

# The Dragon's Room

"We can't even see the humans!"



Impossible Things Vol. 6  
Cole & Lehman

## The Dragon's Room

I'd never been to LA before and I was surprised I liked it so much.

A motorcycle breathed deeply as it accelerated past me onto Sunset Blvd and my body shook with the sound. I had just stepped out of MOTA—Medicine of the Angels—a green-faced cannabis dispensary. A light human touch landed on my arm and I turned my head in curiosity.

“excuse me you. will you go back in there and get me a preroll?”

they won't let me without my id.

squark! pop! here now boy.

here now.”

My fingers wrapped around the money they handed me even as my mouth protested, “I don't really want to go back in there.”

Strange. I found myself walking back through the door to the counter anyway. My body felt compelled by their desire. They knew that I would help them.

I stepped back to the counter person with my id. They felt that their freshly flexed authority was being circumvented, but they couldn't put their finger on how. They scanned my plastic and I walked back through the mock-secret door.

“Any kind,” the person had instructed.

I found an indica/sativa hybrid. Paid. Turned to leave, pressed the blue button to open the door in the wall and stepped back onto the street. I looked both ways and found the one-armed person a short distance around the corner.

They was singin' and talkin' to themselves in a way I recognized from improv jams. Spontaneous words and sounds with no care for makin' sense or using formally acceptable language. These were the ways I loved to play with friends. It didn't seem like this angel could turn it off and I bet the cannabis helped calm the voices. I walked over happily (feeling satisfied that I had helped) and handed them the preroll and a dollar in change.

Their eyes caught me like DMT headlights. One was an impossible turquoise wave barrel on a sunny day and the other a tahili ginger flower fresh-bloomed in morning dew.

How did they get like that?

I wasn't sure any of this was really happening anymore. My life, LA, my upcoming leap to Hawaii. I could just as easily be dreaming. And, I knew there wasn't as much of a difference as we'd like to think. It didn't matter anyway, right now, I wanted to talk with this person. So I walked. They lit the joint and we talked.

“do you want to know how I lost my arm?” they asked as they passed me the joint.

“well, sure. I mean, I wanted to ask about your eyes, but the arm sounds interesting too,” I said.

“don't worry, the eyes will make sense when you know how the arm went ... if i can tell it well enough ... and i don't know that i can. but i'll try.

squark pop blow, here we go ...

so i was walking down a street i've walked a thousand times before, hallelujah ...

one of these streets," they pointed their hand past the boulder-sized agave plants. Pinwheeled plumeria and sunset-dipped wisteria filled the air with California technicolor. My skin was still sweaty with the day's exhale as my mind followed them into their story.

"and this time when i turned a corner i'd turned all those thousand times before...

this time, there was a door

a night-blue metal door on what used to be a blank, crumbling plaster wall

i took a step closer and the door reshaped itself into blood-dark wood

its surface rolled with wrinkled canyons of flesh scrolled with grains of silver and green, like laughter lines stretched up from the corners of eyes in a smile

the door sang quietly and the song filled the little corner of the street. the flowers growing around the wall floated up and down with the melody

so i stepped within arm's reach, turned my ear to it, and listened

it knew i was listening and sang louder, sweeter, and the colors changed on the wood...

i reached toward the sound to caress it and my fingers almost touched the rippling door. three eyes surfaced from the depths of moving patterns and rolled back in ecstasy before they plunged. the door suddenly reached toward me, raised into a mouth, and kissed my fingertips.

"open us," it giggled.

so i did.

there was a shimmering liquid blackness in the door frame. i stretched my right leg into it and my bare foot landed on an undulating sea of velvet pillows. i smelled cinnamon rolls. then fresh rain on sweaty skin after dancing with friends. then juniper burning under a starry desert sky.

i looked down and saw the wiggly line where my belly crossed the threshold. fleshy lips of shiny blackness sucked and tugged at me to come in deeper. i pressed in, just enough to show interest, and was swallowed whole into enveloping darkness.

a breath of ocean salt flooded my sinuses and a sunset slowly warmed to life in front of me ... on the horizon, a herd of wild horses galloped in the curling spray risen from barreling ocean waves. pastel strips of sky burned along the edges and dripped down to disappear in metallic silver water. the waves just in front of me oscillated forward and back with gentle amoebas of lavender traveling the nooks between dancing crests and troughs ... forward, back, side, glide, no where to hide.

this wasn't the ocean in front of venice beach.

it was alive. i could feel the movement of the water pushing and tugging on my skin through the air—gravity thickened here. wherever this was ... i was standing on soft warm sand that moved on its own against my skin underfoot. i had an erection and wasn't even thinking of sex. i'd never felt so alive.

the full moon warmed my skin with gentle fire. more details started to flicker on in the new world around me, like fireflies painting a mural to life. there was an unfamiliar mountain range unfurled along the western horizon. the towers of its spine pulsed like a dragon in the wind. up and down, it rose and fell in time with my breath. or was my breath in time with the spines? i quickly didn't care which way it was.

