

This American Dreamtime is brought to you by FLKR™

TEXT ~ ONOME EKEH
ILLUSTRATION ~ RYAN SANCHEZ

I.

- Have you done this before?

- You keep asking. What's it to you?

- Just doing my job.

- Whatever.

- So you know this can last up to 16 hours. And it can go horribly, painfully wrong...

- Will you stop! What do we have here?

He spreads out an array of small neat translucent envelopes with miniature labels—illustrated to advertise their contents—a few Neo-noirs (Gotham on Ice, Redlight Soho) stuff you'd do if you were doing the bar pick-up scene for the night... the Bladderunner-esque ones pique my interest (Electric Sheep, Molecular Tango) — too edgy; an underwater fantasia (Psyche: Seahorse) I'd heard of the series, but maybe too Discovery Channel... A werewolf scenario — scary, I bristle at the thought...

- What's this?

- This? This is something I usually don't have — it's kind of a bestseller, or so they say...

- Really? This?

The label is literally a fairy tale scene: a lit up forest clearing, a thatched cottage made of rosy light interiors cobbled in river brushed stones and winter creepers: a calm blanket of snow plays rhapsody with pine trees and curious fauns peeking into the rose-lit dream of domesticity... Behind and above it all, an insane whirl of sunset. All it was missing was the Christmas card glitter and it pulsed with—

- Not something I'd recommend.

- Why?

- A) It's kind of perverse for a beginner and B) It's kind of perverse, period.

- The «Bestseller»?

- Also, you know about McKenna's law of Opiates, Dreams and Hallucinogens?

- No.

- Do the appropriate drug for your surroundings. Go Neo-Noir, Sci-Fi or Light Goth. This stuff is bucolic—and probably not in a good way—not if you're in an urban environment

- Sounds crazy. I'll take it.

- Are you sure? It doesn't seem that compatible.

- Oh please.

I peruse the label again, the title is enough to dissuade me from backing off: «Home With the Kinkade's For Christmas?» That is perverse! Thanks Doc, I'll take one.

II.

A Brief History

«Cinema is truth at 24 frames per second»

At the end of the last millennium, CINEMAX a cable TV entertainment company, went pharmaceutical with a new discovery that single-handedly dismantled the future of the entertainment industry. The pheromonal patch, FLKR™ was first introduced as a group therapy tool for schizophrenics, but gained widespread recreational use when the FDA, in some bizarre and probably unmonitored instance, approved it for over-the-counter use. FLKR™ is based on a mood regulator that accesses and manipulates the Pineal Gland—modulating its access to light and creating specific rhythms that regulate your reality. FLKR™ is an internal magic lantern generating the speed of life.

You may recall, Original Sin was velocity based: mankind fell, and thus ever since, it is speed that has determined the tenor of life — speed things up and we have the early comedy of Chaplin and Keaton becomes apparent, slow the same sequence down and discover the tragedy in things... An unexpected cocktail of fast and slow makes for dramedy, and so on. Human perception is always a matter of speed. Consider FLKR™ as the DJ who remixes your neo-cortex, thanks to nano-cocktails, FLKR™ gets specific on pheromonal levels. Better still,



each FLKR™ experience is like a snowflake, one of a kind, never to be replicated. Herein lies the genius: FLKR™ access those parts of the cortex that traffic in childhood memories and associations. With FLKR™, it was all in your head to begin with.

III.

I lied, This was my first time on the patch. The first time I was able to afford it. My curiosity quickly dwindles into anxiety as the room begins to pulsate gently, then aggressively. My companion fluctuates in a sensory swirl of black wipes, white-outs: there/not there...

- You all right, kid?

I witness him morph into a kindly wizard, a Wonderful Wizard of Oz...

BLACK/WIPE/HERE/NOT/THERE

A blow to the head and the scene pulsates with...

COLOR. LIGHT. PASTEL. PEPPERMINT. LAVENDER. Snowflake intersect...

The wizard is static, of course – only a painting!

- Kiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiid awwwwwwwwwwwwwrrriiight?????????

I'm fine.

Scent of warm cinnamon wafts through, an electric phase signal on my tongue tells me mother is in the kitchen baking. In another room strains of The Little Drummer Boy escape into the swirl of color, it is almost slowed down by the color saturation. Not so much the way I remember it. It must be Christmas. Elsewhere, a conversation continues with the wizard. Elsewhere I note I have opened the gateway to schizophrenia, but who cares?

Snowflakes intersect and tickle. The waft of Christmas cookies swirling into a world of neon brights, softening into saturated pastels. The Mystical Letter **N** levitates before me, then disappears into a camouflage of surprise wood panelling. **N** is for **NAUSEA**.

Everything from my stomach, comes up to my head.

In other realities, the Wizard speaks in splinters, they aggregate into: **«Rough Patch.»**

But you didn't hear that from me.

IV.

