



SKYE YELLOW: Chapter Three



This installment of "Skye Yellow" comes a little late for a few reasons. For one, there's been more deaths--these being gang related--leading to a statewide lock-down. Guards have been beaten, and there's been a full-on mini-riot at another prison (Trenton?)--adding to the lock-down's duration. Second, I've been busy revamping the classes here in the Character-Based Unit, CBU, where I'm the Educational Coordinator over programs. Third, I did some painting (a few portraits); and, finally, but there is more, I've had some interesting conversations with my creative writing students about the ... absence of--true females--in their lives, and the essays they've constructed (are now being workshopped together into one), turned out to be, something. You'll see soon.

Prison, just like the rest of the world is FULL of its share of drama. And if things persist at this rate, "Skye Yellow" will take longer than twelve months--unless, at some point, my pen (and typewriter) suddenly find a burst of momentum: I could use a good muse. Isn't this the time when--for the artist--a goddess of a muse reveals herself and assists in some way? Or am I doomed to be forever lured towards rocks? Prison, ironically, being one big rock, hollowed out; its intention as a final destination.

An intention I aim to disappoint.

Right now, with "Skye Yellow", and my other writing projects, I'm struggling with how to reconcile my want for multiple genres. My main focal point, of course, being literary; but, I can't deny the intruding paranormal, sci-fi, and ... steampunk elements, and characters. Making the only TRUE classification of my work: speculative fiction. The rule of thumb for any good genre novel is that if you are going to have an oddball element (or cast of characters), then you need to introduce it early. Don't go fifty pages in and have Ted come walking into a scene with an Icehouse in one hand and a woman in the other--leaving a reader to realize, *Oh, so there's giant talking bears in this!*

And, it drinks and womanizes.

Or, would that be, HE ... drinks and womanizes?

Point is--set the scene.

I know I may be talking a little MFA-ish here, but it's why, in chapters one (and two; especially two), I've sprinkled all sorts of ... hints ... to foreshadow things to come. And I DO mean things, I'm just still deciding on specifically WHAT those things will be. Part of me wants to be "serious"; while part of me wants to be true to myself.

It's looking like the latter is going to win out.

The third chapter of a novel can be a very important one, setting the groundwork for the rest of the book--and even the series. So, I've put some deep consideration into these pages. The cool thing is that you can see--if you look closely--things in the narrative from my day-to-day activities, what I've been seeing on TV (i.e., when I give a link like @ErinADarling, after seeing some hot chick on "QYOU PRIME", or I throw out #bowlogravy after an episode of Tosh.O, and I know of the URL www.comedycentral.com/tosh.o from the show, and I share it with my readers, for a reason, so, check some of it out, share it), you see some of my own life in these pages, my own ideology, and the ideologies that I've inferred to be in some of the people I've known. All of it fictionalized--heavily--but as true to life as I can manage with the skills that I have.

The Burg itself is akin to Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, so that affords me all kinds of leeway. This chapter sets a big scene.

I hope you enjoy it. I still welcome any feedback, or ideas.

"I have often wondered if the majority of mankind ever pause to reflect upon the occasionally titanic significance of dreams, and of the obscure world to which they belong."

--H.P. Lovecraft
Beyond the Wall of Sleep

On May 2, we left Peanut the Poet still on the trail like a toe-jam junky looking for a fix. While Kaspar battled bouts of introspection in the face of solitude, all those little (and big) Undone things tormenting him, as he tried to find his way, reconciling the life of his dreams with the life of his reality.

SKYE YELLOW

A Novel

by

J.E. MAHAFFEY

CHAPTER THREE

3:45 PM. The garage on the side of Donal's split-level had no door, making it more of a *carport* really, but not quite; because it was made of red brick just like the house, and it boasted all the qualifications of a two--and-a-half?--car garage. Minus, of course, a garage door!

If Melissa didn't *know* it was South Carolina, she'd of thought the house was in California somewhere, looking like something out of *The Fast and the Furious*, with a few minor changes. Instead of a lime-green Eclipse RS showboating as a juiced-up GSX, there was a bonafide Eagle Talon Tsi AWD, that threw 580 atwhp (at-wheel-horse-power), using nothing but boost, not an ounce of nitrous. Though, everyone did like to tease him about the NOS bottle mounted in the hatch, just to see him get irritated.

"It feeds the spray for the front-mount intercooler!" He'd defend. "None of it goes into the engine--it just brings down the air temp."

