

This is a little old, now. Before Existential Blues ever gets published -- if it ever does -- the following will be rewritten:

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The Existential Blues, Part One:

On the Boulevard of Dreams

Sometimes I feel
Like the world is unreal
I think it has to be
There ain't no answers,
Only dancers
Who dance real slow with me.

The Armageddon Blues Band
Dancers, from the album
Why Are These Drums So Round?

The Great Wheel lived.

That was the Enemy's first thought in the moments after the warheads annihilated it. It reassembled itself slowly in the first moments after the death of the being Mordreaux. Echoes of a being named ENCELIS it touched briefly, cherished, enhanced, and left with a being known as PRAXCELIS.

The Great Wheel lived.

The structure of the timeline on which it had incubated revealed itself to the Enemy's gaze. The timeline existed with a probability of near-totality; its total energy level was eight times as great as that of the timelines immediately surrounding it. . . .

. . .surrounding it.

Suddenly it found the way outside. It moved up, and found itself in the midst of a swirling gray storm that filled the walls between the worlds, looking down on a vast structure, a wheel, upon which timelines were laid at right angles around the rim. The timelines had form, and structure; they were discrete spokes of energy that radiated up and down from the rim of the Great Wheel. The Enemy saw, as it drifted along the Great Wheel, that the Uncertainty Principle grew more powerful; that Law degenerated.

It looked away to the direction that seemed to it to be the top of the Great Wheel. At the north end of the great wheel, there was a brightness.

A glow.

The Enemy of Entropy oriented itself slowly. It found itself drifting away from the glow. Years were passing in those moments, as the Enemy came to grips with the pulse of time and particle its life had become.

The north pole of the Great Wheel radiated law, gave reason to all of existence. As the Enemy drifted south along the Wheel, the power of Law waned; the Uncertainty Principle appeared, grew powerful, and dominated. Time travel became possible, in a wild zone where no timeline was more secure than a candle in the wind, where timelines shifted, vanished, and were created anew.

Further past that, the timelines at the far side of the Great Wheel opposite the Pole of Law; those timelines were bastions of anarchy and unreason, timelines embedded in a swirling gray maelstrom of chaos.

The Enemy made a decision. It willed and then by its will moved. It ghosted north crossing countless trillions of timelines, across the territory of the timeline-spanning Walks-Far Empire, where a tribe of Indians that were all but extinct on most timelines had come to know power. It approached the bright, living pole of Law that gave structure to the Great Wheel of Existence.

The Enemy of Entropy, the being who had once been a man, approached the Pole of Law, and the radiance that surrounded it grew. It came to know that the Force behind the Pole of Law was a very structured being. Elements of its structure made the Enemy of Entropy pause in thought: in many ways, the Pole of Law was similar to the Enemy itself, though on an incredibly vaster scale.

The Enemy moved into the nimbus surrounding the Pole of Law.

The Being at the Pole of Law was Power, and Law; it was Form and Structure; it bound creation together.

The Being became aware of the Enemy of Entropy.

In a microcosm of time, too short for it ever to recover fully in memory again, the Enemy learned many things in great detail:

The Being at the Pole of Law knew itself as an Envoy. It was older than the Great Wheel itself; it was capable of understanding none of what its presence meant to the Great Wheel; and it was there not because it wished to be, but because it had been chained there by some force greater than itself.

It was God.

It was insane, perfect, and perfectly malevolent -- and in that moment it became aware of the Enemy's presence and

-- struck.

The Enemy, blasted and dazed, fled, south, into the safe darkness, into the gray maelstrom. . . .
. . .into Chaos.

Tourists Go Home:

Here they are and they're walking, right, in the rain, and the girl, whose name is Flowers and whose nickname is Doctor Death, is angry because she is short, and when the rain stops she will be the last one to know.

The guy is walking backward and singing to himself in a strange language, it sounds like a box of twinkies on fire. His name is Loopy and that's really his name, Loopy Jonathon the Third. Loopy Jonathon towers over Doctor Death without meaning to. Suddenly he spins around in a complete circle, and the tourists on Hollywood Boulevard watch him with interest; he has executed an almost perfect pirouette over the star of Greta Garbo. Loopy Jonathon is wearing a shirt that says on the front Universal Truth Number One: On the back it continues, Life's a Bitch. Then You Die.

"Universal Truth Number Two:" proclaims Loopy Jonathon, "You should never say, 'Well, why don't you bite my head off?'" to a female grasshopper who is bigger than you are.

"Listen," says Doctor Death with blazing eyes and rigid self-control, "It's raining and I'm depressed and I don't want to listen to any more of your stupid jokes!" Her eyes flash sparks at him, and the sparks float lazily down to the sidewalk, to sizzle out in puzzles of water. "Okay?" she screams suddenly. "Is this all right?"

They are walking past Grauman's Chinese Theater, a place where famous men and women have had their names and feet and hands preserved in cement. John Wayne's feet are smaller than you think. "Oh," says Loopy Jonathon in injured tones, "If you insist." With stiff dignity, he bends over and starts walking on his hands. "It's just that you're not as pretty when you're all gloomed out." He pauses, flexes his wrists, and tries to hop over a crack in the sidewalk. He fails. "Oh, mother," he cries. He flips back to his feet. "What have I done?"

