

“ALL IT TAKES TO BE A GOD IS TO WAIT UNTIL THE THING YOU WANT HAPPENS. IT WILL ALWAYS HAPPEN, EVENTUALLY, IN SOME WAY.”

-Sara, or the existence of fire by Sara Woods p.65 Oh! Map Books

FAILURE is not an opinion

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TICK TOCK.

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Zorba Cathexis was pondering a riddle.

TICK TOCK.

Remember when this started? It was supposed to be fun.

TICK

TOCK. TICK

TOCK.

There has to be another step in this process. I mean, this is only the *beginning*.

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162

CHAPTER 60: THE END IS JUST ANOTHER BEGINNING

“Let’s see. Pants. Underwear. Shirts. Bathing suit. Socks. Hmmm. Warm hat?”

“Why are you making this trip again?” Zorba asked his friend, Apple Hippopotamus.

“What?” answered Apple, “A girl can’t go visit her sister on the other side of the world?”

“Heh. That’s funny.” Zorba relit his pipe and smoked its contents. Apple glared at him and resumed packing.

Violin Rosin waited at the desk, drumming the fingers of her right hand—B-r-r-d-r-drp. Br-dr-dr-dmp. B-b-b-b-br-dr—until someone emerged from behind the curtain.

“Mr. Rahzin?” queried the person, addressing Violin.

“It’s pronounced, ROSE-n,” said Violin, slightly almost, but not quite, exasperated. “You can call me Vi.”

TICK TICK TICK. TOCK.

“Hi. Yes. Yes, I would like to marry you I think. Or at least have a brief love affair. However brief. It could be imaginary if you like. Yes.

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“Hi. Yes. Yes, I would like to marry you I think. Or at least have a brief love affair. However brief. It could be imaginary if you like. Yes.

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No. Of course.”

“No more onion rings.”

“No more onion rings, hun.”

“You want fries?”

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“No more onion rings, hun.”

“You want fries?”

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CHAPTER 1: NEW BOOK

“Stop it. Too cold. Stop being so cold and blustery,” she said to the weather, as she walked up her path into the outside world. *Why would anyone want to live in such a clime?* she wondered. Wait. Was she speaking out loud? What a weirdo. Everyone knows you are only supposed to talk out loud to other humans and/or maybe dogs and possibly the occasional house plant. Good thing no one was actually paying her any attention. It would appear that no one was paying much attention at all.

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CHAPTER 62: IT WAS A SIGN

“But things were going so well.”

“I know,” said Apple.

“But, I thought,” said her sister, Maggie Brighton Street.

“I know. You thought we were done with all this failure.”

“It’s like. Like somebody flipped a switch. You know, like. On off. Off on.” Maggie was making a little motion with her fingers to demonstrate.

“I know what a switch is, Maggie.”

“So now what?”

“Well, Zorba thinks that we can just count on our alternate-dimensional selves to carry on in our absence. That we have to just have faith in our machinery.” *But yeah*, she added in her head, *somewhere, somehow, we fucked up*.

“I wouldn’t say that,” said a complete stranger, intruding into their very personal narrative. But no, wait. Perhaps this character was not a stranger at all. Perhaps just a tad bit strange.

“Huh?” responded Maggie and Apple simultaneously.

“I think perhaps your assessment mechanisms need some recalibrating. Look around you. And behold.”

So you’ll have to forgive me (me, the author). I seem to have forgotten

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what this story was supposed to be about. You know, all of our characters' particular plots and what-have-you. Now, assuming there ever was a storyline to begin with, you might be wondering how some of your imaginary friends are faring in matters of life and death, language acquisition and tea drinking, etc. and so on. If only this story wasn't already written, if only this tale was unfolding within some sort of interactive medium, if only there was some way for us to really communicate, as opposed to this facsimile of an illusion. If only. What was I talking about? What would you like me to talk about? I'm so fucking tired already. Gods, it never fucking ends.

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Not everything was perfect. For one thing, I kind of had to poop. I know, I know. You're thinking, "Another section of Text Literature about some fictional character's bowel movements? This is not the sort of high quality programming I signed up for. Where's the beauty? Where's the poetry?" Sigh. Well, what can I say, dear reader, except, perhaps, welcome to **FAILURE #9**, your possibly irregular dose of TXT Lit brought to you by OJPL Publishing. We really don't know where things will go from here.

