



Richard Gwyn

Peter and the Ants

On the island's old capital I lived next door to Peter. Most mornings we would sit drinking raki in his shack, saying little, while he studied the behaviour of ants on the dirt floor. He told me he was training them. I dismissed this as the raving of an incorrigible inebriate. He was a perennial source of improbable explanations, fantastical stories. He tottered along the border between the familiar world and another, more tenuous reality. Then one day Peter came banging on my door, insisted that I follow him to his tiny hovel, with its whitewashed walls and corrugated tin roof. He left the door ajar, to let the light in. Thousands of ants were lined up on the floor, in perfect formation, as though practising drill. On close inspection I could see that they were marking time, beating out a rhythm with their tiny feet. Row upon row; column upon column. Now watch, said Peter. Just watch.

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