above me, an emerald coconut tree rustled windchime music in the breeze. to my right, above the playful ocean that i felt watching me, white towers of clouds shimmered with full moon sweat. neon pink and midnight blue plumeria twirled along a path to my left. they bloomed, rotted away, and bloomed again in every cycle of breath. i could feel the living night drumming sweetly in my veins, giving a rhythm to the melody of the waves. to everything.

a breeze kissed me with a single sapphire flower petal, like a star fallen across my skin and i knew it was time to stand.

i pressed myself up from the thick embrace of sand. felt the blood rush, body water gushed down into my feet, and i started to walk up a hill of bone-white sand that flickered on and off under my steps. it was littered with broken shells. spiral cones that used to be homes. coral columns the size of small thatched jungle huts. the costumes of spindly creatures that reminded me of lobsters but painted with colors i'd never seen before.

it was life littered into art, a graveyard and a sculpture, like a Salvador Dali landscape created by the ocean's curiosity, care, and inevitable hunger.

halfway up the hill, i stopped to marvel at my footprints. outlines of toes there one second, and softly flickered out of existence with the ground in the next, like a candle given up. white. black. somewhere in between. white. black. halfway there.

the strangest thing was that i still felt the ground when i couldn't see it.

on impulse, i looked back and the metallic ocean waves sloshed along behind me singing a quiet, secret song. they followed me uphill like a playful dog, lapping at my heels sweetly with hundreds of foamy lavender tongues.

i smiled at the company and found myself under an alien tree at the top of the hill. the tree's purple and gold leaves raised like serpent scales to an unfamiliar web of stars. its red bark and obsidian branches spiraled up and outward to the corners of the land around me. we were surrounded by towering green folds of valleys, shadows, and waterfalls shining sapphire blue by the moon. the tangle of branches and leaves slowly grew and dissolved faces in the dark. eyes. mouths. tongues sticking out sweetly. some faces smiling. some gnashing teeth. some looking right at me, others completely oblivious.

"look here, we only see the world in 7 dimensions and sight is only one sense. AND we only see 1/10 of a billion of the electromagnetic spectrum anyway."

i looked up and saw three fruits hanging from the trunk—bulbous and green and spikey. but they were talking to each other, not to me. and by noticing them and focusing on their colors i could hear them somehow. like they came into range, like a radio station becoming clear. and they were warm, almost arguing about something complicated, but not quite angry, yet...

"and each of us are shaped differently, so we never see the same representation of anything. not quite. we're interpreting a living, wiggling conscious ground. we can rarely agree we're

experiencing the same thing even when we're hanging right beside each other... look. does that spiral lead up or down? is that path the color of ripe rolinea or the smell of fresh-baked bread?

it might as well be both.

and as soon as another being approaches and adds their focal point, it all changes and shifts.

it's a miracle we can even perceive each other, much less pass any understandable stories across our membranes.

and when it comes to 3d beings like humans, well..

"hey wait, it's arguable whether or not they actually embody 3 dimensions yet, even though they're convince they're ready for 5."

"yeah, true, well, good luck understanding them. or even seeing them. one could be standing right beside us and we probably wouldn't notice. we'd have to have dragon's blood in our veins to even have a chance. and even the dragons usually miss them.

that's why so many humans wander in here and get stuck and die and stink up the houses before we can open the windows and toss them back. they find their way in, get stuck in a window pane, and they flap and buzz around and try to get out, but we almost never notice them until it's too late and they die staring at their sun through the membrane, not knowing why they can't reach it.

"their bodies are so hard to find, too."

"and if we do notice them, we usually watch them flap out their life, or get eaten by one of the interdimensional fascia spiders. we're more fascinated by the way humans move and sound and how it feels to watch life drain out of them than anything, because we have no reference to relate our experience with them. or at least we think we don't.

but i have a theory about humans. i think they've got a whole world and culture and complex set of stories we could learn from. i think if someone found a way to communicate with a human, we'd learn some interesting things about our world."

"no! what could they possibly know about this place? they can't even find it on purpose."

"maybe they do find it on purpose. maybe their purpose is just so different and alien to us we can't comprehend it as purpose.

what's a purpose anyway?"

the one fruit said with a smile.

"oh don't start with that again. you know that conversation never ends!"

The person paused to hit the joint and looked at me with their Hawaii turquoise eye. We were suddenly back in LA on some side road just off Sunset in a quiet neighborhood.

"that's when i got scared.

i had been thinking about flies caught in windowpanes all day.

i had watched one eaten by a spider. i had let one free. so now i thought i musta finally cracked like a coconut. it was the only thing that made sense. they were talking about me. about my experiences. and that was just too much. so i panicked and wanted to find the door again. it felt like the only way i'd ever get back to my mind, like a symbol in a story book, but real and inside my head.

i tried to take a step and my feet were stuck to the ground.

i looked down to see the metallic ocean crawling up my legs and where it touched me, my skin got hotter and colder at the same time. it still smiled like the same innocent lavender gentle thing, but as it covered my arms and made its way to my neck it didn't feel safe anymore. i closed my mouth, but it flowed easily through the cracks in my teeth and poured down my throat like slow oil. i felt it hit my stomach and continue down and out into my blood. it covered my eyes in inky blackness that danced in schools of neon green fish.

