

# **The Interviewer and the Interviewee**

*A dialogue in one sitting, somewhere in the Southwest*

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## **The Interviewer and the Interviewee**

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*A small adobe house. Red dirt outside the window. Notebooks stacked everywhere. The Interviewee is 93. She has offered the Interviewer coffee. The Interviewer has not stopped talking since the parking lot.*

## Part One

**Interviewer:** Okay, I am so excited, I have been wanting to do this for so long because your work is just — the paintings are incredible but it's the story behind them that I think people need to hear, because you've been doing this since you were a child, right, since you were like eight years old you were sketching things —

**Interviewee:** Seven.

**Interviewer:** Seven! Even better. So you're seven years old and you're already drawing things you've never seen, places you've never been, and they turn out to be real. How does a seven year old even process that?

**Interviewee:** She doesn't. She just draws.

**Interviewer:** She just draws. Right. Because at that age you don't question it, you don't have the framework yet, it's just totally natural, like of course I'm drawing a bridge I've never seen in a city I've never visited, totally normal Tuesday. And your parents — were they supportive? Did they understand what was happening?

**Interviewee:** My mother threw the first notebook away.

**Interviewer:** She threw it away! Because she was scared?

**Interviewee:** Because she needed the shelf space.

*The Interviewer laughs. The Interviewee does not. She was not joking.*

**Interviewer:** Okay so you kept drawing, kept filling notebooks, and at some point you realized these sketches were turning into real things, real places, real events. When did you first notice that?

**Interviewee:** I was twelve. I drew a house. Very specific — porch on the left side, two windows up top, one smaller than the other, a dead tree in the yard. Three weeks later my father drove us to visit his cousin in —

**Interviewer:** And there was the house!

**Interviewee:** There was the house.

**Interviewer:** Chills. Full body chills. And that must have been the moment you thought — okay, something is happening here, this is real, I need to pay attention —

**Interviewee:** I thought I needed a better notebook.

**Interviewer:** So let's talk about the paintings. Because this is what I find so fascinating — you took these sketches, these very literal realistic drawings of real things, and turned them into abstract paintings. Why? Why not just paint what you drew?

**Interviewee:** Because the sketches have stories and notes written on them. I kept them for myself. The paintings were

for everyone else.

**Interviewer:** Oh that's — okay that's beautiful, that's like — you were protecting the source material, keeping it private, the sketch is the raw vision and the painting is the translation, it's like the difference between a dream journal and a poem —

**Interviewee:** I also didn't want people showing up at my door asking questions.

**Interviewer:** Right. Right. Like me.

**Interviewee:** Like you.

*A beat. Outside, a crow lands on the fence and leaves again.*

**Interviewer:** Has anyone ever recognized one of the paintings? Like — seen something in the abstraction that connected back to the original sketch?

**Interviewee:** Many times. Once, a woman bought a large canvas — blues and ochres, a lot of movement in it. Paid quite a lot. She came back six months later. She'd been to Iceland. She said the painting was the view from a specific hillside outside Reykjavik, right down to the angle of the light.

**Interviewer:** Had you ever been to Iceland?

**Interviewee:** I have never left the Southwest.

**Interviewer:** So she's standing on this hillside in Iceland looking at a landscape that you painted in New Mexico having never — okay I need a moment. I genuinely need a moment. Does that happen a lot?

**Interviewee:** Yes many times. A woman bought a ten by ten. She said it caused her to see things in her future.

**Interviewer:** Okay. The notebooks. You've kept every notebook since you were seven — except the first one, obviously, shelf space — how many are there now?

**Interviewee:** I stopped counting at two hundred.

**Interviewer:** Two hundred notebooks. Eighty-six years of sketches. And nobody has ever seen them?

**Interviewee:** Over the years people have shown up to interpret them.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And what happens to them — the notebooks — eventually? Have you thought about that?

**Interviewee:** I'm busy sketching and painting.

**Interviewer:** Right. Of course. I'm sorry. That was —

**Interviewee:** Don't apologize. It's a good question. I've left instructions. Someone will know what to do with them.

**Interviewer:** Someone you trust.

**Interviewee:** Someone I drew, actually. Years ago. I didn't know who she was at the time. Just a young woman at a desk, very focused, surrounded by notebooks not unlike mine. I kept the sketch. And then one day she walked into my classroom.

*The Interviewer opens her mouth — and for once, says nothing.*

**Interviewee:** She's been my student for eleven years. She'll know what to do.

## Part Two — The Ritual

**Interviewer:** Okay so this is what I really want to get into — because you teach this, right? You actually teach your students how to access original ideas the way you do. How does that work?

**Interviewee:** The first thing I tell them is that the idea is already there. It isn't something you manufacture. Your only job is to get out of your own way long enough to receive it. The way I do that — the way I've always done it, since I was very young — is through a ritual. Something simple and repeatable that signals to the deeper mind: we are doing this now. Pay attention.

