

Rifts

by Alberto Rodriguez

“To say the world is a beautiful place is no exaggeration, I have traveled countless countries and seen the most mystical places of all time. I’ve traveled through dreamlike verdant forests where oaks, pines, sequoias, conifers and even redwoods tower over you in a brilliant display of nature. I have to say, these are by far my most treasured memories, seeing all types of birds fly through the towering skyscrapers, each one brimming with life as the shadows of the leaves dance in the warm glow of the sun.

Now, it goes without saying that nature isn’t the only place to encounter these dreamlike experiences, there were countless cities and towns that had a charm of their own. It’s not for everyone, city life that is, but when you sit down under the shelter of a tree during a rainy day and see the blurs of car lights pass you by, you come to smile at it. I suppose that’s my problem, looking back, just one glance at something mundane that wouldn’t even garner a child’s reaction, I can bring out the beauty of it with almost a youthful imagination. Yes... that’s where it began, and it’s important that the world know that it’s best to never give these places a second glance.

Over the years I’ve found countless triggers for these bubbles of other worldly existence; of fantastical and divine realities; of nightmarish and grotesque creations; as well as phantasmal and paradoxical plains where insanity and rationality are after thoughts. There are no warnings if you ever come face to face with these places, no guarantee of safety when you open your eyes

after you blink, or whether a breath there will be your last. These realities are incomprehensible in their order, in their nature, and in their entities that reside in them.

These triggers, or so I have referred to them, come in in many forms and you yourself might already be familiar with a few. A spider web, latched onto a tree branch in a city park or at the edge of a forest with beads of dew drops glistening at the dawn of a new day. Yet, what may seem like a spectacle of nature on the surface is an explainable phenomenon when you inspect it. A spider web stands before you, but why here? There is no spider in sight, no flies or other insects to feast on, so then why? Its not until further inspection that you realize that the trap is for no mere insect, and upon the fluttering action of letting your eye lids shut, you find yourself no longer in that same forest or in front of that same tree. These locations are scattered throughout our world, a rustic bridge constructed of a decaying log, rocks or perhaps made of sturdy wood left in the middle of nowhere, leading you across a seemingly harmless shallow creek. A chapel that neighbors a graveyard wouldn't normally be explored after midnight but the foolish ones who do find that the chapel twists and contorts after closing the door once entering. It's chambers leading nowhere, to places already seen, or to new spaces that mimic our own. See, the thing with these triggers is that they are everywhere, and some require certain actions to activate. A playground swing set, its blue sheen now rusted and the chain creaking with the wind. Out of a childish curiosity, almost as if to recapture childhood playtime, you settle down on it and let your instinct kick in. Legs in, then out, legs in, then out again, legs in, and out. This simple motion creates the momentum to let the swing work, yet you decide to jump at the peak of this, remembering how in youth you would see who could jump the farthest, so you do. You smile and yet, when both your feet touch the earth, you no longer hear the creak of the chain, the sun is no longer shining and you are no longer happy. They exist everywhere, in every place.

Dead end alley ways suddenly turn into mazes, restroom doors at gas stops leave you stranded in other worlds, building elevators that suddenly stop in between floors show you a shadowy horror, a forked tree at the top of a hill that no one dare go near, or even the shelves of a library.

These places exist everywhere, but in the event that you unintentionally cross through them, I am powerless to help in any way. These worlds they take you too, however, are anything but harmless. An endless autumn forest, with a clearing at the center of infinity where you never know if you are alone. You might enjoy it at first, but a prolonged time in this reality will at some point unnerve you. Night and day come and random intervals, once you settle you will notice that there is no wind, and in the moments of night you will notice the cracking of branches and the rustling of leaves. In another world, you may encounter a city—a replica of your home perhaps—but it is empty. There are no cars, no bustling streets, no laughter, not even the stray echo of dogs barking or cats meowing. Only you, and what appears to be a roaming shadow always seen at the edge of your vision, always beckoning for a second chance. An endless office building adorned with a hideous yellow wallpaper whose LED lights are always flickering, a Daedalian maze of stone where torches lead nowhere and the breathing of a beast echoes, or of a library whose dimensions twist at angles indescribable where its stairs lead you to new different corners of what appears to be an infinite sided room.

These worlds would almost be tolerable if not for the company they provide. The thing about these creatures is that...”

--Excerpt from Dante Esperanza's last note found on his person by officers