

DAMANEK



GIANT ELECTRIC PEA

Taken from the album "Making Shore" by DamaneK (2023)

Oculus [Overture and Acts I to IV]

"These are the peculiar events, as told to me by my good friend in his own words..."

Introduction

My dear friend, if this tale is a cautionary one of 'look before you leap' or 'beware of what you wish for' then, so be it...

I pride myself as being somewhat scholarly and able to pick up things relatively quickly whilst also being well-versed in both literature and in the music that I love.

It is a funny thing that we can often look on blindly and not be fully aware of our surroundings, we go through life oblivious of so many of its details and perhaps my life would have been very different if this had continued to be the case.

Act I – Spot the Difference?

That morning, I was getting ready in front of the long dress mirror in the Study, my mind full of plans for the day and the many tasks to complete. As I focussed in on the task at hand (namely an unruly tie), my mind was suddenly alerted to an odd distraction. Over my shoulder, in the mirror's reflection, on the mantelpiece behind me, where carefully, a small urn containing my young son's ashes had always been placed, there was now something else...something out of place, and my own precious container was nowhere to be seen!

I swung around and looked behind me... no, there was no mistake, the urn was there sat in its normal resting place...I turned back slowly to stare into the glass...in the reflection though there was no urn, some other box stood in its stead.

The initial shock waned rapidly and profound curiosity plus a compulsion to solve a mystery took its place.

I could not deny the evidence of my own eyes, the reflected image was somehow altered. I reasoned that in order for this to be the case, I must assume that in fact I was looking into some 'other' place, some other dimension? another study? another life?

Over the next few days, I re-checked with the reflected image never wavering. I studied books and esoteric writings about the nature of multiple universes and some truths were revealed to me. Under certain circumstances, with pure will power and focussed meditation aligned, reality could be bent and transference between dimensional planes could perhaps be achieved.

It might be possible to cross over and so now I was determined to try and do just that!

Act II – The Corridor

I had practised the studied techniques and so, a little unsteadily, I attempted to push through the surface of the mirror. It took many days of effort before I got my first positive results. I also had to calm my nerves, as the prospect of sticking my head through a 'solid' boundary was not a pleasant thought. As I pushed my fingers through the now rippling lens, a hand identical to my own appeared, forcing its way into my room, mirroring my endeavours...emerging was the hand of my reflected duplicate. Strangely, that seemed to make some sense, to cross over, it seemed I had to change places with my 'other' reflected self.

The moment had now come and with a deep breath, I eased my head through the barrier.

Another mystery, another revelation! Instead of emerging straight into the awaiting facing room, I found myself peering into a corridor. A space between the Worlds, normally invisible to us, but providing an eerie no man's land, silent and semi lit. The other unpredicted consequence was that as I looked to the left, I could see an endless series of my own form stretching far up the corridor and to the right of me a similar endless series of myself, but facing in the opposite direction.

It appeared that my 'clone' had his supporters too!

I decided to push on through and found myself now standing in the alternate Study, I turned and looked back at the mirror and my reflected brother stood staring back at me.

I moved quickly to the mantelpiece and examined a small, jewelled box sat there, inside I found a dimly remembered pocket watch and chain (one that I had always coveted since spotting it in a local shop window, but had never owned).

The sudden enormity of my predicament bore down on me. I was in an alternate life, virtually the same but with some differences and over here, my son's ashes were absent for example.

Was he still alive over here then?

To be able to survive and be undistruptive, I had to be extremely careful. I could not change anything that might break the delicate reality balance, I needed to act out my part in this drama, performing in the role of myself.

Over the next days and months, I perfected the art of crossing over back and forth and was able to move at will. I had also made another discovery, that the many images of me to the left in the corridor were multiple channels into variant other dimensions...I could choose to enter a different alternative Study by moving up the corridor and entering there and then afterwards would find my way back to my own original starting place and enact the returning.

As I moved and chose each 'doorway' left, so did my reflected brother to the right.

In this way, I was able to live my life with boundless variations ... I was able to hold my lost son again, walk my old favourite pet dog, vicariously sampling other possible ways in which my life might have been, but always careful not to overstay my welcome less I become discovered.

And so, my days could have been simply spent happily hopping in and out of realities if a disaster had not struck!

Act III – Passive Ghost

Just another trip I blithely thought. A potentially uneventful skip and jump into a new space and then home, back in time for tea. Idyllically passing time and exploring possibilities, observing and learning. I was feeling very proud of my own cleverness and that really should have been enough of a warning.

I stepped out into my chosen landing room, but immediately felt strange. As usual, I surveyed my new surroundings eager to spot any differences to examine. The mantelpiece again had changed.

