**Crazy Dust**

*Dec 2012*

When James arrived in the city it was late afternoon. Smog-addled rays cast a strange and uneven light across the almost-empty highway, turning buildings to distorted shapes. The scene placed his thoughts into a kind of repose, to a place of pauses and introspection. He experienced a momentary command over things, enjoyed a temporary reprieve against extremities. Just a few hours prior, on the outskirts of this sprawling and impossible city, he had pulled his car over just near a stretch of deserted beach and struck up conversation with a man that he had never met and would never meet again. He explained that the events of his life had led to inevitable disjunctions, and there were issues in need of resolution. The stranger had nodded, but all too politely, and soon the man’s gaze turned back to the ocean, and he quickly walked away from James and into the blue.

Coming away from the arterial roadways he peeled off into was into the clustered networks of streets. The sense of calm had begun to dissipate quickly now, and the complexity of the city’s edges loomed large. The lack of symmetry was exhausting. James had not having returned for at least three decades, began to feel the rapid shortening of seconds fast moving truncation of time, the memory of an earlier madness edging it’s way back to him. When he had last travelled these same roads, white-knuckled hands gripping the wheel tight, head pounding in agony, he was pedal-to-the-metal, screaming into anonymity of the sound-proofed car. But that had been a different time his memory had been running low, his energy was almost depleted. At the time he had thought only of maximising his escape velocity.

The plan to never return had of course been naïve. Over recent months, in any case, it had all become too hard to push back against the inundation of communications, the steadily rising urgency of phone messages, the written tone that suble suggestion of litigation, suggested legal ramifications may somewhere be on the rise. Out of options he was coming back, into a city that had almost run out of time, and whose inhabitants lived in a time just before the end of times.

He imagined, his sisters would already be there, deep in conversation his mother at the family home. Both Estelle and Midge were somewhat deal older, their ages never really clear down in his mind. Their names had no meaning, and they were from a culture without lineage. It was the sisters who, sometime the early days, (most likely between ’84 and ’87 he supposed) who had been at the precise centre of madness. They would wander the streets, searching for signs of a mad father who might be variously found screaming in the laneways, or perched on the barstools, or momentarily surfacing only through the most randomly timed phone calls, and whose civic power and prestige ensured a veil of normalcy would always wipe the drama away. For James, their differences were indiscernible sisters as carbon copies, and was confused just who was who since his teenage years. He imagined them living only physically co-located spaces, grammatically entangled, forever lost in their own translation. He had read in a magazine feature, perhaps recently, perhaps many years ago, somewhere that they lived on different floors of the same apartment building in some exotic locale on another side of the globe, that they had the most faceless husbands, and children that sure must be imaginary.

The car had almost finished its weave through suburban streets. Traffic completely dissipated an afternoon where dusk that appeared artificial and unseasonably extended. He past the rows of well-to-do houses in the well-to-do neighbourhood, ornate landscapes, and tasteful extensions in keeping with period norms. The rich part of town with its expected angles and inventions. He came to a stop a few blocks away from his mother’s residence, parking in a side street’s that gave the promise anonymity, the hope that he might slip away at a moment’s notice.

With his mother’s house in such close proximity now, he inevitably thought of the matriarch herself, the grand thespian, the soprano who could solicit tears and tenderness on command, the ageless beauty who creating a shadow and light at will, the purveyor of coldness, and perhaps his therapist’s most favourite subject of all time. Stepping out from the car, James tried to get himself under control.

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James was the youngest and mostly forgotten child of the industrialist Daniel Hall and famed actress and soprano Tanya Morgan. Before their transformations, the duo had come into notoriety as darlings of the city’s social scene (back in a time when there were such things). Exact details of Daniel and Tanya’s first meeting remain unclear despite a growing historical (if somewhat regional) interest in settling the matter. Best guesses included a popular downtown dinner spot, and other long closed establishments. But whatever the particulars, it was generally agreed that their initial union both suitably impromptu and well-suited to the times. Their love blossomed under the gaze carefully planned early days of cross-promotion, kept the hangers-on at bay, and appealing to a broad mix of imaginations in a range of demographics.

