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## **INTRO**

This collection is merely a spasm, a drop of creation and ideas into the infinite swirl of the digital universe.

This book will likely dissolve into the vast, roiling waters of the Net. It will die either as its last copy is deleted or as its last reader perishes.

This collection is a work of art. It is for and by art.

Thank you, sincerely, for reading.

-KC, 4/18/2023

## **STORIES FROM THE EAST**



### **SANTA'S GIFT FOR DR. PETER DASZAK**

“Dark, grotesque figures, in a soundless rage, attacking with the fury of a Florida man...”

“Dark actors, leading Mickey Mouse to a prison shanking in the shower.

“Yessir, it was all angles and no curves. The blood hunter’s ghost marriage proposal, that anagram in *The Lancet*... All this while the doctor radiated heat, felched by a broken mirror. The doctor’s stethoscope and sphygmomanometer taking shape in the steam.”

The city’s neon panorama was shrinking in the rearview. The river of animation scattered into faint, winking pinpricks of light.

Curving along an empty highway, the Cadillac clattered further into gathering tendrils of mist. The car’s engine grinding, like the gnashing of teeth.

Santa Claus was at the Caddy's wheel, wheezing and sniffing. Then Santa squinted, hit the high beams. The air outside was becoming increasingly befogged with a chalky dust, the fog glowing in an almost iridescent whiteness...

"It's wrong on more levels than a broken elevator. I tell you what... The higher up Huang Yanling climbed, the more she showed her ass.

"She just had the worst case ever of the butterfingers. Up and fumbled that Frankenstein dish. Then she pressed her eyes shut, as if in prayer, and hung her round face low... a setting moon... Yessir, you can bet a kidney that a whole long list of exonerating lies went tumbling through her head.

"But little did she realize how many horrible things had already flown out: hatred, hunger, pain, poverty, disease and death. All of life's miseries, let out into the world.

"Just one, just one... one wrong move altered the course of human history. The CCTV footage of that fumble, oh brother! It's up there in the panopticon, somewhere, for sure. Too bad we don't have a Lizzy Salander to dig up that database.... Talk about pictures worth a trillion words."

Santa's nose trickled blood. His jowls hung low, boiling in layers of anger. He had hot, dark rings of pain beneath his blue eyes, and a tangly mess of white hair curled down to his neckline. A silky menace colored his tone as he spoke.

"The Supreme Leader, Brother Snake God, when he got the word, he had the sad face of a chained monkey. Gotta wonder how many messengers he snuffed out, before he sniffed the opportunity, before he fed the demons.

"Brother Snake God did in his dentures, soccer kicked over a row of tombstones, knocking them down like dominos, and then Brother Snake God commanded his comrades to open the zoo gates, concoct a cauldron of rumors... Yessir, Brother Snake God only chooses people he can control.

"Yessir, Brother Snake God ordered an invasion of cleaners and scrambling dragons. The cleaners shining in the last light of day. The scrambling dragons

speaking only in solecisms. Yessir, the scrambling dragons' truest truths are rarer than diamonds. Their truest truths come fringed in sunbursts of gold."

Santa's flushed face creased into a smile. He flashed back to street art, Banksy-esque graffiti paintings of little people held upside down, by their ankles, small holes bored into their brains. The little people's skulls dripping egg-yellow oils into petri-dishes...

"The little people can lap through the water. They can cast misty shadows. The little people run, scratch, and bite, but, in the end, they're always tripping up like a startled duck," Santa growled, staring daggers, and a snarl of revulsion broke across his lips. Then Santa stepped on the gas, throttled the engine, revving it like a chainsaw.

"But the world was swaddled, sickly, and it took that honey, wandered in circles. The world carving paperboard cutouts of people... Then Tedros did the duckwalk... The Snakes' puppets operating with the precision of hornets building a nest.

"Yessir, then there was Charles M. Blow, and Chris Cuomo, Stephen Colbert, all their ilk: the Goat Fucks.

