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The Quiet Inventory

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A short book

BM-2015-441

2015

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The Quiet Inventory is a short book about a gray inventory. It was made to be read in one sitting, then put back. The sentences stay with the stack of proofs and the early morning. They do not wander off into a story they cannot pay for.

There is a kind of attention that starts only after the early morning. In the back room I kept the stack of proofs clear so a gray inventory would have somewhere to sit. A clock came and went. I did not turn toward it. When I finally used the pencil, the mark was smaller than the decision to make it.

Close the book and the back room does not travel with you. What travels is the sequence: the stack of proofs, the pencil, the decision to stop. A clock will be different wherever this file is opened. The rights in the file stay where they were.

The early morning made the back room smaller. On the stack of proofs, a gray inventory held still, which is not the same as being finished. I could hear a clock and, under it, nothing that needed a name. The pencil waited. Most of the work was in the waiting.

If you license the file, you are not buying the back room. You are buying a described use of a gray inventory, for a term, in a territory, in writing. The watermark on this preview is the reminder that the looking is not the license. The stack of proofs goes on being itself after the agreement ends.

I went back to the back room in the early morning. The stack of proofs was where I had left it. What I had come to see was a gray inventory, and it had not agreed to be simple. I set the pencil down and did not pick it up again until I had looked long enough.

Later the early morning changed and the color cooled. I did not

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correct the stack of proofs. Correction would have been a different book. The pencil left a trace at the edge, thin enough to miss if you were only passing. A clock filled the pause, and the pause was part of the page.

A record of a gray inventory is not the thing itself. The stack of proofs took the light and gave a duller light back. From the back room I could measure the band with a hand, then with the pencil, and the two measures did not match. I kept the second measure. The first one had too much of me in it.

I numbered nothing. A date would come later, on a catalog card, but the early morning inside the work is not a clock time. The pencil has no opinion about dates. The stack of proofs only shows that the mark was made, and that it was allowed to remain.

What I left out was larger than what I put in. The back room had corners I did not describe, and a window I refused to make into a view. On the stack of proofs, a gray inventory stayed inside its own edges. That refusal is the subject, as much as the color is.

I read the page the next day in a different early morning. The a gray inventory had settled. It looked less like an event and more like a fact. Facts are easier to credit and harder to decorate. I prefer them.

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I looked again at the stack of proofs. The a gray inventory was still there, neither better nor worse. The pencil had done what it can do, which is very little, and enough. Outside, the early morning continued without needing a sentence.

A margin is also a decision. I left one, then widened it, then stopped before the stack of proofs became only frame. A gray inventory stayed in the middle, where I could find it again.

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Someone will ask what the picture is of. It is of a gray inventory, and of the time it took to leave it alone. The back room is not in the file. The attention is.

I copied one sentence into the catalog note and deleted it. The note only needs the title, the date, and the fact that the rights are reserved. The paragraph can live here.

The a clock changed pitch. I did not rewrite the page to match it. A book that chases the room never gets out of the room.

On the second reading the a gray inventory looked plainer. Plain is not a defect. It is how a field survives being looked at twice.

I set the pencil parallel to the edge and did not draw. The alignment was the note. The stack of proofs recorded nothing, which I then had to write down in words.

If the use is small, the license is still a written one. Scale is not a substitute for permission. The a gray inventory does not become free because the file is a preview.

I looked again at the stack of proofs. The a gray inventory was still there, neither better nor worse. The pencil had done what it can do, which is very little, and enough. Outside, the early morning continued without needing a sentence.

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