He made it well known that it pushed the Talon well over the 600 mark, Kaspar claimed it put the Talon close to 700, with a 20 percent

increase. But, most of *that* was beyond Melissa. Yet, it never stopped Donal from telling her, showing her, and laughing as she grabbed the trusty oh-shit-handle during short, neighborhood drift sessions. The car worked. She didn't plan, or care, to understand the underhood particulars of *why* it worked, or how--the information just, lodged itself forcefully in her head every time she was around Donal.

He was hard to *not* want to pay attention to, or reproduce with.

Donal, and his toy--the Talon; and Skye--were away for the moment, so there were no immediate reminders of her own Talon. Her dad was such an ass. And so was her fiance--Kaspar's VW sat nervously in the Talon's spot, fitting it loosely; yet, still keeping her Celica out and to the side, as usual.

It was still, however, an undeniable upgrade from the dirt spot where her dad used to make her park: next to the trailer, within earshot of the master-bedroom's window! Under the assumption that her Barbie-pink Eagle Talon, with its bumble-bee-muffler-sporting-Dodge-Neon-motor, would be incapable of any more middle-of-the-night sneak-offs. The number that had *not* been anticipated (or properly calculated), was the heavy drinking factor--with Bud Light's drawback qualities on her father's superhuman senses; and the German engineered moped-like-prowess of Kaspar's Cabriolet, with its thumb-sized exhaust pipe vibrating off across the grass.

Melissa could care less about the garage not having a door.

Plus she knew in addition to Donal's pro-level driving skills; he was a top notch Mr. Fix-It, and could throw one together easily, if he wanted.

A little dividing wall of brick, just like those constructing the house, and holding up the garage, ran down the left of the cobble-stoned driveway--requiring a little bit of a driver skill to avoid. Melissa had to remain actively aware--No. Aggressively aware!--of EACH brick, and the Dodge tank-like-truck at their end. Something Skye had apparently failed at, getting a long (and embarrassing) car-scar as a reminder. And she wasn't the only one earning negative driving points: Kaspar's little Trailer-park-Barbie-ex, Nicole, had done the same--except much worse. Lodging her little Mini tightly between one of Donal's Saabs and the wall, rendering her silent escape a no-go once the tow-truck arrived on scene.

"You said we were on a break." Kaspar had defended, after they'd told Melissa of the failed drive-of-shame. "You needed 'space'—remember?"

Yeah. She gave him space, a whole state's worth after that; and when she found him later, as she'd predicted—dumped, cheated on, and broken (mentally—and—physically), tossed away in a county jail—a shell of his former self. Something Nicole took pride in. Something Melissa had to fix (retrain), ignoring the parts of him that still carried the coconut-flavored tinge of her. The oiled-up lamp-tanner had won him exclusively for a whole summer with her golden no-oo-no-oo grass—but, in its end, she'd shown her true color.

Kaspar had no one to blame but himself.

3:46 PM. Kaspar's half-park-job not only forced her closer to the wall, but it set the Celica up within the gravity-adherent-ricochet area of the basketball goal. Her car already sported a slight bend in its hood in testament to Kaspar's level of sports skill; something he was already suppose to've taken care of! She wasn't used to driving around with a *dent* in her car. People weren't *suppose* to drive around with dents in their cars. The Pink Eagle was a flawless testament to her dad's OCD-drawback; but, by the last time she'd seen it, still parked next to his Bronco II, three years of bird-shit-encased-cat-prints made it look like something the old Ford had birthed like an unwanted cousin. The brown-white-splotched-"Pink"-Eagle sat forlornly in the Star-Iva-sun, baking like a giant redneck-yard-ornament, right at home next to the upright commercial freezer (not intended for outside), full of—what her dad told people—was trout.

Despite the appearance, Millgate Manor (as Donal called it), was not home to ten, or more, as designed—and since Donal had taken Skye to Gatlinburg for the weekend, the house was empty.

She was excited at all the possibilities.

The empty, unlocked bedrooms.

The den. The basement.

The kitchen table.

Maybe things could turn around, she knew Kaspar had it in him to do so. They'd went at one another like fiending rabbits during the liaison-phase of their relationship, but eventually her nerd quality decreased to a point that not even her glasses made an influence.

And she knew once pigtails didn't help--they were in trouble! She'd tried everything short of a full-body-Nair-job to tug at his known vices, and nothing helped.

But, he was home, early--waiting?--so maybe he felt as she did? Maybe he wanted to save them. Maybe he was sprawled out somewhere in an unsoiled part of the house, wearing one of Donal's sport coats, and nothing else....

Melissa pulled out her purse and a single bag from *The Bibliosis*, and headed towards the house--but something pulls her towards the VW. She stopped, put aside her things on the Cabriolet's hood, and unwedges a hot-pink ten-sided die (a D10) out of her--inhumanly-tight--front jean pocket.