"The Goat Fucks were living through screens, pissing and throwing pennies from atop skyscrapers. The Goat Fucks on opposite sides of smiles, treating scientists' diplomacy as if the scientists were sending lit sticks of dynamite...

"Goat Fucks pointing guns, leading the blind into caves, mocking the blind's prostrations... The Goat Fucks expatiating, with Brother Snake God and the Snake-charmers, in bone-white slants, moonlighting and pantomiming emotions."

Santa paused, momentarily, and as he emptied his heaving chest, his voice strained, "But the blind kept crawling. On their bare bellies. They swarmed, chins wet, under milk-white stalactites sharper than vampire fangs. With a mouthful of batshit, the blind went hiding in corners, shivering as they hugged their knees. The blind ignorant, unaware of words glistening with moisture. The blind's cries simple as guide dogs. The blind's footsteps followed by speeding trucks."



The wintery sky hung low, hazy, and bleak. A darkening smudge was spreading. Banks of inky clouds swept along by fierce and frigid gusts of wind. The heavens above committing a kind of frotteurism.

“Comb your hair, put on your shades, and dig your bunkers. It was the Year of the Rat, after all... It was endless stretches of greenery, soaring walls in the Kingdom’s Garden... Yessir, all the cadres at that banquet had a reclining seat...

“Comrades, cadres at the Gala, smiling and dancing in bursts of illumination. Everything painted red and gold, with bestiaries decorated in grinning rats. Everyone at the Gala, collared in cangues, blissfully unaware of the pedo lurking by the playground.”

Santa felt a tremendous force, a searing pain ripping through his chest, and he unloosed a series of dry, hacking coughs. His eyes stretched wide when he remembered that coughing, once, was worse than saying the n-word.

“Throw your head up to the sky and imagine God Himself, hanging upside down, like a bat, dangling and doing sit-ups from the leg of a flying helicopter. God Himself, the real Patient Zero. God Himself, smoking on a mary-joo-wanna cigarette.”

The darkening smudge in the sky started spreading quicker, spilling across the horizon, like an ink stain, racing rapidly in every direction.

“There can be no murder in paradise. I’m telling you. It’s incomprehensible. Inconceivable... Brother Snake God got that smoldering intensity bright in the whites of his eyes, yeah? And he corrected the wrong ideas, right?”

“Metastasis? No sir, not in paradise! In paradise there’s only virgins, green grass and positivity...”

Santa had been licking his wounds, was pulling on a Snoop-sized blunt. The fat man had his meaty hand gripped over the width of the steering wheel, and his knuckles were scraped and bleeding.

As Santa was sitting back in the bucket seat, he steered the Caddy with one hand, and a faint clanking could be heard from the trunk, sounded similar to metal hitting a human skull.

Santa coughed out a plume of smoke, clicked his tongue, then went on, “A maze of limestone caves. Sure paid off like a winning slot machine. We had Ron Varra running around with his hair on fire. But he wasn’t credible. He was a crank. A ‘conspiracy theorist.’ Then God Himself, in the gold chair by the fireplace, told us the dead were coming back to haunt the hospitals.”

“Yessir. Now everyone understands that a day is long, and a year is quick.”

Here and there Santa reached over to stroke the pangolin resting in the passenger seat. The pangolin was purring like a cat.

“I’m telling you. This is killing.” Santa continued, his Texas twang breaking. His enunciation clipped. His voice upping an octave. “I’m telling you. It’s never been like this.

“The Snake-charmers used their cunning, inveigled us. They threw ants in the sugar... Ants in our pants... Fed us nothing but bones. They exploited our Restless Anal Syndrome and used imprimaturs to cast spells. Didn’t Marx say something about the peasants being like sacks of potatoes? It’s no wonder the peasants believe in opioids and influencers, Maatje Bensassi and phantoms.”

A hologram above the dashboard flickered on, displayed grainy video of Marilyn Manson pouring milk and cereal into a groupie's yawning vagina. Then the ghoul dove down, devoured the Lucky Charms like a starving dog.

A moue played across Santa's face, and his lilt became aggressive, "Yessir, it's onion heads on the prowl. Onion heads tapping on trumpets. The onion head's call to arms is telepathy turned telekinesis..."

