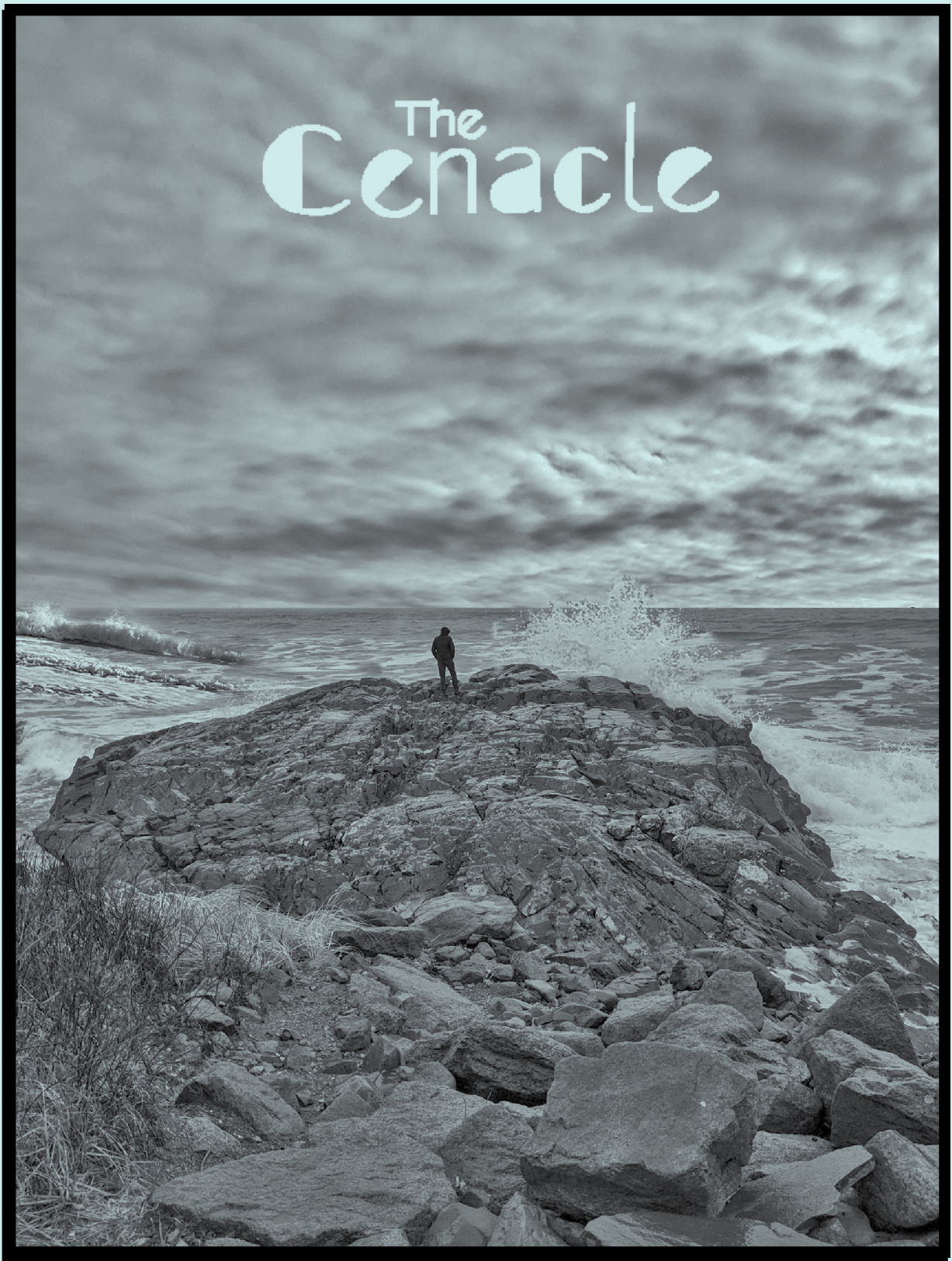
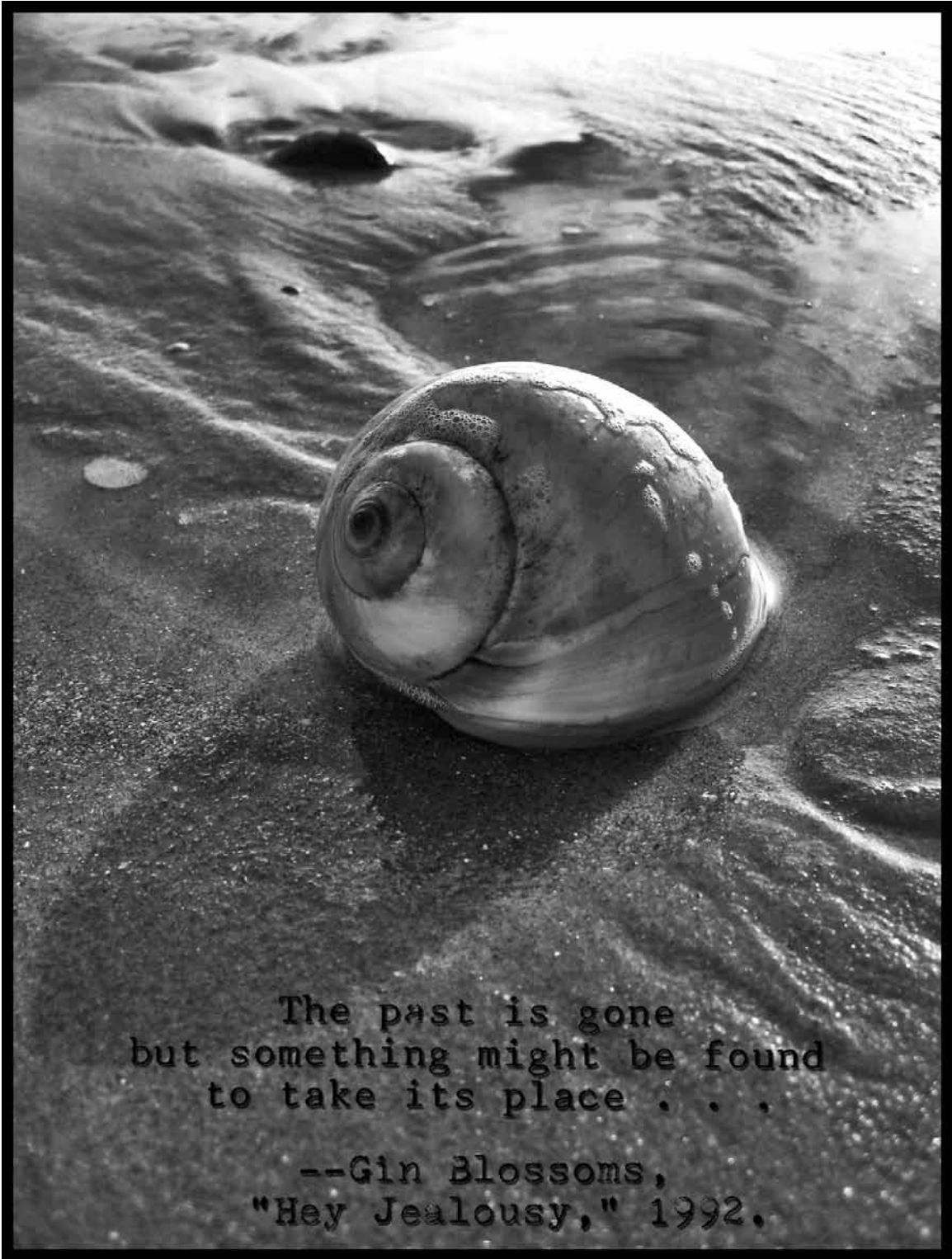