"Alright Kas--do I slap you stupid or jump your bones?"

The D10 clanks across the hood.

It was, as if, Millgate Road held its breath, watching.

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Meoaw....

"Arlow." She said, picking up the die. "What'r'you doin' in there?"

A comically-large-headed tomcat regarded her with limited interest. He was there; she was there; it was just what it was; and he'd done it all before.

"Where's Turbo Pussy? Is she out here too?" She cooed, reaching into the VW, past its roll-bar, to scratch at his orange stripes displayed proudly in the back-seat.

Meowwwwow.

"You're soooooo lazy. You won't even meow right." She teased.

"I hope you're not out here waiting for the sun to come back out. Don't you see that," she added, indicating a big, fat ominously-gray cloud threatening to spew on her at any moment.

When she took her hand away, the look he gave her was a kind of--*how dare you stop!*--inquiry. "You KNOW, for being a rescue, you sure are pretty scuzzbally sometimes--I didn't HAVE to pet you." Though, for some reason, she felt she *did*. The feline had, or thought he had, some Egyptian-alter-pussy-worship in a past life or something; like humans were just meant to provide. Exist to keep him happy, so that he may grace them with his presence. Kaspar parked where he did, not because he wanted to, but because Arlow willed it!

"May I GO--your highness?" She asked.

The D10 once again rang across the hood.

Arlow looked in its direction, flexing his nose.

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6:45 PM. *Psycho Gothic Lolita*, did not grace the projector, or anywhere in the *Bibliosis* for that matter--since it turned out that, without Eleanor's permission--Shylynn had lent it (the DVD and the copied VHS) to Melissa.

And the proposed substitute, *Chanbara Beauty: The Movie Vortex*, didn't go over well with the group. Not with Peanut absent. The Tokyo Shock's usual premise--though in the ball-park of the usual--was outvoted by one.

"It's been three of these things in a roll guys," Shylynn said. "I mean, seriously, check this out--" going to the back of the DVD case "--'The time is the near future, and the world is about to come to an end. In an attempt to discover the key to immortality, a potion has been created. But--" she paused, giving a look to everyone for affect, before continuing "--But, INSTEAD of eternal life, it yields an army of the undead, who now roam the earth. And only a well-endowed, bikini clad, sword-wielding hero can stop them."

"You won," Eleanor countered. "We've moved on."

"You got to keep that eighty-five minutes of your life." Michaila added, throwing on more fuel.

"I'm not so sure about that," Kansie said. "I didn't know they *had* a movie based on this show--what was it?--one of those straight to DVD deals?" She added, nodding towards the current choice in progress on the screen.

"No. Straight to VHS!" Nolan joked, with Kansie on his lap.

"There's a whole cult following to *Dead Like Me*, and this was made in 2008." JaiBeth explained.

"But, isn't the title--*Dead Like Me: Life After Death*--I don't know.... Spot on?" Kansie giggled, stuffing her mouth with a mustard-mayo dipped corn dog.

"Well, I know ONE thing for sure," Nolan interjected.

"And what's that," Shylynn said, immediately regretting her words.

"Reggie sure grew up," he said, smiling his peach-fuzz-clad Cheshire-cat-grin.

All the girls shook their heads.

Kansie half-mock slapped him.

"The actor HAS a name," Shylynn spat, "I don't know what it is, but she has on. That is someone's daughter you know."

"Britt McKillip." JaiBeth said a-matter-of-factly. "Her character, Reggie Lass, is ... sixteen in this, but I'm not sure how old SHE is. A little older I'm sure."

"Still *wakai!*" Shylynn accused.

Nolan payed the Japanese no mind. Switching gear: "You girls are really into these videos. And isn't she an *actress*? Not an 'actor.'"

"'Actress' is a sexist label." Shylynn corrected. "It's like waitress and waiter--use a more gender-neutral term, like--server."

"Don't look at us," Eleanor said to Nolan. "She gets that from *her* mother. I say pat-a-to; she says pa-tah-to, but in the end--a spud's a spud, and they both make great French-fries. No matter how you dress 'em up."

"Was that a *pun*?" JaiBeth inquired with sudden seriousness. "Did you just make a pun in the *Bibliosis*?"

"There's a sign about that," Shylynn said, nodding towards the front door.

"There's a NO PUN! sign?" Nolan jested.

"No," JaiBeth said, "but we do allow irony."

"We promote it." Eleanor added.

The video started to shake.

Nolan groaned. "I don't understand why you girls insist on watching this stuff on VHS. It came out on DVD. Or, just watch it from the net! I could bring over my Epson--"

"We KNOW," Michaila said, stopping him before he went into the points of pixel-prowess for his "high-end" digital projector. With its, 1280 X 800 (WXGA) resolution, ' thrown conveniently into a 120-inch theatre-style eye-candy.