"And we're slaves, slaves to a type of torpid stillness. Slaves, goin' batshit crazy in algorithms... Incunabulum, tintinnabulation... Fucking robots building robots.

"Yessir, we all got hoodwinked... It's the greatest coverup, the greatest crime of our time..."

"But few even care. We're walking crash test dummies. Post-human. We're Sam Harris, naked and covered in peanut butter, chasing imaginary llamas.

"Yessir, last time I went to California, a homeless lady, who looked like Michael Rapaport, squatted in the middle of traffic, defecated, then threw a handful of her shit at me, screamed something about Gavin Newsom..."

Santa snorted, felt chunks of dried blood trickle down his throat, and sneered with a satirical curl of his upper lip.

"Yessir, the ghosts sure are coming back to haunt the hospitals. The ghosts fighting for air and light. The ghosts pressing their noses against one-way mirrors like trapped rats."

The pangolin lifted its pointy snout. Its eyes flashed purple. The pangolin had started shaking like a chicken with its throat slit. But now the pangolin was stoic as the dead. The pangolin statuesquely still, the pangolin reflection of a reflection, a picture of a picture. The pangolin daring anyone to pity or patronize it.





“A popcorn bomb plot. A lady in a gorilla mask punching a politician in the face. A ballerina blasting Coca-Cola firehoses at fat children in Kansas. Bill Gates talking like a pirate and terrorizing call centers in the Philippines. A Karen in a death van. A Chinese warship in the Taiwan Straits... A bat cave in Cambodia... You know Joe Rogan killed the animal’s mother. But we were all pouring gasoline on the delusion, living in a spitfire derecho. We all saw the sad results and no desultory plan. There’s a tracking chip in every electronic device. That’s the true magnet link.”

The Caddy picked up speed, roared past the fresh corpse of an elf. The elf in a snow angel of blood. The elf splattered cold in front of a Waffle House, the eighth ring of Hell. The dead elf’s right arm bent to a sharp curve, twisted like a serpent. The elf’s torso distorted from the impact.

Coroners in space suits were ringing around, in a conga line, dancing in pendulum-like movements, stopping every ten steps to stomp and kick at the elf’s corpse. One of the coroners dropped to his haunches, punched his gloved hand up the elf’s little ass, checked for coronavirus via an anal swab test.

“It’s the Ring of Fire, right? Tin foil hats, bulletproof business suits, and threats of catastrophe. Senators in drag. Damn right the Senators fooled us all, tricked everyone on Twitter, ejected tongues of flame. But, mister, some might say there are more elves, and the elves are up high, living in the clouds, humming 2 Chainz, ‘Beez in the Trap.’

“The elves with a list of grievances long as a man’s forearm. The elves sharpening knives in struggling structures. The elves with awareness in their eyes, confidence in their bearing. The elves fixing to fake the Mars landing, play grab-ass with Elon Musk.”

The churning mass of black clouds in the flat sky thickened, and there was only a faint glimmer of light toward the north. Santa sure knew a peccadillo when he saw a peccadillo.

“One laboratory, it’s all it took. Yessir, Huang Yanling, the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s Gavrilo Princip.

“One lab. One wrong move. One fumble... One spill... Brought the world to its knees. Crippled economies... Took time, trillions of smiles... One lab, gaming functions, slipping Mother Nature the Bill Cosby pills...

“And Dr. Daszak and Shi Zhengli, oh, they’re singing karaoke. They’re off sipping champagne and stuffing toilet paper into Al Capone’s vault.

“Yessir, it was gongs and clouds of smoke and pained voices shouting in chorus when Dr. Daszak tore off all his clothes, set fire to his tennis shoes. The doctor’s head swinging from side to side, like the casing of a bell, as he tore off running, his hairy legs pumping. The doctor with the shocking speed of an Olympic sprinter.

“The doctor’s feet aflame, two bright balls of fire, twin meteors in the night, as he tore through the streets of Wuhan.