The Cenacle



29th Anniversary Issue
NUMBER 124 | APRIL 2024



The past is gone
but something might be found
to take its place . . .

--Gin Blossoms,
"Hey Jealousy," 1992.

April 28, 2004
9:34 p.m.
Bungelow Co.
Attic Study [aka "LaNook"]
Worktable
Melrose, MA.

Welcome to the 29th Anniversary Issue of The Grackle! Today also, my 60th birthday, so nearly half my lifetime (counting I've been editing this literary journal).

And I've been around long enough not to get some sense of how the world changes, & how it doesn't. That said, the mixture of these is not something anyone has been able to nail down, to a formula, tho countless have puffed up their chests & tried.

I find myself leaning back often into 3 questions that I believe most influence human psychology & human culture:

- ① Why are we here?
- ② Where are we from?
- ③ What are we supposed to be doing?



Judih Weinstein Haggai

-33-

Our curiosity, our confusion, & our fear, each in its many forms, poses in these questions, the swathing power of all three —

Thus, ugly wars in Israel & Ukraine right now.
Thus, a global pandemic most have too despaired
even to think about anymore, real as it remains.
Thus, the climate crisis continues unslowed
to render this miraculous green world ever
more uninhabitable to our species &
countless others.

And our best guidebooks written by men &
women as mortal & unknowing as each of us,
& thus as limited.
The lessons of Nature ignored, & the possibility
of true collaboration discounted, incomprehendingly
the gods we pray at & point toward should
like ourselves, pained in our questions,
at best muzzling our most generous answers.

