

WONDER & WONEST

Future Folklore: Bedtime Stories of Tomorrow

Glimpsed by Marlin Chetty

(Reported by OKSee _ who blinked again)

Wonder is the wide-eyed dreamer, always searching for what might be.

Wonest is the honest one, speaking truth with a sense of wonder.

Together they gather bedtime fables from the future stories that sound fantastical yet whisper truths that 42% of adults will recognise. These are the histories of tomorrow, retold for today.

The Pogo Highway

"Tell me about transport," said **Wonder**, bouncing slightly on the balls of her feet. "In tomorrow time, do people still sit in metal boxes, breathing each other's exhaust?"

Wonest smiled the sort of smile that suggested he'd been waiting for exactly this question.

"Ah, but what if they didn't sit at all? What if they *bounced*?"

Once upon a tomorrow, the world travelled not on wheels but on springs.

The Pogo Highway stretched like a ribbon of soft_hard road across towns and cities - just firm enough to launch you skyward, just forgiving enough to catch your fall. The surface had a peculiar texture, rather like bouncing on a giant's mattress that had been left out in the rain and somehow improved by the experience.

Everyone had a Pogo. Children pogoed to school, their lunch boxes rattling cheerfully in backpacks that had learned to compress on landing. Ministers pogoed to church, their Sunday best somehow managing to stay crisp despite the constant up-and-down. Lawyers pogoed to court, sometimes literally bouncing over legal precedent though this was generally frowned upon by the magistrates.

"But surely," interrupted **Wonder**, "people must have fallen? All that bouncing sounds rather dangerous?"

"Oh, they fell plenty," **Wonest** assured her. "But here's the curious thing..."

With practice, you could achieve quite spectacular leaps. Two car lengths in a single bound was considered respectable. Three was impressive. Four was showing off_and everyone knew it.

There was a golden rule that every pogo_person learned within their first week on the Highway: *never Pogo under a bridge*.

"Why ever not?" asked **Wonder**.

"Because," said a voice from the crowd of commuters, "everyone knows you drool when you're concentrating on the landing."

"Drool, drool, drool," chanted the children, who had appeared from seemingly nowhere and were now demonstrating the phenomenon with alarming accuracy.

It was a curious law of physics_or perhaps of comedy_but undeniably true. The concentration required for a perfect landing seemed to activate some ancient connection between determination and saliva production. Scientists studied it. Doctors documented it. Comedians built entire careers around it.

The Pogos themselves came in varieties. Some sprouted cheerful yellow umbrellas when the first drops of rain began to fall, the *click_pop* of opening canopies creating impromptu percussion sections along the Highway. Some had little brass bells that chimed with each bounce, turning the morning commute into an unplanned symphony. Others featured suspension systems so advanced they could absorb a 3_storey bounce with barely a *whoosh* of displaced air.

"It sounds delightful," said **Wonder**. "Like the whole world became a playground."

Wonest's expression darkened slightly. "Ah, but you know how these stories go, don't you?"

Road rage never really took hold on the Pogo Highway. It's remarkably difficult to shake your fist at someone whilst hurtling skyward, finger wagging uselessly in the air before gravity reclaims you. Arguments had a way of being literally deflated by the time you landed.

For a while_oh, what a glorious while it was life bounced along happily.

Until the rich discovered the Rocket Pack.

"Of course they did," muttered **Wonder**.

The Rocket Pack floated smugly ten metres above the ground_no higher, mind you, for fear of aircraft and rather unpleasant meetings with jet engines. Their wearers, shoes polished to mirror brightness, glided over the Pogo crowd like aristocrats reviewing a parade of particularly energetic peasants.

"Look at them down there," called Lady Vivian to her husband as they drifted past a group of schoolchildren. "All that *bouncing*. Rather undignified, don't you think?"

"Quiet," agreed Sir Ryan, adjusting his golden jetpack controls. "Thank goodness we found a more... elevated solution."

Children of wealth now hovered elegantly above the common folk, and that's when the collisions began.