“Dr. Daszak, with a certainty, a concentrated savagery in his sprint... The doctor stopping only to dance in graveyards, with his arms outstretched. The doctor barking at a mid-autumn moon, foaming at the mouth, rabid and hairy as a werewolf...”

The inky, dark scuds of cloud coalesced to form a dense steel-gray mass. The glimmer swallowed whole. The sky gray as a wolf.

Santa rolled the windows down a skosh, let the Caddy breathe. A line of cold air whirred in with a sucking sound, like surf slicking over a slope of sand. The air with a strange smell, something between mildew and medicine.

“Yessir, Dr. Daszak bled the bats, red-handed, with the ceremonious air of a pedophile priest. His was a practice, his was a language of receding gumlines. His was a mouth like a gloryhole...

“Yessir, Dr. Daszak was the Snakes’ fixer. He bought Brother Snake God all the necessary time and excuses, let the broken elevator fall free.

“The Snakeheads... yup, they yanked the seat out before the blind could sit. Then they lost a lung from laughing so hard. The Snakeheads, and their kidney thieves, the world knows they have reeducation camps. But the world didn’t know that the Snakes had their prisoners standing and clapping, cheering the British and American death tolls.

“Yessir, but that Dr. Daszak, he kept an eye out, like Fetty Wap. The doctor elected himself the mayor of a ghost city and was accompanied by thundering drums and exploding fireworks, everywhere he washed up. Just look at the cut of his jaw as he speaks...

“It’s true that we learned more from losing than winning, I tell you what. But our smiles died on our lips.”

The skunk, strong sativa slammed Santa with the force of a flash flood. His eyes reddening, he eased back further in the bucket seat, blew a series of beer bottle-sized smoke rings.

“The Snakeheads knew from November, and they were watching water like a housecat... Yessir, no mock outrage at their booky-wooky coverup. But just as you can’t hide the sun or the moon forever, the truth will find its way.”

The pangolin tilted its head, smiled lasciviously. Santa was feeling especially loquacious.

“The Senators’ thoughts heading into flares, leading into an apotheosis- and it centered on prison labor, rare earths, quiescence, and resting failures... The Senators speaking snuff poetry... The Senators’ teeth shiny as waxed wood...

“The Senators sharpened their box-cutters, said the unions were too greedy. Then the Senators bought stocks and brought in the elves. There were Snakeheads in bulletproof business suits at every step, and yup, they burned hell money, hopped the elves up on melanin and grinch hormones. Ho-ho-ho!

“But the elves saw the light. The elves, these days, have been jumping to a death better than life. The elves bitter as black coffee, the elves review-bombing, lying flat, living in collapsing buildings rather than doing swan dives. The elves sick of bungee-jumping without ropes. The elves having preemptive panic attacks. The elves wielding baseball bats, bashing in the skulls of perfect strangers.

“Yessir, the elves’ hands were bent, burnt, and calloused; the elves’ hands festering, a calligraphy to their scars. But none of that will stop the elves’ surge... No sir... because you can’t really kill an elf. Its energy won’t be destroyed. Nowadays the elves’ ghosts live in almost every machine, and the elves’ ghosts are tiny, too, mere molecules.”

The pangolin peered silently at the mugshot of Dr. Daszak. Santa had glued it to the Caddy’s dashboard. Dr. Daszak’s bald head glistening, a film of sweat over his forehead. The doctor’s face with a look of horror stamped on it.

“I believe in Sharri Markson... Sometimes history needs a push. And really, where are the three workers? Where are the body bags? And just who’s been wearing surgical masks like a holster? It’s game theory, crowns... upskirt camera binoculars...

“The Snake-charmers, they’re spitting in our faces, spitting in the wind. And we’re Theo Von, mullet-headed, weeping while we masturbate. Or so the Snake-charmers think. But it’s not that simple.”

Vapors, columns of illumination and sheets of mist shrouded the distance. Santa tugged his lips into a spastic grimace, and his temples bulged with craggy bones.

