

What the Giants Were Saying

Three Excerpts



A Novella

By David Rix

Please note that the design and layout of this document is not taken from the Eibonvale Press edition book.

Excerpt 1 – opening

It was a grey day – a day that made you feel sad.

Wearily Don eased the car out of the remote moorland lay-by, where it had been parked for the last half an hour. Outside, the world was one of misty hills and looming grassy rocky slopes strewn with dead bracken and gorse, with the great dark masses of the occasional houses and trees and scrublands looming like smoke. The sun was going down in a cold, grey sunset and the sky was like an immense stone suspended overhead. He shivered miserably beneath its weight as he pulled clumsily onto the road and drove, squinting ahead into the increasing gloom. There was nothing glamorous about this stretch of tarmac, for all its moorland setting. This was no wild bleak pass coiling through the gentle high hills. This was just a dreary strip of rough hillside around which a few houses clustered.

From the radio trickled a stream of inconsequential classical music. The gentle warbling of Chopin probably. All trills and notes and prancing around elegantly with their noses in the air. It did little to rouse him out of his deep gloom. And nor did the crumpled paper on the passenger seat, on which the rough lines of a pencil sketch wandered unfinished and unfinishable. The vague shapes of hills were visible – obliterated in an increasing overlay of scribbled lines. It looked like a violent storm had overtaken the land.

A small mobile phone sat glassily next to the drawing – one of those fold-in-half jobs small enough to swallow. It was closed.

He leaned forward and peered up at the sky, resting his chest against the steering wheel. If it was a stone up

there, he thought grimly, then it had to be a bloody block of reinforced concrete.

He sighed. There was a car coming up behind, and that forced him to accelerate from the dawdling crawl that he had kept up so far. Ahead he could just make out the silhouettes of the tall towers of the wind farm against the sky. That meant he would be home in twenty minutes or so. Then he could go in, shut the door behind him and curl up somewhere. Right now that was all he wanted to do. Get indoors again – away from the light that he had fled into so thoughtlessly – away from the gazes of other people. Where he could curl up – and lick his wounds, like a cat washing itself.

[. . .]

He gazed out of the windscreen, down the bonnet and at the wrecked security fence, wondering quietly if it was worth crying here or if he should wait till he got home. The November air was cold though – seemed too cold for him to feel any emotion. Instead he gazed up at the white wind turbines in front of him. It was not too cold for them, at least. Not cold enough to still the energy of the great towers. They spun and spun as always – huge sails whirling around, always seeming just slightly faster than they should be. That was a feeling that brought a small knot of discomfort somewhere inside him. The way those things turned reminded him of a dream or nightmare he must have once dreamed – perhaps when he was very young. Something claustrophobic yet vast – heavy yet light as a feather. But now the dream or nightmare was forgotten – just leaving the faint ghost of a feeling behind.

[. . .]

Liquid trickled on his face, and he opened his eyes sharply. However, now the comic book had turned red. The explosion faded to dull red thunderclouds. He clawed at his face for a moment, then gave up and stared at the images on the page. The turbines still turned, but they stood now rooted in grim blood-coloured earth or sand – and they had transformed themselves into implements of torture and execution, for on each a tattered body hung, turning and turning, ragged entrails flopping and tumbling behind. They seemed to be secured there and tightly trussed with winds and winds of silver and copper wire surrounding arms, legs and chest. And on the closest turbine Jacki hung, her mouth wide, her skin crisped as though from burning. As she spun she desperately kept turning her head to look at him, shaking the trailing ropes of her disembowelled stomach from her face. He gazed at her for a moment, feeling emotionless, watching as she turned forever, her eyes dying with dizziness. Overhead the darkening clouds boiled.

Two black birds sailed overhead, gliding carelessly into the heart of the storm. Towards her. They looked like ravens, claws outstretched, and there was food aplenty here for them. But then the image fractured. They were no bigger than dots as they circled round her. And with that thought the figures abruptly went, leaving the birds to flap away across the moors. No interchange – no fade out. He was just no longer seeing them.

With a groan he mopped the blood from his eyes and the world returned to normal.

