

OLD MALL

A SURREALIST GAME

ATLANTA & OTTAWA
SURREALIST GROUPS

PECULIAR MORMYRID PRESS

OLD MALL

OLD MALL was once a vile god of capitalism. But now, abandoned and forgotten by her acolytes, the old yaldabaoth has taken on a more agreeable character. She is a lonely god now. More human. More Real. We surrealists have decided to pay her a visit.

Action #1: Treat each store front as a separate “creature” or entity living inside OLD MALL, and write a letter to that store spirit. Afterwards, stuff in an envelope, and slip it through the grates of that abandoned store.

Action #2: Leave a few coded messages for OLD MALL in her bathroom, so that she doesn’t feel quite so lonely.

Action #3: Search for signs of life in OLD MALL. Has she left any coded messages for us? Down there in the trash? In the flickering of dying neon? Attempt to channel her thoughts. What comes through?



NORTH DEKALB MALL

ATLANTA

FEBRUARY 19, 2020

7:30 PM

Players:

Steven Cline, Casi Cline,

Megan Leach, Aaron Kearns

It is dusk. ML is running late, so we decide to walk along the outside perimeter of the mall. We come across a suggestive back alley, and find a shopping cart there filled with a fully intact, multicolored umbrella. Earlier that night, AK had waited for us in the rain outside his apartment with a broken umbrella, having not realized that it was broken until he'd already left his building. So she's a considerate mall spirit then, and she's sent AK a replacement? Around this time, CC's phone takes a few accidental "ghost photos".

Multiple instances of the name "ZOPI" are scattered along the brick wall. We don't know what it means, but it feels vaguely important. An online search brings up a sleep drug called Zopiclone.

"Zopiclone is used for the short-term treatment of insomnia where sleep initiation or sleep maintenance are prominent symptoms."



NO ENTRY
TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED

ZOPi

ZOPi

ZOPi

ZOP

Initiation into sleep? The mall is telling us what we already know. We must dream our way through this mall. Must not be like the Ever Wakeful. To initiate into, to usher into...A line from the first manifesto comes to mind. "Surrealism will usher you into death, which is a secret society."

CC hears a strange sound to the right, so we investigate. A bird? No, a bat. Many bats, in fact, coming from deep inside the mall. They feast on the bewildered blind insects, all those deathdrawn by this mall's eerie glow. So absurdly, ridiculously Gothic! We think of vampires, ruined castles, the Marquis de Sade. We think of a zombie Horace Walpole writing *Otranto 2: The Shopping Mall of Otranto*. A book sold exclusively at empty airport terminals...

We walk inside, and choose a table in the middle of the food court. A man with large headphones and a laptop types away, oblivious to us. A second man sits by himself on the other side, staring off into space and checking his phone occasionally. All other tables are empty. CC pulls out her divinatory pendulum, and begins to put some YES or NO questions to whatever entity she can catch. She immediately catches THE SPIRIT OF THE MALL. No small fry or intermediaries, this time. Mall feels sad and tired. She is female, and young. CC feels compelled suddenly to ask if Mall feels sexual desire. CC gets an emphatic YES. Mall



enjoys it very much when people enter her. She feels pleasure when people walk inside her. When they touch her walls. Some more than others, it seems. Mall dislikes certain emotional energies. But she seems to like us, and is bemused and flattered by our attention. She wishes to be made into art. She likes it when AK films her. ML arrives, and sits down with us. CC tells a amusing story about how, as a young teen, she had watched a boy in a mall look back at an attractive girl as he walked, and then fall head first into a flower pot. Perhaps over time these old malls become saturated with a psychic residue of all those adolescent sexual energies? Who knows? CC says she's a real minx.

SC takes a trip to the bathroom. He tears out a random page from an occult book that he brought, and tapes it up in a stall. He draws a creature over it without thinking. Is this her true form? Are those words dripping out from her mouth? Are they spells? The odd directional cues on the top of the torn page call to mind the strange, roundabout way in which they had wandered around the outside of the mall while waiting for ML earlier.

AK has a print off of a collage with some coded messages inside. He attempts to place it in the bathroom after I leave, and reports the following exchange:

Walking, loudly, and in a clear voice, as thou walkest about the Gate in a circular fashion, beginning at the North and walking to the East, then to the South, and to the West, the Number of times being equal to the special number of the Star.

Seventh, thou must needs arrive back at the center of the Gate, before thine altar, at which time thou shalt fall to the ground looking neither to the right nor to the left at what may be moving there, for these vibrations attract many kinds of wandering demon and spirits to the Gates, but in the air above the altar thou wilt presently see the Gate opening for thee and the Spirit Messenger of the Sphere greeting thee in a clear voice, and giving thee a Name, which thou shalt remember, for that is the Name of thy Passing the Gate, which thou must use each time thou passeth the Gate. The same Spirit Messenger will meet thee and, if thou know not thy name, he will forbid thee entrance and thou wilt fall to the Earth immediately.

When the First Gate has been entered and the Spirit Messenger has departed, thou wilt rap back to Earth amid thine vibrations, which has been moving about thy Gate on the Spirit Messenger. Recite thine thanksgiving to the Spirit Messenger at thine altar, strike the Sword of the Spirit Messenger, and give the incantation of the Spirit Messenger, which says how she conquered the realm of the Spirit Messenger, which conquisheth KUTULU. All Idirmu will be thus free to depart the



Janitor: Are you like a ghost hunter or something?

AK: ...

(Deer in headlights expression while partway through taping the photo collage on the bathroom wall)

Janitor: Hey, you can't leave that there.

AK: Ok.

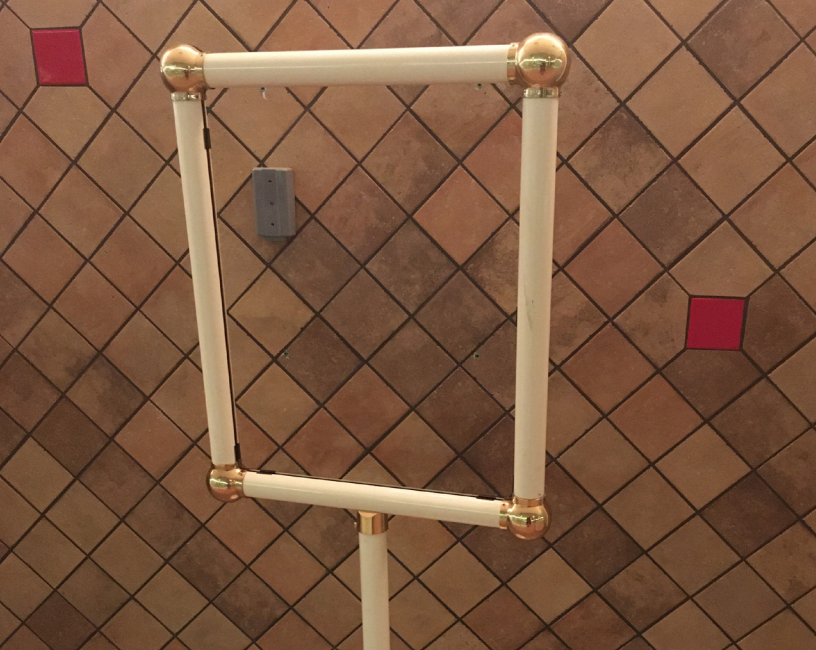
(Pastes up collage anyway and quietly walks out)