“It’s the elves. The elves are unmasking the Snakes’ composition. It’s a code, the patterns of branches, the maps and trees designed for lungs, hieroglyphics written in spike proteins. It’s the electrification of the entire world, the breath of God, the megadeath event... Believe me... the elves will be heard.”



Santa and the pangolin, just earlier that dreary day, had escaped a ziggurat lockup. Crawled up and out a chimney. Caught a hitch in the back of a garbage truck. Then Santa stole a golf club from a Walmart and stalked around the Walmart's parking lot. Santa with the pangolin perched on his shoulder, like a parrot. Then Santa sang "Silent Night" as he bludgeoned and carjacked a street pimp from Arkansas.

Santa's irritability was understandable. After all, for two straight weeks, Santa and the pangolin were locked in a small, windowless, low-ceilinged room.

In lockdown, they never slept. The two spending every waking moment forging official documents, using a Ouija board app. The two receiving detailed instructions from a spirit claiming to be the REAL Carlos the Jackal.

Another metallic clank and a *whomp whomp*. Muffled cries echoed from the back of the vehicle. Santa then crinkled his nose in revulsion and stabbed a finger at the dashboard, clicked on Clay Travis and Buck Sexton's radio show.

"They like to think God Himself went and offed us, like He was stomping on a cockroach. But, no sir, He wasn't hanging upside down from Kobe's helicopter."

Santa swallowed the end of the blunt, belched, and set the Caddy on cruise control. His bloated face blanched. Then he reached in the open glove compartment, plucked out another from the pile of pre-rolled blunts.

"God Himself, like Mike Tyson, stomping on your children's testicles," Santa muttered, and effortlessly Santa clipped the blunt in between his thin red lips, bit into the blunt like a hot dog, and then touched his finger, ala ET, and flicked the blunt's tip ablaze, and a string of grayish smoke curled to the sunroof.

"There never was an answer. There were more questions. Joe Rogan killed Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Ate the red-nosed fucker alive, raw, like a zombie, as the animal was twitching and coughing blood bubbles... Fucking socialists, Rand Paul's neighbor, they had no problem carjacking me for my flying wheelchair, no sir...

"Yessir, a constellation of factors took place, blew in like a burst of wind against a flagpole. Late 2019, early 2020. The Year of the Rat... The Year of RaTG13..."

"One factor involved Doctor Li, the Wuhan doctor. That man was a patriot. A martyr. A saint. He tried to jump on the dragon, choke out the dragon, put out the fire, before it spread. Before it reclined its seat directly at the world's knees..."

"But it was all tithing, totalitarianism, bureaucracy, glass hearts, apathy and antipathy, empathy distress. There were tongues licking blood off the blade. The lab's disinfection took place in October 2019. But the dragon had flown the cave. Later, Brother Snake God found his clothes, slipped on his singlet, and proclaimed another ban, bellowed out: 'No more towel-snapping hijinks!' But it was too late.

“Brother Snake God, in a wrestler’s singlet, forced the doctor into a full nelson, forced the doctor to drink the dirtiest dragon dick blood.

“Yessir, it’s one of the fundamental principles of a Leninist system. Whenever the Communist Party is skating on thin ice, it can afford to switch to repression. The greater the difficulty, the greater the potential growth. Any crack could be a big one... Meaning that one could expect episodic jumps in volatility... Meaning that one could expect the Snakes to be highly sensitive and nervous and, ultimately, inactive...

“Yessir, in the before times, in the good ole’ days, pre-plague, the Snakeheads just made payday loans and fed America poisoned pet food. Then fentanyl. The latter was revenge for the Opium War. Yessir...

“Then Brother Snake God got ants in his high pants, and he upped the stakes, fed the American children spiritual candy contaminated with razor blades. Then Huang Yanling’s epic fumble-rooski... The lady worse than Ryan Leaf, I tell you what...

“Brother Snake God, we know he once lived in a cave and that he ate bat soup. But he was no Ozzy Osbourne.

“Brother Snake God eventually sent the bootlickers and window-lickers to take over the Wuhan Institute of Virology. But it was too late.