**Interviewer:** A ritual. Yes. Totally. It's like — okay it's exactly like meditation, right, where you have your cushion and your timer and you always sit the same way, same time of day, because the routine itself is the signal —

**Interviewee:** Something like that. Mine begins with the workspace. Everything clear. Nothing on the desk that doesn't belong to this moment. I tell my students — if your space is cluttered your mind will follow. Clear the surface first.

**Interviewer:** Clear the surface. Right. And I would add — I personally find that a candle helps? Like one candle, not a whole situation, just a single point of light because it gives

your eyes somewhere soft to land before you start and it kind of — it marks the space as different from regular time —

**Interviewee:** Then your pencils.

**Interviewer:** Your pencils, yes —

**Interviewee:** Your favorite sketching pencils. Not new ones. The ones your hand already knows. There is a conversation between a familiar pencil and the hand that holds it. A new pencil is a stranger. You don't want strangers at this particular table.

**Interviewer:** Oh that's beautiful. And I think the same is true for the paper, right? Like some people swear by a specific sketchbook, same brand every time, because your hand remembers the texture and it's one less thing between you and the —

**Interviewee:** Then I lie down.

**Interviewer:** You lie — wait, you leave the desk?

**Interviewee:** I leave the desk.

**Interviewer:** Huh. I would not have expected that. So you set everything up perfectly — clear desk, favorite pencils, and then you just — leave.

**Interviewee:** I lie down on the floor. Flat on my back. Hands folded on my heart. And I wait.

**Interviewer:** You wait. On the floor. For how long?

**Interviewee:** As long as it takes. Sometimes five minutes. Once, three hours.

**Interviewer:** Three hours on the floor. Okay. And — I mean — do you ever fall asleep?

**Interviewee:** That's rather the point.

*A pause.*

**Interviewer:** You fall asleep on purpose.

**Interviewee:** Not fully asleep. That place just before. The edge. Where the images come on their own without being invited. Where your mind stops performing and starts showing you things. That's where the sketches come from. Always have.

**Interviewer:** And then you get up and go straight to the desk.

**Interviewee:** Immediately. Before the conscious mind wakes up fully and starts editing. Speed matters. I tell my students — the first line on the page is the truest one. Everything after that is negotiation.

**Interviewer:** The first line is the truest one. Okay I'm writing that down. That applies to everything — writing, painting, conversation —

**Interviewee:** Conversation especially.

*The Interviewer looks up from her notes. She suspects she has just been gently corrected. She has.*

**Interviewer:** Do your students take to it? The lying on the floor part especially — I feel like that's where you'd lose people.

**Interviewee:** You'd be surprised. The ones who resist it most in the beginning are usually the ones who need it most. They're so accustomed to forcing ideas that the idea of simply waiting feels like failure. I had one student — very talented, very impatient — who stood over her desk for three weeks convinced the lying down was beneath her. Her work was competent. Correct. Completely empty.

**Interviewer:** And then she tried it.

**Interviewee:** She came in one morning and didn't say a word. Just put her work on my desk and sat down. It was the best thing she'd ever done. It frightened her a little.

**Interviewer:** Because it was so good?

**Interviewee:** Because she hadn't decided to make it.

*Outside, the desert light shifts a degree. The Interviewer is quiet for a full four seconds. This is, by some margin, her personal record.*

## Part Three — The Big Picture

**Interviewer:** You said a number of people have shown up to interpret your sketches.

**Interviewee:** I don't interpret the sketches. People can think what they want.

**Interviewer:** Okay I have to ask you something completely different because it's been on my mind since I walked in. Do you ever sketch things that are — I don't know how to say this

— bigger than just places? Like do you ever draw things that feel like they're about how everything works? The whole system?

**Interviewee:** I draw what comes.

**Interviewer:** Right but like — okay so I've been reading a lot lately about how this whole reality might be a kind of simulation. Like we're living inside something that was designed. Does that ever show up in your sketches?

**Interviewee:** I once sketched a library. Floor to ceiling. Every wall. Drawers instead of books. Very old. No windows. Someone was tending it.

**Interviewer:** Someone was tending it. Like a librarian.

**Interviewee:** Like a keeper. There was a quality of great age to her. And great patience. As though she had been there a very long time and expected to be there a very long time more.

**Interviewer:** What was in the drawers.

**Interviewee:** I didn't open them. You don't open drawers that aren't yours.

*The Interviewer considers this. She has opened every drawer she has ever encountered.*

**Interviewer:** Can I ask you about the moon?

**Interviewee:** What about it.

**Interviewer:** I've been reading — and tell me if this sounds crazy — that the moon isn't natural. That it was put there.

