

a work of art created by an artist v.2

The world tells me, "All we are is dust in the wind." And then the world tells me, "You can't change the direction of the wind so adjust your sails."

CHAPTER 8: You're Repeating Yourself

"Thank you," said the world.

"Sublime," she responded, for some reason perhaps, or perhaps maybe there was no method to the machinery, although, the machinery no doubt is sometimes talking, and sometimes talking directly to you. She was writing a letter, in her head, while sitting around a table, conversing, trying to absorb the history of this place, drinking coffee, admiring the feet of a new acquaintance. "You have very pretty feet," she didn't say out loud, obviously, but maybe thought this too loudly, but no, Uncle, I am totally paying attention to your stories even if I cannot catch all the names. She thought then about fishing or somebody was telling a story about fishing and she thought, *what exactly are my job responsibilities*, and her mind wandered off into some of her more formative years.

"Sorry, I already heard this story like a gajillion times. Could you just fast forward to the part where..." She trailed off.

"What? What exactly are your demands, my dear?"

"Equanimity?"

She was feeling playful, and childish. She was feeling her toes, wiggling around in the dirt. Worms?

"Oh, hey there, bird." (she was in the garden now?)

She was sitting now at a table, and there was a brick wall, and she could touch this wall, and she farted (just a little), and she looked around at the audience, which wasn't large, but it was growing, and she spoke out for justice, and she smiled at a baby, and the tears kept flowing. And then something fictional happened.

We keep trying to create a very specific world that a person could live inside of. A magical world where anything could happen (according to its own sets of rules and logics, of course). And, for some reason, we keep failing, as if there were certain forces thwarting our efforts, although sometimes I feel maybe we *are* living in this world, but these aforementioned forces keep breaking in with their metaphoric concrete construction projects and their rude interjecting loud booming military planes, and it's like, *No. Enough!* We're trying to create something welcoming and beautiful. Something that recharges our energy stores, something that *feeds*. So, then, I guess the question is, is there something inherent in our, let's say, story-telling technology that demands certain, let's say, genre conventions? The woman sat in the corner, feeling the narrative push up against her most sensitive organs. There was a fly buzzing around, minding its own business, it would seem, crossing her path now and again.

"Again! Again!"

She was losing her grasp on the material world, and was tempted by the thoughts of letting go, getting lost in the waves of whatever ocean she found herself swimming in. Still, though, she felt this pain in what could only be described as her body, and with this pain came

what she could only describe as a responsibility. She had been pining for old lovers throughout the day, *thirstily* pining in some instances, you might say, which was rarely something she allowed herself to indulge in. And then the paragraph ended.

This was always happening. Another day. Another month. Cycles? Some sort of woven pattern, looping in on itself? And here we are. Walking around in...circles? Gyration, perhaps, around some central axis. She imagined a shaky table, another brick wall. And it was crumbling? She kept adding brushstrokes to her painting.

"I don't know how to describe it. You reach a point where your body cannot stomach participation in a collectivity that allows for such injustices to exist. And you're trapped in this conundrum that appears by its very existence inescapable but still you look down to see yet another screw come loose from the machinery but this too is a trap and you can't go on and then somehow you find yourself here, an old woman, telling a story." She sighed. "It's like you cannot possibly imagine what comes next, but you just, I don't know, sometimes it's, I guess, a matter of having faith."

"Faith in what?"

Her gaze seemed to drift then, as she peered deeply into the folds of reality. Eventually, she took a breath.

You will have yours, the coconut-coconut.

-An Expertly-Crafted Saying, p.[217].2016

CHAPTER 9: "...I'll Put My Faith In Birds."

Hmmm. Two months left on this rock. I keep getting distracted by career opportunities. Retreat! Retreat! Ugh. I'm trying. There's a loose thread. I think maybe I've become...indigestible.

