



(recreation of final scene by my forever friend, Heba Malaeb)

The Journal of Saint Anna

For many years I have attempted to make sense of this horrific event which, seemingly overnight, turned the world on end. It has plagued me night and day, through many a moon, time prevailing, and while I have grown sick, and old, I can finally say that I have succeeded in bringing the last piece of my project in. I could not tell you why I embarked on this odyssey so many years ago. This is the fruit not of love but of resilience, of spite for the passing of time, and of hate for the beast whose story I have finally amassed.

This is the story of a world very much like our own. Its inhabitants interact and speak and think like we do. Its geography is variant and there are large bodies of water and geopolitical lines and commerce and a great deal many things we would see bears striking resemblance to our home planet Earth. This is a fundamentally different world, however, because of the class and race relations I have observed and come to learn through my extensive research into these documents, of which only eight have withstood the test of time and which I present to you in this collection hereafter.

All of these documents I shall present are isolated journal entries I have found in my research. All of them possess an extravagant and markedly queer usage of language, even the ones in the voices of Earth inhabitants. When I found the first one I deemed it insignificant, an anomaly, entirely too cumbersome and inaccessible, and so I threw it aside, vowing to return to it after I had adequately mapped out our neighbors' calendar system.

But I found another. Written in the exact same style. Different voice, granted, yes. Disdain was apparent. Several years later I found yet another. Earthly. And yet immaculately written out in lyrical prose, in sentences unfailingly three words long.

This pattern could clearly not be a coincidence. I therefore shifted my intellectual investment to finding as many of these journals as I could. They span in space as well as time. Some are from around the same epoch one thousand years ago, and some are quite a bit more recent. All, however, are infuriatingly perfect. Every single line. Three words long. Despite my hitherto adequate cultural and historical context for the world, the entries made very little sense, until I began compiling and rearranging them. I am certainly guilty of a great deal of speculation, but the events that transpired seemingly make very little sense within the realm of reality of the other world, Enctar, as I understand it is called - an no sense at all within the realm of our own.

I believe the order in which these stories are here is most intuitive narratively and chronologically. A short afterword accompanies each piece in which I explain my take on the events and how I believe they inform our understanding of the full sequence of events.

Our world is doused in darkness, friend. Enctar is even darker. In my life I have seen things that are truly horrific and I only wish that you will not encounter worse.

From the journal of Buddy Morfin
Rattus the Second

*Folds of him
Trudges through doorway
Shuddering, stumbling, choking
"Larissa," he hesitates.
"Yes?" I prod.*

Impatient, books scattered
Sphere-quarter, shadows
Enctar, war-torn
Once, now flourishes
Reign of Youth
My fat father
Slaves, they toil
Ribs, toes, souls
Consummation through Initiation
My recycled soul
A race reinvented
Repurposed and reconstructed
Families of Outliers
Outlier mother, killed!

Of insurmountable import is an understanding of the fundamental politics of Enctar. In Enctar, society is divided into two sectors: the Youth and the Outliers, the latter of which is a misnomer because the population of Outliers far exceeds that of Youth. The Youth, an elite population of under-eighteens, reign sole sovereign over the land, with exclusive political and economical control. They manage the banks, run the research – They are the one percent.

The Outliers, on the other hand, second-class citizens, are workers, toilers, constructors, plumbers, servants, garbage people, maintenance people, and drivers. They are the glue that keeps the society together and maintains the longevity of Enctar. And they do so in the most remarkable of ways.

They call it “initiation,” whereby a child is genetically engineered and injected with Ambrosia, the stuff of life, which has been sufficiently researched, commoditized, and bottled.

The baby, now running on an unsustainable supply of Ambrosia, is hardwired to expire at eighteen, at which point its Ambrosia is harvested and the cycle begins again in another child. The population is hence maintained. The perfect circle of life.

