

There is always a modicum of worry with our choices.
Each choice its own crossroad.

I had a hard time mailing off Chapter One, they found four dead prisoners (strangled to death in a killing spree); and then the day I went to the mail room, a guy here got his head chopped by a makeshift ax, leaving a blood trail all over the concrete. I had to be selective of where I stepped--not wanting any of the blood on me. But, Chapter One finally got mailed, and now Chapter Two hopefully will make it to its destination. My choice? Is to work. Not to be shaped by my current locale, to be defined by it in any way, if I have a say. And I DO have a say. I am a writer.

On March 22, we left Kaspar in the woods, somewhere (most likely around Whitewater Falls) around the South/North Carolina border, but he's not sure.

The Skye Saab is a wreck.

Kaspar figures that if he follows the mountain DOWN, it's gotta end at the Burg--right?

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SKYE YELLOW
A Novel
by
J.E. MAHAFFEY

CHAPTER TWO

4:30 PM. Peanut always took people by surprise; and always when he'd least expect to *find* someone to befuddle--there'd somebody'd be. Humans were like that.

Peanut went from tree to tree, bush to bush, and trail to trail. Peanut was ... the self-badged Person Monitor. Someone had to do it. So, why not him? It gave him something to do. But so far, everything smelled of rain.

It was fortuitous; being amidst people indebted to him.

Humans looked out for him: giving him food, shelter, medicine--even hooking him up with a (some hot--some not) piece of tail every now and then. And why not? Peanut was the exemplification of a man, with attributes ... and assets, the ladies liked.

Dating was adventitious: people date aimlessly. It was pleasurable to pounce bed to bed, couch to couch, rug to rug, car to car, yard to yard! Sometimes the grass WAS greener; sometimes there would be NO grass at all, just mud!

He once composed a poem about it, called "MUD Pie":

That's why I don't shy from
 Playing in mud, playing in mud,
 Playing in mu-uuu-uuu-uuu-uuuuud.
 The green grass.
 The short grass. The no-oo-no-oo grass.
 Playing in mud, playing couch to rug,
 car to yard to bed.
 Playing in the head!

5:15 PM. "What luck!" Peanut said to himself. He blinked his eyes again to confirm the situation.

A giant banana-colored people cart.

It hadn't been there before; but then, it was there, right in the middle of a big puddle of its own golden piss. It wasn't like people to leave their carts in the woods, in fact, other people with bigger carts usually came to drag them away on the occasions that they did. So, the Banana--Peanut surmised--was definitely new to the scene; and a closer investigation revealed that the Banana's ... juice ... was candy! But something that tasted sooooo good--had to be bad.

Peanut studied the Banana's design--it wasn't normal. Which usually meant it was that much more valuable. Stanzas began to float around in his mind. He examined them, considered their flow and form, committing them to memory:

Banana,
 you and I--the Peanut--will meet

the demise
 of a rebirth of a thought.

A cart
 released of the burden
 forgets the bane of its day.

6:30 PM. Peanut had went over every solid inch of the Banana

with the best of his ability. The process was grueling, his legs straining, but with a break (or two) he'd persevered until the job was done.

Parts of the Banana were bare, exposed, and easily accessed. The job, at length, gave Peanut rebirths of thought.

The Banana's inside was as hard as its outside; unlike any he'd seen before. It had an obvious purpose. But, whatever that was--he didn't know--and it wasn't doing it.

Or was it?

Someone had brought it to the Mountain; and oddly, it ADDED to the Foggy Otherness emanating from the Burg. Peanut always-- He stopped. Froze stiff.

People prints. And they were headed in the direction of the Anomaly--or as some dupes called it--ZOMBIE ISLAND!

Peanut began running along the trail.

The Blue Ridge Mountain washes over you, prickles your senses, and consumes any that have a heart for life. It's where people lose themselves, and lost, find in them the stirrings of life, death, or ... possibilities of life AFTER death!

Peanut followed the non-rain smells.