A tear ran down her cheek as the craftsperson continued to carve on her chest. This had nothing at all to do with her realization later that day that her inability to connect with new people was probably yes almost definitely certainly to do with her personal inability to make an effort to meet basic societal standards for personhood and also maybe an inability to agree with the music coming out of the coffeeshop speakers claiming that what is coming next is better than what came before. "Look to the birds, babe," said a voice in her head at this moment of the story that we are currently inside of, reminding her, of course, of matters of faith, perspective, and possibility. And for a moment she had that confident hey-look-at-me-I'm-riding-a-wave feeling that her body tended to associate with climbing trees for reasons both historical and political no doubt, but this lasted just for a moment only. "Do you think maybe you have too much on your plate?" said another voice in her head

as a leaf fell from a tree and some other voice said, "Hello? Hello?" And now this voice was speaking in her ear in a language she didn't understand although something surely was being communicated in its tones and rhythms and melodies and perhaps she wasn't supposed to learn those particular lessons because maybe the things she wanted *were* worth the risk and maybe it was just a matter of one of her limbs being asleep, which, yes, indeed, you can tell by the way she keeps tapping and shaking it as she limps onto the bus. *Oh mountain*, she thought at the mountain, and I guess that was the exact moment when her world exploded like the shell of an egg inside of a seed pod wrapped in a riddle it apparently always was.

"Wow, that's a lot of rain."

It was coming down hard now, like somebody's water broke, like somehow something shifted and the rules were different and this was a portent of the world to come.

"Actually," said an academic treatise she was reading during her various poop breaks, "that word originally referred to a cyclical sort of *time* and not a physical place." And perhaps here it is called for, a note, on missed opportunities.

"We cannot know [the creator's] plans," said the artist, "but the [infinite justice] of the work must never be doubted because I said so that's why and obviously the confusion you are experiencing is because you are not smart enough/mature enough/deep enough/properly situated enough to understand, to, um, you know, see the proverbial FACE OF GOD, which is apparently quite beautiful but perhaps a bit too brilliant for your human viewing organs and oh also the struggles you are encountering are supposed to be part of the experience because *this is what you deserve* or *actually it's for your own good* and somehow this all

makes some sort of unknowable sense. That's the theory anyhow." She paused and adjusted her shorts, which had somehow risen part way up her [REDACTED] and thought, *And this here is why you can't have nice things.* "And I guess," she continued, "in a way, that is actually kind of in line with the approach I take when my better self is driving/steering the ship. If it's meant to be, it's meant to be. And if it's not meant to be, it's not. And I'd rather live in a world where the improbable dreams of my better self are, indeed, possible. That is, I think we are all deserving of a better world and I see no good reason why this should not be meant to be in the here and now." And it was right about then that a bird pooped on top of her head.

CHAPTER 10: A Conspiracy of Bones

"Well, I wouldn't call it a vacation. More like visiting family. I still have...obligations."

Yes, indeed, she was obligated, obligated, it seems, to express herself through this particular body that continued to give her all kinds of grief. She looked down at her hand and into the still raw wound that had materialized due to the friction that came from all that hoeing she was doing over at the community garden. *That door doesn't open*, she thought at the plump shiny fly repeatedly bumping up against the door's window. She turned her gaze back to her friend in the seat across from her, only there was no one there, the seat was empty.

Back in the waiting room, the drip of the fountain in her ear, the flickering light of the lamp on the table. Muffled conversation behind the closed door. The door opened.

Lying on the table, receiving her treatment, she glanced at her bossy watch that was always demanding her attention, telling her what *time* it was. Her stomach grumbled and what was she going to eat and when was the last time she actually felt *satisfied*? Up ahead, there was a light

at the end of a tunnel and just like that she felt her not-quite-parallel realities start to congeal into this unified narrative vehicle that was transporting her towards some specific direction. It was unclear whether anybody was going along for the ride.

"Push it open," he said, pointing to the TOUCH HERE TO OPEN DOOR sign on the door, but, apparently, she still had one more stop yet to go.