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CHAPTER 60: AND THEN THERE WERE FOUR

Once upon a time. No wait. Scratch that. We were trapped in time. Trapped. No way out. Sludging through, we were. Our minds stretched in all the directions. In the distance, others. No way to make contact. No way to touch. Except. Except...

Zorba Cathexis awoke from his nightmare, naked as the day he was born, drenched in sweat. His fever had broke. He was in a strange bed? He was...hungry. Uh oh, he thought. Here we go again.

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Alice Year-of-the-Boar powered on the archival hardware in her windowless office in the basement of the corporate archives. As her machinery begrudgingly grumbled itself awake, Alice reached into her memory banks and for the first time this year—this year of rats and incessant rains—thought about what the fuck was she doing here, day after day after day after day after day. Something was off. Askew. There was some sort of fly in her ointment. There was...*fuck*, she thought. *I'm late for a meeting.*

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LOW BATTERY. LoW
bAtTERY. LOW BATTERY.

Shit, thought the text machine,
now how LOW BATTERY am I
supposed to create exquisite
chunks of literature for u to
consume? All of a sudden, drips
and drops of rain began a- LOW
BATTERY splattering. The
wind blew our contraptions
towards the side of the road as we
eyed the pinkish wisps of cloud
LOW BATTERY shrink into the
night. Gods we were fucking
tired and maybe also hungry. We
walked on towards our murky
future and

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One black heart + a broom. They were in a tea shop. They awoke in a room, trapped in a dungeon. They were in a tea shop playing games. The four of them sat at their fantasy table, conspiring a way out of their imaginary predicament. They were sitting in a mystery, wrapped in a puzzle. It was Friday night.

“I robbed the devil of love once.”

“Oh?” replied [new yet to be named character].

“Mmm hmm,” said Lucy as she nonchalantly reached for a chip.

“Ladies,” interjected Apple Hippopotamus. “Not that I’m not having loads of fun here, but I do happen to be a mystery detective who finds herself in the middle of a rather important case...in the REAL world. Besides,” she added. “I think it might be time to move forward with the next phase of our plan.” Just then, a buzz erupted from Lucy’s bag.

“Ah,” said Lucy, catching Apple’s eye. “Speaking of the devil.”

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**CHAPTER 61: NOW WE'RE GETTING
SOMEWHERE, PROBABLY, SURELY, YES?**

“**N**o no. You have to cut them into bite-sized chunks.”

“Settle down there Mr. Fancy Pants Chef. I’ll have you know that I do know my way around the kitchen.”

“Also, I think you might have taken it out of the oven too early.”

Apple gave Zorba a glare that said, “Do you want to eat today or not?” But, also though, he wasn’t wrong. “Zorba,” she whined. “Mistakes were made, okay? Sure we’d all rather things had gone differently, but it’s not like we can just edit the narrative to suit our whims. The dish is out there, in the world. And besides,” she added, “it’s still going to be fucking delicious.”

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“It’s like a circle in a spiral.
It’s--”

“I know, I know. It’s like a
wheel within a wheel.”

Zorba sighed and leaned back in
the chair that creaked under his
weight. “I don’t know. Part of me
thinks this is the same thing that’s
been done over and over. Like,
what’s the point. We know
where this path leads.”

Apple was smiling up at him
from her seat on the floor,
surrounded by varied flotsam and
jetsam. The rain outside picked
up its volume.

“But yeah,” he continued,
tossing the folder he had been
reading down to the floor and
reaching for the pipe. “Maybe.
Shit.” Zorba Cathexis was
pondering a riddle. “Remember
when this started? It was
supposed to be fun.”

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supposed to be fun.”