Perhaps, he thought, he could take care of his Monitor obligations in time to make it back to the Bibliosis before JaiBeth put on the Friday Flick. A Tokyo Shock number, entitled: "Psycho Gothic Lolita." The screen--by now--he thought--would be up, Shylynn would be bringing the '90s projector down out of the attic. While Michaila and Eleanor sent out reminder-vites to fill seats. Peanut would prefer NOT to miss the event. Eleanor had gotten a Tokyo Shock for Peanut specifically; knowing his obsession, and that it would irk some of the viewers of the female variety with its outlandish objectifications. Which was the point--to strike up debates.

Along the footpath, Peanut at once picked up--in addition to woody smells of ... the woods--the person's scents coalesced in a semi-dry area protected by the thickest of the canopy he'd seen so far, with a convenient stream of water nearby. The smell was very strong all about him, where the human had obviously rested,

but one smell stumped Peanut. A particular low hanging limb that had a ... funk.

Why would a limb smell like a foot?

Breathing it in with flared nostrils, he realized how stupid he looked: sniffing a tree like some, elevated, jet-black, stiletto thigh-high. It's wrong. Obviously wrong. And he'd normally decline, but when it's right there in his face....

Completely enraptured by the open-toed bouquet; Peanut's mind raced:

He opened the door to the human house
& took his biscuits with tea.
Somewhere he got out of the hills alive

with something of himself
remaining in that foliage, growing
from its mud to the Island

from its trees. He wondered
Where/should/why would the person go? As if
it vanished, somehow. Some way.

The Fog about, lying in wait, warm
against the skin in places of its
own. No face(s), arm(s), leg(s),

or torso(s)—only the eye(s)
for the thought(s) of mind(s).
Why open a door to the human house
feeding the conscious of the head(s)?

7:00 PM. Peanut finally broke free of the aromatic enchantment. The limb suddenly, to him, shiny and obscene—glistening with Knowing, and casting its shadow that grew as the sun spat deep orange across the land.

He had to combine all of the collected data, and it dawned on him that perhaps the person might be of the Wiccans—one of

the Burg's many clans. It was statistically possible, likely even.

Peanut found the footpath once again: it cork-screwed up into a hill, disappearing over the next ridge. If the person WAS of the Wiccans, he would be fine; if he was not, he was outside his element. *The Fog about, lying in wait, warm....*

3:30 PM. Kaspar's clothes were soaked through, and the added weight frustrated him; his non-hiking-Vans had long become sloshy wet, heavy, and confused by the non-skateboarding terrain; his face, hair, and his body in general, felt grimy, sticky, and fouled by the tainted shower; he stumbled over every rock, every protruding root; but, he went on.

The irony? He was sand-dune-thirsty!

The empty 20 oz. Dr. Pepper bottle only mocked him with its candied subterfuge--he should have rationed it. Bought something else.

Coming to a semi-dry spot under some thick Civil War-era foliage, Kaspar stopped for a break after hearing the attractive sounds of a stream. The tightly packed pine needles were dry enough in spots, that he sat down, took off his Vans, and rung the water from his socks. The "stream" turned out to be no more than a Blue Ridge trickle, but after finding a low-hanging branch to air out his socks--Kaspar HATED wet socks!--he was able to fill his post-apocalyptic-20 oz.-canteen.

The water was cold, clear, and refreshing, yet ... earthy. He ignored the musings of what might be upstream, slipping itself into the hillside trickles.

Like golden Saab piss!

A little garnish for the one-half of a--honey oats--Nature Valley bar that he'd rummaged from the Skye Saab's upturned contents. He'd considered taking the Diva Cups, but didn't know what for. Choices, it's all about our choices.

"It's not like any of it matters," Kaspar said to himself, pausing a moment to see if he had anything to say on the matter. But his leaf-den remained quiet.

He thought about Melissa, just getting in, probably asleep

on the love-seat. How she'd come in--tired from work--and crash, there, instead of on the couch, where she could stretch out fully. Pulled up towards herself like a cat, napping. Bathing in the evening sunlight that broke through the window's partially open blinds. The ones that he made sure to crack just a little each morning before he left.

Like that, Melissa always made him want to have kids with her--looking so angelic and *unspoiled*. More than once, filling his head with all the possible positions that he could corkscrew himself into to achieve such a feat.

