

Surreal dream-like short story: **Plucked from the Sky**

“Can I stop at any time during the process?” Bees started swarming in my stomach, and only then did I let the thoughts of potential regret and my impulsivity hit me.

The employee leading me turned their head back over their shoulder. “Not in the middle, that could be dangerous. But don’t worry, our methods are really entirely safe for your physical and mental wellbeing.” Their ‘easy’ smile looked painted on.

“Ah, yeah, thanks..”

We got to the back room and I laid down in their chair, dealing with the agonizing wait.

The doctor finally arrived, instructing me to lean back and attaching a million and one electrodes to me. “I’m going to put you under in a second. Then you’ll have a pleasant rest where your actions feel like a lucid dream and you’ll wake back up in a few hours.”

I held my hand up in front of them. “Why do I physically stay here and ‘dream’,” I used air quotes, “if it’s time travel?”

“A perfectly normal question. Our professional technique is not time travel the way you would see in movies. That sort of thing is impossible given the physics of our bodies and the nature of time. One common analogy we give for spacetime is a loaf of bread. Each slice of bread represents space matter for one moment in time. However, all of the

slices of bread exist together simultaneously. Essentially, our physical being can only inhabit one moment of time at any given instant, and know of our past 'slices', but is not able to view all of the spacetime loaf. Perhaps this is more evolutionarily straightforward.

However, here we combine technology, psychology, and modern medicine, to 'hack' your viewpoint on time. It would be impossible to change what slice your body and physical state is in, because that spacetime slice is fixed. However, we can project your mental state to look at one of your past slices and you can converse and impact your past self. It's tricky, and not easy to control for first time patients. You should be cautious and try to remember your past self's mindset for the best results. Please come back again if you would like another experience."

I wasn't sure what to do with that information. I had some sense that it was probably complicated and over my head, but "time loaf" was not exactly what I was expecting. I really only had one thing to say to my past self, and it was on her to listen to me. "Okay, I'm ready doctor."

They put the mask on me, and I leaned back into sleep. It was a gentle descent, a cozy and worry free feeling like the feeling of being exhausted at a sleepover and not being able to keep your eyes open for another second as you cuddled into blankets surrounded by similarly exhausted children. As I went, I held onto the moment I wanted

to project into as hard as I could, focusing on the image of packing bags furiously, right before the airplane.

Then, I was there, with me right in front of me, which felt incredibly weird. My past self was stuffing shirts into bags. I looked down and saw that I had no limbs, no physical self. I was a floating consciousness, third person perspective. I tried speaking or thinking my thoughts to my past self.

She startled as I spoke to her. *Hi, it's your future self. You don't need to believe me, but I wanted to give you a message.*

"What the hell? Who's out there?"

*I'm sure you have questions, but I'm not sure how much time I have, so I'm going to ignore you.* My past self looked relatively pissed at that, but stayed quiet and waited.

*Don't get on the airplane, it fucks up your life.* I remembered the doctor's message about caution and empathy, and tried again. *I know you're angry right now and want to escape. I've been there, literally. Right now your isolation makes you vulnerable.*

*Running won't turn out how you hope it will.* I felt exhausted from the energy of focusing my thoughts towards her and could feel myself slipping out of lucidity.

Her suspicious look had lessened a bit, perhaps she could tell my voice was hers, or maybe it was obvious it wasn't a prank. "Okay, I guess it's not my most thought out idea. Or like, at all thought out. I'll think about it."

I felt a relief wash through me. I could stop it, I could prevent everything from happening and know peace. I thought of Kelly, the person I cared for the most, but who my past self had not met yet. I knew my heart would twinge if I could feel it right now. Would we still meet each other? She would understand that I had to do this. But, where would we be in 'current time' if not for each other? I pushed the feeling away and tried to focus on the scene in front of me. My consciousness had slipped further while my thoughts wandered, and when I tried to muster any words to speak, I couldn't. Well, I sent the message at least.

I saw past me give up waiting for a response and sitting on the bed. She scratched the back of her head quick enough that it must have hurt. "Literally what am I supposed to do with that?" She got quiet again and I could see she was thinking hard. If only I could know.. and then I felt myself morph and I could hear her.