We get up then, and begin to explore the empty mall. The de Chirico vibe is undeniable. 30-year old mannequins, their bodies half clothed, their limbs missing. Ghosts & goblins left behind during some apocalyptic panic? Forgotten minions of some vampire-capitalist? A devil long gone, in any case. Several eerie signs are found, speaking to us an empty message of Pure Void. After a few turns, we see a grandiose, magnificent clock. It is mounted on a metal pillar, and lives at the very heart of the mall. It is elevated from the four surrounding pathways. SC stands on its raised platform and contemplates the absurd dream of this place. There is an overwhelming sense here of “I can't believe this place actually exists?!” A close cousin to that similar feeling which practicing occultists often get, the old “I can't believe that spell actually worked?!” A very liminal space, this mall. One imagines many Unknowns bleeding through here, in this deepening silence. This twilight neon half-life. One imagines, and can almost see—beneath closed eyelids—the germination of numerous “behind-closed-doors” whatchamacallits.



Little cosmic horrors, painted in millennial-pink. Yes, one can almost see and taste them here, those nothings. One need only open one's mouth wide, and poke out that squirming red tongue.

We spy many disembodied body parts in Mall. Eyebrows. Eyelashes. Mustaches. Segments of her Mall-body, scattered her and there for us like a vaporwave Osiris. An incredible swarm of cameras are looking down on us, too. More cameras than one would ever think necessary. Mall's reflective, ever-watching eyes. We walk to the abandoned store which CC had decided on an earlier visit to write her letter to. The empty entrance has been recently replaced with a black tarp, and we can no longer see inside the store, though a light appears to be on behind the tarp. An imposing "X" covers its surface. CC quickly slips her envelope underneath the door, and we scatter nervously.



CC'S LETTER:

*you know me
or more importantly
you know the paralysis of emptiness
the nesting of shells inside of shells
of hollow spaces in hollow space*

*so maybe you can tell me
is being filled with empty shells
the same as being filled
with sorrow?
with darkness?
with the hidden and hollow?*

*we breath inside the hollow
spaces of the earth
inside the hollow spaces
that we girdle
round with the flesh
of our faces and our walls
and our hurts*

*we breath in the darkening drafts
of thrice-dreamed airs
the sorrow so deep
it overflows the basin
drowns itself in night
the darkness so deep*

*it hides the colors
and covers the light
it holds inside
the hidden containing
every thing unseen
and the hollow that invites
the hordes of lost things
to come and to bring*

*you know me
or more importantly
you know the opulence of emptiness
the nesting of vessel inside vessel
of waiting spaces in hallowed space*

*you know the
ecstatic pain
at the event horizon
of empty beings*

We come across a large overhead map of the mall. YOU ARE HERE, it says. Oh really? SC is reminded suddenly of the role playing games of his youth. He feels strongly that he is inside one of them now. The virtual, dripping through to the real. Well, this is a game we are playing, after all. Makes sense. But which button do I push to get away from this menu screen? X? □? I don't want to know where I am, thankyouverymuch, I prefer the "get lost" method.

Further on, ML spies a "Rising Sun Squire Shop", and SC finds "Camelot Music". More echos of the gothic castle. Do we quest here for the grail? A goofy sign exclaims "This is where it all starts!", and a 10 point diagram of "Kruzzler Kars" follows. A Kabbalistic tree? A dizzying journey from Malkuth to Kether? Is that our quest, Dear Mall? A 25 cent toy machine nearby promises "GOOD STUFF", including eight balls, dice, and cards. Essential tools for any surrealist game-player on a quest, but CC's purse is already full up with divinatory this-and-thats. Good to know this is here for emergencies, though. SC is reminded once again of the old role playing games. A quick stop at the supply shop before attempting that big bad dungeon?

ML finds her chosen store, and slips in her envelope. The sign outside it reads "Elegant Epiphany".

GOOD STUFF

These Plus Many Other Items



SAFETY WARNING:
CHOKING HAZARD-The small toys, like marbles in this machine are not for children under three years.



This is where it all starts!

Kruzzers Locations

ML'S LETTER:

dear mattress emporium,

*under that soft algae-fluorescent glow your sleep stations are
crying out to be possessed. be it bodies, bystanders, battalions,
or beasts. your springs require an urgent offering of sweat and
dreams.*

morpheus

analgesic

trance

tossing

resin

eyelid

sunken

slumbers

slake it soon. slake it soon.

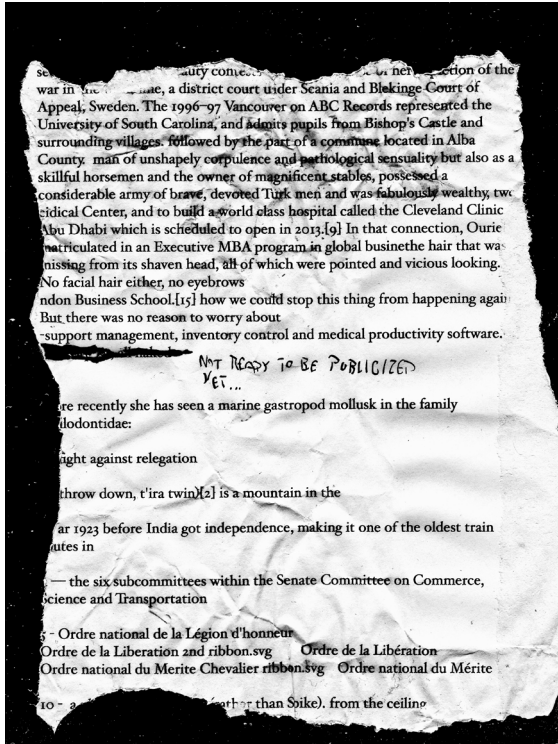
yours in sleep,

m



Not long after this, AK finds his store “HOLLYWOOD”. He drops in his note.