In a series of much later interviews, undertaken long past the time when unstoppable malice had polarised opinions of the pair, Tanya would maintain (in perfect arc of theatrical exuberance) that, yes of course, there had at one time been a kind of shared rhythm between them, a inevitable vitality, that pulled them together, as if it was a required by the world. It was not so much love, but a kind of integrated list of possibilities from which they could encounter the world, the underlying complexities hinted of far larger and insoluble problems. The couple was a sign of the times.

“But,” she would add, leaning in and applying a tone palpable gravitas, “People simply can’t understand”. And she leaned in leaned closer now, to the interviewer, hopelessly besotted and trying to appear as something altogether more than a mere hanger-on.

“At that time, you understand, my ascent to the stage was already assured. I had reached the height of my powers at such a young age and was already so many parts. The idea of being a wife, even it was to the famed industrialist and mogul Daniel Hall, it was such bloated celebrity well, it all felt such a kind of tipping point, as if the roll might have an eternity of sell-out seasons. I never tried to explain this and Daniel could never understand any of it. He was a man of…of so few dimensions, you understand”.

In the backdrop of worshipful nodding. She switched gears now so saying “You know, for a long time I had intended, wanted to keep my original family name, its line, but he seduced me you see, it was only the lack of syllables, and the summary report from the focus groups from my agent and-‘

“And now”, claimed the fawning interviewer breaking in, altogether too excited now, “your name is far more known, your fame has eclipsed Daniels-”

“Of course, that’s right! You know, in a way, he gave birth to my greatest role!”, smiling giddily at the wide and narrow lens, as light was adjusted to capture just the right hue of her face.

James had always tried to avoid watching these interviews which always seemed to be edited in different ways to maximise the range of interpretation. When he pulled himself away he found it left him all unhinged, that he condemned to be a voyeur in a world he wished only to forget. The details of his click-bait of his without any definitive meaning seemed crushing. Though perhaps it was merely the perils of being a third child he sometimes supposed, lasting evidence of lovers indiscretion. The interview were also loaded as he had often been behind the scenes, production team that paraded past the interviewers, acting coach named Balkarev who spent countless our hours with telling here what it was to stroll through a space with purpose secretly fucking; or the in-house makeup artist who explained to her the sheer extent of her face’s possibilities, that their house was an infinity of characters. Through it all James wandered in his childhood, the face of a clumsy waiter.

In contract to the media saturation of his mother, James’ father, by contrast, rarely any interviews and footage of him was much more muted, appearing and disappearing into cars, a minor character in the scenes of life. The lack of situational audio added the man’s mystique, the general belief that was mad, insanity that encroached the city walls and covered its inhabitants, especially after the incident in ’95. No one could pinpoint that precise moment when the athletic type, a your man of promise started weaving his way slowly into madness. James would sometime, sleeplessly think on such things, pondering the meaningless outtakes of faraway childhood, piecing together his fractured lineage.

Through the mosaic of thoughts, James entered the large outside his mother multi-story terrace house, immaculately proportioned from a sea of balconies, fitting perfectly in a suburb of genteel potentialities. Moments after he rang the doorbell which moments later was opened by one of this bland faced staff with forgetful face, the type of help his mother favoured and tried to discern if they had met before. The aging gaunt but altogether lacking in detail led the way and James followed, moving an open foyer area, winding luxurious staircase heading of the left floor criss cross black white. He passed through a large drawing room, decorated to proportion and into an inner kind of sitting room where his he could see his mother, Tanya was reclining on the couch, as if sitting for a portrait painted. She glanced at him in way that made it impossible to understand if she had seen him of not. The sisters where there too, one by the window, another, filling the weight of the scene, by a large bookcase. Their bodies and clothes juxtaposed against their moods and the art in the room and their bodies at a certain time in life, and James felt somewhat out of place.

The conversation did not halt in content or style, and was far beyond formalities into the heart of the matter. focus for me to differentiate them, the three of them sat in a

“It’s the manifesto, that ridiculous manifesto”, Tanya began dramatically.

“His life’s work”, chimed in one of the sisters, ironically, as the other rolled her eyes.

“Fuck his life’s work. I am so sick of it”

“The lawyers need an answer however. We need to tell them something”

“He needs to be stopped. No communication in or out. He made the fortress. Time to lock him in. Like a tower”. His mother now rose, in full character. “This has to end, these distractions, they are an encroachment!”