As I pass the number 60 on my calendar,
I feel in some ways more estranged from the
human world than I ever have. I realize,
even more profoundly, that no person has
the solution to this wild, weird, fucked up
human existence.



I wonder: Should I have more to offer up for my 60 years on this planet? Maybe. I remember I used to think I knew more than I think I do now. Like Bob Dylan's song, I was a lot older then. Getting younger as I go on.

I do believe one thing, a kind of faith I have carried through most of my years, & will surely ever on: I believe in the power of art to transform the souls & cultures & worlds that will let it. Making art, supporting others making art, enjoying its countless varieties in this world, that's how I respond best to my 3 questions.

Is this solution for all? I can't say. I tend to believe that pursuing a single solution for all the human world's struggles & sufferings is going to yield more failures than all else. Violent failures of clashing ideologies. Quiet failures of despairing individuals.

Looking for anyone anything any single idea for the solution to the questions I called out is foolish. Is the brainwashing that, in power practice on the world's populations, both held back the anticipated chaos of

-35-

the widespread realization that there
is no solution.

No sure rewards for the kind & loving.

No sure punishment for the powerful & cruel.

Somehow it's true that every morning still,
most of us, countless billions, get up to
engage another day, hoping for the
best, eluding the worst, best we can.
Most often landing in the muddled-up middle.

We try, & try again. For our selves, our loved
ones, our colleagues. Some of us even for
strangers. We let our hearts envelope as
much as we can.

Why? Best I can say comes from the
old wise wisdom: where there is life
there is hope. An old thought, yes, but
one I keep close, along with those
3 questions. And my black pens & notebooks.

Thus, instead of solutions, I share with you
in this journal, through its many splendid
voices, my faith in Art to better the world,
if not deduce its Beauty & its muck.
- O & O - 4/26/2024 - Melrose, MA -



Edited by Raymond Souland Jr.

Assistant Editor: Kassandra Souland

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- *Cenacles* #47-124
- Burning Man Books #1-72
- *Scriptor Press Sampler* #1-21
- *RaiBooks* #1-8
- RS Mixes from “Within’s Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution”; &
- Jellicle Literary Guild Highlights Series

Disk contents downloadable at: www.scriptorpress.com/cenacle/supplementary_disk.zip.

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This issue is dedicated to Judih Weinstein Haggai.



SCRIPTOR PRESS



NEW ENGLAND

2024

Feedback on Cenacle 123 December 2023

Sam Knot:

Martina Reisz Newberry's poem, "Spanish Raindrops," really strikes me. The way we move from the title straight into shattering glass, and rising from that introductory aftermath the stunning question: "Which bits are useful?" Each of the perfect fragments that follow seem to keep on asking that question even as they answer it. They hold together like I imagine the city she lets speak must, breaking down the wall between such unlikely neighbors as danger and comfort, with even the concrete smart enough to make room for a bit of moss. A poem of poems!

* * * * *

Jimmy Heffernan:

I was emotionally arrested by Martina Reisz Newberry's poem "At Eleven O'Clock," which is a sort of after-the-fire-has-died exegesis on romance that has faded toward the all-too-familiar. The imagery and narrative of the poem are delightful, even though this is, naturally, not really a poem of delight. But I can't help myself—I love it. This poem evokes pathos, sympathy, empathy, sadness, and the understanding that can only come from being human. Keep up the great work, Martina!

* * * * *

Martina Newberry:

Often, while reading Jimmy Heffernan's poems, I find myself saying "I never thought of that," and "fascinating." The interview with him led to a new depth in my reading of his work.

Charlie Beyer's "Brain Claim" wouldn't let me loose. Once I began reading, I couldn't stop. *So* well-written. Such lovely, flowing prose.

I've never been a traveler to exotic places, but Nathan D. Horowitz's travel journals always make me feel as if I were right there having the experiences he's sharing. "Waiting for the Ranchera to Poza Honda" especially stood out to me. The description of the elder Cou stuck in my mind. The explanation of the witchcraft murder was a little scary and a lot interesting. If you've never believed in that kind of thing (witchcraft, etc.), Nathan's travel journal will have you rethinking its place in this universe.

I can't stop crying when I read Judih Weinstein Haggai's poems. Her poems and her friendship have been a huge and beautiful part of my life.

* * * * *

Nathan D. Horowitz:

Judih Weinstein Haggai

an appreciation
by nathan d horowitz
baltimore 2024

I Rise

I rise,
the chair begs me to return
but I can't
it's just impossible.