“Fuck”, he said and sat up, but the movement brought a violent lunge of pain from his head and he sagged down again against the headrest. He was still shaking, he realised. Suddenly the car seemed very cold and finally, with a weary sigh, he pulled the door closed. For a moment he sat there staring out at the grey sky – at

the lowering stone that mirrored the moors it smothered – out at the great turning monsters that sat there like giant life-forms eating the air. The figure he had seen earlier was much closer now, he realised. Now he could see the long hair and small, angular face of a girl. Perhaps early twenties – perhaps older. It was hard to tell. Ragged looking. Her limbs thin and her clothing surprisingly light for this cold evening, seemingly nothing more than tattered jeans and a thin shirt a few sizes too large for her wrapped around her shoulders. Somehow she must have climbed over the fence, for she was on this side of it now. He watched her for a moment. Was she looking at him?

Excerpt 2

Overhead the giants talked softly. He could hear them above the wind. It was a peaceful sound. A sound that made him think of peace and restfulness. It made him think of the gentle buzzing of insects on a summer day, and smell the sizzle of frying bacon. The scuttle of wood lice and the patter of hail landing in the grass.

Curious associations, he thought softly. But then again – why not?

He opened his eyes, gazing up into the comforting skin of her shoulder . . .

And the sails of the great windmill were turning gently.

“Feather?” he murmured, staring at the giant where it reared above him across the sand.

There was no answer.

He stared – then began to tramp forward slowly. He felt as though he was in the presence of a thunderstorm.

His body was tingling, flushing with a sudden glow of heat. With a careless gesture he tossed his sword away across the sand. The tower loomed higher and higher above him – and were the great sails bending down to watch his progress? He wasn't sure.

He glanced down at himself and saw that he was wound again in the copper wire armour and he began picking at it, unwinding it. It came loose in springing coils which tangled round his feet as he scrambled out of them. He walked onwards, leaving a tangled trail of wire – and eventually he was free of it and stood naked save for the woven symbol, feeling the soft sand moulding round his feet.

He looked down at his chest, where the three pronged windmill design still stood out in sewn copper, and he smiled, tracing the lines and looking up at the tower in front of him, almost as though for approval. Slowly he approached the base – where the white wall sprang up out of the red sand. He reached out a nervous hand and stroked the smooth surface. It didn't feel like metal at all. It felt almost like skin. It seemed to vibrate and pulse under his fingers like something alive. Alive and aware of him.

Finally he sat down comfortably in the sand with his back to the white wall, settled himself there, and closed his eyes. Giving himself up to the voices.

Voices.

Voices.

Voices . . .

There were secrets here indeed. "Help me." he whispered. "I know where I am going now."

Yes.

The world leaned slowly and he tumbled backwards, gently as a dream, falling into the tower. This was different to before. While before he had been plunged through a bitter and filthy tract, now he found himself

floating as smooth as good sex through a delicious softness. It didn't last long though. He slid down the world and it passed away leaving him filled with a happy regret. Perspective swung this way and that. The ground was now below, now above him. And he was lying in the softly coarse grass of the moors again.

Hail was falling – small and cold. They fell as lightly as flower petals, and when they struck him there was a flicker of cold and light. The grass stroked his skin. It was rough, but so real that he wanted to cry. This was – this was earth in all its glory. A seething mass of questing roots and swarming creatures. And he could somehow feel them all – as a great solid mass of life. This was a vision that he would never catch as an artist in the traditional sense – that feeling before you wake up of seeing marvels that you could never pin down later. But that didn't matter. It didn't matter because he was experiencing it now. Nothing mattered any more except a gentle progression towards the unknown experience.

The giants were still there – the same old towers. They watched him placidly, with all the emotion or involvement of sea anemones. But he felt comfortable with them. Indeed, he remembered the sense of comfort he had felt when he first heard them whispering to him – and now he began to see why these towers had been such a key. Whatever fantastic tricks the human mind can play, this was the greatest. Somehow these white towers had become the symbol for all human creativity. And he finally saw it – and finally, with the hail falling around him like rose petals, he finally heard what the giants were saying.

This is my body – it is yours.

* * *

He woke up to find himself back in among the trees with Feather sitting next to him, quietly stripping copper wire with the kitchen knife. It was quite dark now. He felt . . .

