

Jamjar - An Expansion

By Elizabeth Wen Feng

A girl was in her garden looking for bees on her hydrangeas as a shower of glowing orange and yellow shards of sunshine lit the periwinkle bushes. The sun glazed her skin as she sighed and stepped further into the purplish orbs, the garden shears placed into her apron pocket. Her foot hit something solid, there was a crunch underfoot. She picked up an old jam jar and examined it. As she lifted it to her face, the mouth opened wide as her body and swallowed her whole.

Then down, down, exponentially downwards she fell, underneath her was the twinkle of spinning silver ornaments, and above, the evening over hydrangeas. .

“My, what a lovely sunset! I wish I were there to see it.” She frowned.

Finally, she bumped into the jar and found her footing to stand up. But she could not tell what she was standing on. She sees the face of a funny-looking bug, its visage twisted through the bends of glass all around her.

“Help?!”

The bug blinked and said, “Hmmmmmmm,” its greenish body rolled around the edges of her cage, its mouth a concave hole that swallowed glints of light in the glass.

She felt befuddled and asked, “Why am I falling?”

The bug said, “What a bore, what a shame. A thousand bores today. You are the boringest and that is why you are here. She only chooses the boring girls.”

“Excuse me?”

The bug said: “Bye-bye, Ms. Boring.”

She opened her mouth to reply, but the petals batted her words away. As she fell again, her eyes stretched down the glass’s curve, and her nose became a crooked line, pointing upwards like a grotesque finger. As she fell, a shadow landed on the tip of her Pinocchio nose and buzzed its wings. It took the shape of a wasp, the antennae drooping below her.

“The boringest. But tasty. Mmmzz.” The wasp murmured to itself as it nudged the tip of her nose with one of its black feet.

“Why am I here? How did I fall into this jar? Who are you?”

The wasp buzzed at her, “There were many like you, but you are boringer and sweet. Very sweet. Yumzzzz.” Her nose was tickled by a feathery line of tongue from a large, gaping maw. It licked jam from her cheek.

The glass arches the insect’s body impossibly larger, and its shadow leaps, and joins the one above her. Beneath her, the abyss welcomed the new creature with the tinkle and chime of her own screams.

She thought of her lovely plants withering in the glaring sun and wondered about her life before. She felt a sharp pain in her scalp and jerked to an abrupt stop, realising she was hanging by her hair. She was tangled in a sticky, silky web, and a dark blob shoved itself right up into her face.

“Man.” It whined. “Exactly the same position, even after I redid my web in a different place? I don’t know why she thinks it’s fun.”

It bounced across her head and moved down her back. “Ooh, that’s a nice outfit. Shame that it’s all going down her stomach.”

It dangled from her foot and stroked its imaginary beard with several feet. “Huh. You seem a bit more interesting than the last one. Or the one before that, or the one before that, and probably also the one before that.”

“You guys are always talking about “the other ones” and this “she” person. Who is she?”

“Ah ah ah, I don’t think I should be telling you that.” It clambered back onto her face. “Whoop. Our time is up! Bye-bye! Remember to bring a warmer coat next time! You guys never do.”

Before she could fully grasp the meaning, the thread tangling her was nibbled away by the spider, and she dropped, yet again, into the depths.

It was another immeasurably, unknowably, impossibly long time that she fell before her bare arms and cheeks were greeted by a biting, cold wind. The girl looked down and saw a vast expanse of whiteness rising up to greet her before she hit a pile of snow. The next thing she heard was the chilling howl that pierced her eardrums with the icy wind.

She struggled to get up, her slippers sinking into the thick snow as she tried to run.

A pack of wolves prowled nearby, and their weighty shadows bore down on her until the tip of one’s fangs nipped her ankle, skidding her across the snow. The whole pack pounced on her.

The leader growled, “I really don’t know why she keeps insisting that we catch things like you for her. What a miserable existence.”

It picked her up with clamping jaws, and with the whole pack behind, it carried her deeper into the snowy landscape.

She closed her eyes and let herself be overtaken by the dark swirls behind her eyelids.

She woke to a bulging pupil pressed right against the glass around her. It stretched grotesquely and twitched. She squinted back.

“Oh ho ho. It’s been a while since I saw one as lovely as you, deary.” The voice ping-ponged around her. The face holding the eye came closer, and she saw the distinct wrinkles like an apple in the sun.

The girl shrunk away from the nightmarish glare. She desperately wished to smash open the jar. Then, she remembered something sharp in her pocket. The shears. The witch slowly, menacingly screwed open the lid.

“Why are you doing this? What would I even do for you?”

“Well, what else am I supposed to have for dessert? You don’t mean the frogs on the walls, do you?” She sneered.

After watching the creature fumble and bumble, she took a distinct sniff and gulped the girl down like pickled buzzard pudding.

Slurp.

And then, a vicious tickle at the flesh of her misshapen cheeks as her dessert slid like a scalpel into her gullet.

Boring? Never. The girl thought.