of the time that they left the bear holding the bag.

**RACCOON-WITH-BRUISES**

The gray force people to live hard lives. To get from place to place we must sit on line-rolling-baskets hidden from their eyes. We must run from them when it stops. We must carry wet skins with us when we travel for fear that the gray will stop in a place where we cannot breathe otherwise. We must bring layers upon layers for warmth and protection from the hard cold surfaces of the line-rolling-baskets.

One day Raccoon Rover had just traveled from Den-of-Roses to Gray-by-the-Bay and was seen by the gray as she departed from the yard. A chase ensued. Rover was captured and beaten because of her burden and their sticks. Rover was beaten so badly that she was transformed from a whole Raccoon to one whose missing parts were filled in with wood and rage. She became one who lived forever in the shadow of trying to escape and being captured.

She taught the other Raccoon people about running and fighting. “There is no chance we will ever escape until they are gone, so we must decide how we are going to make that happen. Many say it will be by overrunning them with our numbers, I say it should be by tooth and claw. We must make a Great Escape!”
She continued to move from place to place and spread the word of the Raccoons and The Great Escape. She would share songs and dance about that time. “The time of Escape will be one when the gray will be of the same size as the people and we can live openly instead of in shadow and rain.” The Escape has been talked about by generations of Raccoons who have been hurt and bruised for the telling.

Having been deeply bruised Rover believed that what had hurt her had to be removed in the same way. Her heart was so full that everyone she touched remembered her lesson.

**THE NAMELESS RACCOON**

As important as donning the cloak, coat, or hat that marks one as of the Raccoon people (and separate from the gray) is the process of taking a name. Unlike the world of the gray where you are inflicted with labels that come from horrible stories of sacrifice and vengeance, the self-naming of the Raccoon people is a time for celebration and game. Usually names are taken from favored things and can tell a short story of an accomplishment or friend.

There was one Raccoon person who was so broken by the gray that this person refused to take on a new name. They knew that the gray would come one day and wanted to guard against that by being untraceable. If you have no name you have no shadow and in a world that remembers everything only those who live in, as opposed to have, shadow will be free. Or so our nameless friend believed.
As it turns out, having no name can be a real challenge. You cannot be referred to, you cannot be called to dance or sing, and while the gray may not find you, neither can any of the Raccoons, Bears, or people outside of a very small group. This may be the best way to live in a world so very gray but it also is a way that hasn't much room for spark, dissonance, and the loving chaos that the Raccoons are known for.

The nameless Raccoon became referred to as just that. A wave of the hand and everyone knew who you were talking about. A nod, wink, and a 'one-who-must-not-be-named' foretold the nameless one's arrival. A hug and an 'until we see you again' their departure. In a world without gray it could be that none of us have names but until then there is the Raccoon-with-no-name.

**THE STORY OF THE RACCOON WHO GOT CAUGHT BUT STAYED FREE**

There is a story about a Raccoon who hid in the wide open. How he did it is hard to believe: so hard that the telling should be filled with laughter instead of whispers. This is a tale so hard to believe that it must be told twice. Once when you wake in the morning and another when you lay down to rest at night. One story is about the sun rising, another about it setting.

When the sun rises our friend Raccoon Fortune did what we all want to do. Raccoon Fortune set about freeing Raccoons and others who had been imprisoned by the gray. He did it with malice. He did it with glee. By the moon and river he scurried about making sure that some gray were no longer able to contain our friends. As a result Fortune had to hide from his past. He took on a disguise.
Under this disguise he advertised his choices as a story. His story was judged and laughed at by the Bear, Deer, and Beaver people but the Raccoons knew it for what it was: their story. He rode this whirlwind until one day it stopped spinning and what was waiting for his feet to touch the ground? The gray. The gray tried to consume Raccoon Fortune, to shape him into their device, but instead he sang about his happiness and courage. He sang what we all believe.

"I am not sorry. I would do it again and again. You try to stop me and you try to stop a shadow because we live in the dark and return when the coast is clear."

When the sun sets Raccoon Fortune meets with the other Raccoon people and says "I could never do it alone. I collect your stories, the stories of our friends, and I share them with strangers. Some of these strangers join us, some of these strangers learn to appreciate the moonlight but the rest are not our enemies. We must tell them that they are because they are gray or sluggish or unhappy but every one of them could join us, could be our friend. This is our time to take what we can, live well, and wait and see what happens."