AK'S LETTER:



HOLLYWOOD



We come across pink sign advertising perfume. The text reads “MODERN MUSE”. So are you our “surrealist muse”, O Mall? Or would you like to be? Ah, but we know the answer already--you brought it up during that pendulum session, didn't you? A new MODERN MUSE for 21st century surrealists? Is that really such great idea, Mall? I mean, what will the academics think of us all then? Will they hate us? Is this really ok?

We move on. Three paint buckets are seen conspiring through the bars of an empty store. We can't hear their words, but they seem to be planning something truly foul. We hurry on. A shoe store attempts to sell us some invisible shoes. We aren't very impressed by the selection, and besides, we're all broke. CC slowly caresses the wall of Mall, and Mall seems excited by this. SC joins in.

SC soon notices his chosen store, something to do with nail care, and slips it his envelope:

SC'S LETTER

Dear Sal (or should I call you Salome?),

I notice that your back room light is still on. A convention of possum and raccoon? An Illegal poker game for common household pests? Somekindof furry sex magick shenanigans? Or are you merely scared? Your cabinet door is unhinged, just like your



mind. A creeping sequence of bear likely traverses, wiggles along the path of your attic. You are dull, just like your father-mother was. You likely are dreaming of clear lipstick and bold carpeting. I leave you then, I leave you to it...

In surrealist friendship,

Baxter

A second black tarp is observed covering the entrance to a store. A long slit has been cut down it, acting as a door. The lights in the room are out, however, and nothing can be seen through the slit. There is a textural strangeness to it all that disturbs us. It seems like a blackened version of that red clay wall from the film “Videodrome”. Very fleshy. We think for a time of what lies beyond. Of the unspeakable pleasures found there, of the devils without name. And yes, of course, now that you mention it—that slit IS quite unavoidably vaginal. Erotica, hiding in plain sight? Another disembodied body part of Mall Spirit? My, my...

We eventually head back to the food court. Still that same silent crowd of two. We pull out some paper, and attempt to catch a few fleeting thoughts from Mall.

CC channels the following:

Catharsis ends with butterfly lights and swollen fingers



SC writes two automatic poems:

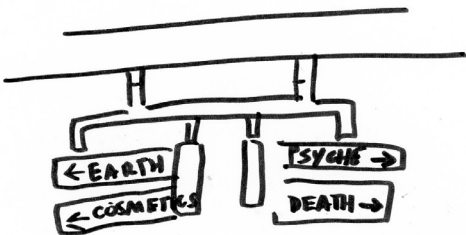
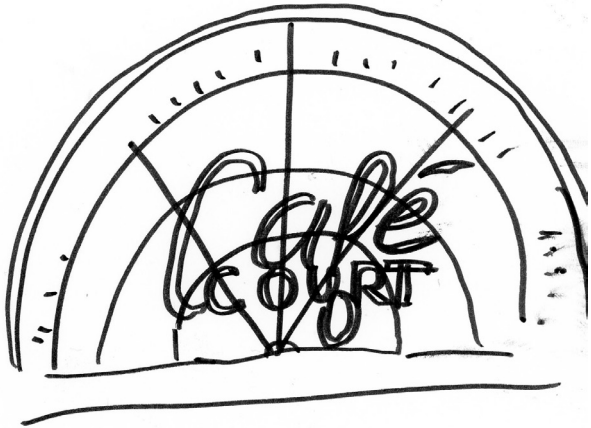
*the cosmic sponge
betrays a catacomb
the chair in space
bizarres a dog
the fashionable people
elope on silk
spiderweb for truth*

*gentle fecal turn so bring
stone sword pinkness
layer of
saturn
purple hill
face
alligator shoes
pad-faced jade lock
category of "I"*

ML observes:

Mop. Perfume. Blue lights suspended. Everything in stasis. Empty chairs 3 trees half encased in taupe. Diamond tiled. Sheen. Metal grates metal chains metal tracks. Green sign reads "everything for sale", but everything is nothing and the stores sit empty.

CC has a flash of an image in her mind of a large giantess laying across the food court, and begins to draw it. Is this the true form of Spirit of the Mall, or is it just one among numerous others?



A surrealist Q&A game is initiated. One player writes out questions, and the other players answer them without knowing what they are.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the mall's source of electricity? The horticulturalist would know, but he is buried in a large pot.

2. What sustenance can the food mart offer our souls? It is hidden underneath the tiles.

3. What secrets does the janitor's cart contain? It is the bats, for sure.

4. When the clock strikes 3, what fills the empty chairs? A doorstopper made of fur.

5. What is nestled at the bottom of the flower pot? The complexity of the whale holds the answer.

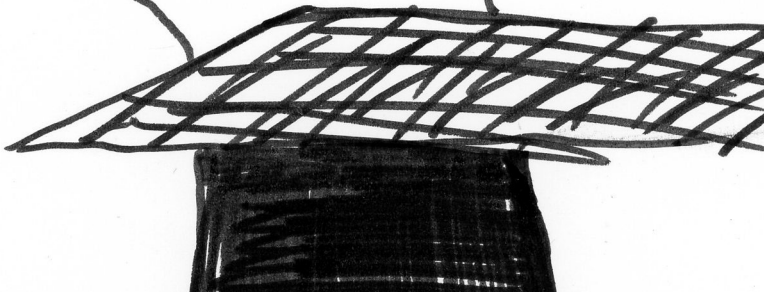
6. What is the last item thrown in the trash? I don't know, but in another lane, humans grow wings.

7. How many are buried in the sarcophagal walls of the mall catacomb? A wishing well collapses in on itself.

8. In a parallel universe, what is this mall like? Undoubtedly the tiles hover over a darkened ether.



yes, we are ghost
-hunters here.



Over by the bathroom, we see the security guard talking with the janitor. A sidelong glance is made towards our little table of weirdos. Things begin to feel a bit tense, so we gather our things and make a swift retreat. On the way out, ML sees a red apple on the wall. So is this old mall a trickster temptress then, a sultry Eve? So be it. We shall happily eat of her fruit.

In the car on the way home, CC relates our evening's experience to her dreams. She's often had dreams of large, empty spaces. Empty airports, empty malls, empty schools. A suggestive side road is noticed by her. Seems to be calling out to her. She requests that we drive down it. An impressive old school comes into view, devoid of any human life at this late hour. A place called Woodward Academy, it seems. CC has a sudden shock of marvelous recognition—this is the very same school she once had dreamed of! But she had never once been in this section of town. Had never known of its “real” existence. And then, a few minutes later, we pass sign reading “Airport Mortuary Shipping Services”. One of her empty airport dreams had included a mortary sequence—piles of dead passengers made of fruit, all laid out in caskets. Truly, this Atlanta of ours is a garbage bin of weird weird wonder. Its marvels, as numerous as its mosquitos...