The lack of sensation was the first thing that hit him – and it came with a feeling of terror. His head felt clear and sharp, his lingering headache squashed out of existence. But he also felt oddly numb, as though his body was asleep. But even as the fear shocked him he felt his body suddenly waking. He gasped and shivered, his eyes opening huge and his penis jumping erect at the flash of heat inside him. Like a swimmer taking his first floundering strokes through the water he tasted his body. Sensations came crowding in – a vast overwhelming mass of them. Every blade of grass and moss and every leaf that touched him was a knife edge. The wind was a sandstorm. And every living thing about him rampaged like a dinosaur. He gasped and twitched and cringed away. No no – too much much too much . . .

And with that panicked thought it faded – faded away to normal – then, before he could stop it, to complete numbness again.

He felt like Alice lost in her Wonderland. Drink me. Eat me. Big. Small. This way that way out of control. With a plunge he fled the numbness and once again the leaves became blades. He cried out.

“For fuck’s sake,” he wailed – give me something solid here.

Then he felt hands touch him, and he froze.

“You can imagine this,” she whispered, caressing his chest. The feel of her skin against his was incredible – like being licked by a burning tongue. He almost forgot the razorwire leaves.

Then she softly swung a leg over him and sat astride.

He felt her arse squashing into his pelvis, her pubic hair scratching at him – and he gazed at her unable to speak. Whatever electricity he had always felt at her contact was amplified a hundredfold. The sensation was so intense that he was tempted to flee it again, seek refuge in safe numbness. But he felt rigid – unable to move or respond.

Slowly and gently, so as not to hurt him seriously, she slid down, lying flat on top of him again.

“Don,” she whispered.

“Yes?” he said – even his voice was a sensation.

Her lips descended.

Lips – tongue – burning – fire -

For a moment he struggled against it, terrified beyond belief at the sensations that ripped through him. His entire body was melting like ice in burning fire. Her lips flashed steam at contact. Her tongue, rough as sandpaper and as smooth as silk probing deep into his mouth. He gazed up at her eyes, and in them shone the depth of the vast rabbit hole that descended behind them. And slowly he returned her embrace, tasting her skin – skin that flowed like sand – soft and firm and glowing with lurid radiance.

Excerpt 3

Don never remembered how they got home. He woke up to find himself slumped in his chair in his studio. He groaned and clutched his hand to his stomach in a flicker of panic. The memories in his head seemed very hard to believe now in the confines of his familiar studio –

but a moment's investigation confirmed them. He remembered the staggering sight of his own insides taken and spread – remembered pain – and its absence. Apparently he must have fainted. Yes – that sounds right. But now – he examined himself more closely – he appeared to have been sewn up again with all the skill of a surgeon, and now the heavy smells of flesh were mingled with the fresh scent of herbs. Copper wire ran through his skin – great turns of it – holding him together it seemed. There was a moistness about the wire and the flesh beneath that suggested body fluids leaking – but it was very slight.

Very carefully he leaned back, feeling his body trying to obey his instructions. It felt terrifyingly loosely held together and very fragile – numb and dead to the world – and he shivered.

He felt as though he would never be leaking again.

The door opened letting in a gleam of light, and a figure stepped in. The sight of her brought the last vestiges of the past couple of hours crashing back, and he gazed at her in stunned silence. None of this was possible, he thought, fear flickering. All he felt now was a panicked desire to escape back to where things were comprehensible and rational. Feather regarded him with a very curious expression on her face. She looked almost cautious, as though worried as to how he would greet her after all that had happened. But there was also a glitter in her eyes – a satiated gleam of self-satisfaction. She was dressed again now in her jeans and that slightly incongruous lacy-looking shirt that hung round her like a curtain. She said nothing, just stood quietly regarding the ruins of his paintings. Gently she touched the crumpled sketch of Jacki on the turbine with her toe, then thoughtfully kicked at the torn remains of a landscape.

There was a crunch of glass.

Don wanted to shake his head in general negation of the whole adventure – but he didn't dare move. It was curious to see her there though, in the mundane surrounds of his studio, he thought. It made her feel very real. She was not just some bizarre dream conjured up by a cracked scull.

Don sighed, and she looked round at him.

“How did I get here?” he asked, faintly.

‘What the Giants were Saying’ is available from
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