Ugh. These weren't good choices she was making, and a version of that song from that movie started playing, and it was undeniable that there were forces conspiring to keep her alive—if not well—and maybe this was a good thing and maybe it *was* something she would support if reality operated on some sort of principle of informed consent and actually cared or responded to what you have to say, and everything was a negotiation and maybe she wasn't so bad at negotiating, all things considered. All things considered, why not ask for more? You might even say it was a moral imperative. But, then again, at the same time, enough is enough.

"Well, future, what is it you have planned for us, then?"

The future just stood there, stone-faced, patiently waiting perhaps, for us to make our move.

"BZZZZ. BZZZZ," said the buzzer, indicating, perhaps, that her lunch order was ready. It was a bit chilly inside all these rooms on this day, a day when she had forgotten her sweater, which isn't that just the way it goes sometimes. She couldn't quite hear the music and there was such a clatter, a hubbub even, and she was floating through space and I'm so sorry that this story is not more beautiful and pleasing to all of your senses. It's just that mass communication can be so hard and dense and heavy—so *massive*—and perhaps we forget to remember that sometimes we just need to be tickled and maybe this is all just a distraction. She was dripping again, slowly leaking out of her orifices

and she was feeling that feeling that told her that if there was a conspiracy conspiring against her, it somehow included her self, and maybe this was all good and fine. She couldn't quite say. She looked at the time and decided she was probably due to clock back in.

"Excuse me, folks, I had to shut the bus off for a few minutes," (she was on a bus), "It keeps jerking between first and second gears." She was one stop away from her connection, but what did it matter if she made her connection? She was only trying to go home.

"Take a picture. It'll last longer," was how she translated compressed the feeling of trying to think through how to communicate her current moment in reality with all of its facts and meanings and complexities and literary values and then time passed and she dropped all of those beautifully attractive threads and in the end nothing got written down at all. *And this is why you can't have nice things*, she thought and oh my god my body feels like it is going to explode is that your fault she thought at the boy man that was clearly doing art and she was very happy that the baker was feeling better and sometimes perhaps grief wasn't the best word to describe the things that her body was giving to her. And make no mistake, dear reader, her body, no doubt, was certainly giving it this morning.

"Squawk squawk squawk. Squawk squawk," said a bird, in a tree, reminding her not to get lost in one single perspective while we are collectively attempting, don't forget, some other more worthwhile thing. It was a secret, of course, this thing, in a way, and it was good to have reminders of the things that we are trying not to forget.

Meanwhile, not everything was perfect, which in the field of Communication Theory we call an *exigency*, and she looked up to see that she had once again already missed her chance. And it's true, sometimes we do, objectively speaking, miss our chance, but it is impossible to know this for certain until we reach the end, but of

course the end is something you can never, ever, objectively speaking, experience. That's the theory anyway.

Not everything was perfect today, yesterday, last week, and there is certainly a bias in the design of this technology, and there is a profundity to experience that does not always get translated through memory, speech, summation, abstraction, compression, and there is a bias to this technology regardless of whether or not it was intentionally placed there by a group of possibly nefarious and/or benevolent humans, gods, sprites, gnomes, and/or elves. Any way you slice it, we exist inside a work of artificial intelligence. But that wasn't what I wanted to say. What I wanted to say was, once upon a time, there was a woman looking at her reflection, the chorus of a song on her lips. "You're all a part of me," she was saying but she was also trying to say thank you and also, see, revolutionary change can be pleasurable and we are so close sometimes can you feel it and every day we explode.

There is, indeed, a bias built into this technology.

God knows thou art a collop of my flesh.
-line from a play

CHAPTER 11: The Bread Thief

"Oh, such a cute little baby. Such a good appetite she has."