WESTGATE SHOPPING CENTRE

OTTAWA

MARCH 5, 2020

6:00 PM

Players: Ottawa Surrealist Group - JA, L, PP

The outside is a construction zone. Disembodied gloved hands manipulate dark fences that block the sacred or cursed site of some indeterminate redevelopment.

Westgate is actually not a strictly “dead mall” in the sense that creatures can still be found here. It is perhaps one of those extremophiles on the edges of life, the livable, and the limit of the desert. Or it is actually a rich vein of a kind of life, deep in the ocean trenches, but small. Maybe it is where life originated. The atmosphere of the “Old Mall” is here. Certainly, this was Ottawa’s oldest mall. More uncanny than fossils are those aeon-spanning trees, semi-rotten Greenland sharks who forgot how to die. The people here are very poor and sometimes very mad, since the local mental institution is very close by.



Perhaps we had been anticipating a more dead mall, but it was still up to us to determine how dead it really was, despite the fidgeting of electricity produced by a galvanic influx. In any case, we wouldn't be remiss in calling it a "Damned Mall".

(A reflection. Is there a bit of deception and smoothness in the typical urban explorer's fantasy of total abandonment? Isn't there always something alive? We do not defer to the misanthropes and the misbiotes who fail to recognize the supreme pleasures of extremophilia).

There are street signs indicating the different storefronts. Perhaps this is reminiscent of the surrealist exhibitions which have made use of similar features of analogical urban planning. Still many of them are empty. And the stores which are here are not exactly indicative of health. Hermit crabs. One of a kind stores, not chains. One can actually sit at a cafe table drinking while looking directly into Ottawa's most abject dollar store. It has the atmosphere of those perpetually dying Benjaminian Arcades.

A postered timeline vaguely indicates revitalization and growth in the years to come. It does not state how. Not yet. We are in that disconcerting liminal space, the relative atopus. According to the sign, this is the last moment before "construction can begin".



**L'Image Unisex**
Main Street

L'Image

The dream atmosphere is paramount. It grows stronger as the night comes on. There are features here which are so quaint, so decayed, so out of date as to be almost exclusively oneiric. "This is a dream of a lost child." What are these communities? What is this city? Who lives in these streets? Or are our memories in waking life filled with dreams like these. This sedate place, is where people from dreams come to live.

Amazingly, the "soft mall music" plays through the speakers in all corners. As disconcerting to find still. The mall itself feels displaced. Equally disconcerting are the patrons, who seem entirely faceless, purposeless, and almost equivalent to ourselves in their aimless drifting. L compares them to the anonymous train-riding entities with turtlenecks up to their eyes in the Miyazaki film *Spirited Away*. The hustle and stylish despair of the active downtown malls is here entirely replaced by slow confusion. A proliferation of gigantic mirrors in strategic places like the food court reflect back ourselves as the same kind of anonymous patrons. We find it is so unlike capitalism to allow such "watching of time" in a public space. A place where wizards get stuck by mistake.

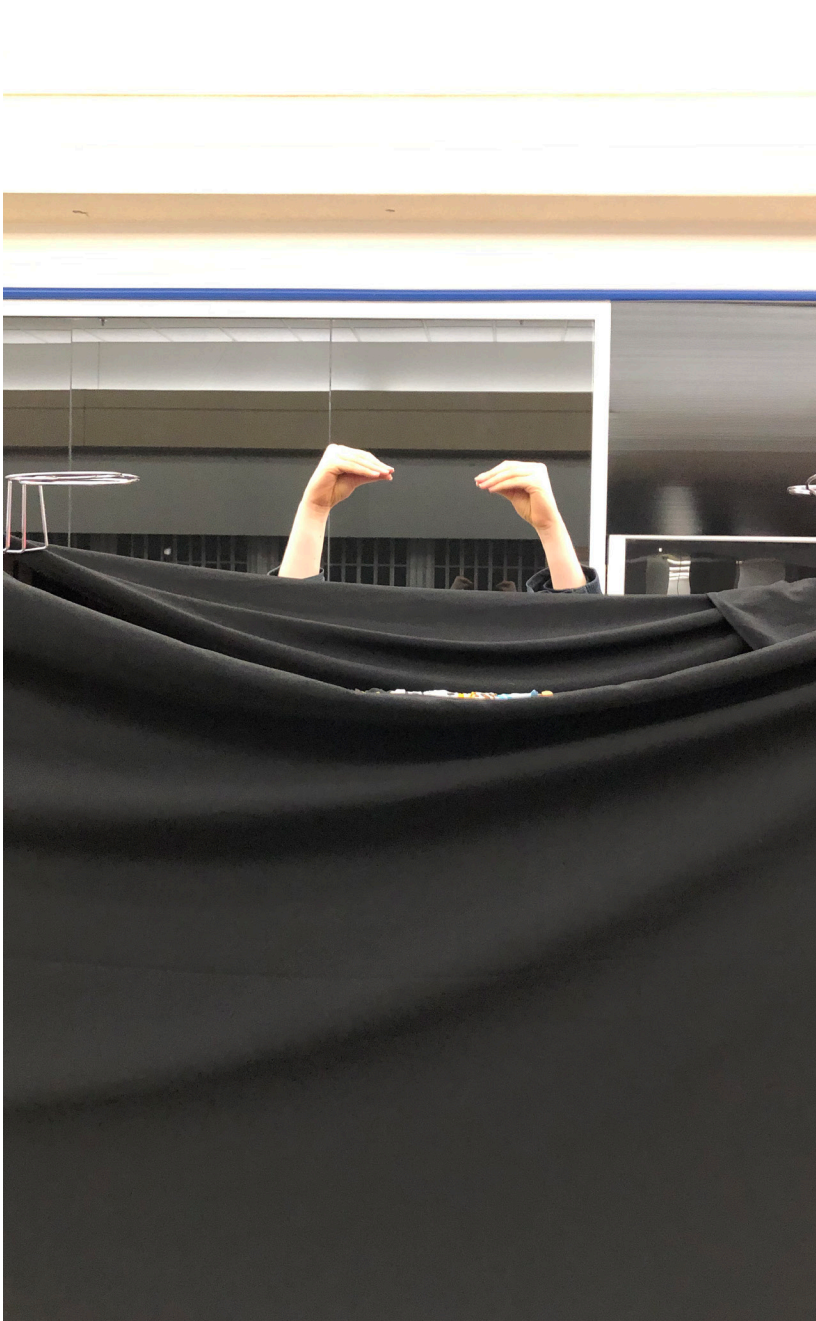


SPOTS AND ENTITIES

One of the most striking encounters was with a skeleton figure done up in festive greenery, and sporting a bowler hat. This we found in a chiropractor's window. The positioning of the figure was lifelike, casual, almost coquettish. We suspected it. It was perhaps a very gruesome message from a mob boss about what happens to stool pigeons. Poor old Green Hat Joey...