Essentially the Outliers become assigned “parents” to newborn Youths, guardians of their welfare, until their inevitable demise on their eighteenth birthday. Even though they do reproduce and the Outlier population is also maintained, priority is given to the guardianship of Youth over their own children. Once an Outlier is old enough, they leave their home and assume Parenthood over a Youth.

To understand the events that transpire hereafter, we must orient ourselves within a timeframe that is apt for both Earth and Enctar. I have been able to, thanks to my extensive research, become familiar with the Enctarian calendar system, which appears to be very heavily reliant on historical events instead of the motion of celestial bodies. The events in Buddy’s story seem to have happened in a time rotation – “year” – they called Rattus the Second. Admittedly I did not discover the reason behind the naming, or why it is the second of two. Each rotation corresponds to a thousand Earth years, and the events of this story seem to have occurred concurrently in Rattus the First and Second – roughly AD 1008 and 2008.

It is said that Outliers were the original inhabitants of Enctar. Something happened in Rattus the First, apparently, that turned things on end and brought about the Reign of Youth.

Buddy is a very interesting character. He is a Youth, this much is quite apparent, and we know that his Outlier parent, Benign, is a very large man with a very small personality. About his mother we know very little. Is she Larissa? And is she dead? This I have found is the unraveling point of the narrative.

Who has killed Larissa, and why is she so important? If the Outlier parents are slaves to their Youth children, and Buddy is seemingly apathetic to her wellbeing, why is this the point of no return?

From the journal of Gwen Sheridan
Rattus the Second

*We learn tolerance
We learn patience
Damsel in distress
Rooted in place
To my left
Angelica my friend
Dirty blond ruffled
Face stirred, dainty
To my right
Yoko, war hero
She was insolent
They took her
It was yesterday
It was horrible
They dragged her
By a leash
In a waistcoat
To the cellar
And she thrashed
And she screamed
Angelica my neighbor
Who is twelve
Eyes electric blue
Wide with fright
I am scared
Later he comes
Boy of fifteen
Out of place
I recognize him
From far away
Another time maybe
In the past
I am comfortable.*

Clearly a change in tone. I found this piece second, very near the first. Despite the obvious differences in writing style, tone, aesthetic, and material (Buddy's is on a very expensive-looking fiber compound sheet, while Gwen's is on thatched reed that resembles papyrus) both documents have aged similarly.

Gwen is an Outlier child, probably around fourteen or fifteen years old. In this entry she is describing in some detail the practice of Outlier Tolerance.

Ostensibly Tolerance was an educational tool decreed when the Reign of Youth came about to prepare young Outliers for the toils of the Reign. It was institutionalized torture, and it wasn't until several years afterward that I found the Constitution of the Reign and read the appalling Code of Tolerance.

Gwen is certainly not the first child to recount the terrors of Tolerance Studies. In my understanding, Outliers have three main duties in life: breed, serve, and die. And Tolerance Studies, as ludicrous as they sound, prepare them to do just that, because learning the virtues of patience, memorization, improvisation, quick-wittedness, and critical thinking is the truest road to a happy and prosperous life. So the Code said.

Who is the boy who walks into the Tolerance Hall at the end of this entry? Why does he spark a sense of familiarity within Gwen?

From the journal of Owen Panning
Rattus the Second

*She's a superstar
Like, super legit
Don't even know
My sister sings
And like, well
Has two albums
The real deal
So one day
Apartment is empty
Grey on grey
Where is she?
My sister Linda
By day, student
By night, limelight
Missing in action
Put bag down
Around the corner
Strange rustling, scratching
Sitting room wall
"Madam, you there!"
Bro. Bro. Brooooo.
What the fuck?
This is strange
The wall's speaking
"What the fuck?"
I am perturbed
Like, SO MUCH
Warily I approach
Knocking from there
"Who is this!?"*

"Ma'am! It's Benign!"
She's expecting him?
"Who are you!"
Pounding – I'm enraged
"Madam Linda there?"
Lost for words
"She's not here!"
"Let her know
Larissa is dead
The job's complete!"
Clear as day
This guy kills
And my sister
Is a suspect?
What'd she do?
My superstar sister
Does she kill?

