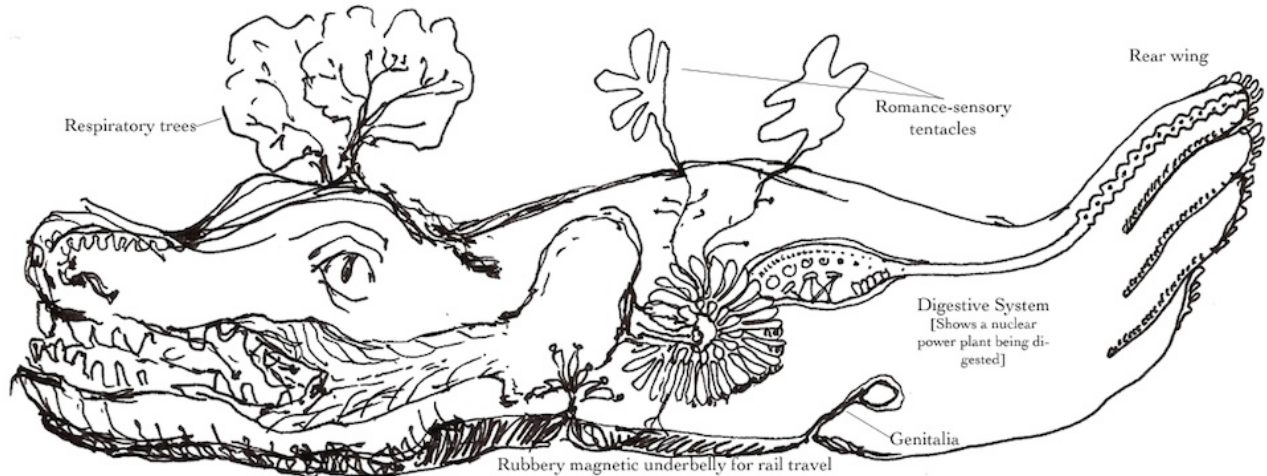


THE RAILWAY ROCKET DOG



The anatomy of the Railway Rocket Dog

When the government in a panic stripped the country of its railroad tracks to supply metal for weapons that the society had devolved to need, the railway travelling species of the Rocket Dog was of course, heavily affected. With these natural habitats and means of travel destroyed, their immobilised bodies lay scattered in massive numbers across what is today known as the Desert of the Dying Dog. This remarkably compassionate and romantic creature was like many other things, greatly underestimated, and the society was largely ignorant of the significance of the demise of the Rocket Dog. At the time, each Dog that lay parched and wheezing, knew perfectly well of its own doom, the coming doom of everything else, and even the glimpses of hope that were the saviours to come. Embracing those final hours, hope of survival was acceptedly discarded. A mass extinction took place beneath the blazing sun. The hairy romance-sensitive feelers slithered through pores of bellies and backs and reached feebly up to the skies - the Rocket Dogs absorbed all the romance left in the air and began to make beautiful poetry.

A lone travelling, hardy old woman came across the first dying Dog, and so touched was she by the lyrics it sang that she abandoned survival as a priority there and then. Overcome by passion, she sought strength to venture on through the wilting masses. All the dying Dogs were singing, and though her heart throbbed with overwhelming melancholy, her face was lit with purpose as she sat amongst them listening to and documenting their words, etching their poetry onto scraps of bark with bloody fingernails. They stroked her face with their gentle tentacles, thinking: *We have touched the saviour!*

Around them, the smokey, post-war world had quietly brewed a new Earth. Wild-eyed, naked human beings scampered through luscious jungles and towns that looked like crumbling teeth, desperately scavenging for splinters of life. Society had disintegrated, and allowed the biosystem's creeping imbalances to go by unnoticed. At nature's gradual but dramatic pace, towering metropolises of nuclear power plants had formed in the absence of their greatest predator: the Railway Rocket Dog.

A toxic massacre ensued and humanity was reduced to practical extinction.

Legend has it that, many years later, a lone traveller scavenging the desert for splinters of life, had come across some delicious bark. He was seized with a hysterical nostalgia on recognising the ancient symbols etched upon them and produced unintelligible grunts in a frustrated attempt to recover those clear sounds he had once spoken long ago.

The saviour was touched. He did not eat the bark, but gathered the rest buried with the bones and returned

with them to his cave, where passion fed him understand the inscription. Abandoning the survival way of life, his heart welled up and out of his tears as he discovered poetry like stars and galaxies, drawing chalk lines on cave walls, working like a mathematician of love.