**Careful: You'll Wake the Story**

It reverberates in the tunnels of itself so, when you tell it that way

A spiraling narrative that turns around and goes through its anti-mirrors

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**Chapter 1**

**I Am Trying to Awaken from All Stories**

"The realm above the one in which we are already dead," he said. Then died. Translucent petals fell on the video of him dying. animated that is. a flaky offshoot of that turned into an ad for a travel agency. It advertised destinations. Snowy whiskers made an announcement." Follow me off the abandoned ramp. It'll lead to that night edge."

Night is like a roadway wall and there are realms above, below, and past it. marshmallow clouds raining puddles of led, im already dead, im already dead- waxing my toes till my skin turns red, violence means nothing when your already dead, im already dead, im already dead- how can i chew looking at you? always wanting more always wanting more-you taste so much better medium rare, your so much better dead your so much better dead-im already dead.....eyes wide open, feeling wide awake now but im already dead, already dead...i think im quite crazy in the head, violence means nothing when your already dead.... translucent petals but I think they meant pedals on the sign at the Guitar center where keyboards were marked way down even the see-through synthesizers had run out of steam (they actually had once run on steam) though in the parking lot next to the disabled accessible store dumpster were those items nobody seemed to want any more with a free sign barely legible and rats were napping there under the other sign only half of whose lights still shone or blinked (a neon sign you see) written "abandoned ramp -- no dumping."

That's where we met both in need of a quiet place to get some sleep. "Is this the end? The one in which we are already dead?" she asked, flicking translucent petals from the end of her drybone xylophone cigarette, continuing: "because you forgot Snow Whiskers, you decibel accessible flaky offshoot --and I am not good at following rules, as you well know, especially neon signs that are ALSO just a flaky offshoot of gaslights anyway, so you'd better stop your gaslighting and playing possum with those rats and get your arse back to the abandoned camp where you left our wolf!!"

I got a new pedal!" I shouted, pumping the steam-powered Bose. "You're gonna die when you hear this new crazy sound," I said, pumping the steam-powered amplifier. "Had a dream . . . listen: we're getting a band together, we're calling ourselves "Snow Whiskers! It's perfect!" (Phoosh . . . phoosh...) But we're not one of those bands who do their flaky little offshoots of their own band names, writing songs about their fucking band names, you know? For chrissake. They're already dead when they do that, already dead! In a realm just above them, just above being fucking dead! They think they're so fucking clever like that, with their layers and all, like their deceiving people!"

The guitar was controlling a thin, pretty whine through the amplifier.

"Steam power! It's the fucking SHIT! And I haven't even played anything yet! This one's called Abandoned Ramp!"

*Will MacBride, Daniel Ross, Peter Johnstone, Artemis Asio, Owen Kaelin*

**Chapter 2**

**In Which the Dead Free the Living**

Her heart was busy exchanging the outside with the inside, blood to cover the scar tissue of raw emotions, the realm in which the dead free the living from self-inflicted purgatories hidden beyond the dull glow and damp surface of the savaged ego's waxing moon umbrella, the realm above the one in which the living free the dead spirit from the confines of rib cages to loose the soul springing eternal beyond the shards of the broken opaque window she had sheltered, sequestered it behind along with the populated collapsed bridge between her myriad desires and every pale vessel of a man and their empty, ephemeral, ecliptic light from their "Star light, star bright, first star..." she saw each night, hanging hope upon their collective glimmer, a solidified union of deceit, the blackest antennae transmitting hope across a cosmos cruel and into a black hole, the space between the inside of her heart where love beat eternal and the outside, aging epochs, eons, with every poison arrow from Eros' callous bow.

There are railroad tracks that now break this solidified union of the cat, ones we would have laid ourselves if we were not busy tending the reflections as a stock of grain waiting in a silo.

Under such harsh rule had the felines brought this despair, through opaque window glares and blackest antennae marques on the waxing moon umbrella. They had come from the realm in which the dead free the living, a place we all knew none were allowed to go for we were all natives to the realm above the one in which the living free the dead, and were simply not allowed.