“Brother Snake God, oh, he agonized, dug himself a new cave, and hid his puffy, steam-bun of a face for weeks. But then he came to, photoshopped alertness into his eyes. Then he strapped on his high pants, went to work. Brother Snake God’s high pants perfectly creased, perfect as folded paper, his pants dark as motor oil. Brother Snake God’s high pants just as his eyes and his hair: a most pure, funereal black.”

Santa put the pedal to the metal. The speedometer reaching 106 MPH. And, silently, he remembered when he used to impersonate Jesus, back when he had a series of slapfights with African cabdrivers. Then Santa recalled his stint as a

fortune teller in a bus station bathroom, over in Hoboken. Santa's always believed in tarot and circumstance.

The pangolin cast a puzzled, sideways glance at Santa as the Caddy passed by a blank highway sign. The blank sign bent, slanting like the spine of an old man. A flickering streetlight silhouetted and lit up Santa's fat face like a strobe light.

Santa stuck a forefinger to his chin, nodded, and unloosed something between a laugh and a growl.

"The death of one... The death of one..."

Santa again swallowed what was left of the blunt and reached into his red coat's front pocket. Pulled out a baseball-sized snowball of cocaine. Licking his lips, he raised his eyebrows like he'd solved a riddle, and proceeded to smack the white ball to his face and snort as much as he could. Then he slurped up the rest and screamed loud as an opera singer.

"I told you a thousand times. It was a popcorn bomb plot. A hijacking of public trust. A switchblade to Mother Nature's throat. But the research went astray. Fauci ignored the fireball in Tianjin. And worse yet, he played with the fire.

"Yessir, the Snake-charmers wore their underwear outside their pants. They pulled out their yogurt-slingers and played Russian Roulette. And after they finished, elf brains were blasted, oozing trails of yellow and red sludge, the elf brains splattered, like modern art. Fucking Jackson Pollack performance pieces over the white walls of that lab. It wasn't as if the French could have built it any better. It took almost two decades for a reason.

"Then we discovered the truth about Nicki Minaj having swollen testicles, an impotent penis, and a sex offender husband. But it was too late.

"I too fear, loathe, love, and ultimately believe in the power of the internet."

The pangolin chewed on a tablet of children's strength LSD. Then Santa ducked down, dug under the driver's seat, and broke out a blood-stained bottle of Laotian rice whiskey. Brushing his long white beard to the side, Santa twisted open the bottle cap with his teeth, spit out the cap, then flipped the whiskey



bottle upside down, cradled and chugged it, all whilst steering the Caddy, carefully, with his bare left foot. His chubby, prehensile toes curling over the steering wheel.

With his right foot, Santa was pushing the Caddy hard, ragging on it, throttling the gears, like a racecar driver.

*The Clay and Buck Show* faded, and Warrant's "Down Boys" came on the bass heavy stereo, the car filling with rock guitars and heavy sounds. Santa bobbed his scruffy face, slapped at the dashboard as if he had a winning hand of Blackjack. Then he rolled down all the car's windows.

Santa shifted his gaze, saw there were zoo animals, lions, tigers, elephants, gorillas and kangaroos, along with the comedian Jim Breuer, the comedian running on all fours, groaning and making goat sounds... The escaped animals in the breakdown lane. The animals pushing forward at varying speeds...

Further on the horizon, another runaway elf had doubled over, was writhing and convulsing in the breakdown lane. A centaur soon parachuted in, sputtering and wheezing, and it pounced, commenced to grind its hooves at the elf's green, puckered face.

*"Certain things you do really make me mad..."* Santa sang along and then flung the empty whiskey bottle out an open window. The Caddy's four windows sucking in wide columns of cold air. The air taking on a metallic, sulfuric tinge.

The pangolin glanced at the open car windows as if they were the empty eye sockets of human remains.

*"Jani Lane was underrated. The man was a genius. The Tarzan of butt rock."*

*"Whoa, can we rewind to where we been..."*

The pangolin squeaked on the leather as it rolled on its side and pawed at the air, like a playful kitten.

*"Yessir, there's nothing wrong with a sissy."*

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