A new urn was there...what could that mean this time? As I read the name plate, the blood drained from my already paling skin. I shuddered with overwhelming panic as I saw my own name embossed into the copper name plate.

My failing strength, my semi lucid appearance all confirmed a tsunami of dread...in this reality, I was in fact dead. I turned to look at the reflection in the mirror, but he was still hearty, looking at full strength whilst I could not muster the needed vigour to push my hand back through the glass again.

It appeared that I was now to be marooned here.

The only slim chance of escape was if my reflected partner decided to take pity and come back through and rescue me, but was that likely?

As days, months and years passed, I was simply an observer. On this side of the mirror, the people passed through me unaware of my presence and in the mirror itself, well, life went on. I watched the room change, the décor alter as my own reflected image got older and rounder.

Hope was all but faded and the lyrics to my favourite songs were haunting and taunting me, running around my head as I stood there impotent staring into the mirror.

Waiting.

Waiting.

Act IV – A Welcoming Hand

Then one day, I was taken aback as the Mirror suddenly went black, covered over on the other side by some shroud but with a small crack of light through which I could still see a little. A second urn now stood on their mantelpiece. I was inconsolable, this was surely the end of all things, and I would soon be doomed forever.

Then, unexpectedly, light burst from the mirror as the drape was forcefully pulled back.

I stopped, transfixed, looking into the eyes of my now younger mirrored self and I felt my own life force returning. His hand started to extend towards me through the space between our Worlds.

I leaped through the glass, down through the corridor and found my original path to home once more.

I was back again, safe and returned to that very first instant when I had initially contemplated travelling and now, I was fully restored to the form as I had been at that moment in time.

In the days that followed, I regained my life track and deliberated on all that had occurred.

It had been amazing to have had the experiences of endless lives and to have walked in their footsteps like some hybrid amalgamation of stories by Lewis Carroll, Oscar Wilde and H.G. Wells, but, perhaps, it was a far better and braver path to embrace the life that I had originally been given to me and to make my best future here.

I had no wish to travel further and so I turned away from the Mirror for the last time and in the imagined voice of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven", I vowed 'Nevermore' .

The End

Lyrics

Act I: Spot the difference?

I am not Alice, but I am looking through the glass
with each glance considered, locked in as if by chance
I remain in stillness, to concentrate my stare
Counting and considering the aspects hanging in the air...
that consume the other place, the reflection, the clone
facing just my image, frozen and alone
But that room is so familiar, every item holds a space
to mimic my own surroundings, which I now carefully retrace

In almost every detail, the twin reveals a peer
but my eyes are drawn to the mantelpiece and the casket's clear veneer
The polished plate is a match, but something there's a fraud
the name there scribed is contrary to the one behind me with its cargo stored

My beloved stranger, my familiar shade
My alien imitation, my subconscious charade

The fire ahead seems warmer, but my body has turned to ice
the slide of clammy moisture detects the warning inner voice
How can there be changes in a fixed point in Time?
But the facts cannot escape me, that object is not mine!

I strain to see it clearer, but the angle defeats the gaze
I must not cross the boundary or pass beyond the glaze
Returning later to the crime, the scene remains the same
Whichever way I contort, there is very little left to gain

Steadfast, I fixate on the one developed flaw
that the box that holds my son's ashes, has changed! of that I'm sure
and the only way to prove it is to open up some kind of doorway

My beloved stranger, my familiar shade
My alien imitation, my unconscious charade

Days passed by quite slowly, as I wrestled with the enigma
I must cross like a beam if I can only find the right trigger
If a mind can really transpose upon matter,
I might slip though the boundary (if the pane does not shatter)
to literally travel and reverse my position,
the negative form of a dimensional magician

...So, I must try

Act II: The Corridor

Like fingers through ice, I slip the barrier
Your hand now reaches out to me
With perfect timing we coordinate
To dance in perfect harmony

Penetration and emergence
inch by inch we counteract
As my head becomes immersed again
within the impossible tract

A glance to the left, endless ways forward
over to the right, endless back
We are so many, we are legion
Countless faces to track...

To and fro
Light and dark
Pleasure mixed with pain
(A niche in a broken gap in the plain)

Hope and despair
It's here and then it's there
the puzzle remains because
this space should not exist (and yet it does!)