“But we need to prepare a response”

There was something soothing about the rhythm about it all. About his resounding lack of engagement. The pointlessless of his need to even be in the room. His presence was unnoticed and he was only there by way of a legal detail

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In a sense at least, Daniel Hall’s manifesto had come to dominate their lives. It cast the most inescapable shadows across their dealings and interactions, now forcing itself into every conversation. The exact starting point of the vast tome would never be pinpointed. When James considered the origin story, it’s existence seemed presaged by a kind of randomness, perhaps thirty years ago when James had been a teenager. He felt certain that his mother had been away some kind of tour, because he felt he would have remevbered her a reaction. and listened as his father dishevveled in gown and slippers wandered through rooms like a madman through an empty house, deciding on what to do, and his father, again it was dusk, it was a family that would never survive the afternoon, he realised this. A strange pitch and rhythm had entered the house, an uncomfortable dissonance against the voice of his mother who mercifully was not around at the time

James had not rushed to see the source of the sound, had sealed his fate as a witness rather than an actor. but rather frozen, unmoving on an upstanding landing, trepidatious on an upstairs landing, gazing stricken from the top of a staircase, to see a room covered in papers, his father, manic and scribbling madly filling pages after a page, while his assistant long since committed, crouched trembling in the corner, finding language the world to be impossible. It was impossible to confront, to fall into the madness of it all so James stayed hid out of site, a silent spectator ingesting lifelong of neuotic complexity and his father had just kept screaming, “Of course”, “that’s it”, “Yes Yes!”, certainty of punctuation into the silence as a world James could never understand revealed itself.

The years began the years of wild scribbling in a house that became ever smaller, filling with more and more paper, and around the time Midge and Estelle become incorporeal, floating above them both and lost to the din. James stuck in the initial scene, of hiding top of landings, moving between anonymous places, when the family forgot him in its noise. On returning to the madness, Tanya refused to make sense of any of it, throwoing herself into sellout seasons, long widing European tours, putting it out of her mind, fighting Daniel’s notoriety with her fame which would eclipse on the world stage.

The rumour, both publish and private, was that no one had ever read Daniel Hall’s manifesto. Was it a political work? A mathematical treatise? A vast and sprawling novel? Was its author a polyglot or fool? These were impossible questions that could never find answers. A particularly salient rumour, which James could never verify was that Estelle had one point, just after her sixteenth birthday had waded into an endless sea of papers, finding an unexpected entry point, and had spent four waking days being able to connect pages. This was almost certainly rumour and the story went she had become deeply listless for months aftwards and their may have been a suicide attempt. A number of years of madness, heavily accented doctsAnd could not bring herself to enunciate the her thoughts, brief madness. James was not qualified to speak to the truth this, prior to her teenage years he had found her morphed into her sister, and so he had no way to begin the inestigation.

The sheer weight of the inconvenience of it all was what drive Tanya to distraction. Her house was Tanya, who would never hold another soiree, another murder mystery night, tainted by drama that she was not. From that moment, Tanya was rarely seen in the house and midge and Estelle, into, by this time their arguments where one sided, great scrip writers, normalcy, thrown out full formed into their own lives, their own marriages no numbering an even four between them, but normalcy, and their children. It was mystery.

Whether it was the result of these interactions, it must have become evident that the genteel house filled with paper was making cohabitation simply impossible. So one day, just a few months before James found himself rushing from the city, Daniel Hall enacted his own self-exile, filling a cavalcade of black vans with serious tinted windws driving to gleaming gleaming new building and took up the top floor and the quintessentially eccentric CEO, who was hands off on the business arrived at work one day.

Company headquarters whose name is unimportant (James imagined Hall Industries or some such) long forgotten as a possible heir. Origins were unclear, something of mainframe company. Storage. Its vintage start was early eighties rooms full fo tapes running. The increasing automation, lower cost, gradually turned in the building into raw electricity. When their where papers, when the imagination could be captured, he would scream at reporters, theatrical reporters that yes, he was creating a manifesto. It was of course assumed that this would be some kind of technological revolution.

So there emerged two points locations that Around the same time his mother took full control of the large house, fitting it out as a house soirees so the children became like the paintings in the hallways, the odd bits of eccentric furniture that would could mostly be forgotten about and, in any case, they reached that age where they rapidally faded into adulthood, so there was nothing really that needed to be done with them. It was said, by an increasingly small circle no doubt, that the parties Tanya through at this time for her growing group of actor friends, were of the highest calibre, unforgettable, and her biographers would argue at a much later date that it was around this time that Tanya started conceiving of her final spectacle on the sensual scale of something akin to Scriabin in the himalayers or some such. It was impossible to say.