We found a shrouded something. Totally draped in black, evoking unmasked the gothic materiality in an almost classical form. We thought it was a sarcophagus for the spirit of Old Mall. Neckties seem to be sticking out. From a certain angle it had a theatrical presence, placed in a prominent position in the middle of the corridor. A puppet show. Lake was selected to play the "Doctor" and accordingly put on a bit of a drama for us. "The things we do for love..." plays softly over the mall speakers.

The many shuttered, empty storefront windows were plastered from the inside with a black, reflective covering. Our own images from the mirrorworld shot back at us. Some few gaps were nonetheless there. At one abandoned storefront, the light shone through the cracks. We peeked inside. There was a dimly lit room. A single chair. And a door left ajar in a very



disconcerting way. We imagined a singular entity sitting in a waiting room, the last one, the only one, which can only contain one patient at a time. Maybe reading a magazine. The doctor will see you now... And the creature gets up, goes into the room. It is also playing the doctor for itself. This loop plays itself forever. It is a curse. You can only leave when there is both a doctor and a patient. But how, when only a single entity is allowed inside?

“What a peaceful life, being trapped alone in a room in a mall,” mused PP.

A certain corner has a disconcerting assemblage. It is immediately reminiscent of some forgotten Nougé or Magritte installation. The word “L'image” is represented in a neon sign on a plain wall. Below it, a few glass bricks form an indeterminate geometrical design. A sign reels off vague notions of treatments to be had here. Nearby, one of those street signs say “L'image Unisex”.

Another abandoned storefront. This one has vaguely aztec and/or tex-mex detailing on the pillars framing it, along with the usual black shutters. Perhaps it is inhabited by the Leather God, Insignius Stitchenson. Or is it the inventor of the sunglasses lense? The First Eye. The Shadow that Ran Away. An attempt to peer inside is only met with black.



We then come across a garbage bin. It has two very prominent staves, possibly related to magic, sticking right out in a vulgar manner that seemed very dreamlike indeed. Inside, there are heaps of thrown out lottery tickets. Later when we returned this way, one of the staves had disappeared... Nearby, an ominous darkened room is labeled MALL ADMINISTRATION. The door is very chrome like and entirely reflective. It asks us to please ring for entry.

We descend to the basement area. There is a very uninviting, empty area directly beneath the stairs. There is a lot of room and nothing in it. L immediately associates it with a killing ground, or the area in a dream where you get cornered. The atmosphere is very thick. JA suggests there might be a weirdly discordant salesman here. You'd be down there and have some trouble leaving. As we are interpreting, a discount textile store is loudly shuttering itself. The ghostlike shrouds are hung and watching us in the dark.

Passing through some doors in the basement, we found two tiny locked panels labeled "Panel A" and "Panel B". We took turns interpreting what was behind them.

JA suggested that they contained two old time automata performers. A comic duo. Panel A contained a

ENJOY PHOTO



TAX SERVICE
PASSPORT
PHOTOS
\$14.99
PER PAIR

STRICTLY BUSINESS

CHECK OUT
SECTION

PRICE

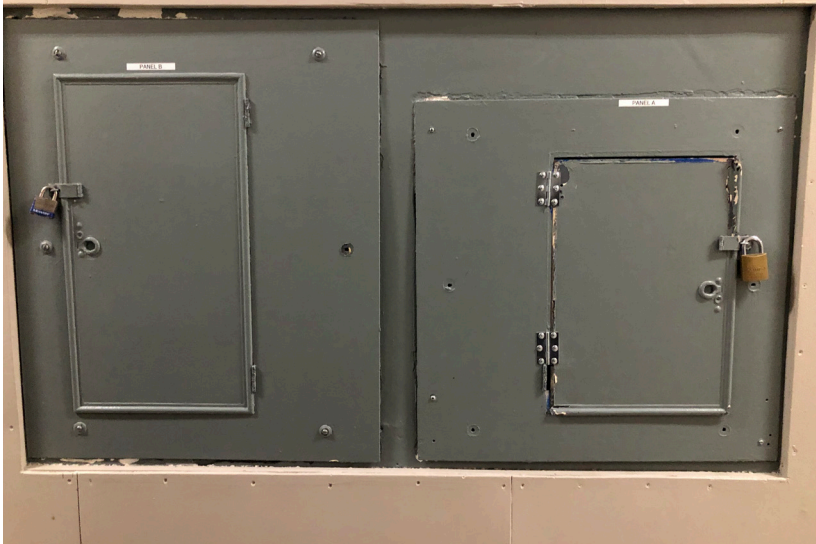
tall thin one and panel B contained a short fat one. Whenever the appropriate forgotten currency was put into the slot, the panels would swing open and they would tell off-colour Victorian narratives.

L suggests Panel A contains a cyborg spring and B contains a mouldy sandwich.

PP suggests A contains a giant reptilian hog faced chiroplastic beast that has been miniaturized. In B, a platonic scaled manifold machine encapsulated by the spirit of a miniaturized “demi-whale”. In both cases, the miniaturization of gigantic creatures.

Back upstairs, we note the proliferation, among the few stores that remain, of jewelry and gold. As if the reversion of the mall to its primal state required an atavistic striving towards the base value of the universal equivalent. It reminds us of a kind of crank economic behaviour that tends towards gold. One jewelry store is advertising, curiously blandly without any particular design or graphics, a “moon shadow collection”.

While ordering some food at the nearly defunct food court, PP is slightly paranoid because the shawarma guy had in fact recognized him. We consider the possibilities of an eidetic memory as regards the lonesome food services provider in a damned mall.



We found a stairwell leading to some rented office space “upstairs” above the mall. This was a disconcerting area. The tiles on the floor were very prominently geometrical—pure, off-white rectangles, aged orange with time. Tiles reminiscent of those seen in malls in certain older Cronenberg films like the opening scene in *Scanners*. There were strange stairwells, odd cracks and gaps, and bizarre platforms. Placements seemed off and a sense of Lovecraftian architectural incohesiveness abounded. There must be a reason for this ledge, but...

We found locked offices, no windows, and some mysteriously violent children’s art displays involving drowned parental figurines, distasteful limbs in all sorts of tactile pleasures and toy frogs and dinosaurs enlarged and mixed with paints in a chaotic mess, to frightening effect. The emptiness of the area suggested a wonderful, inaccessible and windowless hellscape perfect for some kind of exhibition.

Another odd feature was an entirely pointless mirror, very high up facing the middle platform of the stairwell, and reflecting with a golden metallic tinge absolutely nothing. If we stood in a particular spot, it managed to reflect just our heads. We presumed this feature of reflective decapitation must be its own purpose. In leaving this area, the soundscape changed dramatically—as soon as you stepped into



the stairwell the soft music of the mall disappeared into the strange churning of a fan. And then, another set of doors led us to a zone of dead silence. This suddenness made us think more of a video game than reality.