In the reflections of the once-populated collapsed bridge we had to worry out night and day for the narrow-eyed domestics to feed upon, exchanging the outside with the inside, leaving us nothing but regret of the sloth and empty wills. It was only when so few of us were left that then the tracks fell from the clouds like a hot rain on parade of cotton candy, the same tracks that crushed one ounce pink matter beneath them in a spray of freedom, the same tracks that bore no remnant of what we were all doing before felines came back to town.

*James Goertel and Rand Burgess*

**Chapter 3**

**See-Through Dream-Drenched**

All that jazz dripping from her mouth, under poured over above, in tongues, her dreams, white picket penitentiaries, the realm in which houses are shaped like animals, waiting to cage a man, a me, a maybe husband with her see-through dream of happily-ever-after showing it's nightmare face, black pepper teeth, broken ladder smile from behind, beneath, within dreamy moon petals falling from a wedding song soaked sky upon this playground where boys become unwilling men, the dissolved see-saw of irresponsibility soon replaced by a married-go-round and the warble of its calliope song, more like a Bataan Death March than an Ode to Joy.

Quicksilver miles by the wayside, trash picking, paying debts, elastic plastic neon jumpsuit. The see-through dream of rail cars dotted with old highway men covered thick with white pepper gossamer smiles only solidified the dream.

I cannot find the tune that was lost in empty plastic squares; there is simply no jazz lingering about. Never are there any moon petals in the realm in which the houses are shaped like animals, only parades of broken ladders, if not death, and lilacs that coast alongside white walls.

No, we are lucky to still be under poured over above and beyond the faults we had so willingly committed in another’s namesake. Jailed free without a tunnel to buy what has been already hauled away. I think I would still do it over again.

I walked through the sea, the water under poured above and refreshed my soul â only for a minute. Lost in a haze, a dirty place with see-through dreams and drought I wanted to escape into reality but never could. This world is mine and I must embrace it. I walk past the dissolved see-saw (it was there since I was a child I scraped my knee on it and it developed a taste for children’s blood), through the pepper snow (achoo) and climb up the broken ladder. The mice wave and smile at my return.

A crow brings me a lei. I walk below the raining moon petals and past the clouds that contain houses shaped like animals and saunter into my cave. I sit down on the recliner, pop open a Coke and look out of the TV to see people watching me.

There were child's eyes for a minute behind it in the mirror deeply blue like the sea. A corrugated breeze arrested the moment. Suddenly a film of blue-green light wafted in between it and the mirror in a staccato rhythm that bled into a continuous wave. "What is this" I thought, "must be a body call."

The book fell open to a page on Dakinis and the baraka. "Where are these lucid beings" I whispered to myself. The sky was otherwise black and I smelled nutmeg. "Have they left, maybe if I let my thinking go wild I will catch a glimpse of one, maybe even hold one."

I felt a twitch in my neck and remembered to starve down my coffee intake. She had said she would be in the neighborhood before the end of the month. Why had I thought of her, for the first time in months, just after I remembered the Tuatha de Daana.

Suddenly now there was a black ostrich feather and a bustling green blackberry bramble in the mirror. I tasted sweetness before they opened my eyes again. "Had they been sewn shut or was it just a memory of the caul." A murmuring berry fell into the blackness, rolled down to the bottom of the whispering mummy-dada lake, eyes taken away into unsweetened chocolate. The feather handed wind had not sacramentally, as it were, broken time angst.

It was a brass drawer, a gauzy brass sea chest where the insinuation had lain since the last precessional twitch. My membranes were not really so metal-like any more. My desires all decanted, vaporized, blown into the place where things like that can enter the electron tubes. The dentist who did improv had pointed to this vaguely several cerebral bubbles ago. "It was not easy to explain," I thought.

They were not Ascended Masters but they had a bright leathery look and eschewed worry as if they were a pair of birds caught in a Volvo. The asp bitten seeker was once an elm tree but now was a mother of pearl button that reflected my nudity in the most distracting way. I would not think of laughter or petroleum for a month.

While evil men slept, their souls became saints, time flowed backward, resetting all the clocks, little children cried the tears of old men's memories. Thoughts gave way to form, color blossomed, and light wrapped its arms around the soft moon petals which descended through a naked dream. Mother of pearl cast out her prayers, dissolving everything she saw or had ever seen in her lifetime.

