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The Lucid Krishna

The psychoanalyst lies on a futon in a silo apartment in Newtown. Before the airport curfew ends she phases into REM, transported from the simmering November night. Time softly morphs. Her body's orientation is mugged by altered perceptions. She's a passenger in a car, traveling in her anima from sweat-stained sheets. The driver's name is Krishna. His face resembles a rain cloud, his dark hair is lustrous as peacock feathers.

The couple stop to have a drink at a pub. People are laughing, shooting pool, and watching World Cup soccer. Because this is a liminal dream, the analyst is half-aware that she, too, is a fragment. She doubts her sense, though Krishna is tender. Somewhere in her thumbed, unabridged copy of the Bhagavad Gītā, she's read that the world is delusion, that ignorance is a dream. But her pheromones are aroused, her dopamine levels rise. Prudently, she avoids the pitfalls of over-confidence. Drawing in the reins of her dream chariot, she rides the surface of this montage with practised restraint. The couple play two rounds of pool, and would keep going, if they had spare coin.

There's nothing contrived about Krishna. He's a dairy hand from the Darling Downs in southern Queensland. A play boy, she doubts, a butter-thief, she speculates, and on the pretext of ignorance she probes him. He admits a weakness for ghee, but declares he is allergic to the mere smell of abbatoirs. Country towns are rife with claustrophobia, with rumour, prying and peer jealousy. Krishna is conspicuous for his swarthy looks, which girls find irresistible, and for his vegan principles; an empathy for animals bred to be quartered. As he speaks, Krishna slugs a schooner. His mood wearies, as if he's been suffering from some exquisite burden. Why hasn't he garroted the black dog? Why hasn't he booted the blues the analyst ponders, parenthetically, lapsing into her daytime persona.

THE LUCID KRISHNA

After stints at fruit-picking and crop-dusting, Krishna quit country for city life, not merely for its distractions but to pursue his real passion, music. A casual at Carlovers in Leichardt; in his spare time he plays saxophone for a local jazz outfit. They have a playlist on *My Space* and are being offered pub gigs in Sydney. The analyst is entirely supportive of such wish fulfilment. Besides, he's ripped. She likes his unshaved appearance.

Soon they are in the car again, driving in a flash by the time warp of rapid sleep to some outpost. She is buckled in the front seat, gazing at the flying scenery; saying yes to the unknown sky. This is the kind of dream without vacillation, the kind in which the analyst is fearless, without black holes or shadowy portals, which may disintegrate in her memory. They park at the entrance to a rainforest, nowhere present in the city's towering shade. Scented pine and leaf-moldering smells catch her. Velvety tree ferns sprout between rocks. The tree roots form slippery steps, which iridesce with lichen. Protected from the wind, Krishna and the girl feel the sunlight stream through the trees, glazing their skin. The free-floating light dances at their feet as it filters through the canopy. Resin leaks from giant angophoras.

The sea murmurs into her awareness as they climb up to a plateau. The couple rest awhile, Krishna riffing an ostinato on his tenor saxophone. The song absorbs her. She is silenced by the short gaps in Krishna's breath, as he swallows the embouchure. She knows this moment, which encompasses the dream-as-a-whole-in-a-flash, encloses her rapture. When she wakes to a noisy suburban weekday morning, even if she cannot describe a precise sequence to record in her journal, this moment distils the entire dream cosmos. She uncorks a bottle of champagne she's carried with her, in a backpack, and she pours them both a glass.

But never is the dream-logic clear. She doesn't question where exactly they are heading, or the reason for their detours. Thrilled by this rendez-vous with Krishna, she shuns dictating to the dream. The blue-skinned saxophonist is a sputnik in her nocturnal transit. They pass through regenerating woodlands sprayed with native orchids. Krishna presses her against a tree. He begins to fondle her, unzipping her jeans. A few butterflies are colouring scribbles in the foliage.

THE LUCID KRISHNA

There's no portent of the dream fading, no false awakening, nothing to rescue. Neither is remorse creeping into this lure between the analyst and the blue-skinned stranger. Feeling increasingly confident, she begins to take control of the dream. Segueing her perceptions, she inserts a reciprocal gesture by closing her eyes and inviting Krishna to copy her in closing his. She can almost see the fading impression of sunlight: orange, red and purple. Krishna grabs her hand leading her further along the trail towards a stream.

At last they reach a waterfall, tiered in three levels of deep green. No one is in sight. Smooth ebony rocks are covered with bottle green moss and the spindly trunks of palms. By now, the analyst knows she is exercising her purpose. She tears off her clothes and her shoes. She wades through the shallow water to a ledge about twenty feet high. With a clean movement she dives, headfirst. It is invigorating, the sound and energy of the cascade, the white spray plashing her face.

It's your turn, she gasps to Krishna.

She swims to the edge of the cliff, where she can feel the force of the spill around her.

I don't think I can, he replies, faltering.

You have to, it's so refreshing, she calls back, her voice exploding into laughter.

But he keeps making excuses. Beads of sweat form like little pearls on the sapphire skin of his forehead. She finds herself imploring him to jump, the uncertainty a slight bother. Krishna walks to the ledge where the air is vibrating, the noise unbearable. The white tunnel of water seems to suck him in the more he looks down. His ears are ringing. The ten minutes it takes him to steady his nerves seem like hours.

Just do it, you'll love it! the analyst cries. Krishna braces himself. At last he dives in.

The water is pure. The girl swims to embrace Krishna. She has been burning to be held. He feels like a god, his skin gleaming, his hair smooth, all the consternation washed away. She can hear him laughing, a laughter that echoes

THE LUCID KRISHNA

jubilantly in the steep valley. She can taste his porous, salty skin. Their bodies entwine, but she sees only blackness now, the darkness his laughter pierces.

If Krishna is an interloper, he is familiar to the analyst. Was it yesterday they met in that other life? Wasn't he the guy in the elevator, talking all the way to the twenty-third floor? These days she pays increasingly less attention to her waking hours. Some dreams are briefer, less luminous yet they serially plot the shadow pleasures of past incarnations. Her guru tells her that the past is the future. She has come to believe in such things, though she wonders if she'll ever marry them to matter.

Dawn breaks. Day birds croon their urban memos. The first Boeing aircraft crosses the flight path above her silo. Soon the noise of traffic abrades. Her mobile phone is ringing, calling her to rise, to countenance routine. Jolted to anamnesis of meetings and deadlines, she scrawls down what she remembers of the tryst. With a restrained, secretive joy, she attempts to crawl through the day's dark tunnel.