The Best Seller

At Home With the Kinkade's for Christmas, released in 2001, became one of FLKR's best selling holiday patches – it by far out trumped the Norman Rockwell series – which became surprise Art House favorites, perhaps because in their Frank Capra-ness, they invoked Jimmy Stewart, Spencer Tracy – but really Jimmy Stewart, figure-head of right thinking American

Masculinity – who smoked Marlboros and slyly did double duty in the shadow worlds of European directors like Hitchcock and Preminger. Thus the «Rockwells» became Hitchcock-ian by default. On the other hand, the Kinkade series, licensed by FLKR™, based on the works of late 20th century American artist, Thomas Kinkade, a self-proclaimed «painter of light», were immediately dismissed by the intelligentsia as kitsch, but were instant mainstream hits. What no one predicted was the series underground appeal: the Kinkade's with their play on American Fantasia, in some distant time outside of time, were exactly what some philosopher had termed «machines that suppressed time». This was the «Once Upon A Time» of fairytales. This was America's own custom-fitted dreamtime.

V.

The Shrink asks me to lie down: Tell me about your obsession with Snow White.

- How did I get here?

- I was hoping you might tell me. What is it about Snow White that appeals to you?

- It doesn't.

- Then why are you here?

- Are you part of my hallucination?

With this sliver of awareness the faux-shrink disintegrates, leaving me in Snow White's Cottage. (But isn't this my living room?). The walls are giving way to saturated pastels pulsating light. I remember what fascinated me about Snow White – she was like Goldilocks, but with dark hair, wandering into a cosy cottage, but never to wander out. Never to wander out. Never to wander out. I begin to spasm as the Mysterious Letter **N** hangs in the air, flashing then disappearing into the cosy ambiance. Then flashes again.

N is for **NEVER**.

VI.

Label Warning

Label Warning: FLKR™ and PERSPEK™ may cause any of and all of the following symptoms – epilepsy, convulsions, heart attacks – temporary blindness, insomnia, synaesthesia, loss of balance, temporary deafness, temporary schizophrenia, nausea, vomiting, amnesia, drowsiness, rash, dementia and may irritate eyes. FLKR™ IS NOT RECOMMENDED for pregnant women, nursing mothers, people with a history of depression, epileptics, asthmatics, people with stress related disorders, people with a history of violence, lack of self control and diabetics. IT IS NOT ADVISABLE to mix FLKR™ or PERSPEK™ with any medications, narcotics, opiates or alcohol. FLKR™ and PERSPEK™ SHOULD NOT TO BE USED while driving or operating or heavy machinery. Maybe harmful if swallowed.

KEEP OUT of reach of children and household pets. FLKR™ is for entertainment purposes only. Please consult your physician before use.

VII.

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VIII.

American Dreamtime – How Does FLKR™ Work?

(From the FLKRpedia) From the cave drawings of ancient Lascaux to the latest strides in pharmaceuticals, light modulation has played a role in the animation of human perception. The so-called «Third Eye» or the the human pineal gland is operated on an available light basis and thus regulates our dream sequences – awake or asleep. FLKR™ often referred to as American Dreamtime, especially since it functions as a waking trance, is an alchemy of light regulating neurotransmitters and customized circadian beats. This circadian rhythm is programmed with the use of a morse code sequence of light and darkness which for significant stretches of time can overtake the users own in-house bio-rhythms and superimpose a subjective sensory experience alien to the user's psyche. This can last from a few hours to almost 20 – depending on a myriad of factors such as affinity, resistance, openness...

Originally developed for psychotherapy sessions, the patch fell out of use within medical communities. It was suspected (but never proven) to provide potential gateways to dementia and schizophrenia. Indeed when this American Dreamtime oft times operates as a nightmare: in cases where there is intrinsic ideological resistance in which several hours of a subjects' experience can be characterized as a «bad patch» or a «rough patch».

IX.

Something/someone enters the room. A small bundle of malevolence. Dwarves are here? They find Snow White sprawled on the floor. They suspect she is a victim of American Dreamtime and/or the Mysterious Letter **N**. **N** can be for **NIGHTMARE**. Either way, there's nothing they can do about it. It's a Bad Patch and she has to ride it out.

X.

Product Placement

It wasn't too long after the advent of PERSPEK™ and FLKR™ that the world of advertising attempted to insert itself into this new internal mode of communication. It's intrusion was subtle: real world advertising began to focus on archetypal images absorbed unconsciously, but triggered into meaningful experience with the help of FLKR™.

The FDA proposition to regulate advertising in FLKR™ was mostly brought on, not unsurprisingly, by Thomas Kinkade's blatant Disney product placements in his «patchworks.» Disney had commissioned Kinkade to commemorate it's 50th anniversary with a Snow White scenario of the fairytale heroine happening upon the dwarves cottage in the forest. To boost sales, this Snow White Scenario imposed itself in all Kinkade related patchworks regardless of theme.

