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Eastern European Cartoons

Before The Big Bang

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> *The story below is my submission to the STSC Symposium, a monthly set-theme collaboration between STSC writers. The topic today is "Beginnings".* —At the beginning there was nothing,—declares Richie Roach in a firm rhetorical manner.—a blank page on which our world was later painted, an empty mirror where our newborn civilisation saw itself and smiled, the utter void wherefrom the mattering matter materialised and manifested itself into existence and bla bla bla!—Richie Roach is a raging rhetorical beast.—They will say that to you, and you shall believe, surely, because this is what you've been told to believe from your early nymph age when you crawled your way out of an egg and your dear mother and father said to you these exact words. There was nothing, kid. Off you go, commence your miserable life.

Now, the vacuum springs inside the pause that Richie Roach begets. He wiggles his whiskers protruding above his head and ofttimes curls them into spirals as if attempting to tune into the same wave with the audience. Someone among them gulps. They, too, start wiggling their

whiskers. They need to tune in to that wave. Oh my, they need that badly. Look at them!

—But!

The audience shudders.

—I'm no father and no mother to you. I have the luxury to be completely and brutally honest, for no lie!– you hear me, no lie!– can ever be benevolent and compassionate enough to slur over your freedom to think, your freedom to see your past and whither it directs you. But! Today, we flip the sides! We change that forever! By the end of this presentation, you shan't be the same person any more.

The audience starts to nod and gurgle with enthusiasm.

—Our best archaeologists have retrieved a few pieces that can shed light on our history, on what was before us, before the times... Even before the Big Bang!

You can hear how the audience's wings start to rattle, filling the hall with humming vibrations. Richie Roach hears that too. They are excited. No. They are thrilled.

—That's where we start today! Before the Big Bang!

The pause eats the sound again. Oh, bloody hell, you can almost hear the vacuum.

—Meet, the Titans!—says Richie Roach in a plangent voice, and claps.

Now, from the ceiling, attached to the ropes drops a normalsized polaroid photo of two giant creatures, banging their giant arses against each other, one of them staring through the camera (the creature, not its arse), presumably holding it with one of its long limbs, and, tiny in juxtaposition, Richie Roach points at them with all his four arms. The audience is flabbergasted. They see aliens, or ancient chthonic monsters from old myths and forgotten fairy tales, but they appear different, different, for now they seem real. The audience's antennae erect. They tremble. Now, they all are the wave, and Richie Roach is riding it.

—There was no single Blatta Major that blesses us all and bla bla bla, as we are taught to believe, and there was no nothing before it. Now, what used to be a part of a children's horror story about giants stomping across our world, turning us into little chitinous pancakes, and bringing us to substance, becomes real—

Somebody in the audience sighs in horror. Kids start crying. A rhetorical devil, he ignores the soaring turmoil.

—What used to be a fairy tale becomes history. The Titans.

Richie Roach points to the photo of two arse-banging titans again.

—They dwelled upon our world, had families, friends, and fun together. Look at them. Yes, look. They are happy. These creatures owned this world before us, whatever it was then. These creatures

guarded it for us. Perhaps, they created it. Perhaps, they even destroyed their world to create ours. We must be grateful to them for making us such a gift.

An annoying sceptic clears his throat and stands up.

—How d'we know these "creatures" were real at all, huh?—he enquires, all his arms crossed, big black eyes squinted, whiskers curled in nervous uneven spirals.

—We, my friend, have anticipated your question, of course, and in all honesty, wouldn't hold this event, this presentation, without having a series of groundbreaking answers to it.

—Huh?

—A-huh?! Intrigued, my friend? Now, all, brace yourself. The Head of The Titan! Behold!

Richie Roach claps, and grim and epic symphonic music starts playing, while on the left side of the stage, curtains roll into the sides, and floating from the darkness into the auditorium, a dozen of cockroaches drag a normalsized human skull, corrupted and sooted by the years and other external factors. A good third of the audience faints, awe strikes another third, and the rest submerges into unremitting murmuring.

—A-huh! You couldn't see this coming, could you?—says Richie Roach, agitated.

The annoying sceptic takes his seat, no word uttered, though his jaw is in the ghost-talking position.

—This, we believe, is the head of one of the Titans, the head that thought this world into what it is, the head that must immediately become one of our most cherished artefacts. Should luck expedite so, we will find more and more heads of The Titans in the future. We are sure there were more of them and—

—How d'ya "sure" there were more? How much more? Easy to say with yer blabbermouth. How can ya know anything for sure? Life is a bloody gamble, that's what we're sure about. Mebbe, that's some sort of relict anomaly, huh? Mebbe, you've just built this... whatever it is... from clay or whatnot to deceive us. When your blabbermouth don't work, ya always lower yerself to those magic tricks.

—We know that because we saw it, my friend.

The audience groans.

—Be so kind, show us then, ya blabbermouth!

Richie "Blabbermouth" Roach claps, and on top of the arse-banging polaroid picture, drops another one, a bit burnt. On it, you see an enormous cloud of smoke and fire, looming over the world like a gigantesque mushroom. Below it, the creatures, thousands of them, stand bewildered in the twilight, staring at it.

The audience is, well... speechless.

—It appears “different” from what the scripture endows us. It’s less “round”, and more horrifying yet beautiful nevertheless. So, our best experts believe that it is what it is, the first graphic evidence of The Big Bang.

The Big Bang happens again, now—inside the audience. Now, the annoying sceptic’s eyes glimmer.

—Perhaps, this picture captures the last minutes before The Big Bang, the last minutes of the primordial world. We are yet to discover what really happened at that moment, what the Titans were thinking of then, who they were, and what were their motivations and desires. Perhaps, it shows the exact moment when they created our world. Perhaps, they made a great sacrifice, so we, the cockroaches can now enjoy our humble existence.

The Sun, 1909 by Edvard Munch

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