Deliberately. Does that — have you ever sketched anything that felt like it was connected to that idea?

**Interviewee:** I sketched the moon once. From the inside.

**Interviewer:** From the —

**Interviewee:** I was perhaps thirty. I woke up and went straight to the desk as I always do and I drew what I had seen. Corridors. Curved walls. A very particular quality of light that had no obvious source. I labeled it in the notebook. I wrote: this is not a rock.

**Interviewer:** You wrote that in 1960 something.

**Interviewee:** I wrote that in 1962.

**Interviewer:** I have chills again. I have had so many chills today. Okay — the earth. Because I feel like your sketches must pick up on things happening to the earth — shifts, changes, big events —

**Interviewee:** I have notebooks full of water.

**Interviewer:** Water.

**Interviewee:** Coastlines that no longer match any map I can find. Cities half submerged. A valley I sketched in my forties that was bone dry — I sketched it again thirty years later and it was a lake.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that's the future? Or the past? Or —

**Interviewee:** I don't interpret. I draw and paint.

**Interviewer:** Okay this is going to sound like a left turn but stay with me — Mandela effects. Things people collectively misremember. Like there are people who swear certain things existed that apparently never did. Does that mean anything to you as someone who — I mean you've been sketching realities that may or may not exist yet —

**Interviewee:** A student brought me a photograph once. She was very agitated. Said the building in the background had been torn down ten years before the photograph was taken.

**Interviewer:** And?

**Interviewee:** And I had sketched that building. After it was supposedly gone. I told her I didn't find it troubling.

**Interviewer:** How is that not troubling?

**Interviewee:** Because the building existed. Clearly. In some arrangement of things it was still standing. The question of which arrangement is the correct one strikes me as less interesting than the fact that there are several.

**Interviewer:** Several realities running at the same time.

**Interviewee:** I don't interpret. I draw and paint.

**Interviewer:** One more thing and then I promise I'll let you get back to work — someone once told me that human beings are more than we think we are. Like at a biological level. That our DNA is actually a kind of antenna. That we're built to receive things. Does that resonate with you at all?

**Interviewee:** I'm ninety-three. I have been lying on my floor and receiving things for eighty-six years.

**Interviewer:** That's — yeah. That's the whole thing right there isn't it.

**Interviewer:** Okay completely different topic — fires. Because I keep reading about how major fires throughout history weren't accidents. That they were deliberate. Cities burned down so someone else could control the land. Does that show up in your work at all?

**Interviewee:** I have a sketch from 1974. A hillside. Beautiful. Full of houses. I painted it — one of my larger canvases. Sold it to a man who said it reminded him of home.

**Interviewer:** And?

**Interviewee:** Three years later that hillside burned. Every house gone. I saw it on the news. The man called me. He was crying.

**Interviewer:** Because his home —

**Interviewee:** Because the painting was all he had left of it.

*A silence.*

**Interviewer:** Angels. Okay I know that sounds like another left turn but — ascended masters, archangels, beings that are basically us but further along. Do you ever sketch things like that? Beings that aren't quite human?

**Interviewee:** I have a notebook from 1989 I keep separate from the others.

**Interviewer:** Why separate?

**Interviewee:** Different quality of light in those sketches. I don't know how else to describe it. Like the source was closer.

**Interviewer:** Closer to what.

**Interviewee:** I don't interpret. I draw and paint. However a person looked at a sketch and said that there are mean angels and we were meant to control them. And that makes them meaner.

**Interviewer:** Wait — mean angels. Like angry?

**Interviewee:** Like destroyers.

**Interviewer:** Okay — the financial system. Because everything is changing right now, right, like the old ways of doing things are just crumbling and something new is coming and I feel like someone who has been seeing the future since 1939 must have something in her notebooks about —

**Interviewee:** I sketched a room once. Very large. Men in dark suits around a very long table. One of them was crying. The others didn't notice.

**Interviewer:** When was that?

**Interviewee:** 1987.

**Interviewer:** The crash.

**Interviewee:** I didn't know that at the time. I just drew the man crying and the others not noticing. It seemed important.

**Interviewer:** And now? Do you have anything recent? Because I feel like we are right at the edge of something enormous —

**Interviewee:** A student of mine says she makes sketches about blockchains and CBDCs.

**Interviewer:** World War Two. Okay. There's a theory — and I find this fascinating — that we didn't really win, that the whole thing was more complicated than we were told, that it was really about technology and deals made in the dark —

**Interviewee:** I sketched a submarine once. Very large. Unusual design. I was eleven years old. I had never seen a submarine.

**Interviewer:** Eleven. That's — what year was that?

**Interviewee:** 1943.

**Interviewer:** You were sketching submarines in 1943.

**Interviewee:** I was sketching what came. I didn't know what it was. I showed it to my father. He went very quiet. He said put that away and don't show anyone.

