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School Dreams: The Runaway Class

JEFFREY PFLAUM
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1

The cage rattles at first slowly
then louder and louder until the gates rip
away from the windows
in a spectacle of uncontrolled fury
catapulting through a compliant sky
they windmill to the oblivion
of dark space fathoms upward
the windows no longer barricaded
stand still transparent and bare observing
children as they look back at the windows
the light intensifies a shade brighter
every second in a rhythmical pulse
like someone's pumping illumination
from another world a blaze fires the glass
to yellow white orange their eyes blinded
by the extraordinary power of quick-paced
infinitesimal moments packed into one picture
of time frozen imprinted on students pointing
their faces to windows shattering into a trillion
specks of dust lit up and dispersing in air

2

the class sits in awe listening
to slow faint whistles
from space entering the room
circulating through their ears

gliding inside bodies lifting them
up for a dance around the room
the brilliance of a new light
is too much to bear
they scramble around desks
wild-eyed children
with a teacher sitting befuddled
pandemonium races through their heads
and pushes them to open space as the wind calls
with a gentle coolness to the skin and directs
the students to a free world in front of their eyes
dazzling in its glory *shout Hallelujah! Hallelujah!*

3

the wind curls itself around the student body
leading them to the promised land
of deep outer space
initiating the million kids march
one step into immaculate fluorescence
and not knowing what to expect
yea but they walk into the valley of light
unaware rootless aimless one-by-one
together they walk the plank
at the room's end into waiting clouds
that swallow them up their lives harmonizing
inside a celestial canvas an escape to freedom
withdrawal commences as they leap off
the end of the world into a mile-high blue daze
a separate reality sends a soothing flow of cool

against their faces leading to a shortcut through
clouds and sky with yellows blues golds
reflecting off their skin

4

as the teacher stands motionless
looking square into a white blaring rectangle
mesmerized by its glow the mentholated
stream filters through hitting his face and he raises
his arms in desperation to the icy void crying out
to anyone in space who will listen *where are you
going? what are you doing? come back please*
his hands sweat with fear he begs his students
to reflect but the teacher's protests fade away
into an azure sky and he realizes it's show time
for the magic theater of the mind where the master
watches the farce and becomes part of it
because this episode won't click off and he knows it
the pedagogue makes his move and enters
the Broadway drama to pursue a runaway class
and like his children he ventures out of the classroom
into a playhouse of wild blue yonder

5

dream on dream on dream on as students sail
like gliders through infinity and join together
in one heavenly step to the oblivion land of
the lost and misbegotten who have left
the premises of the school the caged box
and all the zero hours driving themselves
further into porous firmaments

our big sky country a paradoxical universe
the teacher yields to the powers of light color
wind and cloud as he jumps into a friendly sky
a panicked voice pleads his case *come back*
please please the discord of scared and alone
stammers through his sad message in a Magritte sky
echoing through the ozone and boomerangs back
to his ears with the sounds of nothingness
no one's here no one's home nada nada nada
unbearable coldness and oxygen debt
anesthetize him in a final moving portrait posed
on a cloud with arms waving in the wind
its soft fingers and luminous gleam lay tracks
around his entire body and jumbled life leaving
misty trails forged by heaven's perfect hands
now holding up the communal wires
between teacher and students

6

the wind blows inside pathways
joining them together
with tidings from the far side
we love outer space and want to stay here
away from your world we found a home
where we are untouchable because there's
no reality except the one we see in our mind
return? why? as the twisted channels
of haze nudge closer to the teacher's ear
he listens to whispers of a mystical beat
with dissonant moods and rhythms
that have eluded this person like everything else

from today's events he remains on the cloud
looking into new worlds *what are your chances
of awakening? and then again where are
the children? will they come down? can you
find them cruising in a Magritte sky at peace?
how can you make contact? and where will
it lead you?*

7

but in pursuit of the exiles'
elusive lives that you sketched for years
by entertaining audiences going through
routines the stages of your life to right here
the invisible wall an exodus for students
into aqua nirvana and you too
made a choice because you walked into
the vast entanglement *what are you
searching for in the magic theater?*
say good-bye to your Self you are out
of the cage all those years playing
el maestro and now the spectators
have disappeared and look at you
fallen on a cloud logging through space
trying to recover what is missing *but
what is? I ask you the students
are absent mark them down in the white void
and where does that leave you instructor?
scanning the skies inside a foggy web
tripping through the cosmos
contemplating a return to your Self?*