i felt myself drop down into an abyss, swept away into an ocean that existed under everything i thought i was. i could breathe under this water and somehow i was still calm. my personality had dissolved with minimum protest and now i wanted to stay this way forever. all song, and color, and movement.

i was being moved and twirled, my body cared for by this ocean of spiral fingers. it laughed and sang while it rewired neural networks, relaxed muscle bellies, and spun my DNA into new configurations. i felt dangled in the claws of a giant feathered cat that could just as easily eat me but chose to love me instead. i was touched everywhere at once — loved, worshipped, and played with at the same time,

so i relaxed.

i started to feel my body with space around me again. i was sitting in a circular obsidian cave. a soft yellow light woke up around the edges, slowly like candleflames. the firelight moved toward the center from the outer edges and painted ribs along the walls in warbling oranges. they crawled slowly to the ceiling in dendrite veins and spiraled around an octahedron vortex that went upward and outward forever.

the song changed in the room and a chandelier of ten thousand blue roses bloomed from the fire-veined vortex. it rotated downward as it expanded and the petals spun in shapes of bodies. arms of fire. faces of pleasure and agony. and eyes of storm all waltzed in the air to a sweet music box melody.

and then i could see a dragon in a chair with its back to me.

at least it looked like a dragon on the surface. it had scales, and teeth, and fire and smoke puffed out with the time of its breath. but underneath its shape, just past what i could sense, i could tell it was something different than a dragon.

it was the thing we made up the shape of dragons to try to explain. its body was spread out across infinity and this point was where all of it converged into a surface.

i could see its mycelium web of faces reach love and betrayal and friendship and fear and hope and wonder and curiosity into every universe ever imagined... it tendrilled out in a web through everything, only aware of itself in some places and not in others, and somehow i could understand all of this.

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in some worlds it flew through the skies, devouring and creating empires. it seeded love on a planet only to come back and pick it apart piece by piece to enjoy the sweet taste of agony. and it sat right there in front of me in this strange cave, singing and knitting a scarf.

i looked away, terrified of something i had seen it do to a cat in a trap, and i fell.

it felt like a fall that lasted forever and in an instant, i slammed flat into the ocean.

i was still in the dragon's room, but caught in waves of color in some faraway corner. my head would go under and when I surfaced, I saw red, purple, and blue dancing up to the ceiling. when i was sure i would drown, my face pressed down into the color and i could see LA again ...

Silver Lake! Micheltona street!

i could feel the sunlight against my skin and even smell the flowers. but i flapped helplessly against some impassable membrane. one second i was standing on the street looking at the Hollywood sign, and the next i snapped right back into the dragon's room.

i'd give up and push through and then get excited and flop right back.

i could hear the dragon singing ...

"... to catch a song

just sing along

you can't sing wrong

you can't sing wrong ...

oh! poor human

i'll get an egg and send you back

just a lick ..."

the dragon's tongue grew across the cave like a tree of gold-veined rivers and wrapped around an egg-shaped song of blue and yellow lightning spinning in the corner. it talked and sang to itself in language i couldn't understand as it moved.

"...here we go  
in you go.

we'll just ..."

what looked and felt like an infinite mouth moved toward me. it had uncountable teeth that grew in a spiral into more mouths with teeth blooming from every point.

it was too much.

i knew they wanted to help me, i could feel it in their sound. but i thrashed and screamed and flopped harder against the colors. if i could just slip through to my familiar sun maybe those mouths would disappear ... but they kept getting closer.

suddenly i felt a wet ripping in my right shoulder and my body was swallowed by slow, sucking lips.

“oops... sorry little one  
hope you can survive in your world without one of those.

the egg will seal you right up. just a flesh wound.

if we had enough time i'd grow you a new one, but we have to get you out of here before the spiders smell the blood. you've been here too long already and they're on the way. even i'd have trouble stopping them, they're just too small and determined and too much of a match for your shape

your bound to lose your other one or something you like better,” i heard as i felt lifted and moved .

there was a rumble, a giggle, a burst and a gushing and then I was back on this street, where we stand right now, at this wall. this same wall.”

We stopped to look at the blank wall, just another corner of LA. I looked down and the joint was somehow still lit in my hand so I took a hit.

“when i came to, i was laid out in the street. blood all around me. my arm was gone and the wound was healed already.

someone drove by in a Tesla and must have called the police. an ambulance came to get me. but as soon as they got me to the hospital, they wanted me gone. they thought i was playing a joke. there was no explanation for all the blood and my missing arm and the freshly woven wound all together.

i had no memory of home before, my name, who I was...

they thought i was lying

so they kicked me to the street

and now i'm here, with you.

and all i want to do is go back to that other place, where at least I feel understood and seen. even if the spiders come. sometimes i'd rather be eaten than forgotten like this.

or I could be the dragon's pet

i bet they'd feed me good.”

They were looking down at a dark spot on the street under the wall. I knew it was their blood. And that they were done telling their story. And didn't care if I believed and understood, because they expected me not to.

But I did anyway.

I could see it in their eyes.

“so, how do you like LA?”