**Interviewer:** And did you?

**Interviewee:** I put it in the notebook. I showed no one for eighty years.

**Interviewer:** Until now?

**Interviewee:** I didn't show you. I told you. There's a difference.

*The Interviewer writes this down. She is not entirely sure why.*

**Interviewer:** Okay last thing I promise — and I know I've said that four times — but medicine. Because there are people

who believe that healing technologies exist that we aren't being told about. That the body can repair itself in ways that go far beyond what we currently — have you ever sketched anything like that?

**Interviewee:** I sketched a room that looked like a hospital but wasn't. Beds, but different. A quality of light again — that closer light. People going in one way and coming out another way.

**Interviewer:** Another way how.

**Interviewee:** Lighter. That's the only word I had for it. I wrote it in the notebook. Lighter.

**Interviewer:** When was that sketch?

**Interviewee:** Last Tuesday.

*The Interviewer stares.*

**Interviewee:** I told you. I'm busy sketching and painting.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Different topic. Antarctica. Because there are serious researchers who believe there is an entire civilization under the ice down there. Hidden. Very old. Does anything in your notebooks —

**Interviewee:** I have a sketch of a city. No sky visible. The light comes from the ground.

**Interviewer:** From the ground.

**Interviewee:** Warm light. Orange. The buildings are not like any architecture I have seen above ground.

**Interviewer:** Above ground. You said above ground. Like you've seen architecture below ground.

**Interviewee:** I draw what comes.

**Interviewer:** Birth certificates. Okay this sounds crazy but stay with me — there is a theory that when you are born a financial instrument is created in your name. That you are essentially an asset on a ledger somewhere. That your whole life someone is counting what you produce. Does that —

**Interviewee:** I sketched a room full of ledgers once. Floor to ceiling. Men moving between them with quiet purpose. Very orderly. Nobody speaking.

**Interviewer:** When?

**Interviewee:** I was nineteen. I thought I had sketched a library. But the men weren't reading. They were adding numbers.

**Interviewer:** And nobody was speaking.

**Interviewee:** Nobody needed to. They all knew exactly what they were doing.

*A long pause.*

**Interviewer:** That's the most disturbing thing you've said all day.

**Interviewee:** You brought it up.

**Interviewer:** Pole shifts. Because the earth has done this before — just flipped — and some people think we are due

for another one and that certain governments know this and have known for decades and that's why they do the things they

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**Interviewee:** I have seventeen notebooks of coastlines.

**Interviewer:** Seventeen.

**Interviewee:** Different coastlines than the ones on any current map. Some have more land. Some have considerably less. I stopped trying to date them. Past or future makes no difference to a coastline.

**Interviewer:** Does it scare you? Knowing what you know?

**Interviewee:** I don't know anything. I draw and paint.

**Interviewer:** You know more than anyone I have ever met.

**Interviewee:** I draw and paint more than anyone you have ever met. That is not the same thing.

**Interviewer:** Okay — UFOs. Because in the fifties there were craft flying over the capital and everyone saw them and then nothing. Silence. Like someone made a deal and closed a door. Have you ever —

**Interviewee:** I sketched craft when I was eight. Before I knew what they were. I thought I was drawing clouds with the wrong shape. My teacher marked the sketch wrong. She said clouds don't have windows.

**Interviewer:** Your teacher said that.

**Interviewee:** She was not wrong about the windows.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever sketch them again?

**Interviewee:** Regularly. They appear in the notebooks the way birds appear outside a window. Unremarkable after a while. Just part of what is there.

**Interviewer:** The regions. Because there's this idea that nation states are going away and the world is going to reorganize itself into regions — the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa — like the borders we have now are just temporary and something larger is coming —

**Interviewee:** I sketched a map once that had no countries on it.

**Interviewer:** No countries at all?

**Interviewee:** Landmasses. Rivers. Mountain ranges. But no lines. No borders. I was twenty-two. I thought I had made an error. I kept waiting to sketch the lines in and they never came.

**Interviewer:** Maybe they weren't there yet.

**Interviewee:** Maybe they weren't there anymore.

*The Interviewer puts down her pen. She picks it back up.*

**Interviewer:** I bought Bitcoin at twenty-three dollars.

**Interviewee:** I sketched a young woman sitting at a desk at three in the morning staring at a screen with an expression on her face like she had just heard something very far away.

**Interviewer:** That was me.

**Interviewee:** The notebook is from 2010.

*The Interviewer is quiet for the first time in several hours.*

**Interviewer:** Thank you for letting me visit you.

**Interviewee:** You are very welcome.

**Interviewer:** May I buy one of your sketches?

**Interviewee:** Yes you may. I sell them for one bitcoin.