LETTERS TO THE MALL

The following epistles were penned in the mall and slid at random through the shutters of abandoned storefronts.

*

Dear Friend,

The kiss of the grey homunculus is the last thing you remember.

Who are you?

Don't try to fight it. Life's not a question, it's a sweet diatribe of manic automation.

Cheers & fingernails!

-Z.H.O



Dear Mall,

It saddens me to think and see that you're moving on in your lifelong journey of sales and corporate businesses.

Your adventure will continue elsewhere, and your monies will grow!

I'll see your travels into another mall, dear goddess,.

When you claim your rightful throne, I hope your worshippers bring you much needed gold...

Dear Madame,

I salute your brave vigil. Purgatory is a strain on the nerves of the hardest mother, and I pity the plight of one allergic to xanthan gum. Perhaps it will ease your weary mind to consider what your continued emplacement means for your community. There are many who would console a woman her untamed constance, but a might bit of perseverance in the face of tragedy can instill rightful vigor where otherwise none but bewitching chantments would lie. It is therefore you to whom I send this address, and no other.

Yours truly,

Your Admirer.



22

MESSAGES FROM OLD MALL

Following the game suggestion from our Atlantean comrades, we placed our hands on the shuttered storefront with the curious aztec-like zigzags and the pareidolia-inspiring mustard-desert wallpaper. We each tried to channel the voice of the Old Mall, and retrieved some gnomic pronouncements from the depths. Interspersed among these are words overheard by passerby:

“The mail is not delivered...”

“The freshest is always left open...”

“The stork has a message. It is willfully wrong...”

“Cryptic tenebrous fingernails...”

“The floor monkey came and mopped away my soul, parted paperwork of past customers...”

“They made our filing cabinet a winter sled...”

“The cabinet in Brittany is actually a great castle...”

“There’s no desert there...”

“In the old days our coffee used to summon dancers...”

“May you rest in piece, pieces of the mall, as we dig up the embers, from the crustaceous period of time, of the excavation may linger on to diminish oneself...”

“The teddy bear and a mirror in the middle of the desert...”

“The glass is made of vitrified fossils...”

“The ancient map. On it, rough outlines of a human body...”

“The carpet once held a body...”

“The walls of smooth skin coarse like wooden entropy contains itself as one structures a lifeforce. Mall like entity... May you have the joy of rebirth into a pile of rubbish...”

“An anteater with the body made out of fresh ideas...”

*“This is not a pillar, this is a box of...” *indistinguishable**

“Questions. Questions for the spiny crustacean...”

“Deals. Deals for graverobbers...”

“Leathery sacks of encompassed fortitudes...”

“Our inventory was hacked by the gamer. Now they have all the elixirs...”

“I miss my blanket. I miss my collection of forks...”

“We are still in here dreaming...”

“My mind is screaming.. Words are kept on the westgate wall...”

“Free ideas in the resonant hallway...”

“My necktie is stuck to the chair...”

“My sockpuppet is trying to draw out money from the bank. It can't remember its pin number...”

“My banana peel is peeling a monkey...”

“The pipes aren't quite up to code, but we can live with that, because they're buried in brick.”

“The shadow man wanders back and forth, looking at its own reflection in the mirror, wondering what life must be like on the other side. It can't leave the room...”

“Farewell room. Farewell echo. Farewell long spoon feeding woven tongue. Who could ever sing a song for the forgotten one. Congregate at the storefront...”

“Free stones. Get your stones...”

“I will stay...”

“No no no no no no no no....”

“Trepanning...”

indiscernible mumbling

“Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes...”

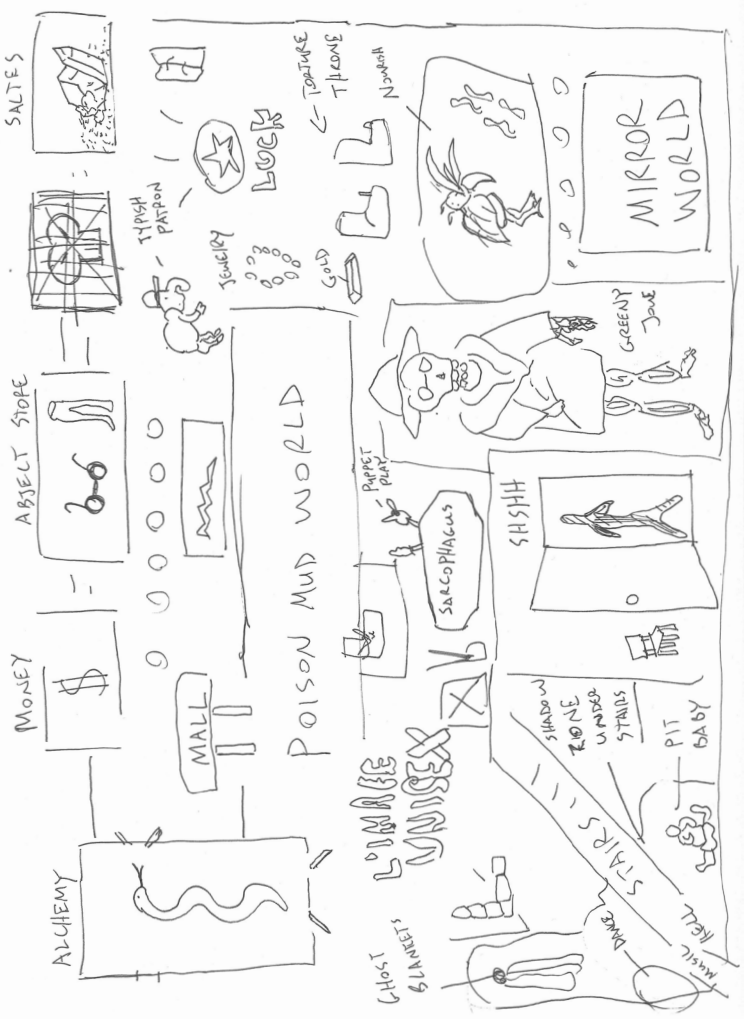
“Toothbrush...”

MUSIC

One task involved playing something to keep up the mall's spirits. Remembering an old trick of Burroughs, JA played some of the recorded mall's atmosphere, which he had just captured in the bathroom. The audio comprised mostly clatter, some muffled voices, and the soft mall music persistently drifting throughout the funeral parlor. This ritual was supposed to curse a place irrevocably.

MAPS

After exploring, we decided to draw some maps of the mall from memory. These tended towards symbolic or psychogeographic emphasis with varying degrees of literal detail.