This is where I became supremely confused. Owen Panning is human, very much from Earth – I am good friends with his great uncle, with whom I have had many a philosophical debate over oysters back in the day. Why has reality become distorted, and how come has Benign crossed over into our realm of existence? Seemingly stuck behind a wall, as though the wall conceals a transdimensional method of communication. Owen's sister Linda, a teen pop sensation (this Earthly research was a little easier to conduct, thanks to Google), seemingly absent from the apartment at this time of day, is implicated in the death of Larissa by none other than Larissa's husband. Who would've thunk?

From the journal of Linda Panning
Rattus the Second

"You know me
I'm a superstar!"
The opening lines
Of my hit
"Steed," it's called
You've heard it?
It's the shit
You're missing out
So like anyway
There's this guy
Tries reaching out
Through my wall
Sent by Mother
Keeps me safe
These people here

*The Panning family
Not my family
My True Mother
A True Snake
Finds me often
Dark of dusk
Our meeting time
We spoke last
And she said,
"Your aunt, child,
My beautiful sister
Anna my junior
Thought her dead
Indeed she's alive
Many years ago
Rattus the First
She crossed over
Her world, Enctar
Bridge of Ambrosia
They killed her
So I thought!
She is incognito
Requires your help!
My benign servant
I've ordered, Benign
In whose custody
The last member
The Enctarian League
The sociopolitical group
Killed her – tried
Unless she dies
Anna cannot return."
Confused... strange... outrage!
I'm spoiled but
"I'm no killer."
I am appalled
Want to stop
But she continues
"Can't be here
This is urgent
I must go."
My aunt's alive
Anna about whom
Legends are told
Apartment is grey
Plunged in silence*

*Benign will call?
Who's he killing?*

This is a troubling entry. While Linda's delivery and recounting skills are trustworthy, something seems amiss. In the chronology of my research, this was the first time I came across the Anna character, who, in our understanding (almost) brought about a catastrophic turn of events when she tried to cross the bridge into Enctar from her homeland. Admittedly I know very little about her homeland, other than the fact that tension between the two lands was so high that the advent of cultural diffusion in any capacity warranted the mobilization of the "Enctarian League" and an assassination attempt. Who is Anna and where is she from?

We find out several other things too. The unnamed woman behind the wall, Anna's sister, Linda's biological mother, is a "true snake". What does this make Anna? And why is Linda living on Earth with an adoptive family instead of with her (assumedly) Enctarian mother?

From the journal of Tara Syaron
Rattus the First

*"My wife, miss."
He'd told me
One Fullness later
Rattus the Second
"Larissa, yes ma'am."
"Tell me all."
Larissa the wench
She knows Anna?
Is Anna alive?
Who is Larissa??
"Tell me!" Urging.
"The Enctarian League
Last surviving member
I overheard her
Talking to herself
Plotting to preclude
Anna's imminent return."
He stammers profusely
"My good servant,
I must ask
And expect compliance
Ask no questions
But eliminate Larissa."
Pause. Pause. Pause.
"As you wish."
*
Retreat in haste*

*My husband beckons
In this state
Perpetual anger abounds
In this state
In menacing rapture
He had exploded
When I informed
My hermaphrodite self
Borne a child
Burned her head
Killed her snakes
Sent her off
To another world
In fond hope
Of bliss ignorance
But I broke
And reached out
And my daughter
Pinnacle of radiance
Moon of glory
Masquerading as human
Rattus the Second
I saved Linda
I saved her.*

Particularly moving entry. But it also lacks a great deal of context. Tara proved to be the most difficult about whom to dig up information. She is a gorgon, in many regards very much human, but with a mane of living, intertwined serpents. A True Snake, perhaps? I know very little about gorgons besides the fact that their snakes shed every month, a process which other accounts have described as debilitating and agonizing.

