

Svenja called me a couple of months ago and said that she was starting some new work for her exhibition at Dentre and she'd like me to write a text for it. The works circled around figures of predators in the wild. The way I write is that I try to personalize things as much as I can, let them sink in, let them grow, fill me up, until words start to pour out:

### *THE THRILL TO KILL*

*The year was 2012. I was working on a farm in Humboldt County, Northern California. Trimming weed all week long. I sat for 16 to 20 hours, until the paper bag was filled with trimmed buds, hopefully over the 200 dollar mark. The bosses, two lame-ass rednecks from upstate NY with an inclination for grooming teenage girls, had a Chihuahua called Roadkill and a Pitbull called Gator and liked to watch wildlife documentaries. I used to sit next to this French girl who just traveled back from India where she had become a yoga instructor and vegan fanatic. She loved giraffes, prayed that one day everyone would evolve to eat only greens and cried real tears whenever a predator would catch its prey on TV.*

*Big Boss would take every opportunity to rant about the majesty of American bald eagles and grizzly bears, or fantasize about the ferocious natures of African lions, Asian tigers and other apex predators around the globe. When she cried, he would condescendingly try to comfort her, projecting his alpha male delusions and his hillbilly evolutionism on the girl's frightened, empathetic nature. "That's life, sweetheart, that's just life" he'd say. What a jerk.*

*In the evening he and his brother would get smashed and act like the total idiots that they were. "Who wants to go shoot some raccoons?" Roadkill would jump around, all excited. Gator would just sit there, being a good boy, waiting for his master's command. The French girl would start whining again and everyone would gather round to comfort her. This whole pathetic routine made me want to vomit. I mean really chérie? Is this really what you feel like crying about? Why are you displaying your weaknesses before them? Do you really want to be a victim at these guy's hands? Her tears felt fake, performative.*

*I was sure the brothers were acting out. I've heard them go out to shoot before, and it sounded like they were really just shooting cans. I got up. "I'll try" "You sure you know how to handle the piece, angel?" "I guess we'll have to find out, boss." We walked into a clearing in the woods. Big boss passed me the loaded shotgun. I liked how I felt holding it - hard, heavy and cold - in my hands. Felt the adrenaline rushing in. I wondered if I'd be able to shoot these bastards out of business. I imagined myself hunting them down into the dark woods, one after the other, the terror in their eyes after the first one went down. The metallic smell of bleeding flesh. I'd be doing the world a favor. My vision got blurred, then sharp again. "What's the matter, angel?" I shot the first one down. Entered a state of trance. One by one, they all went down. The cans did. For the first time in weeks I heard silence. Even Roadkill was standing still. I turned around, their eyes smiled with the glow of recognition. I was one of them. I had just elevated myself to a different degree of respect. I felt safe. Like I didn't need anybody's protection.*

*In the following weeks I became growingly annoyed at Frenchie's crocodile tears and obsessed with stories of hunters and predators, specially the ones about animals that kill for no perceivable reason. House cats tossing little birds and rodents around, never killing them. Foxes destroying chicken coops for fun, biting one chicken's neck after the other. Bottlenose dolphins clearly enjoying causing painful deaths. Badgers killing every animal with feathers in sight, eating almost none. Leopards out on hunting benders leaving behind the uneaten remains of sheep and lambs to rot in the sun. Hyenas killing and injuring dozens of gazelles just because*

*they could. Teenage elephants testing out their strength and slaughtering other large animals when there were no adults around to keep them in check. Chimpanzees making wars between themselves, taking prisoners and killing them slowly.*

*I was compulsively trying to find a rationalization for the thrill I experienced. I became annoyed at myself for feeling confronted by what I perceived as toxic positivity. Why couldn't I just leave it be? Did I really need to prove the girl wrong? What harm could there be in someone advocating for kindness and believing there could be an alternative to cruelty? Were there not enough assholes in the world getting their fix off shooting guns? Wasn't my cynicism just another form of giving in to the banalisation of evil? What distinguished us from the rest of the animals was not the absence of ferocity or ruthlessness, neither it was a particular lack of empathy. It was the fact that, given the chance, we could choose not to give in to those murderous instincts, although many times, as I could observe from just looking around, we still did. Then it hit me. Frenchie's were not crocodile tears, they were real giraffe's ones. And my annoyance at her was just another way for me to keep my head above the water and not succumb to the apparent hopelessness of it all. We were two sides of the same coin. We were both trying the best we could to make sense of an absurd world and neither of us seemed to be getting it right.*

There is no right or wrong in the poetic realm. As artists our works are open fields where we weave and build visions that help us cope with our paradoxical realities Senseless wars, police murders, deforestation, generational abuse, ruined cities, struggling futures. The world is not a problem for us to solve. Our works are not politics, yet they are political, fiercely rooted in the world we live in. Where others see endings, we see horizons, allowing new perspectives to shine through.