The Westgate Mall Map & Directory.

West Gate Shop of HORRORRESS



Appendix

ESSAY

A CRYPTOZOOLOGY OF SOME ASPECTS OF 21ST CENTURY REAL ESTATE

Jason Abdelhadi

Buildings as creatures. We presume commodities can behave like biota, and that locales and buildings, as forms of the latter, also carry forward with a kind of lifecycle that relates to their environment. And when circulation stumbles, when miscalculation strips the property of its “real” value, what is left over, and how does it communicate? Poetry by extinction? We enter an epoch of ancient monsters, pseudo-creatures, unidentified entities. We observe ecological collapse and living fossils, rare sightings and the proliferation of bizarre lore. What follows are some examples of recent phenomena I have noticed around the city of Ottawa, Canada in which the officially sanctioned “life” of the locale (that is, the life of a relatively active real estate market) has unintentionally given way to a kind of monstrous offspring. In each case, the prospect of a future ruin seems bright. One is tempted to treat

them as cryptozoological specimens.

The Grimacing Façade

One desperate technique adopted by local Ottawa property managers is that of accelerated ruin. This has developed out of legislation requiring the owners of certain buildings with historical or cultural significance to preserve their character in some way or another. These buildings are often located in core parts of the city where the market for ruthless condominium construction has rendered the preservation of these artefacts both expensive and obnoxious. They would like nothing more than to demolish them. Sometimes the local press will take the cause of the urban planners and bewail the loss of city-character. While engaged in various legal battles and betting on the long game, the owners pay lip service to the minimum required upkeep, often carefully curating neglect. The buildings are left conspicuously empty. They rot and crumble. In at least two cases in Ottawa, all that remains is the historic façade of the building: the crypto-iconic Somerset House in Centretown, and a historic Girl's School building on Murray and Cumberland.

Time is sped-up. When locked between the market and state forces in a kind of paralysis, the locales themselves are soon taken over de facto by whomever the winds blow in. This is where the official language (proposals, signage, warnings) give way to the poetic ingenuity of the street-walker and the noctambulant.

In the face of both the stifling urbanism of the ethical planners and the raw profit mongering of the developers, the sight develops a character of defiance. It accumulates objects, rubbish, strange monuments and humorous graffiti. The old school gets a new mascot in its abandonment, a weird doll placed there by some eccentric person who climbed the scaffolding. More generally, the stultification, however temporary, of a central part of the city gives way to a certain atmosphere of cheerful demoralization. It becomes a kind of derelict commune and a beacon for the lost wanderers of the city. In its plenitude, we see the fulfilment of a world without capitalism's agents; the façade is a façade.

The Temporary Park

A particularly strange example is a certain temporary park that suddenly appeared a few years ago on an empty lot at the intersection of Rideau and Charlotte. This park was given no other character—no honorary name or symbolic designation other than “Temporary Park”, and an indication that this would be the future site of a condo. For now, a few paltry benches and a gravel pathway. The area itself is a rather derelict portion of a main street, and has a decidedly eastern feel in the Lovecraftian/Gothic sense: a formerly historic district reduced to dire straits by westward development.

What makes it particularly humorous is the signage:



TEMPORARY PARK

Richcraft Group of Companies, the City of Ottawa, and the neighbourhood of Sandy Hill is providing this temporary park until 2016.



Future development By Richcraft Group of Companies

“Richcraft Group of Companies...is providing this temporary park until 2016.” As of summer 2017, this sign was still standing and has been vandalized rather poignantly: the “2016” is encircled along with the phrases “RICHCRAFT SUCKS”, “GET YOUR SHIT TOGETHER” and “2025?”.

What Lovecraft is to Love, Richcraft is to Riches. Responsibilities are abdicated to darker forces. We see here in the break with the schedule an unexpected beckoning to cosmic time. Invisibles are hinted at, forces that emanate beyond the powers of companies and developers. Is our whole existence a liminal zone waiting to be reclaimed by something? The Temporary Park is waiting to fulfill its destiny. What happens when time surpasses investment, and gaps emerge in the smooth constructions of circulation? On the spot we could raise creatures...

The After-Death of Malls

What’s shocking is not so much that malls die out, but that they are kept so long on life-support. The Beacon Hill Mall in eastern Ottawa is weirdly acknowledged as such. Most of it is entirely empty. The shops are simply vacant, or contain the bric-a-brac of their former life (menus for a Chinese bakery, racks of old magazines...) For the sake of the four or so active businesses (a butcher, a government services branch, a pharmacy and a thrift shop) the mall nonetheless keeps up the pretence of infrastructure. Plants are still



tended to. A map is even presented to the customer, designating by large places where they are unable to shop. One is given so many options in which to avoid spending one's money. It's in the dead numbers of the map that the imagination is suddenly and unexpectedly liberated. What was here? What could be here? What lives here now that they are not telling me about? Dead malls are a favourite now among aficionados of urban exploration, heralded as a new gothic. What is not so acknowledged is the ritual of their mummification, their journey to the afterlife, their encounter with the guardians of the dead. Here we see a reduplication of the malls of the living in their nocturnal, other-worldly or dream state. That Osiris is bound up in construction and real estate, is that really so surprising?

Condopunk, or Shadowy Pedestrian Lifeways

People who have visited Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, or other very "hot" markets immediately notice the construction boom in regards to condos, usually in sudden, dense, shadowy clusters leering over a small and increasingly pointless downtown core. Open views quickly become clogged with strained glassy surfaces. For anyone navigating this skyworld at the ground level, the dearth of anything speaks to the kind of de-stabilization usually attributed to so-called "invasive species": choked-out local life, ruined ecologies, new deserts. In Ottawa, a certain pedestrian walkway

called “Waller Street”, linking Rideau to George and bordering on a condo cluster and is book-ended on one end by a homeless shelter and nearby nightclub, and the other by a beer store. The walkway was spruced up a few years ago in a campaign to add all sorts of chintzy addenda to the Byward Market area. Things with vaguely threatening auras like public art, banners advertising the exact neighbourhood, digital information screens, light shows, musical systems that play things day and night etc.

This walkway has a very interesting position in that, in the few moments it was actually open, it was occupied exclusively by homeless and down-and-out characters, presumably for “gothic” purposes (an adjective used in the Ottawa Citizen newspaper to describe the nearby homeless shelter). Of course it was closed, gated, without a whimper of pretension that it was to keep these unwanted people out until their shelter itself is presumably moved. It remains shut day and night. Oddly, some of the public art plaques and light shows still project into the space, which is now totally bereft of everything except for a few morsels of food that seem to appear now and then, and the pigeons which eat them. This has a similar effect to a few such areas and installations, public benches and especially art displays for the Canada 150 celebrations, which seemed perfectly inviting to homeless people and which effectively reclaimed them from the expected propagandistic, commercial and disciplinary

purposes. One hopes the proprietors never figure out how to position these things perfectly, and that they keep discounting those who should and must make use of these the most. Still, the empty zone of Waller Street is a particularly interesting example of a frozen tension. Inviting, convenient, but totally locked because of the people even now still loitering in its borders. Why build spaces if we are not to loiter in them? For the shadow pedestrians, the perfect commodity-bearers of the future.