Benign overheard his wife discussing with herself – or with someone? – different courses of action to take should Anna indeed plan a return. This news, once relayed to Tara, is understandably simultaneously delightful and distressing: she might be reunited with her sister, but Larissa is cooking up a retaliatory move. But who or what is Larissa's source and how does she know what Anna is up to?

I am comfortably certain about several other things. Anna, also a Gorgon, was, like her sister, plagued with immortality. The Curse of Eternal Life, as it is called. From the only account from Larissa (which I have unfortunately lost) I have learned that the arrival of Anna brought with it a dramatic, overwhelming change to the climate of the city. Billowing grey clouds gathered and would not scatter. A dullness settled upon the city. Essentially prompting the mobilization of the hitherto inactive League.

And this might be a farfetched claim but I would go so far as to wager that Anna's Curse of Eternal Life was somehow the first-beginning of the Reign of Youth. The Youth's Ambrosia, which destroys their bodies but preserves their souls, is based on the very essence of the Curse.

This entry was also the first time I encountered the term "Fullness," which I have now taken to understand as a full rotation of a calendar cycle. It was at this point so many years ago that I, subtly, and then all at once, grasped the sheer magnitude of these events. I had already spent half a lifetime excavating these documents and trying to make sense of this narrative,

and I had become weary, and disenchanted, but it was Tara's story that really hit home. Larissa's murder, a terrible and yet seemingly isolated act, had brought together four distinct narrative history spaces, one thousand years apart.

From the journal of Terence Cevogh
Rattus the Second

Life is chess
Motion calculation subdued
Being without reason
Spouses in opposition
Break our matrimony
Bring forth rebellion
Touch our minds
In queer ways
Grey wintry daze
Bosoms afloat serpentine
Legitimate gorgon queen
Braced transdimensional impact
Beauty diminished songs
Bore a daughter
Out of place
Sent her away
Rattus the Second
But First Rattus
Anna no! Expelled
Protectors League prevailing
Banished to Turmoil
Gateway Beast priori
*
Empathy in dream
Mass breakout asunder
Beasts powerless, anarchy
Anna projected Fullness
Empathy in future
Larissa protector champion
Our only hope
*
Grasshoppers cicadas rattlesnakes
Symphony of death
*
Holding her face
Beautiful blazing green
Lies. Lies. Lies.

Terence's entry is our turning point, and, thanks to its depth, the richest and most contextual. Our protagonist here, resident of Enctar in Rattus the First, husband of Medusa, is an architect and, surprisingly, an immigrant. Terence moved to Enctar from Turmoil, a five-dimensional prison space suspended amongst Enctar and its neighbor worlds in the multiverse. In this tesseract are housed the most powerful and dangerous of the multiverse's criminals, and it is manned by a breed of creatures called Gateway Beasts, one of whom was Terence before he became estranged with his kind and opted to leave the tesseract.

In Rattus the First, after Anna's failed attempt to cross into Enctar, she was sent to Turmoil to live out the rest of eternity in a state of higher suspension. But... she escaped? Through a spacetime rift and planned to emerge in Rattus the Second? That is the truest explanation I can come up with given the context and circumstance.

Terence's allusion to Empathy in dreams is most likely a reference to Empathy link communication, a transdimensional technology which allows, as far as first-person accounts are concerned, auditory communication between individuals across the multiverse (I have a strong feeling this is also the technology that allows Medusa and Benign to communicate with Linda). From Terence's language I have surmised that he must have been informed of Anna's escape through Empathy. "Mass breakout asunder," which sounds like quite the dramatic undertaking on Anna's part.

Upon hearing this news, Terence, seemingly overnight, reaches out to the last surviving member of the Enctarian League, our good friend Larissa, one thousand years into the future.