Cold letters appeared and peppered her vision, forming words that gently poured down glowing ladders, dripping like whispers, tales of broken dreams. The jonguler holds two or three egg cups, pouring fluid from one cup to another, under poured over above the realm in which her lover comes to die, the realm in which houses are shaped like animal cookies where the Patriarch awaits while cattle unfold on the balcony above, foretelling and blooming his doom with mockery as a panoply of ponies gallops madly by.

Above and beyond the call of duty his weddied bliss beckoned, Peter Pan with his moon-petal mother-of-pearl teeth not yet blackened, the see-through dream not yet revealing his broken ladder smile, his callow curls not yet salted, peppered, his too-smooth body still slipping down her, seeking Perfect Woman her throat not yet exposed to vultures with the rest of us. She saw this: a couple in tandem, equillibrated (or so it was perceived by her at first, her rose quartz diadem deciding) --but surely not equllibrated now, a dissolved see-saw, one up, one down, him above, her below the surface calm of a corrosive liquid--but with her still not heeding the sea saw, buzz saw comic striptease in which Minnie Pearl- Mother of Pearl- Poor Pitiful Pearl- Perils of Pauline, not even Polly Purebred of the Ursuline Order of the Universe can stop the dissolution that exposes him for the desiccated dental McCavity, the Parched Patriarch of putrescence resolutely spinning in Davey Jones Locker in suspension, in suspense for he will certainly be revealed for all to see. Even she.

*James Goertel, Rand Burgess, Natasha Cabot, Jeff Thomason, Paul Barnett, Artemis Asio*

**Chapter 4**

**Hole in the Sky**

Inside the icebergs off the coast of Greenland, in the realm in which animals are interchangeable, lives the Salt King. He melts away his kingdom slowly; the ice becomes semi-transparent and he can see the seals and the whales wave at him through their hole in the sky while water seeps into his castle. He climbs up and down the icy ladders and rides the rusty railroad into the sunset, leaving his kingdom in his wake.

He is no longer the Salt King but a simple Poseidon instead. When I wake, I wake repeatedly to this kingdom of salt, once a kingdom of ice. Up and down this valley, at one time sealed underneath in a mile-thick glacier, I find only salt. There is no more ice in this valley, although the air is very cold. Snow falls from the clouds only to melt on the backs of all the interchangeable animals who whine and cry in their unending misery.

A rusty railroad won't lead me out of here. The steel has eroded into the ground where the hills begin to rise. Every morning I wake, disquieted, to this realm in which all animals are interchangeable, to this cold valley where everything living needs to fight to survive, and I look up at the hole in the sky.

I contemplate this hole, but I can never grasp any meaning in it that will satisfy me. It is like a kind of abrading of the sky, as if the sky were, in some way, now semi-transparent, because of some terrible disaster. It's a space of some kind of darkening, a deep blue, and in the evenings one sees stars in this hole sooner and more numerously than elsewhere, until night falls in full and one can then no longer see the hole.

At night, as I dream, I'm visited by animals which are not interchangeable strange, blubbery creatures of the sea and these animals have wet voices. They complain of their life in the sea, where they're routinely terrorized by some arrogant but very powerful newcomer named Poseidon. They tell me that in the sea, plants and animals rise up when they die and are always clean. They tell me that when they themselves die, they, too, will rise. The animals tell me that the sky is not transparent, and it does not have a hole. They tell me that the sky is not a big glass but rather a big mirror.

I want to ask the animals what they mean, but I always wake before I can, then finding myself staring again, up and down the sky, pondering that strange hole. I do not know whether or not to consider the words of the talking, non-interchangeable animals from my dreams, because those animals have lied to me before . . . although they've also told me several important truths... . And still at night, I reverie of the Salt King, icicles dangling from his pepper mustache.

He wanders the rusty railroad with quartz and steel hammer, driving spikes into the earth. The dirt cries out. The dirt bleeds. He patrols, hammer over his back. In the dawn of this ice domain, where the animals are interchangeable, they sing me lullabies interchangeable with dirges. I shut my eyes to wake. Up and down, which world wakes? Which world slumbers?

I ask the interchangeable sea otter, drifting on her back, gazing down at the hole in the sky. The real one be the world ye wake to. I close my eyes to wake. Open eyes to sleep. It rolls a clam on its belly and devours it, then it interchanges with a salmon and spins round. It dives for the hole in the sky. Crack.