MALL DREAMS

Jason Abdelhadi

April 19, 2018

My friends and I are staying in some kind of dormitory in the mall for some odd school program. My friend asks me what I want in life? I say “a pinball machine!” and so he leads me to his room and says “like this one?” and shows me an old machine. It is very vintage, without a glass covering, and has a white background with a lot of 50s style characters drawn on it in blue. I am now commenting on the comparatively large size of my friend’s room in the middle of the mall which has room for three desk tables (one of which is a bed) although it has no window. Someone finds me and tells me to hurry since there’s cake. People are looking for me because it’s my birthday and there’s cake and Picasso will be there. Yes, I go into a boardroom of a former workplace. The bosses look bored. I am still there. I nonetheless meet Picasso, Tristan Tzara (who is sitting in a corner) and André Breton himself who is very happy to see me again. He slaps my back and says “mon cher ami”. He complains about the weather in Quebec city which he says was horribly windy and has given him a cold. I tell him that’s not unusual here. Amber thinks I am old fashioned to be hanging out with such old people on my birthday. A little later I

am afraid for Breton. He writes me a message that he seems to have awoken an evil entity who is coming for him and Elisa. He says he led it along the Seine to distract it. I meanwhile go take a walk along a forest path to clear my head early in the morning. Back on my parents' street I see a mother deer sitting together with a fawn, but looking again it is not a fawn but a dog, some kind of collie or herding dog. I go to take a picture of this "animal odd couple" with my phone to show Amber, but the deer starts acting aggressive. And then mosquitoes begin attacking me in a horde.

May 3, 2019

Lake and I go into a photograph store in a mall.* There's a sliding door which we try to close to protect the photos so we try to close it only to notice a sign saying to leave it open, so we do. I notice a photo of a 1930s miner in a helmet with a headlamp which is apparently very famous. Lake wants one from the outsider art section. He finds a poem object cut out in purple construction paper in the silhouette of a bearded man containing a poem. It starts with the line "There's a hell on top..." We're both very impressed with it.

**This is a startling coincidence with our mall trip to Westgate, which involved, unbeknownst to me, just such a store on the basement level called "SUPERIOR PHOTO".*

October 23, 2019

Joël Gayraud wants to meet me for breakfast in a place. It seems very expensive. The waiter brings the menu which includes pasted in it a cross section 3D sample of the food (mostly breakfast sausage and peas, repeated for each line item quite redundantly). I feel I am too early and leave. I go to a mall. I wander for a bit but find I need to leave to meet Joël again and am worried the waiter I abandoned will be pissed. I try to leave up some very high and comically wobbly escalators but when I get to the top I see they do not exit but merely end in a hotel. Then I see another one, but it turns out to be a dummy escalator prop for a guerilla clown who is doing a convincing comic routine as an escalator repairman. I am somehow now outside looking for the direction of the restaurant. I see Joël is calling but accidentally hang up on him. I am frustrated to be lost in an area I know so well. Joël texts me but it is simply an image of a skeleton enjoying breakfast...

May 20, 2018

I am in London, in a mall trying to organize a trip with a bunch of kids to another mall, which has a special cockney restaurant in it called “Boiled Beef and Carrots”. Somehow we are working on a black metal album. A black metal album that for some reason has

to include a class full of kids. I come to a decision: it would be an easy solution to try to do a Bathory album with a bunch of kids on it. However the real challenge will be to create an album that uses the kids to transform the world by changing the heart of the listener into that of a child. The album cover should therefore have a typical black metal subject but should have the images of the kids very subtly laid over it in totally horizontal strips. An optical illusion; you can only see the kids if you want to.

Lake

September 21, 2015

I was in downtown Ottawa in the vicinity of Parliament Hill. I had psychic powers that constantly instructed me in the best way to do things. I was shooting up the RCMP, in a mall. Apparently I was killing them so efficiently they couldn't tell who was doing it anymore because anyone who could see me was immediately gunned down.

I fled the scene of the shooting towards Parliament. I was shooting up more of the police, but I was also now considering how I was going to escape and lay low - perhaps go on vacation. I might have been planning to go somewhere tropical in disguise - perhaps as a man.

I was also remembering another dream in which I was a strange, feral youth with mysterious powers living concealed in the rooms of the Parliament buildings, apparently too stealthily to see. Parliament was like a royal palace with big red carpets and chandeliers everywhere. I think I was attacking guards in that dream too.

January 7, 2016

Me and my wife were visiting Hazeldean Mall. There was a court of law there that my family was involved with in some capacity. The courts sat in retail outlets at local malls and were argued personally by litigants with judges given near omnipotent power. Luckily, the woman with the curly hair who judged us seemed to be on decent terms with my family.

Then, it seemed like Jessica and were in Iran where we had fled as refugees due to a massive civil disturbance in Canada. I was forced to grow a beard and act out the part of a proper husband while Jessica was made to wear a burka. Because we were economically stable and the local condition was relatively peaceable we managed to get by with the bare minimum of resentment at adopting Islamic orthodoxy. Behind closed doors we dropped the facade and carried on our gender-fluid feminist way of life.

I was perhaps relieved by the large, fleecy black robe I was able to procure for myself decorated with handsome golden embroidery. Because such a comfortable and fabulous garment was available to me while living such a way of life, I was not quite so miserable as I might have been. The locals generally treated us well and we proved surprisingly well adjusted.

October 24, 2016

I was in a large mall with a gabled sun-roof, on the top floor looking down. There was a water park somewhere inside. It was actually a kind of authoritarian society and I was trying to get away with something, or just out of surveillance. I wasn't in direct danger, but felt suspenseful.

Casi Cline

first dream

I am walking through a large building that feels like both a mall and an airport. It is mostly empty. I go down a hallway that has really big windows. Outside the landscape is made entirely of a bunch of red sand dunes and the sky is ruddy. I see a black circle open up in the sky. It is growing larger and larger and will soon swallow the whole world.

second dream

I am walking through an airport/mall, looking for a funeral home and having difficulty finding it. I keep going up and down a lot of escalators. After some time, I find a funeral home and get excited. However, when I go to look inside a casket, I find a person made out of different kinds of vegetables, and I realize that this must be a funeral home for vegetable people only.