This entry also showcases a curious tension of interest. Even though I know very little about their marriage, I very much get the sense that Medusa and Terence married in love and not out of any necessity. How then does Terence reconcile his love for his wife with his apparent duty to defeat his sister-in-law? What are his motivations? The tension is palatable in the closing lines of this entry. He sees "lies" in his wife's eyes during her monthly troubles. How does he feel about that?

Despite the obvious loss in material, for which I apologize profusely, I believe this entry provides a powerful foundation for our understanding of Anna's coming.

From the journal of Buddy Morfin
Rattus the Second

"Quick! Tell me!"

Girl in darkness

Who are you???

"Where am I?"

Groggy – lumpy head

"You're my Terrence

Come for me

Aren't you, dear?"

"Uh... excuse me?"

"My sister approaches!

Can't feel it?"

Confusion purposelessness overwhelming

Instantaneously physically electronically

Psychotically enormously affirming

I am Terence

*She is Tara
One Fullness later
We are reunited
Mission is complete?
Wrap my hands
Around her neck
Choke the life
Her recycled soul
Out of existence
My only opponent
This chess game
Defeated. Dead. Checkmate.*

I could not believe my eyes when I first read this account.

Working under the assumption that Buddy is the boy who walks into the Hall at the end of Gwen's entry, the context of this entry becomes a little more grounded. I really want to believe that the "girl in darkness" here is Gwen, because that scenario is the only one that makes sense.

Following is my interpretation of this flabbergasting entry, and the rationale behind the conclusions I have made.

Having successfully escaped from the Turmoil tesseract through a rift in time and space, Anna emerges in Enctar a thousand years into the future, where, as we have seen, the Reign of Youth prevails. In her timeline this could have happened overnight or across the span of centuries – the rift, and her immortality, ensure the inconsequentiality of time. Once she embarks again on a path into Enctar, her physical presence, which we know was potent enough to have drastic effects on the weather one thousand years prior, must have stirred the Ambrosia in Buddy's system and recalled his past incarnations. Identity became undone, unfurled, and limitless. Was Buddy's first incarnation Terence?

And what about Gwen? Is she not an Outlier? Is she a Youth as well? How was she reincarnated? What was the fate that brought husband and wife together after one thousand years? What was Anna coming back to?

*

My name is Euryale. In the multiverse millions of years ago my name was Saint Anna, because I had a plan and the plan was good and I wanted to make the world good. But it went horribly wrong and I was persecuted, imprisoned, and hated for eons thereafter. Now in this flimsy body I can do nothing but retrace my steps to understand where I was remiss the first time and try again. Enctar still stands and the Reign of Youth still stands and my sister's soul is still ensconced somewhere and so is Terence Cevogh's. Terence was mistaken, however, the first time, and the second time, and in his audacious attempts at heroism he ensured my success.

I had always planned to be imprisoned. The Turmoil tesseract was always an arena for my story. I had always known that my presence would bring about something marvelous and spectacular. The Curse that brewed inside me was too vast. I would sacrifice myself that first time. I would be imprisoned. I didn't care. My mere arrival sparked the end for Enctar as they knew it, the beginning of a new, weaker, submissive race. And I was right. I returned to find the Reign of Youth, a society too weak to keep trudging forward and too eager to exult in immediate luxuries. It was laughable.

I killed Terence and went back to my homeland.

But it is cold here. My windows are closed and the fire crackles with an indefatigable passion. But a chill settles around my bones, arresting, paralyzing, and I sit here pondering the consequences of my project. I cannot help but be in awe at the sheer magnitude of time and space, and the sheer futility of human endeavor. If the universe is one big machine, and we are all

cogs in it and have to toil tirelessly and agelessly in the grand black abyss of life, then tick-tock I shall not. I have gone too far, invested too much, lost far too much. This will be my last output before I part from this world. If someone, somewhere, sometime in the future happens upon this project, then remember my name, and know that the multiverse would have been a better place under Saint Anna.