Many an ordinary pogo_person, mid_leap and entirely focused on their landing trajectory, would bounce clean into a Rocket Pack owner's boot. The impact would send both parties spinning_dignity severely dented on both sides, though for rather different reasons.

"Terribly sorry!" gasped Jennifer, a part-time librarian who'd just inadvertently booted Lord Jack in the shin whilst attempting a modest two_car_length jump.

"I say!" spluttered His Lordship, rocket pack sputtering indignantly. "There ought to be regulations!"

And regulations, I'm afraid, there soon were.

"For safety reasons," announced the newly formed Aerial Transport Authority, their own rocket packs gleaming with fresh authority, "Pogos may bounce no higher than one_and_a_half metres."

The Rocket Pack owners nodded gravely at this entirely necessary precaution, whilst the common folk found themselves suddenly, literally, grounded.

"That's not fair!" protested young Melissa, whose four_car_length record had made her something of a local celebrity. "We were here first!"

"Safety first, young lady," replied Inspector Linda, whose clipboard had its own tiny rocket pack. "We simply cannot have people bouncing willy_nilly into the upper atmosphere."

The Pogo Highway, once a carnival of leaps and laughter, slowed to a dismal crawl. Road rage finally had time to blossom_and fingers shown in anger could now be properly seen, which only made matters worse.

"But surely," said **Wonder**, leaning forward, "the people didn't just accept this?"

Wonest grinned. "History, my dear Wonder, has a way of rebelling against gravity."

Out of the frustration rose the Great Pogo Union. Craftsmen and tinkers, working in secret workshops that smelled of machine oil and determination, began to whisper of revolutionary springs_coils that could bend laws as easily as they bent steel.

Rumours spread through underground networks of the Pogocket: a device that bounced and hovered in harmony, neither fully spring nor fully flame. Part pogo stick, part rocket pack, entirely illegal.

"We'll show them what real innovation looks like," muttered Rika, chief engineer of the Underground Bounce Brigade, as she welded a particularly rebellious spring. "Height restrictions, indeed!"

The authorities banned it immediately, naturally. The rich scoffed from their lofty perches. But the stories remained, carried along in bedtime tales and rebellious songs: that

somewhere, on forgotten stretches of the Pogo Highway, rebels still bounce higher than any law allows.

"And do they?" asked **Wonder**, eyes bright with possibility.

Wonest tapped his nose. "Some say that on very quiet nights, if you listen carefully near abandoned sections of the old Highway, you can still hear the distant *boing_boing_boing* of illegal bouncing."

Wonder clapped her hands together. "I do hope they never get caught."

"So do I," admitted **Wonest**. "So do I."

Wonder and Wonest's Reflection:

Gravity always has favourites, but history bounces back.

The Great Umbrella Uprising

"Rain," mused **Wonder**, pressing her nose against an imaginary window. "I've always loved the sound of it. But what if someone decided rain was... inconvenient?"

Wonest chuckled, the sound like distant thunder. "Ah, but you're thinking too small. What if they didn't just find it inconvenient? What if they tried to *outlaw* it entirely?"

"You can't outlaw weather!" **Wonder** protested.

"Can't you?" asked **Wonest**, raising an eyebrow. "Let me tell you about Ho Chi Minh City, and the year they tried to cancel the monsoon..."

Once upon a tomorrow in Ho Chi Minh City, it rained every day, just as it had for centuries.

The rain wasn't a nuisance_it was a *rhythm*. It pattered on corrugated rooftops like a thousand tiny drummers warming up for the world's longest concert....

TO BE CONTINUED AND THEN INTO

- The Silence Shoes
- The BalLOOn Tax
- The Borrowed Shadows

Flickers of Tomorrow

The Pogo Highway taught us that gravity has favourites, but 'Think Blink' still finds a spring.

The Umbrella Uprising showed us you can ban the rain on paper, but clouds never read decrees.

..... so the stories of tomorrow become the folklore of today. Little lessons, lightly told, waiting to be passed on at bedtime_ with a wink.

"Sometimes the most important rebellions start with something as simple as a child hiding a squeaker in their shoe, or a grandmother deciding that wonder shouldn't require a licence."

_Wonder & Wonest