She was sitting at her table in the corner, processing her memories and playing with her food, thinking about how at some point she had stopped communicating with the future, stopped anticipating its needs, and she was thinking about failure and shame and healing and how beautiful she used to be, from a certain angle, and there were so many tables she was sitting at and sometimes you can hear what your neighbors are talking about and sometimes you can't. And the bubbles kept popping and she missed what was gone and what never was and the pain must be so great to accept such a bitter medicine. She sighed and something caught in her throat and the music kept playing as the diners came and went.

every frame a painting, every word a database, every letter a love letter, every goddamn time. imagine this. imagine a narrative that draws you in, that gives you the ability to exist inside a body and **feel**, that enables you to

live the life you want to live, that tells you you're not alone, that respects your privacy, that gives you room to grow and make mistakes and reminds you what's possible and that, yes, we all deserve better. She thought then, it's hard to write a story or maybe I'm still afraid to write a story that I want other people to read or maybe this is more of a sculpture and I better get going if I'm going to get to the gallery this afternoon. But the art gallery was closed today but then the trees started throwing flower petals at her and she caught one of them in her bosom and she thought, *this is an art gallery*, gesturing all around, and, as she walked up the road, something started to blossom and she stood on the corner in the shade and maybe it's better this way.

"Hi. I remember you from the poetry reading."

"Oh, yeah, sorry. I didn't recognize you without your smile. I think maybe I'm in love with your smile or the way you tell stories or your photograph which doesn't do you justice gosh you seem so nice," but she didn't say this out loud of course, this imaginary dialogue that revealed a bit more than she was comfortable sharing because she was too comfortable and that's why nothing ever happens in this story except when it does and whose fault is that? She was never saying the things she wanted to say because she was afraid to take risks but if you want to make change you have to take risks and maybe she was too old or too many days late or dollars short and she could list a dozen things she would have done differently, a dozen things wrong with this picture that was still kind of pretty sometimes even if it was increasingly not worth the effort. Are those flowers?

Are those flowers? She wondered. Are they edible? Or do

they perhaps herald the growth of some future fruit? Let me tell you a story.

It was the middle of summer or whatever they called that season where it kept getting hotter and the world was filled with a loud buzzing machinery that made your eyes tear up because maybe you were allergic to the world and now you were sneezing and scratching at those bites that covered your body and I think what we have here is a failure to communicate. It was the end of the world, didn't you know, and it ended when you said hello, according to the music that the world was singing. There was a large, ugly splotch that marred the setting of our scenery, that had seeped straight to the depths of the artistic medium itself, that apparently wasn't going away.

Sadie Rosen stood outside the old storefront of The Bread of Life (serving breakfast and lunch), a long abandoned facility stripped of its infrastructure in what used to pass as the Downtown District. Its streetside window was sporting a cute little indentation where some person, place, or thing had tried to smash through the glass and instead left an intricate spider web of cracks that was somehow quite pleasing to the eye. She was waiting, perhaps foolishly, for something or somebody to arrive at some previously scheduled time and space and transport her into some altered state of existence or to further her muddled plot or to give her a ride home. She didn't know what came next, but she had plans this morning, which came with all sorts of unintended consequences.

Unintended Consequence #1:

There existed, somewhere along the resultant space-time continuum matrices, a past full of a great deal of unpleasantness, and faith in some god or innately just cosmic moral balance did not make this more palatable to her surprisingly sensitive and discriminating taste buds. There was this intricate system of pain and discomfort that was not so easy to disown, as it made up a significant portion of that which she was, and besides, would you rather all those billions of probably conscious living identity structures that would all one day be dead not exist? I mean, it was one thing to ponder this from a relative past's future, but what to do about the ethical conundrums faced by those entities very much existing in that past's ongoing present?

Unintended Consequence #2: choice

The idea that we are somehow responsible for the world that we live in is a hard reality to embody. Yet here we are, embodied in a world grounded in a very contextual and conditional consent-making process whose imaginary nature does not lessen the depth of the kuleana implicit in the identifiable entities that we periodically manifest as. I guess what I'm saying is that we all have a part to play in this narrative.

Unintended Consequence #3:

It's too late to turn back now. I believe, I believe, I believe we're falling (still, again).

