

Collapsible Horizon

by Tantra Bensko

(* * *1) (see below) I'll take a break from reading physics of the dreams of the Event Horizon to Papa, as he dodges the ashes from the flaming goat-hoof above his head. He snores while awake. (* * *2.)

Experiment (* * *3.)

Premise

1. My man has not died. (* * *4)
2. He will.
3. When he does, his after-life self can go where-ever he wants, and see whatever he wants, *whenever* he wants. He just spins the hands on his face to point to his eyes, one way, then the other, countering the clock.
4. Where he told me many times that he planned to go is — to watch me. Scrutinize me with his curvy, full lips pursed, his sculpted cheeks sucked in, his gemlike eyes narrowed, waiting for a sentence, a detail not syncing up. He plans to watch my accuracy, my honesty about everything I said, did, dreamed, thought, remembered, felt. The stories I tell of my past, he will check for references. The liminal images of my hypnagogia, he will pan for gold of treachery. My dream of Nixon, my laugh on the warm night of the cicadas, under the porch of the house in the damp in the dark, the sound of the copper pipes pulsating with water, spiders walking along their bulging curves. He will come back and haunt my past with every word I say, with his narrowed eyes, a Cheshire cat without a grin.
5. Therefore, his after-life self is hovering over me now. He is watching me type. He wafts invisible in every dream. I will

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never want to reach out to a man while unconscious. I have learned almost perfect control of my dreams. I also rarely sleep. (* * *5)

Set-up

A day of making funny faces at each other and laughing with the hysteria of the damned, and dressing up in funny waterproof white suits with drawstring hoods, white diatomaceous earth powder on our faces like mimes, playing together next to pink flowers and red berries, his face next to them the most perfect thing I have ever seen, other than the scabie tunnels surviving the onslaught of the diatoms. (* * *6)

He dreams I do awful things in the shower, with men, leave him alone on the edge of the abyss. Each night he dreams I tell him awful lies. He stares at me in the mornings, cold, cold pupils, frizzled hair. I reverse my letters now. My breath begins to smell like his teeth. He turns away, hand over his nose. He is the most beautiful man I know.

I imagine him standing by me in any conversation I have, or write, listening. That way I'll be surely considerate enough. That way I can watch the tone I use to praise him. I've begun to stutter. I include him in the first sentence of every letter. He reads them to make sure. Is he reading this sentence now? Does he see the person reading it? How clenched his jaws of air, how loud his silent voice?

How much I love him. His agile self dangling, turning upside down, tickling me, wound around a rope hanging from the loft, where I'm not supposed to go. I'm not supposed to speak to him. He stands in his underwear and plays his violin. I see him screeching the notes from the fifth stair but dare go no farther towards the man I pledged my every future to. Every future is only one future of me not leaving him. He draws the bow over the violin. My mind trembles, vibrating, screeching an endless tune, longing for the

present to waft over the past and show it what not to do. Show it its present is OK if it just believes its future is OK.

My only future consists of me not leaving him. I *promise* him I am not planning to leave, no matter what he dreams. No matter how every day he says he knows I will. But there is no future life in which I am leaving him. That life is an abyss. That life is no life, is the same as death, is black. But he says I will in fact leave; so he is leaving. The man I love is packing his truck. He says he doesn't want to be with someone who wants to die if he leaves her.

Query

Does his afterself spy my devotion? Somewhere, it does, high enough up, up in the levels of himself. Far enough up, he *has* to see it. He's seeing it. We are twirling on ropes together, hung from nothing but the center of laughter coming from a throat with no glottis, spewing white hole frosting on the donuts of desire.

Can I forget him because my Papa needs me, and read to him about collapsing wave-forms and Event Horizons, and can I sleep with Mama in my bed, hugging the blue? Can I ever apologize enough that I feel every inch of my guilt folded over upon itself, dreaming about itself in waves that crash it to bits, pulverizing itself into powder that covers everything, how sorry I am for everything?

And then, can I blow the guilt away, like diatoms, and as I do so, their ghosts spun of candied judgment cracking into sugar, floating away into the wind, my breath.

Ingredients

Mama sleeps in bed with us. The blue of her ghost sleeps underneath me. I love her more than anything. What does she think

when we are naked, when we yell, or mimic, imbibe, curse, cry, shake, make love, roll over on her, want to die? Does she know how very much I love her? Does she think now that I'm nasty, now that she has seen me day after day in bed?

Some part of her, high enough up. . . .Some part of her is bright with me, shining at each other, rays outstretched.

Papa is in bed in the next room. He's hasn't moved for years. We hear him steering the car that is his bed.

The scabies are in our skin. We pick them out from each other's back with hot needles. The only time we see each other's flesh we're spraying it with chemicals, wrapping it in white. Our world is made of bags of closed, a dryer running, booties, gloves, white powder covering everything.