But there was one further location too, its pervasive architecture, important to note as it would become a location of their final showdown when the city itself fell to madness, when the lawyers rushed to evacuate, this was. Most of the project, neglected Most unfinished projects, except one that was in full flight, a large stadium in the busy city that was just a few blocks over from the office building. And it was these three geographical points that seemed to define things more than anything else, Daniel’s high rise building rapidly filling with paper, the family home, a right set of terraces, converted and home to soirees of late 80s and the stadium, somehow on autopilot that would soon be built, and the empire would slowly fail from there. The whole order had a cultural complexity of a previous time, and it felt to James when he left as a teenager to rush off to university, that the city (which in reality consisted of millions of structures) had nothing but these three buildings.

Midge (or perhaps Estelle) was still fretting by the window, and the other one had fallen in a heap into a large leather chair, their back and forth chatter was ambiguous and without source of target. A waiter passed through the scene with a tray of untouched drinks, seemingly oblivious to his presence. The conversation continued to unfold.

“It is the lawyers. That is the issue. They say the risk to his estate”.

“Because of the cost of publishing. They say he expects no editing, millions of pages per volume, claiming that anything else would lack precision”.

“Ridiculous! Just ridiculous. It will ruin us!”.

The lack of composure was understandable. His father, after years of making no sense, was ready to make a final set of demands. And family money would run out. His father, long related to a minor known figure, harmless, was now coming back into the limelight as it was planned for release. The cost would be prohibitive, undermine

“The lawyers want a meeting! We need to speak to the lawyers!”

James moved out of the room, unnoticed coming back into annex himself, ignoring the looks of unimportance and pushed out of the room, through the hallway, coming out into annex, taking turns and up some stairs onto w landing where he stood beside a large window, seeing outside, half his reflection, and wanted to fade away, that inevitable feeling of claustrophobia he could never shake, their voices still in the other room become more and more shrill. He had felt if for a long time when he left, that notion that these tree points, punctuated by idiotic cities, that would destroy the city and that would implode. The tenion was palpable and the looked out of the small opening into a large ande saw that the soirees endless, lunches of tanya were still going and just in another room of the house, and he started in listning to them, large plans.

The greatest stage play ever. In the history of theatre. Each part played by a thousand

It was too much. James rushed backwards, down the steps, pushing past the wall lined staff, coming out fo the house and rushed down the street, in the afternoon sunlinght and knew that we would not be missed to his car, breathing heavily

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*June 1995*

A few months after the incident with the manifesto when Daniel went mad, to be pushed into the house, when either Midge or Estelle was recovering in a best that money could buy sanatorium, to overcome the reading of the manifesto, a further that incident had occurred revealing the extent of this fathers international connections, that would the make the final incidences of so many years later seem so problematic. It was a the middle of winter, and Daniel had been waiting checking the weather endlessly, each day, making charts

END

His mother called, dramatic, worldly, iron fisted, a politician without a state, theatrics.

“Oh god, James, the problem with you? You are too many people?

His father ina moment of lucidity – you know for many years, I tried to understand how it all ticked but we are on a horizon, meeting point, we are the event horizon. Meant to die. We time travel in our disruption.

He opened the document…..MANIFESTO IS BOOK – in which Daniel is all characters. He reached over the to executive summary. “I arrived…” it seemed benign making little sense, and he was too tired to take it in and

James reached into his lit cigerettes, dishevelled packet and lit one and passed it to his father. He raised his eyes, said nothing, and together they looked down at the maddening crowd, and looked down across the maddening crowd. Running, screaming, escatic terrified.

And he was dead. In an out of life just like that. An unchosen instant to all the instants. The device had almost fallen from his father’s hand and the machines were silent. He felt his fathers cooling, blood becoming still. and reached over and took it, holding it close, pressing down the button again, and propped himself up. He felt the red sniper lights circle him and pressed down the device button again and the LSD flowed below . And the sniper lights danced in patterns, always patterns he could not discern and he smiled in that futility of knowing, waiting for the world to go blank.