"I'm sorry." He said aloud.

Kaspar always felt ill-will towards Melissa, and then, every time, a memory would surface to remind him of WHY they were together. And he wasn't the only one struggling with such duplicity. He could not allow himself to forget her solicitous masquerades: How, on *two* occasions, Melissa had posed--via Internet--as Nicole, an ex that Kaspar hadn't seen in over a decade, or had any contact with since she'd left him. Melissa attempting, he assumed, to extract information--divert him, maybe?--test him?--he didn't know, all he could do was speculate. Because though he knew it was her, and had found her by the ISP address, she was never going to own up to it.

The thought of Nicole keeping tabs on him, at any level, made no sense. She'd made her dismissal of him very clear. NO. Nicole would most likely not even remember his name--let alone bother to ever Google it. Melissa posing was the answer that made most sense. Especially since she'd found Nicole's "Glamour Shots" stashed away in his spank-bank.

But Kaspar understood.

He still held a flame; and that threatened new loves.

And vice versa....

The whole situation was jaded. They weren't her, she wasn't them, and he was still him--but a new him. He didn't understand how someone, anyone, could be in love-- madly fight-to-keep-you, screw-the-world, us-against-them, kind of love--not your mere infatuation--and walk away. Never looking back, pretending not to even WANT to. He just couldn't do that. He didn't love like

that. When he loved; he loved wholly, and THAT didn't fade, given ANY amount of time. Anyone to tell him otherwise, was either a liar, or a cold-hearted-SOB. A person might move on, that's one thing, but if the love was real--there's no denial of its permanent place within a heart. There can be more love, yes. But there is no absolute expunging, not even in the face of hate.

The modern heart was just not made that way.

It's stereotypically the men who are wired cold, as depicted in every TV show, movie, magazine, etc., of Kaspar's rearing; but in his experiences of late, and current entertainment and media mediums, show that the stereotype is being shared, if not shifted. Women have adapted in kind to how men used to behave, changing the definitions of love.

His future was bleak, and lonely, of that he had no doubts. He'd done Melissa wrong, and there'd be no fixing things. Not even a ring could bind away the wrongs. Everything you do, means something. It has to. Once the choice is made, that's it, it's locked linearly in Time's Arrow. We're just along for the ride on Causation Highway. Every subsequent choice an additional mile-marker, turn, detour--or dead end. Bridge out.

Some content themselves by ways of vengeance, but on that turn rode hatred and bitterness that only--in its end--turned inwards. Others contented themselves by ways of conformity, but on that route of identical commuters rode only molds of monosyllabic consolation that--in their end--merely served a status quo, leaving many turns untaken.

To borrow a Saab; not to borrow a Saab.

Choice.

Consequence.

Kaspar preferred not to hazard such musing of effect of cause and cause to effect, and its affect on him and his days to come. He had today. He was trapped on a mountain. He might not have a tomorrow.

5:00 PM. He leaned forward and looked at his watch. He'd somehow dozed off. His body in obvious self-repair, when he got back to the Burg (if he survived the Wrath of Skye), he planned to sleep for a week.

The tree limb was NO Maytag, but his socks--one more-so than the other--had become ... less wet. And as he put them both back on, he thought again of Melissa. Done things can be defining, but those Undone things can be outright tormentive too. The Undone, Unseen, Unexperienced--denied--life. He would talk with her when he got back.

Renewed images of Nicole began rolling through his head like gilt-edged cells of a broken film-strip. She was moving; but she was staying still. She was in a blue, flowered sun-dress; she was in nothing, surrounded by a sea of purple. Her eyes wide open; but not seeing. Her mouth full; yet empty. The images of her, like any memory, while reminiscent of golden days--were loaded. Nicole had not been any more perfect than he had been, or than either of them COULD have been, considering their situations, circumstance, and age. She had hurt him.

More than once.

They'd ALL hurt him; but he'd hurt them too.

He took one step forward, and the sloshy looseness of his shoes--one more-so than the other--irked him. But what could he do? Choices were made, his choices, and it was a brave new Burg waiting for him.

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