This was just the tip of the iceberg; more unsettling were the appearances of Jesus in the Kinkade schema. Many claimed to have met the Christ while under the influence of FLKR™, some even went as far as experiencing religious conversions thanks to meeting Jesus in Kinkadia. It was this part that drew fire from Evangelical communities across the USA. At first there was nation-wide euphoria at the prospect of meeting their Lord and Saviour, then the more circumspect views kicked in: not only were these Jesus sightings encouraging drug use: the main charge leveled against Kinkade was that his faux religious confections could only be in service of now fallen Angel of Light–Lucifer: for he was producing exactly the sort of «false Christ», that Christ himself had warned of in the bible.

In the controversial «The Church vs. FLKR™» case, the FDA and the Supreme Court were forced to confront the manufacture of religious experience as product placement. Their rulings would have caused disruptions in realtime and altered religious institutions status as not-for-profit entities. In the end it was pressure from various Christian communities and not the courts (the case was suspended indefinitely) or the FDA that forced Kinkade to take Jesus off the table.

XI.

It's a **Bad Patch**. I have to ride it out.

XII.

Personal Appearances

If advertising and product placement in FLKR™ were now under control, there were no restrictions on «personal appearances.» In fact Kinkade (and a few others) argued it was their right as artists to insert themselves into their work. Most disturbing is Kinkade's «how» of insertion, it is unproven, but rumor has it that his propensity in realtime for «territorial pissing» spilled over into his patchworks: traces of his bodily waste fluids are supposedly mixed into the patchworks – to give a personal flavor. Naturally the FDA would never approve such methods.

Kinkade is known to appear mostly as a benign jolly psychopomp in Kinkadia, the friendly postman, the kindly uncle, the pipe smoking psychotherapist... However there were increasing reports of «rough patches» in which he would manifest as gaggle of foul-mouthed cigar smoking imps; a randy dwarf; a horny devil – always lurking in the crevices of the shadows that made the light so surreal... More esoteric was the Mysterious Letter N – often interpreted as N for Netherworld. Negativity. Nightmare... The presence of the Letter N is the underbelly of American Dreamtime, it's darkside. It's horror is said to be palpable, but its appearances cannot be described without further descent into psychoses.

Kinkade categorically denies any sinister function of the Mysterious Letter N. The N exists, he claims, as a tribute to his wife, **Nannette**.

XII.

– Tell me about your fascination with Snow White.

– I told you. I'm not!

– Then why are here?

– Are you supposed to be my shrink?

I wait, this time the hallucination lingers, not falling for the same trick as before. It was like a self-improving virus, eventually the antibiotics stopped working. I employ another tack:

– The Black Civil Rights mantra «I am Black and Beautiful» is a latter day translation of the Bible's Song of Solomon, where his love interest, the Shulamite states: «I am dark, but comely».

There is no response, a strong sensation hits my nose: **ammونيا**.

I am lying in a stinking crevice of darkness, a blackhole. Far off are the unattainable swirls of light ominous light curtain, hiding in their folds the Mysterious Letter **N**.

I recall Anselm Kiefer's painting, Shulamite a vast holocaust memorial of dark oven bricks and gold straws like golden hairs like goldilocks... Dark brooding with glimmers of salvation lodged in speckles of paint. **HEY!** The psycho therapist(?) interrupts my train of thought – **Hey! You're losing the picture. This is KINKADIA. Ditch the Shulamite.** – All of this spelled out in smoke.

XIII.

The Mysterious Letter N

In the Book of Esther, in the Old Testament, the Hebrews are is saved from a holocaust thanks to the interventions of a former beauty queen turned wife and concubine of the ruler. With all the near-death swipes and misses and the miraculous denouement, not once is God mentioned in this book. Or so it seems. The letters YHWH are not readily apparent, unless one reads the Hebrew verses like an acrostic–diagonally, with the first letter of each line– then the hidden name of **G_d** appears. It would seem Thomas Kinkade had something similar in mind with his work: N is for Nanette, but also for Netherworld, Nothingness and No.

XIV.

«This is the right picture. This is Kinkadia. This is built from my own sweat (and piss). This is American Dreamtime»

The darkness pixilates, fluctuates.

Blink and **N** is for **NASTY**. Why can't it be for **NICE**?

I understand immediately the meaning of painting light: darkness is required, and things or people to shove into it. Sensory assault: cinnamon cookies baking in the oven; the Shulamite baking in the oven; the hidden name of **K_NK_D** hanging over head; shock ammonia wafting above. A rough patch. How many hours, years, aeons till the **NIGHTMARE** ends.

N is for so many things, sit here with me and we will reverse its mysteries.

Onome Ekeh lives in Brooklyn, NY and has been known to do her own dental work. She is currently working on her film script «The Curiously Dressed Gentleman».

Ryan Sanchez lives in Brooklyn, NY and has been known to do her own dental work. She is currently working on her film script «The Curiously Dressed Gentleman».

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