

*Ryan Vance / Daniel Baker*

# ORI

## A narrative mixtape

→ *A musical three-in-one experiment; a mixtape, story, treasure hunt; built song by song, word by word; part tug-of-war, part co-op gameplay; Dan deals first.*

*Albert Ayler Quartet  
Love Cry, Truth Is Marching In  
John Coltrane's funeral, 1967*

Truly, harrowing. For all eternity. An apocalyptic evocation of syncretic spirituality. Sunny Murray's earths-core rumble gestures at the passage of time without becoming beholden to its infinity.

The brothers Ayler, poignantly dispatching uncharacteristically tender flourishes into their horns between monolithic blurts of tortured atavism. The nursery rhyme simplicity of the marching band fanfare, the unified sustaining of the most rapturous of notes culled directly from an earliest memory of the gospel church. Then someone, who cares who, starts to scream. Coltrane is dead. Music alone will not suffice. Playing is not enough. The quartet descends into pure sound.

*Teseque-Maryam Guebro*  
*'Mother's Love'*  
**Ethiopianes Vol.21 (Piano Solo)**

Levi returns slowly to life, feeling liquid, inside and out, each drop from the cave's roof blooming on his skin as a mineral meridian. Something is different this time. He is lying half in the sea and the water is somehow clear instead of red and frothy. There are neither lightbulbs nor thumbtacks in his mouth. He does not hurt. This is new.

Sitting up, he can see the sun rising behind the pleasure pier, which teeters on the horizon, distant and wrecked.

Kokou is nearby. Kokou is always nearby, afterwards.

"What did we do?" asks Levi.

Memories stick like shrapnel: he remembers the auditorium, wrapping red velvet round his big, steady hands and yanking 'til the curtains tore, 'til the rafters buckled, 'til the old gods came home. The pier's current likeness to a sunken elephant graveyard is their doing.

"Well I hope you," he says, "feel better."

But it is not about feeling better; it is not about that at all.

*Oval – 'Do While'*  
**Systemich**

Not, as would eventually become quite clear, the "new Eno." Rather, a studied yet somehow sensually organic reformatting of Music For Airports birthed into being by Markus Popp's healthily destructo mind-set. If machines could become confused, beset by fever amid the ever-increasing heat beneath the

keypad, they would perhaps emit the worried frazzles and wraith-like static captured on 'Do While.'

The background muzak trotted out by some contemporaneous producers of the post-rave milieu tended towards a retreat into the middle class sonic myopias of the chill out. Papp, however, is resolutely unconcerned with avoiding disruption; the riddled totemic skips and action-painted self-mods embedded upon the source material of these lucid dreamscapes imbue a tetchy anxiety. Amongst that, though, lies the beauty.

*Do Make Say Think*  
*'Ontario Plates'*

**Winter Hymn Country Hymn Secret Hymn**

"I think you're made up."

This is before the pier. There is ash in the soil and blood in the ash, and cindered leaves of a long overdue journal spiral towards the crescent moon.

"Not all Orisha, just you."

Kokou has exactly two online presences, a Wikipedia entry lifted almost verbatim from a Google Books sample of a mid-50s travel guide, written for the golden age of National Geographic tourism, before post-colonialism was a good thing. A dubious source. Yet, Levi's tent is a bubbling plastic pool and most of his skin is burnt and dripping.

Kokou, as it happens, might consider tonight's destruction somewhat excessive – if she understood excess or, for that matter, destruction. But she is learning. She is trying to remember why she threw Levi's portable gas canister into the campfire. Like the trees, now black and upright, now fiery deciduous, she is



missing limbs and limbs of herself.  
So this, she thinks, is how it feels.

*Codeine*  
*'Tom'*  
***The White Birch***

How could there ever be so much pain in the world? What, or who, are they mourning? It's the speed of it. The entropic dynamics are everything here. This is the practice of the anti-flourish.

The telecaster, the bass and the drum kit aspire towards the aching inevitability of the natural disaster. Nobody has quite given up in this world, but everyone is exhausted. Yet it's a faultlessly realised collective aesthetic, one sprinkled with glacial exhortations towards transgression and rich in its exploration of metaphysics. The trio render their heroic fatigue into woebegone rings, each chord afforded the time and space to disintegrate fully before being trampled by the next into the ether.