Today Sadie was wearing an outfit that made her feel beautiful and noticed and appreciated. She had accomplished so many things that would have been on her list if she had made a list which was something she had mostly stopped doing because she was afraid of commitment or afraid to tempt fate or didn't want to telegraph her passes and now she was determined to do something fun, although the odds of this happening were hard to keep track of. *I guess we'll just have to wait and see*, she thought, but we don't have to wait and see because this is a work of fiction and anything we put to the page will be what happens/happened/is happening to her. And what was happening was this:

"It's a celebration!" chanted the crowd during the chorus of the politically astute and well-crafted musical offering from one local favorite whose performance anchored an evening of poetry that was surely a manifestation of an uncompromising and powerful and well-performed love. Oh my, such a fun evening she would have or was having or did have as she hopped around from gallery to gallery to gallery to museum to bar to bar. An evening full of live music and old friends and interesting juxtapositions and probably other things, too. I don't know, I lost my train of thought, thought the author, who was always inserting herself into her fiction. She couldn't help it. She just wanted

to tell you a story about all the amazing things that were happening, but she had done that before, and to what purpose? She looked over to the military occupation that had manifested in her favorite diner, and the part of it that was making eyes at her and had an obviously stunted sense of comedy, and thought, *Sorry honey, I don't fuck with imperialists. You'll have to quit your job or get dishonorably discharged if you want to join my company.* The temporary infiltration walked out the door and in walked a cowboy and there was obviously still some residual sickness floating through her body's tubes and passages, but she was feeling more confident in her body's ability to heal itself. Her world was this story's past and maybe one day she'd get back to writing it because she knew it deserved to grow into the beautiful [work of art] that all children deserve to grow into and now she was thinking about how cruel this world's creators were to consent to certain realities and now she was thinking about her ability to have faith in her ability to weave a mat worthy of this future's feet.

"AAAAAAHHH!!! I totally forgot what I was creating here," said the author or the fictional character who was maybe also an author of sorts or maybe it was a different fictional character altogether and maybe instead of trying to create some beautiful work of art she should be gathering her thoughts into some sort of shareable essay that might communicate clearly the things that she wasn't seeing communicated—all this to say, why was she still struggling with the concept of manifesting her ideal world?

"Hello? Hello? Is anyone there? I think our ghost is

back,” she whispered conspiratorially to herself. *I know you can hear me*, she thought at the ghost.

“And what is it that is keeping you from doing these things?” asked her personal therapist.

“Hey. Just popped in to say hello.”

Smiles all around.

Let me tell you a story.

“Wait, do I know you? You look familiar.”

The painting on the wall started to drip. All that heat. The structure melting away. A puddle on the floor. Her mind was racing. She kept kneading the dough.

CHAPTER 12: They Say Our Love

"I'm glad you had a fun night, but you deserve better."
Don't we all."

Dear Future, My Beautiful Child of the
Past + Present,

I have so many regrets that melt away when I glance towards your existence. When I was pregnant with you (said one of your mothers), I did not know your name. Or your form. You were a part of me that frightened me and I could not predict what would happen when I birthed you into a world. There comes a time when you have to stand tall and there comes a time when you cannot stand and there comes a time when you fall. Something is coming.

Dear, dear future. I have so much rage and so much impotence. And this is what makes you so impossible and so inevitable. You, my grounded paradox, I offer you nothing but a prayer.

Sitting on the transport, she was waiting for what came afterward, for what was behind curtain number imaginary number, for the work to reveal its form, for you to say hello.

“Have you eaten? Do you have a hunger? Might I feed you?”

Mmm. Delicious. Sometimes we taste so delicious. Sometimes we order wrong. Sometimes we jumble things up, pick up the wrong pieces at the wrong time. Out of order! you scream in judgment of the world, in judgment of how good it feels to melt into this integrally queer balance, this opinionated and well-humored cosmic flow. Well-textured, perhaps, even, you might say. Don't forget to create contingency plans for spill situations. Remember that flammable liquids spread quickly.

She was juggling too many balls. She was thinking *is this enough?* She was. She was.