I practice my art and I can travel at will
I slip between the mystic cracks
and I walk all the Worlds, the Worlds within
I can choose which ones to attach

I am in control of my own destinies
I pick and select the locales
and the corridor offers me up the choice
to traverse all these open canals

Enter myriad rooms
Enter myriad lives
Live countless generations and sample the 'other' side

I touch, I listen, I see
I laugh and I cry,
the governing overseer to a million of 'me'

I can walk my old dog again
Spend time with my beautiful boy
A chance of various opportunities

My sorrows and my joys
And you will never know the wonders,
the wonder in every terrain
but I'm careful not to reveal myself
to the actors within this domain

Enter myriad rooms
Enter myriad lives
Live countless generations and sample the 'other' side

I touch, I listen, I see
I laugh and I cry,
the governing overseer to a million of 'me'

Act III: Passive ghost

The months of travel had changed me as I lived the new points of view
I chanced to try and change the Past and make some things anew
Perhaps there would be a price to pay, for power always comes at a cost
but little did I know what that would be until the day that I was lost

I stepped into a new location (as I had done so many times before)
Perusing the room for clues and changes, tallying up a score
My gaze was stopped fixed on the shelf, the casket, the plate and the name
I read my own title emblazoned there, embossed atop the grain

I admit to being curious, but soon fear was then exchanged
My form was now translucent, but my reflection stood unchanged
I felt the drain of energy, I no longer had the control
to force my way through the barriers and reach the homebound goal

Events went on without me, as all I could do was observe
I was missing remembered part of a life, that I once deserved
Watching without ending, transfixed, I stood and faced the glass
Waiting for some chance that my partner there would call me back at last

But the years passed by unyielding, with me rooted to this spot
The reflected rooms kept changing, to a clock that would not stop
I myself as observer, watched my body start to age and decay
The triumphs of my former ego and zest, trapped in some other ballet

In this "Time Machine", "Dorian Gray" mashup
Old Wells was turning the dial
While Oscar remarked that I was "not being talked about"
(I could not manage a smile)
In my hopelessness, Joni kept singing
+ "...you don't know what you've got till it's gone"
till the Animals' "We gotta get out of this place..." accepted the vocal baton

But this is not a fantasy, this is not the Wizard of OZ
and yes, there may be "no place like home" and perhaps, there never was?
I'm caught in a trap, with no way to get back, a fate that I created alone
so I can sing all those lines and harmonise, but this bird will still not have flown...

Act IV: A welcoming hand

Today something changed. I witness a room in black
The mirror covered over but I can see to the back
Their casket has a partner and mine still stands alone
The end of days is coming, and I still need to atone

A week spent in dark contemplation, I dug deep into my soul
To a blinding realisation that once would have once chilled me to the bone

"But at least I'm spared that!"

Humour to counter the debt

Awaiting the judgement that I deserve, Mea Culpa with regret...

Light again fills my room, the curtain pulled back

I stare unbelieving at my younger self (no longer insomniac)

My thoughts are fast cascading, with no time to pause

My feelings have returned, I'm back on course

A leap across the Corridor, I'm back in my room once more

Locking eyes with my 'other', shaken to the core

The moment reset, by life and then death and through prayer

It's a chance to regain the thread I dropped

and take the hand that I was dealt

To accept my one path and embrace the essence I once felt

...to have passed beyond the dream

...to have gained a thousand moments

...to have played out the final scenes and then awoken

...to be gifted a chance to view, all the choices that could have been mine

...to be swept up in a moment in time

Love and loss, sorrow and joy, apportioned in equal lines

resting in an uneasy balance, entwined

My wanderings are now over, and it is time to close the door

I turn away from the mirror as Poe's Raven cries "Nevermore".

+ Note: I 'borrowed' cameo motifs and lyrics (bits and pieces) from Joni Mitchell, The Animals, Elvis Presley, Yip Harburg and the Beatles - plus a passing musical nod reference to 'The Remembering - High the Memory' by Yes so, thanks to them all" (The Author).

Credits

Guy Manning - Lead / Backing Vocals, Keyboards, Acoustic Guitar & Instruments, Loops, Samples, Percussion

Sean Timms - Keyboards, Backing Vocals, Programming

Marek Arnold - Saxes, SeaBoard, Additional Keyboards

Plus Our Guests:

Brody Thomas Green	Drums	<i>[Courtesy of 'Southern Empire']</i>
Cam Blokland	Electric Guitars	<i>[Courtesy of 'Southern Empire']</i>
Nick Sinclair	Bass	
Riley Nixon-Burns	Trumpet	
Linda Pirie	Flute/Piccolo	
Julie King	Backing Vocals	
Kevin Currie	Backing Vocals	
Amanda Timms	Backing Vocals	

All music and lyrics written by **Guy Manning**

Arrangements: **Guy Manning** and **Sean Timms**

Album front cover: **Caz Reason**