He drives a spike through the rusty railroad over the horizon. It breaks into mirror shards, tumbling into the sea. My Salt King. When will you return to me?

Crack. Another spike splits. Sky breaks. The end a curving root pierces through my chest. The interchangeable animals giggle. I borrow into the snow cave. I see through the semi-transparent floor, the hole in the sky, a tomb buried beneath fathoms that crush and press and pulverize. Come home my king.

I beg my husband. Crack. A spike through the fulgent eye, magnesium flare dousing, stiletto through my ribs, magma blood seeping from my flesh, from the earth. This world burned warm, verdant and rich when I married this man.

Subtle it froze, frost creeping. I betrayed my watch of the realm in which animals are interchangeable; they trade their names, become songs, blow to wind, blowing away, falling below through the hole in the sky.

I cry for my Salt King, but his ears are deafened by hammer falls. He drives another spike. Horizon shatters. Mirror shards rain. I claw from the cave, drag myself to the water’s edge. Swimming. Muscles numb. I follow the currents to the vacuum. The sea trembles from his hammer, quakes from his blows. Pressure in my chest filling my body, flesh expanding.

Fathoms hammer down on me. Almost to the hole in the sky below, but then I’m turned round in liquid space. Which is the vector up and down? I reach my hand for my Salt King, my moon band kin to his. He drives another spike and patrols his rusty railroad. Inhabiting the realm in which animals are interchangeable, I ride the handcart of the damned up and down the rusty railroad tracks into the salt mines of Eternal Perfection (loathed), eluding the lustily hurled iron spikes of the wakeful Walrus King who lives beneath a mustache of stalactites and stalagmites counterfeiting salt.

"Living" in this stalag of a mine pit, mining mica for the windows of cast iron stoves stamped "No Artistic" I earn my living.

And I see a bat that is not a bat but is, tunneling its way inside the wormy weathering wainscoting of trestle and beam where infrared maggots wriggle, worming through Antarctic ice sheets, opening a hole in the sky where my white cat Grimalkin and my black cat Minette elide and peer out as one, beholding the semi-transparent stories of other contributors where redemption only lies.

After my bath of silver salt and my tea of tears from the skulls of crocodile lovers I peer through the semi-transparent hole in the sky I have conjured to watch my soul float in other realms. I turn the dial to the heat of my heart and the view sifts through channels of dirt and green tarnished tin foil. It crackles and sparks to inject my spines soft spots, the electric chair, the rusty railroads with brain matter under their edges, the two kings, the secretly lost Queen. Where am I? The realm in which animals are interchangeable with my insides is where I have landed. I could not love it more. I have escaped.

I’m free in the center, free on the outside, until a sloth changes my insides and I weep for years about a salmon I once knew. I cannot wake from the gem of the sloth, I am transfixed with horror for what I see before me. Up and down a barbed spike, crushing, mutating the sky to ribbons of tears. Salt in my inner eye, the slot flees the skin, but also takes my insides with him. I stare hollow into the eyes of nightmares and lullabies sung in interchangeable pings and pongs driven by a giant hammer with one face of an axe and one of a mule.

My semi-transparent hole in the sky, my life, my way out, my past, dissolves under the infinite mirth of the Salt King’s burden and I change his insides for my own.

*Natasha Cabot, Owen Kaelin, T. Fox Dunham, Artemis Asio, Rand Burgess*

**Chapter 5**

**Humans Are Not What They Seem**

Blue, deep blue flooding black eyes, the mass of "what if" slung low across the soul, color replacing a sense of place, the realm in which humans are not what they seem, touching internal landscapes, the realm below where people are not what they seem, where pendulums of mortal time are found by means of Braille swinging back and forth in perpetual friction across a dry and brittle heart, a fire stick igniting a combustible organ no camouflage can hide from all the tired horses the spirit rides toward death, toward despair, toward walking sleep realities where the sun can find no means of levitation, lifting only through the gravity of pastel memories riding a balloon to the moon, where it is at once weightless and burdened by the weight of remembrance and regret.

*James Goertel*

## [Careful: You'll Wake the Story](https://issuu.com/lucidplay/docs/careful)