

Salt Lick Plateau

by R.S. Dawgstein

Fishnet shaped lightning erupted around the traveler. The malfunctioning grid snapped the gateway shut, causing him to rebound back to the world. But was it 'his' world?

The dark tunnel collapsed. Sky and ground reappeared. An Ibizan hound, brown and white with a manlike body, clothes tattered into dust, found himself nude. Lying upon a vast dome of white rock. Befuddled by the discharge, ears still ringing. He panted for a bit, opened his eyes. Taking in a cautious glance. Ears pinned back at the inexplicable surrounding him. The dome like rocky summit of dirty white rock appeared to be hovering like an airship in clear air.

Past memories of working for an Oil and Gas drilling company choosing this moment to flood an addled brain. Questing for gas in a Louisiana bayou town sitting on a cypress forested salt dome. Acting as a concerned good-ole-boy explaining to the locals the drilling would have no effect on the ground beneath them. And the vast salt dome beneath their swampy feet? No different than the salt lick block one would nail to the fence post for one's horse or cow.

He shook himself, ears flapping back and forth. Less addled now. Head somewhat clearer. The dog rubbed his eyes and opened them again. The firmament beneath was still there. It appeared to be high above the ground. Breathable air. Sky looking blue and earth like. Where am I?

The hound slowly drew himself into kneeling position. He shook his head again, long ears flapping like stiff flag. Brown pigmented canid nostrils flared, sniffing about. Long white muzzle scanning the surrounding terrain of 'rock'. It resembled dirty white quartzite. Dimpled, heavily pitted with crystalline planes. A clawed finger scratched it's surface, finding it surprisingly soft. The material gathering up around his finger claw. He raised his hand, sniffing the sample. Dog tongue swept over it. Salt...ancient sea salt. With an odd organic tang to it. Where did this stuff come from?

He looked ahead. Far beyond the rocky, hovering block was a dirt plain, populated with distant buildings like equipment boxes, vast snake like cables with power tower sized poles driven into the perimeter of a circular dirt driveway that itself enclosed straight lined dirt trenches in a familiar pentagram pattern. Behind it loomed a square metallic mountain range.

Familiarity came at last. He was back at the Agriculture Lab! Oh crap, the experiment! It failed! Trying to save energy to use a summoning grid for transport by dimensioning the gateway went agog!

But what is this thing I'm sitting on? Think.

Recollections that the Agriculture Lab served two purposes; genetic research into non-domesticated herbivores and act as a cover for Computational Demonology. The summoning grid had been set up in the yard next to the deer pen. A pen with wooden fence posts and barbed wire. Something as innocuous as a white block nailed on top of a wooden post. The very post he had bumped into while setting up equipment for the test.

That white block nailed on top of one particular barbed wire fence post...

...of course! That friggen salt lick block! The dog barked with relief, feeling his vocal cords buzz instead of emitting a laugh. He had indeed returned back to the world. But dimensionally reduced as well!

How small am I?

Small enough to lie on a salt lick block as big as a salt dome! His best guess he was likely as big or a bit smaller than a finger claw at least. Bone tired, the hound reclined, finding himself licking the rocky plain of salt beneath him again for the salt. Smacking his lips, tasting salt and dried tangy drool coating it. Definitely not canid. Herbivore.

The hound felt a tremor buzzing up and down his spine. That ancient mammalian instinct of being perceived by someone else flooded over him. He gazed upwards from his claw sized perch on a salt block mounted on a seemingly vast barb wire fence that enclosed the...the Deer Pen!

And looming forth behind him, was a rapidly approaching yellow and white furred squall line of muzzle, belonging to the pen's cervine occupant. Like a storm cloud, the nose dropped a pinkish tornado of tongue upon the salt block. Sweeping towards the wee tiny dog.

He was not alone.