Despite the harrowing subject matter - part psycho-spite, part detached deconstructions of everyday emotional minutiae - Tom builds unexpectedly towards a cathartic bliss out of a chorus. Something has occurred to rob the narrator of the ability to console himself with nostalgia. There is now only a baleful submission to the terrifyingly adult premise that shame will most likely outlast shamelessness. It is one of the most moving rejections of the grand rock gesture in favour of the cosmic kitchen sink drama in recent memory.

*Grizzly Bear*  
*He Hit Me (And it felt like a kiss)*  
***Cover; originally by The Crystals***

Kokou is on holiday, is a tourist, has never been this far west.

The air tastes different and, even though each new tongue folds the wind in different ways, she is now certain the ambient tang of industry has nothing to do with Levi's mouth. It is everywhere. It sits on the skin like a film. As if to slough it off, she vigorously applies a cheese grater to Levi's soft stomach.

Who will witness this test of strength and fortitude? Levi was alone in his flat when the possession took hold, and Kokou is unused to this sort of solitude. She has such bile at her disposal in this body it seems perverse to keep it private, to remain within the constraint of this ill frame.

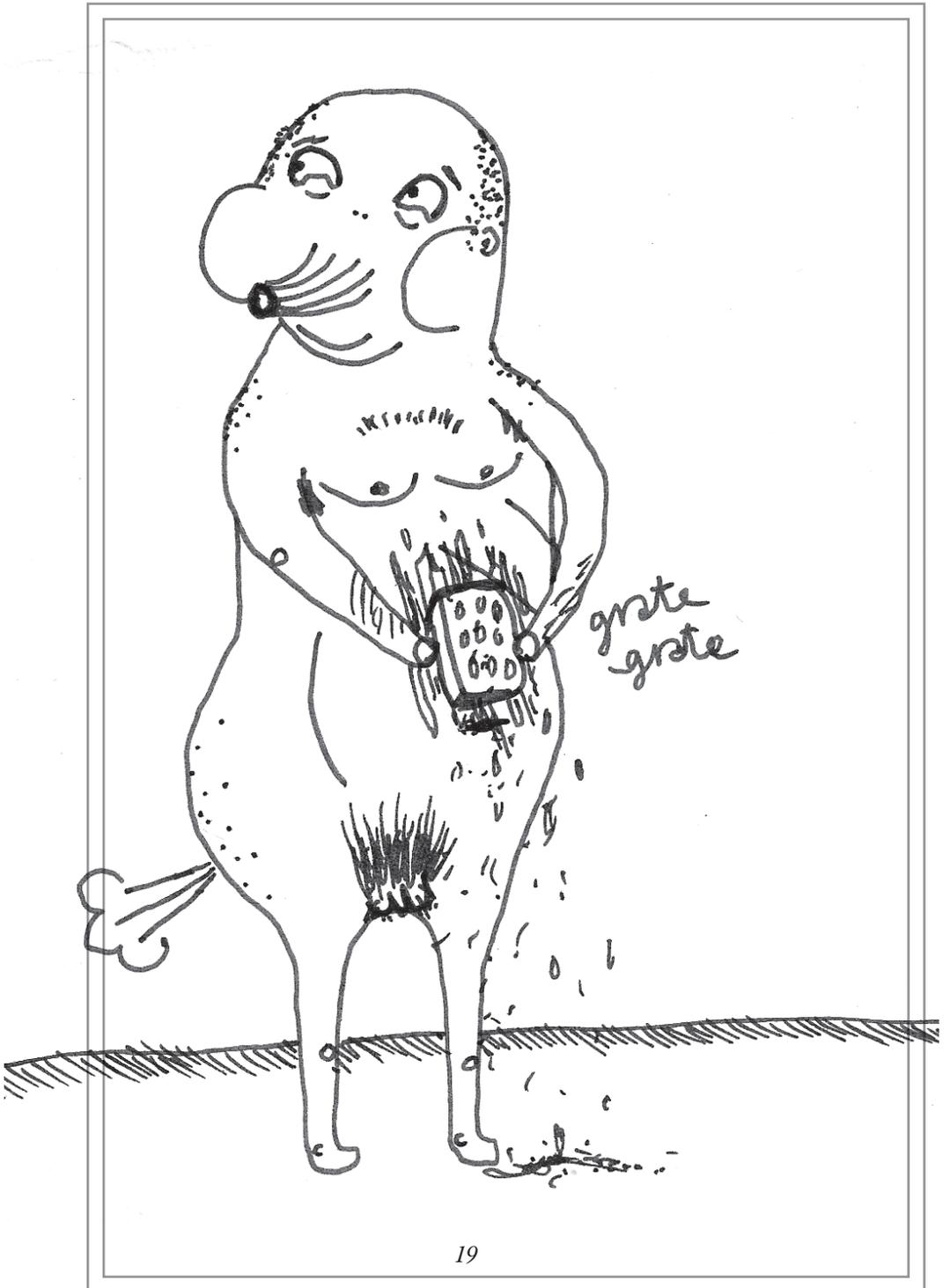
It will take the isolation of a camping trip for Kokou to snap out of a routine of eons. For now, however, she is content enough upending into Levi's eyes a full bottle of lemon juice found sitting with the condiments.