[Artist's Statement

Hi. ~~My name is Sadie~~ One of the names I identify with is Sadie (bat Avraham ben David Zeus ben Yankl haCohen

v'Sadie) Rose (bt Fishel bn Ruth) Rosen. Some of the places that have fed me are Mānoa, Northeast Philly, the deserts north of the Red Sea in Palestine, Maunawili, Makiki, New Orleans, Hilo, 'Ōla'a, Kunming, and the lands of the Neshaminy. I'm not sure where I'm from but I usually say I live in Mānoa and was born in the city of Philadelphia and my people have come through the lands of the cities of Philadelphia and New York and before that places that as I write are called the Ukraine, Romania, Poland, and maybe Russia. And before that I don't know because those stories were not passed down. The one story we've passed down is an old one that takes place in what is now Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Lebanon maybe. But regardless, the identity my body has inherited is clearly one that has congealed over thousands of years of movement and change and complex relationships to a multitude of lands and languages that make my particular relationship to home and place difficult to summarize in an artist's statement or an aloha circle, which are quite common in the land in which I currently dwell. This is further complicated by the (god willingly short-lived) existence of a settler-colonial nation-state that has weaponized my people's identity in order to colonize and attempt to obliterate the beautiful cultures that have evolved along with the land in what is now Palestine (and the surrounding areas) in that horrifying way that seems inherent to all settler-colonial entities, which is why maybe I've said that the settler-colonial nation-state is the most useless invention of all time, although if I had to answer that question again I'd probably say nuclear weapons or bitcoin.

Suffice it to say, being a Jew (of a particular sort—Ashkenazic, ethnically Yiddish) is/has been a consistent and deep part of my identity but it doesn't give me a clear history of my particular family's genealogical migrations through time and space. That, coupled with the fact that I have moved oceans away from the community that raised me, and my complicated relationship to the covenant formed with the invisible all-encompassing imaginary god that forms the core of my people's stories, does muddy the flavor of this part of my identity and how I relate to the story of my family. Also, I'm a trans woman (a narrative shifting device if ever there was one), which I'm not sure what that means in this place that I'm writing, how the rules of this place interact with my foreign body, though it is clear that they most certainly do. Indeed, negotiating the relationship between place and the maintenance of my identities has been a consistent theme across recorded time and song, as in "I want to be with you, but I want to be me..." The artist is interested in the juxtaposition of life and death, in existence and non-existence, in the transformation of worlds. Despite her fears of intimacy, she aims to create collaborative multi-layered works that jump off the page, that strike up a conversation while you are riding the bus, that explore the themes of multiversal justice and beauty and despite what she might say, she *does* like to dance, to make love, and to fully engage with the many forms of eating in public. She's trans and single and looking for love in all the wrong places.]

"And I still haven't found what I'm looking for. But

maybe this is simply due to a deficiency in vision. Anyway, I've got an eye doctor appointment scheduled, so we'll see. I think I'm ready for a new set of frames. How's that love bite?"

"Oh, this little surprisingly painful bee sting?" she said, looking down to her hand. "I think the swelling's gone down. And that previously growing numbness seems to be waning. Still some lingering pain, but I feel better about the whole situation. Oh god, so nice to see you here!"

The two friends embraced and bid their respective adieus.

CHAPTER 13: The Comparison of Oranges

Uncle walked in with a box and started removing the paintings from the wall. She sat in the nook next to the reclining Buddha feeling her body feel all of the feelings. So many feelings today. She wondered what the moon was up to and now she was dancing and all morning it seems her body was aching to explode. The walls were empty now, save for the screws left behind, and she couldn't quite comprehend who or what was touching her or where they were located in space and time or why it felt so good sometimes to be touched and was this enough, to be in communication with gods and ghosts, and she stepped outside and (the breeze!) the breeze made her weak in the knees.

The old woman sighed and thought about how time wears on these bodies of ours, these seemingly illegible archives that still manage to connect us across worlds to all the things that are related to us. She marveled at the sublime beauty of this technology and swallowed down that last sip

of coffee from her tiny little cup.