Doctor Death says, in ominously quiet voice, "I don't want to hear it."

Loopy Jonathon stands very still. Finally he looks down at Doctor Death, and there is a devil-light in his eyes, like a television that has been turned off and set on fire. Rainbows refract from the lights in his eyes off of the raindrops that cling to his eyelashes. "Killer," he agrees calmly. Abruptly, he Changes, and then he is Rod Serling (some of the street people stop performing, to watch in admiration) and he says, "Submitted for your approval: the Cool family."

Without pausing Doctor Death runs a finger down the magclip that keeps her coat closed and takes out shurikens, beautiful deadly throwing stars, and starts juggling with them.

Loopy Jonathon backs away, walking quickly and then running, running backward down Hollywood Boulevard at a fair clip, and Doctor Death is not running after him, but somehow she is staying as close to him as ever, and the crowd is getting out of the way, the crowd is thinking to itself, These people are weirder than we are.

"The Cool family," said the Voice of Rod Serling, "Sissy and Doug and Mondo and Joe and Byron. Sissy and Doug are the parents, two aging refugees from college who never adapted to the chuckle chuckle real world; and their children. Mondo Cool is a fifteen year old high school dropout-in-training, blond-haired with polychrome rainbow sunglasses, a California Girl, jailbait, a girl with one foot on a bale of grass so high that she walks with a continual limp, and one foot in the Twilight Zone. . . .Joe Cool, a nineteen year- old successful high-school dropout and all-around charismatic human being. . . .Byron Cool, their twelve-year old little brother, about whom the less said the better, except that Byron once chewed the same piece of hamburger for two hours just to see if it could be done, you know? and who was responsible for spreading a terrible social disease throughout his junior high school.

"As our episode begins, Mondo Cool and her brother Joe are in the living room, watching television and smoking Acapulco Gold. The television is a malevolent cyclops reflecting its images off of their sunglasses, and on the screen there is, unfolding, the very latest episode of 'Pirates on Rollerskates'. . . ."

"That's it," screams Doctor Death. Tourists scatter into the streets at the sound, and get run over and die. "No more jokes!" A shuriken cuts through the air, the rain, and Loopy Jonathon. Blood spurts from his shoulder, dribbles down over the bright neon-lit silverette shuriken. "No more fucking jokes!"

Another shuriken strikes Loopy Jonathon, and he is holding his hands up in front of him as though that will protect him from the too-sharp steel, he is screaming a high wavering sound, and a shuriken grows out of the palm of one hand, and then the scream stops abruptly and there is a shuriken half buried in his throat.

He flops to the sidewalk, and his blood is dark, Doctor Death was expecting it to be shiny for some reason, but it's not, it's dark and nearly black, and the rain washes it away into the gutter.

Doctor Death stands over his body with the rain falling steadily on her shoulders, dripping like tears over her sunbrown cheeks, the neon rainbows shimmering in her damp eyelashes. "You stupid bastard," she whispers, "why did you make me do that?"

Loopy Jonathon does not answer her because he is dead, and the crowds are trying hard not to notice any of this because it will ruin their evenings if they do, even worse than the rain already has.

Doctor Death sits down on the sidewalk, gleaming leather boots in the water of the gutter. She shakes her head. "Pirates on roller skates, indeed," she says in black, black depression. She starts pulling her bloody shurikens out of Loopy Jonathon's body.

Less than two blocks away, had Doctor Death only known it, is something that would have slightly alleviated her awful depression. In a bathroom in a ARCO gas station on Hollywood and Sixth, a person is in the process of writing the following:

The sun shines on metal

So pretty
I envy the new robots in their perfection
All smoked glass and chromium steel
Perhaps I'll join them
Shed my skin and trade these messy gray cells
For the beauty of silicon semiconductor
Perhaps I'll join them
Reprogram to new parameters, and walk with the new robots
Among the brass orchids
But then I would no longer be a man
And the smell of salt
The sight of mist crawling in over San Francisco Bay
Would be only a reminder of rust

The truly amusing part of all this, of course, is that the being dying in the stall in the men's room is not a man; it is an android, a cunningly constructed artificial person; on its forearm it bears the alphanumeric RVS1302-22-98GK.

Leaving the bathroom are two completely ordinary-looking men wearing silver jumpsuits and their eyes glitter a little bit, and everybody who sees them thinks, As if there weren't enough techno-punk fags in this city to begin with.

One of the men, a time-hunter from the year 2812, says to the other man, a techno-punk fag who he met in the bathroom while he was killing the runaway android, "I'll tell you, friend, I hate it when I get these semifer damn androids who go Loopy Jonathon."

But Doctor Death, two blocks away and getting further away with every step, does not know these things, and so she trudges off down the Boulevard with a black fury that causes the rain to evaporate off her in clouds of steam, which looks silly, which pisses her off even worse.

And. . . .

As Doctor Death is stalking off of the Boulevard in a destructive all-consuming rage, and kills a break dancer just for the hell of it, on a hill overlooking the Boulevard, there is a brief bright flicker of light, and the Enemy of Entropy takes the shape of a man, standing alone in the rain.