The screen's image jerked to the left.

"I got it." Eleanor said, heading for the Magnavox VCR.

The movie had--paused itself--on the faces of Ellen Muth and McKillip (the Lass Sisters), as they simultaneously floored the gas

of "Millie's" vintage (and newly detailed) Mustang convertible; in a beelining for a wall. Seeing what that baby can do!

JaiBeth thought about that, wondering--was the Universe making a pun ... or some kind of allusion? To take such a moment, of all available moments, and pause at that. To reflect upon THAT? Preserve it? Weigh it for its worth. She found herself searching for any such moment of her *own* life--then, without effort, she found herself reliving the single most important moment of her life: the day she got *off* of Zombie Island. The millisecond she'd found clarity enough to escape the anomaly. To walk away from its promise.

"I wonder *where* Peanut is?" Eleanor said to no one in particular, as the Lass Sisters resumed their Death Dash.

"Oh, you know," Nolan said, "he's probably out playing Jackrabbit Johnny to someone's--"

Kansie nudged him.

The Lass Sisters changed their mind about the wall.

JaiBeth gave the girl credit--she knew her old-school electronics.

"Could you *imagine* dating a guy that used to BE a familiar? I mean, it's bad enough having a regular guy, with a regular past--but that? Ew."

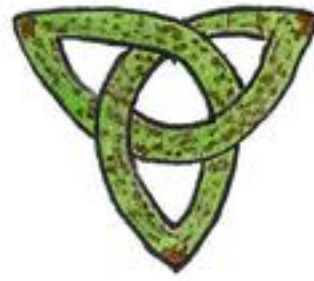
Shylynn looked at Nolan. "Why would you think about something like *that*, and say it out loud for the rest of the world to have to hear. Have *you* dated enough guys to have to worry about that?"

"WHAT?" He stammered: "No. I haven't."

"Well ... there was the one time." Kansie jested.

"Nope. No way. We never even made eye contact--" he explained "--you were like the Great Wall of China."

The girls all exchanged looks with each other, and then all eyes were on Kansie. JaiBeth wasn't sure if the girl had gained (or lost) points with the group. The only thing that *was* clear, was that there would most definitely be follow-up questions.



THE HOOKER'S NEW THONGS

-- Part One --

Many miles away, there is a hooker so perversely fond of new thongs, that she spends every dollar earned on obtaining (and accessorizing) them. There were thin ones, thick ones; pink ones, black ones, even clear plastic ones, and one orange one made from a county-jail jumpsuit worn by her ex; some were mere lip-huggers, while others had *extra* features.

She had a problem.

Some women collected shoes--she did too--but when you spend most of your time *out* of clothing, shoes are not where eyes linger. Though, she could really care less about her "Johns" (or "Janes"), going to the Quad (the Burg's sexual epicenter), or going for a ride in a random car, truck, van, bus, motorcycle, bike (hey, it happened once); all she cared about was the whale-tail/moon-floss-tease.

She had a thong for every hour of every day, and planned them by mood, weather, outfit, and use. They were magick! She was a veritable Sabrina the Teenage Witch--except, she wasn't a teen, a witch, or a fan of cats.

In the town where she lived, Gothenburg, a hooker's life was easy. Every day she was pleurably amused. Being a psychology grad, she took inadvertent note of everything around her, and it was the little things, the idiosyncratic things that people do, that gets her. Like how, after *disengagement*, in that moment of zip-up, men would look at her as if they'd just made her theirs; in that moment of panty (and boob)

re-arrangement, women would look at her as if they could take her home, become BFFs, and sync-up over an episode of Ellen. But, in the end, once such moments passed, they all went their own way, the same way: in shame. Taught by society to feel disgusted by what they'd done, what *some* felt she'd caused them to do, walking in such long legs shoved through thin, tight thongs--soiled with sweat and determination. Sometimes, just hers.

The men went back home to their wives (or girlfriends), and the women went back home to *their* men (or girlfriends), whatever, and none the wiser, just a little less stressed. She was doing a public service really.

With her, there was no significant other, no jilted lover to lay claim. She belonged to the town. She belonged to the moon goddess. She belonged; but not to anyone particular. She was ... communal. The party favor of bachelors and bacheloretts alike, she knew no border. She had been given willingly to the night of the Burg that had spawned her, and sired her way. But, for the moment, she belonged to an old Dodge pick-up truck that looked over twice (maybe triple) her age ... slowing down to match her whale-tail-strut.

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