

Sleep Walk

By Drew T. Noll



Sleep Walk © DTNoll 4.2022 48cmx63cm

Prologue:

We spoke much together, me and my little brother; I dropped clues regularly, regrettably—clues meant to engage subconsciously, becoming something else, maybe for us both. He did the things I dared him to do, which on occasion also gave him bruises and stitches, maybe a broken bone, too. Looking back it seems manipulative. But, at the time it was a way to engage ... with him, the world, and with thoughts forming from my own



designs. My hands and feet built it—starting with my little brother; which only served to propel ‘my own’ biosuit forward, trying to keep up with everyone else ... and just everything. I never realized the extent of the responsibility I would carry in life for each turn produced, and others that I may have prodded into moving, regardless of serendipity ... specifically. I never really understood, until now, that my biosuit’s footprint would no doubt extend beneath it all as I inadvertently, and purposely, interfered within the world of others.

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That night I awoke thrilled to have discovered how to protect endangered species’ that had, surprisingly, been living in my own backyard. These animals were varied and ranged from tiny, to plain, and up to magnificent, as well as unseen. Somehow they had been released from the wild for lack of space, so in my very own mind I became their ‘only’ chance for survival. The problem was that I was already engaged in a project and I could spare no time. My little brother always looked up to me, and as it happened he showed up at exactly the right time, in my mind. We spoke briefly, and I knew as I explained the situation at hand, that my little brother would pick up the tiny seed that I had dropped, exactly as stated above.

Immediately I saw that his face lit up and I knew he was hooked. He would take the lost animals out of the danger they were in, down the jungle-laden ravine at the back of my backyard, and straight out to the sea where they would eventually be free. A smile shaped yard filled with creatures moving



towards the entrance of a ravine down below was all I could see, as I followed knowingly with my camera clicking, content flashing before my eyes in full stream. I was extremely proud of one image I grabbed, my brother clasping the shell of a giant tortoise, like the Vitruvian-man, as they both plummeted from my view, down the hill. My camera captured flashes of geckoes and centipedes, images of wild-feathered birds, and mammals of every size, as they all slipped down without a clue.

The way was steep and filled with dripping vegetation that pointed us all down to the sea-delta at the bottom of the ravine, but before we could arrive at our freedom, a barrier stood in our path, tall and covered with metal barbs to keep us from crossing. When I caught up to my brother, surrounded by animals, he had already dug under the fence. He was holding its bottom high to let everyone under. He looked up at me with a broad smile, vindicated in his ability to conquer, but I knew it was my doing and I felt a pang of dread as what might unfold began its beginning. The animals all flowed down the ravine from its edges to the center, and then disappeared into a brand new aisle of construction that had been stamped onto the valley floor below.

I stood at the fence with a hole, cut underneath and begging to be sewn, and then watched all the animals gallop and squirm into the cobbled concrete street that wasn't there just a moment before. I could see the collision that was about to occur as our new neighbors began stepping from buildings that lined the cobbled street, looked up in our direction. Hoping to avoid a collision with the new officials of the neighborhood built, on my



mission to get my brother and animals to the sea, I slipped down through the hole which I had been cut in the fence via my brother, moments before.

But, I was too late. Before I dropped down below the tree-line where the scene in my mind completely disappeared, I flashed on my little brother getting caught, grabbed from behind by a man that acted just like the mayor of a new town. The last thing I saw was an impression that I wished I had photographed with my phone: Red skin bulging over his collar and fat fingers clasp down, my brother began to shrink away from the mayor's grasp and from us all. Then, in an instant, the animals and my little brother disappeared behind trees as I ducked under the fence and tumbled down the ravine, hiding from myself, and from them all.

I knew what I had caused, I realized what I was responsible for, and I had plenty of time to dwell on it hoping all the while that when I finally emerged from the trees at the bottom of the ravine it would all have been a dream. It was quiet as I stepped foot over foot to the foot of the ravine. Even the wind had stopped. The entire jungle was still, and echoing desire, quivering. Not even a stray insect could be seen, or for that matter ... ever heard from again. I felt bad for the grass under each footstep as I plodded forward towards the knowledge that I already knew. It kept taking forever, a hall of reflections unending, light continually bending.

When the trees finally cleared, all I could see was my little brother's face. It had expanded ... making all other things unimportant. He was crying in deep sorrow, his world crushed down around him and his grief filling the



void between us. As I approached him I heard him try to speak, but with a quivering jaw not a word was uttered. Again, I knew that this sorrow was my fault, and now not only mine to bear. In pain flecked with anguish, my little brother said with his entire being, "*All ... the animals are dead.*" They had to be put down, it seems, because there was not enough room in the world for them to live.

So, in complete distraught, opening onto depression, I knew I was at fault, that it was all caused by me, all this sorrow. I had knowingly planted the seed that caused my brother to act. I knew he would herd the animals down the ravine, even though I didn't know about the new town built down below. And, what's worse is that I did it all to attain some minor content to further my own selfish gain, my own artificial agenda building only me where nothing from before was perceived. Even still, knowing the harm I'd caused, I thought about a picture I took from the world I'd built: my brother and the giant tortoise disappearing down the hill. The multitude of animals all around him seemed to know their fate, and I knew deep down that it could never be real, I could never let it; it must always remain a memory, a dream. So, with a heavy heart, which almost caused my brother's tears to erupt into a river flowing from a face of my own, early that morning, I ... thankfully, just went to sleep.

