

Lizard Back

by Tantra Bensko

Giving the lizard a bath, the only way to hydrate it, makes it lick its eyes with a humanoid silent tongue that leaves the comfort of its gums and investigates the edginess of its open eyeballs. It refuses to eat the crickets in the terrarium, which grow large, grow wings, and songs, souls, rental rights. When a splash of water from its bath falls on the floor to make a tiny pool, I wipe it up with a tiny piece of cloth. The lizard hides more adventurously in the dried grasses, still so slowly I never see it move.

Later, I will take the lizard on the bus in a mini-terrarium attached to the port in the skin of my back, where a woman with a giant spot on her cheek will look at it, move her neck from side to side, and say “mm *hmmm*, girlfriend. You *know dat's* strange. You know I don't be a Ph.D and all, but I *still* be knowin *dat's* strange.”

I will wear the mini-terrarium into the bars tonight, after wearing it to the spa, and see if they have some holiday-spiced eggnog if I give them the last of my wad of cash, bits of lint and dried terrarium grass coming out of my pocket when I bring it out. This may get rid of my blues, as the mini-terrarium attached to my upper back makes me the most eccentric of friends.

The lizard is like wearing wings on my back, makes me fly like a dragon in my dreams, which I have all day long, while looking at you, talking to you, right now, having dreams in some part of my head. I'd like to stick out my tongue and lick the part of my head where the dreams come from to show you. But my tongue isn't that long yet, though I clip a little more of the skin at the base of it every week. It can now go into my nostrils pretty far up.

I have some clothes intact, for when I don't attach the mini-terrarium. I have other clothes with holes in them for the attachment points to go through. When I remove the terrarium, the holes in my shirts become slinky sexy over the portholes. I can do strip tease moves as I dance, and strangers can peer at the port, trying to figure it out. It's similar to an insulin pump, I tell them. I become part lizard, and I can therefore hide in the tall grasses of my waking dreams, and never be found. You don't see me, really, because most of me is hiding now, eyes unblinking, skin becoming pale. Most of me is looking at you with very large eyes, with vertical pupils, close up, right now. That part is not used to secrets. What is the secret you're not telling me?

If you don't tell me, I'll probably lick your eyeballs. I'll sing the songs I learned from the crickets. I'll stare at you in your dreams, close up. What are you hiding? We promised. We promised only transparency until the greater translucency of death. You don't remember promising? That was in one of my waking dreams. You were there. You are always there. And I hold you to what you say, there. I hold you close. You.

I will remember some day what you said in that *one* dream. You know, the red one. You were standing on one foot, the other in the air wrapped around your ear, very nimble, agile one. You were lithe, unlike now, but if you spend enough time three times a week in my dreams, you will be so lithe in normal life. Everyone will fall in love with you. No one falls in love with you now. Not you.

I dream the future while awake. I dream the past while asleep. I sleep during the day. Steam from the spa has mussed me up. The

back massage was hesitant. The bars are crowded, and I don't want to break the glass. I'm going home. Where I'm about to leave for the spa, and the bars.

I curl my tongue of time over my head, and over my eyes. I lick the sweat off your dreams at night. I sing with the crickets in my mind, harmonies gone Schoenberg, avoiding all the regular scales, the actual notes, sliding in between. I rub my legs together in sympathy. I feel their boredom in my legs. I hear their songs in your head. Remember the dream yet?

You were dancing inside a star, exploding as usual, your name spread across the limitless skies, and your tongue dripping drops of dew. You sang the songs you danced to. You said you were only me on weekends. You said you were you today. You said nothing for awhile, while licking your legs with your panties, with your scarves, with your tongue. You shimmied. You won. You laughed, and spun. You. You. You.

