

Oneiric Flash Fiction

1

The vibrating light, that dyes the ancient library interior, is filtered through red and blue stained glass on the tall windows framed by stone. A cat meanders through the books on shelves in the library, it seems friendly but mysterious, as cats often are. At the children's section, our eyes go straight to a bright orange book called 'Anatomy of Scream' and we think of Munch's Scream.

The library turns into a shopping mall where customers are forced into cages. Frightened and confused, we browse around aisles in different shops, until we realise that in a few minutes the air will be un-breathable. People taking food from shelves are falling to the ground, their skin melting. We go from shop to shop looking for gas masks, as time is running out. Then we accept that the air on our skin is already contaminated. Bodies of people in cartoon shapes and forms litter the floors. We drive to Scotland looking for army barracks or that 'famous-secret bunker' where we could find gas masks. And then we realise we're going to die anyway: why are we wasting our last minutes panicking rather than finding peace?

2

There's a guy who pushes the trolleys back to the trolley park in a local supermarket. Ever since my daughter was a baby, they have had conversations. It has always felt a bit strange; we sort of know him but don't know him. He has a side-line making brilliant backpacks for Nintendo. I wanted to buy one from him, he said:

'I do them in pink'

'She hates pink, have you got purple?'

'I've got purple fabric, but the zips would have to be pink,' he replies.

It felt like the dream was about blurred boundaries and difficulties in communication. At the same time, wouldn't zippers of different colours be great? Wouldn't they symbolise an inclusive, dialogical society where people of different tastes, beliefs and skin colours communicate not just to live in harmony, but collaborate in the creation of something better?

3

You were with a woman who was from some sort of indigenous community, native American or Inuit maybe, you had a dress the same shape as hers. She was painting traditional patterns onto your dress, zig zags, beautiful colours. She was also tattooing those patterns on your skin, across your chest and onto your arms. These were permanent tattoos.

Zig zags – in dress design and crouching and stretching. Zig zag is a desire to connect, almost like the 2-colour zipper of a dream someone told you about... A dream that was part of a bigger dream... coming round from an operation anaesthetic, your friend said ‘you were alternatively stretching and crouching, but doing the opposite from what you were saying you were doing.’ He drew it on a piece of paper to describe, two vertical lines, quite broad and in between zig zags. You said ‘that reminds me of the alarm clock dream, let me tell you about this – Freud talked about the alarm clock dream in which time has collapsed, the alarm clock rings, you hear it and reconstruct a story that ends in the alarm clock.’

So you thought this zig zag business was the same thing, going backwards and forwards in time, and felt compelled to explain it to this man, who was your friend, but which friend? Then you hear an alarm and wake up.

4

‘I dreamed my therapist was a large fridge behind my head. The fridge was empty’

‘A fridge, not a bridge?’

‘A friend of mine imagines his therapist behind him with a big torch looking into his brain, pinpointing things he doesn’t know are there. I think I prefer the fridge...’

‘But the fridge is empty, and the filing cabinet is full of dreams...’

‘Ah, how I wish I could have a well stocked fridge, full of both food and dreams...’

‘Have you ever read Sylvia Plath’s *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*? Somebody is in a mental hospital and they find out there’s a filing cabinet with all the patients’ dreams. The protagonist feels very protective towards these dreams. Calls it a Bible of Dreams.’

5

Britten's Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra brass notes are taken, in the form of musical sheets, from a drawer and placed on the lap of a patient by a friendly nurse. The patient and the nurse are looking at some swabs applied to the patient's tonsils, waiting for them to turn from red to blue. Or was it the other way around? And what was the test for? And what are the real expectations? Be it what it may, what a wonderful relationship, combining music, art and medicine!

6

I am awoken in my hotel room by the noise made by microscopic creatures that emerged from the room's previous occupant's ears. They are making music by thumping on the bed while a penguin dances on ice in the mini fridge. I get up and go to the toilet, to find out that a strange woman is having a bath there.

While I try to think what to do, my sister walks in, hunched and dripping water, staring at the ground. Seaweed and pond life drip off her. She shivers and starts shrinking. I suddenly feel very tall, almost like a giant, and wrap her in a dressing gown. Then she gets even smaller and her coldness turns into warmth and finally everything's ok; it's ok to be small, it's ok to be sad.

7

I was walking through a market with no shoes. I looked down and there was a flip flop next to my left foot. It wasn't big enough: the thong was in the wrong place so it half covered my foot. On the other foot I had another flip flop, big enough but no thong so I tied it on with a string. There was fruit squelching under my foot as I walked off into the market, squeak, squeak...

8

I needed to borrow some shoes to leave a party. Instead I borrowed a friend's electric car, which turned out to be a bouncy castle. I drove it downhill, until I came to a junction where both directions were blocked. The bouncy castle had no reverse gear so I walked back to my friend's house. I had also borrowed a cardigan from their younger sister which I had soiled, so I washed it. It had shrunk, and I didn't know what to do, so I hung it to dry on a line. Now it looked like a glove or a hand waving me good bye as I left.

9

I wake up with a thought or idea – looking for a notebook or something, or somewhere, to note the idea down – I can't find the place, project, or idea, and then I realise I wasn't awake and I am part of other projects in my dreams...

10

A friend of mine died about 10 years ago. He was an architect. I remember well one of his many fascinating projects: he had designed a house in such a way that on a particular night in the year, the moon would pass over a skylight on the roof above the fireplace. In this dream, I was visiting his house. He wasn't there, but many members of his family were. I saw a picture of him on a bookshelf and suddenly felt sad.

Then I sensed a pale shadow pass by my feet and looked up, I heard the moon passing above. Through the window I could see a huge moon going from left to right, quite fast, until it disappeared. I went out but saw nothing. Then I ran up to the attic and found a skylight from where I could see the sea. The moon was emerging on the waves, a globe floating on foam.

11

She has a recurrent dream – based on a David Hockney painting. There's a brown Labrador at the bottom of a swimming pool – it looks peaceful. She can see the dog through the reflection of the water. She notices that the dog is not dead, even though it is under water for a long time. She sees the refraction, and it is peaceful. The dog is happy underwater, everything's fine. Then she wakes up and thinks: *If water is linked to dreaming and the dog in my dream was dreaming, was I the dream the dog was dreaming?*