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BRRRP BRRRP.
WARNING. SYSTEM
MALFUNCTION
IMMINENT. BRRRP BRRRP.
“Zorba, what the hell?!”
“Sorry, that’d be the new
security system I set up for you.
Odd though, I wonder what set it
off.”
“Um. It sounds pretty ominous.”
“Oh yeah, no. System failure is
probably a big deal.”
“Um, okay. I guess we can
reboot, take it from the top?”
“I’m sorry, what?”
“I said,” said Apple, shouting
through the sirens,
BRRRP BRRRP.
“Oh, never mind.”
WARNING. SYSTEM
FAILURE IMMANENT.
BRRRP. FAILURE.
IMMANENT. FAILURE.

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179

“Boring.”

“No, it’s confusing is what it is.”

Apple broke her reverie and looked up at her friend Zorba Cathexis and her sister Maggie Brighton Street. Wait, what are they talking about?

“Oh Apple, that reminds me,” said Maggie, “I’m thinking of moving in with my boyfriend.”

“But.” Varied emotions flashed through Apple’s emotion centers. “But you just moved in.”

Zorba threw down the multi-colored polka-dotted folder that contained the report and reached for the pipe. “We’ve got to step up our game, you know?” Smoke filled the room.

“Boring.”

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“Is the toilet flushing?”

“Year of the Sheep.”

“Have you met my friend? You know, the hideous monster that’s unworthy of love. What? That’s how she self-identifies.”

“When did all these people get here?” asked Apple.

Maggie gave her sister a weird look and turned back towards her conversation. Apple sat at the table, surrounded by somebody else’s friends, feeling out of place and slightly almost perhaps out of time. She decided to roll another cigarette.

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Um. So. Surely then, multiple characters were moving in a very specific direction. They were in the same room. On the same page. Part of the same cellular network. Some of them, maybe, were running out of juice, running around in circles, running in place. But surely, we would imagine that this particular conversation they were engaged in had some sort of meaning, held some measure of literary value. Surely, some sort of. Surely, something. Surely. Zorba Cathexis awoke from your dream, feeling almost whole. As his eyes adjusted to the specifically colored, brightly illuminated scenery, he realized something quite profound. [PLEASE INSERT SOMETHING PROFOUND INTO THIS DISJOINTED NARRATIVE]

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PROCESSING

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CHAPTER 62: THIS WAS PROBABLY A MISTAKE

“Are you crying?”

“No. It was, um, raining.”

“Well, you know what they say,
rain is just the tears of--”

“They don’t say that.”

“But, you didn’t let me finish.”

Things weren’t going so well. I mean, sure, on paper, everything should have been fine. All of the elements were more or less in place. I mean, like, that certainly looks like a beautiful rainbow over yonder or whatever. But. Something. Something was...missing.

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“Are you crying?”

“No. It was, um, raining.”

“Well, you know what they say,
rain is just the tears of--”

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CHAPTER 63: THE CASE OF THE MISSING WILL

Mississippi Hammer stared blankly at her communication device. Her head was pounding like a thing that pounds, or maybe more like a thing that is pounded by a thing that pounds. Either way, she was in no condition to be parsing such abstract similies, let alone trying to solve cases and write reports, which, you know, was probably her job, being as though she was indeed a mystery detective, having graduated from the local School of Mystery some moons back.

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Not that solving mysteries required a degree or anything, at least not in this province. Take her partner, for instance. No, really. Take them. But seriously folks, someone had lost their will, and this made it difficult for us to do particular things, you know? Missy decided to get up and go for a walk.

Outside, the air was a bit muggy, and a person could hear various noises. Like, a buzzing hum, a periodic honk honk, a sma8tering of twits and twissles. There was a flower on the ground, and a bush. Colors?

“Boring, start over.”

“What?”

“So, your sister never told me what you do.”

“Oh, I work 4n a museum?”

“What?”

“I’m an artifact?”

o “Huh?”

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“Sorry,” said the author to her imagined audience, “I am afraid we are going to have to declare this little experiment a failure and put a halt to its operations.”

The author was walking through some sort of maze, humming a tune.

i know i've been gone for a long time/i hope i didn't scare you/i went back to the sea

Sadie stopped humming the tune to Mom's "Stick Close to My Side" and said, "Hey there [insert ur name here]. How are you? I love you (and appreciate you)."

Works cited:

<https://blacksquares.bandcamp.com/album/2>

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STOP! ENOUGH. GO NO FURTHER.

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