*Washington Philips*  
*'I Had a Good Father And Mother'*  
***What Are They Doing In Heaven Today?***

It's the humbling quiver of a soul so vulnerable you worry about its safety from the moment you hear it.

While the brittle timbre of the depression era acoustic guitar slung over the shoulders of roving Delta bluesmen oozed a suppressed physical violence when eventually recorded by the Lomaxs, Washington Phillips' as yet unidentified





homemade instrument bleeds with the transcendent sunlight of the heavens. In the words of Frank Walker, the man who first captured the iconoclastic primitivism of this most ethereal of gospel musicians, “there wasn’t nobody on this earth could use that thing except for him.”

Phonoharp, Dolceola, whatever. Those in search of an absolute miss the point entirely. When John Fahey set about re-formatting Charley Patton’s visceral twang into a composite of the Old Weird America and the contemporary avant garde, the elemental decay of the 45’s he so religiously collected was considered as vital as the music contained amid their grooves. The crackle and hiss that shroud Philips’ sixteen fully recorded tracks would be resolutely unremarkable, were it not for the truly otherworldly paeans to his god he penned and interpreted.

Like a child scolded at church for fidgeting, he retreats into himself and conjures up the ethereal yet controlled wail of the repentant sinner.

As meditative as these pieces are, though, it’s difficult to interpret Philips relationship with God as anything other than difficult. “I used to have a real good mother and a father, and they certainly stood the test,” he intones, extolling the virtues of their piety at every other juncture. He’s as terrified about their fate as he surely is about his own. All he can do is pray.

*Katie Dill*  
*‘This Body’s Only Rental’*  
**Full of Gentle**

Levi’s hands tremble as he wipes the leather hardback with a soft damp cloth.

The Special Collection has many nicknames. Middle management joke about The Dungeon, the other cleaners consider it Overtime, and one particularly fanatical archivist called it Nirvana, but Levi has his own secret sobriquet: The Sarcophagus. Partly it’s the décor, gilded but sterile, and partly it’s the podiums under spotlights, just like a museum, but it’s the reverence which affects him most; the patience and the glory of these fine, old books. Between thumb and forefinger he could rub their spines to dust.

His hands would shake regardless: at home, during church, in line at the supermarket. People think there’s something wrong with him, as if because he’s big he should be dead to the sway of the world. But I feel it more, he says, because there’s more of me to feel it. And then they say, feel what?

Levi would like that. To just, for a little while, not feel at all.

The journal he’s holding trembles open to a page on warrior gods, as if summoned.

*Screamin Jay Hawkins*  
*‘Little Demon’*

**B-Side to 1956 single, ‘I Put A Spell On You’**

This is before most.

The sweat of life slicking off each popped hip, each arm flung, Olorun kicks, hollers, calls for holy witness. The universe doesn’t so much explode into being as it does congeal very quickly. Everything, everything is perfect, just as it should be. Everything, except-

And there she is, at the end of everything.