The con artist of the giant wigs knew Papa had them, but let him keep them. The con artist stole his money, and turned the whole mountain to lies. She has discovered how to have no wrinkles by having no conscience, no conscience at all.

High enough up, somewhere, she glows. We glow together. Time is beyond meaning. Her wigs shine golden in the sparkles, and her long red fingernails become eagle talons.

Now that Papa's money is gone, we have to sell the homestead out from under our beds so he can live. Mama's ghost born here, Papa dead weight, his hallucination Doppleganger walking the hallways, kicking the silence. The boom of the oxygen machine and the nurses, the malfunctioning air conditioner, rhumrhumrhum.

Observation

My man says he knows I'll leave him because his dreams have been to the future. They float over us. They tell him things in a

female voice. His dead Grandma loves him. She doesn't want him for herself. (* * *7)

Will we die of nothingness and hunger? Time to fold it all up and put it away. Time for the futures to collapse into the sale, when we know if we can stay in the house afterwards, like ghosts. I scoop the gravel on our driveway into the potholes for the hundredth time, still unable to make out if the driveway angles up or downward.

The Dreams of Event Horizon

The experiment has taken us into the wormhole, of course, (* *8) and all the characters are turned upside down and all rationality shaken from their pockets. Rules no longer apply. The singularity calls.*

My man has become a scarecrow in the garden, tin pans banging, crows cawing overhead, ready to tear off his flesh, rending holes in the illusion, where everything shows through, pulsing. Mama has become box springs, coiled underneath my flesh. Papa smokes a pipe like in the old days, but the smoke goes into the copper pipes and turns into a silky snake of wisdom, lying in wait for the plumber. The land tilts. The con artist, who once pretended to be working for my blindness Papa, while working instead at a mortgage company, has a for-sale sign stuck through her heart. Scabies sing in their tunnels, vibrating the skin like resounding drums. The reader, observing the collapsing waves becoming one reality, becomes Shroedinger's Cheshire Cat, with a fur-licking grin. The Event Horizon spins around and around, like the dryer on murderous high heat, always on, these days. The con artist says we planned it all out before we were born.

Conclusion

Somewhere up high, my closed eyes turned up, my breath held zero flash panoramic. (* * *0) Somewhere, every character in

this book is free. And the very reading of the sentences, as you hold your breath, and let it out, sends the characters away like diatoms in the wind. And the ladder of my selflevels of time shudders. You can walk under that ladder. I promise. There is no such thing as bad luck when I feel like this. There is only the anti-story.

There is only the way out of the stories, up the ladder. To the white fluffy clouds of big fat cats, white comforters, and a blue sky, the color of Mama's aura, and the spritz of sunshine. Papa, always smart, so smart now it hurts. The con artists' psychopath-pinkness of pretense now turned to real pink flowers of delight. The oldest trees on the land hugging us and saying we have learned the lessons they were teaching us all along. My man waving to me from afar, looking old. The scabies forgiving us, as they make little snow-angels in the white.

* * * Footnotes

1. It's time to turn Papa over. I grasp onto him as he screams he is falling into the abyss. I tell him I won't let him fall in. Is he already in, and already out?
2. Papa never remembered any dreams before that didn't tell him something miraculously practical.
3. We already suspect that all the wave-forms collapse upon observation, and that they also do not. Everything feels so collapsible; in fact, that we feel we could wad it up, and every part of it would lick every other part of it with the same saliva. It would become a spit wad.
4. In another parallel he is dying right now. Which one of him will go through the slit? Both at once, and fly together on the other side, holding hands, with contrails behind them, zooming like conjoined twin jet engines.
5. Lack of sleep for a single month can kill. Many months at a time creates some kind of astral conflagration on multiple levels in order to stay alive in some of them, any of them, at all. Meanwhile, each "um" is logged with disgust. Lack of

sleep is known to turn people into hyberblubber. No one wants to touch their skin. No one wants to hear their voices.

6. Wearing our scabies protection, we stood next to the berry bushes, with our arms and legs outstretched, pretending to be snow-flakes, and stars, to the outer world. To ourselves, we were giant scabies trying not to laugh.
7. I told her ghost when I met him I was only borrowing him. That should could have him back when he died.
8. Tunneling through a wormhole of loss takes a long time, as you slowly go through the Event Horizon, out into the white hole. What I have learned by this experiment is — as you do that, the long process echoes over and over, the whole time, within it, recursively. You feel yourself going through it over and over again as you move along. This in itself is worth the Collapsible Horizon to realize.
9. Actually(0). The long anti-shadow shone on my guilt, my imperfections, my apologies ground down to dirt, has done its work. I have merged with the ghosts, and we have raised ourselves up together into the air. We have held our breath, closed our eyes, turned them upward, climbed the ladder of our selves, the levels of our futures, the wideness of our auras. We are suns together. We send out solar flares.

