

## The Norweillian Artist

### part ONE

The obscure town of Norweill, nestled atop the Highlands, connects with the rest of the systemic basin via one solitary stretch of balsam fir-lined cobbled path, appianesque, sun baking the surrounding xanthous fields of yesterday's gold. Fiery figures of heat in eight simmered and mingled with sashaying sand skirts in a ruffle prance; amidst the static background crouched Henri Loquasce, a reasonable bulk frayed in deep brown dungarees and maroon boots, laced but undone, mud-soiled fingernails gingerly extracting a certain balm of gilead, the oleoresin oozing out a perfect remedy for every painter's pet peeve – any self-respecting craftsman in this 14<sup>th</sup> century recognises the inherent inadequacies in traditional blocks of cadmium yellows or titanium whites. Even then, the pigment is far from perfect but not, thankfully, from a distance. As Henri drew the last sap of essence he bent up, contorting a little as his ailing joints creaked and glanced up at the sweltering sky. Shimmering. Splashing on a few measly melted ice cubes, a groan of satisfaction, he slung on his kit. He had earlier passed by a solitary weathered knoll, from atop one could instantly discern the skyline, the flat grassed ground, and little else in between in this vertically compressed panorama. That would be the sweet spot, he smirked to himself.

### part TWO

Eight pieces of square canvasses, firmly attached to his satchel, jostled with and clanged against the now empty water canister, slender and conical and touted to carry ice – not this day – as Henri trudged across the plains off a circuitous road that cut through a series of cattle farms. Whistling to himself - a merry tune to "la bambina di Proz" - could not distract from the eerie stillness hovering under the blazing mid-day *solaris*. Shrugging off unseen cobwebs behind his ears, he quickened his pace and let his tongue loose on an aeroponic junket and shifted his thoughts to perhaps a panna (or latte) cotta, heavenly. Stumbling onto creaking woodplanks of the canal bridge, turn the corner approaching the feastday market, a courtyard teeming with carts and tents and carriages and tombolas and thieves, a motley mish of the old, the ageing and the odious. Patting off a crust of earth, nearly caused an eruption of expletives from an adjacent fop whose feet Henri stumbled on and flicked his face a speck of sully. From the far wide corner white of his eye glint a glimpse of a parched edge. Paused and halted and leaning over with a gush of anticipatory adrenaline, carefully nudged the sketch from its sandwiched position. A bewhiskered face beamed at him – "One o' my finest Sir, one couldn't have picked a finer selection" – one could only imagine the bewilderment on his expression when he received the reply – "Indeed, my fond fellow, 'tis a rare find, an authentic, fresh from the oven, modern-day Loquasce, at an exceedingly fair auction of 850 francs – wrap it up for me at once."

### the END