The thoughts were scattered and racing. It was hard to grab on to any one idea. She felt scared, then angry at my message, then scared again. She thought about time travel for a second, but gave that up. She tried to think of other things she could do right now and a sense of hopelessness blanketed everything. It hurt, to feel that again, this strongly. I had forgotten just how horrible I had felt being isolated at home, with no options. My

friends had left for college, and I realized they weren't real friends anyways. It was me and my mom, and an empty empty house. A few fragments of ideas passed through her head, before halting under the hopelessness. And then she had a dangerous thought, 'what if with this warning, I was able to take the flight but be more aware now, do it better than I would have?'

Suddenly, I'm suffocating in her head. I leap backwards into open space. Hovering there, in the corner, I belatedly realize that panic attacks just aren't the same without a physical body. I feel fear, but it's further away. There's no way to hold on to it with my body and my breath. I give it up, because there's nothing else to be done. The fear stays at a simmer.

She, my past self, repacks her bag. She put in rope, a compass, water, and some snacks. As if some extra objects would fix everything. She had no idea what sort of danger she was in, and who's fault was that? I'm such an idiot. Yet at the same time, I realized I tried my best, past and present, and nothing was going to change. My consciousness slipped again.

She was walking the street, then a field with the mountains behind it. A small personal plane. It happened quickly, as if I was making a very wrong, diagonal, slice of bread. I slowed for a second, in a vertical slice again, as my emotions latched on to the moment.

My past self approached the plane, well, I did. "I" was there, convinced that I was leaving my hopeless feelings behind as I walked away. I see his face, rugged but in a charming way. (I know others find it charming.) He smiles in a way that was meant to relax me, and had relaxed my past self. Now, I can see the sharpness of his canine teeth. I walk towards him, handing him my bag. His image distorts, his face lengthening and his body getting taller, furrier. I look into the wolf's mouth and see the excited glint off of yellow eyes.

The plane takes off and it blurs.

My heart soared above the clouds with you for miles

You wanted me there, with you,

Needed me.

I felt your arms would hold me to the sky forever,

And let my worries float away.

When there was no going back, I leaned into you

And your arms enclosed enclosed enclosed

You squeezed, and I apologized for my brittleness

I crumbled to the earth

The roots of my trust held me there as I rot

I knew I could be anything I wanted to be,

And the only thing I could want to be was yours,

so, I was.

My flesh fell away and molded to your body

You grew twice as big as I shrunk

I held Medusa's head, my head, out to the Gods

Then discovered the only reason God's aren't monsters

Is because no one calls them one

I sifted the sand of my erosion from my grave

Your stone gaze, which held me here,

looked away for just a moment,

I disappeared, let the wind take me back

Take me out to sea, the wave foam on my body

A woman walking by, my Kelly, looks at sand and sees sea glass

I look at the embers in her ribs, edges of flame consuming her like paper

She's smiling and I let myself lay for a while,

shielding her from the wind

Helping her embers fade

We make an intricacy of glass

I wake up as if molasses was poured over the bread pudding I was in for seemingly years and years. When my eyes open, I feel the solidness of flesh, the ache of my chest, the annoying suction of the multitude of electrodes on my body. Though these

are being carefully removed by a technician. The doctor is in front of me, smiling. I mistake his face for a wolf's for a second, then let the muscle tension in my body go.

The doctor drops the smile for concern. "How are you doing? Was your trip difficult on you? Any pain? Mental fog is normal, that's mostly the drug we used to put you under. If you continue to experience mental fog for more than 48 hours, contact us."

I move my mouth to remember it. "No pain, just adjusting."

I head back home in a haze, and end up turning towards Kelly's apartment. I knock and wait, unsure of what I'm going to say but wanting to see her face. She greets me, and I give her a hug, letting my body weight fall into her. I cry, and she holds me closer. "I'm so grateful that we have each other. I would say you have no idea how much, but I think you know."

I never deserved to go through what I did, and neither did she. But my younger self made that decision because of the circumstances I was in, the trusting person I was, and I could never blame her for that. There's nothing to regret if there were no other options. The plane, him, everything made me a different person that had found Kelly when we could understand each other like no one else could.

When I wake up the next morning, something feels more whole, more in touch. Like a river where debris has cleared to let water rush by.



**Inspiration:**

[N.K. Jemisin - Fifth Season](#)

[Ursula Le Guin - Semley's Necklace](#)

[Brian Greene - Fabric of the Cosmos](#) & Austin (for time loaf theory)

[Adventure Time: Marceline and the Scream Queens](#)