I hear the sounds of figs falling
and I fly through windswept branches
swirling swooping energy within

I drink wayward wafts of cool
and my kayak spirit paddles the streams
furry scampering things along the bank

all one, forest land and hill
me amongst them
large and small, all

not to turn back
till the trumpet sounds

the chair is the world of life.
it begs her to return but she can't.
it's just impossible.

she hears the sounds of figs falling.
swirling, swooping,
she flies through windswept branches.

she slakes her thirst with something
not quite water,
not quite air.

spirit kayaking
on a stream
lined with mammals.

hear, o israel,
the lord, our god,
the lord is one.

here, o israel,
the spirit, our god,
the spirit is one.

time is a one-way road.
no turning back
till the shofar sounds.

i read this as a pleasurable death
dream, a vision of the next world.
i see judih in a flying kayak.

she's facing right, in profile,
shielding her eyes from the sun,
smiling a big smile.

addressing them:
patrol the night sky,
pilotless drones.

breathe in, pilotless
drones. breathe out;
patrol the night sky.

my mind's on the breath
of drones. breathe in,
you pilotless ones. out.

the paradox here
of noiseless
whitenoise

only on a kibbutz
is noise both white
and noiseless.

the spectrum runs from
bomb blasts to birdsong
around here.

the spectrum doesn't run from
bird blasts to bombsong.
there are no such things.

the dronesongs inhale
vibrancy of ceiling fan,
their mind on my breath.

patrol the night sky
my mind on my breath
pilotless drones

ceiling fan whitenoise
noiseless kibbutz
warmth of 4 am

along the spectrum
bomb blasts to morning birdsong
vibrancy of life

the drones inhale
birdsong to bomb blasts.
they exhale pale ale.

patrol my mind,
pilotless drones.
night sky is breath.

the vibrancy of bomb blasts
inhaling birdsong.
noiseless kibbutz.

what does one think of
when meditating in the shadow
of gaza?

ceiling fan whitenoise is coincidentally
also my native american name as well as
the name of my band.

tiny, clean photos of moments,
spectrographs of minerals
with expiration dates

bomb blasts to birdsong
hell exhales then
breathes in

birdsong to bomb blasts
heaven inhales then
breathes out

when johnny appleseed
met jiminy cricket,
they mass-produced a haiku.

i wonder if judih was thinking of
one particular apple seed
she swallowed as a kid.

yes

yes

yes

the jackals
also wrote a haiku
about judih
it said only yes
yes yes
yes

nir oz
optimistically named
meadow of strength

nir oz
so close to god
so close to gaza

swallowed apple seed
slowly sprouts
haiku fruit

kibbutz wandering
spontaneous rendezvous
jackals and i

bird of paradise
beside the armadillo
emerging friendship

bird of armadillo
beside paradise.
friendship emerging.

our strength is in god
our strength is in god
our strength is in god

the mythopoetic process
is organic
we are plant

a poet's origin story
on the inside
a woman is a tree

spontaneous rendezvous
with jackals
on a wandering kibbutz

seems like all my rendezvous
with jackals are spontaneous
on this kibbutz

desire for coexistence yields to
deepening disillusionment

i'm an armadillo bird
in a meadow of strength
beside the white chickens.

one kibbutz merkaba
one swarm of kibbutzim
one murmuration

the quickening
as neurons meet
and say howdyshalom.

pulse accelerates
mind makes new connections
as Fall shows her face

i receive projections of me.
i send myself, receive myself.
i catch myself when i fall.

as i move through life
may i receive myself
just as i am

mind races:
show me your face, goddess,
and i'll give you a capital f.

a little prayer
to the goddess
within

reading this after judih's death,
i jump to the conclusion that the figure
is her killer. or death itself.

that recurring figure
occupying space in my mind
still a mystery

it's not clear what the mystery is.
is the mystery the figure's identity?
is the mystery the mystery?

do poets get
premon-
itions?

is malkuth
repeating itself
time and again?

that recurring space
occupying my mind's mystery.
a still figure.

malkuth is the
kingdom, the world
malkuth.

Tamara Miles:

I made it to the first poem by Judih Weinstein Haggai, sank into it, breathed it, needed it, and couldn't go further into the issue yet. But it's beautiful. And Cassandra Soulard's cover photo: *wow*.

* * * * *

Charlie Beyer:

Raymond Soulard, Jr's "Job Hunting Journal" saga in *Notes from New England* is close to my heart. Some of us job hunt our whole lives. Personally, disgusted with others' petty job needs, I am compelled to work for myself. A boom-and-bust thing. But as Raymond correctly states, "it *is* personal." A body needs the esteem of their skill, appreciation of it, and desire for it. To be a slave is OK, but not a *whipped* one.

It is said that "money is like a sixth sense, and ya can't use the other five without it." So one's "real" life of what is important to them, & a struggle to accomplish when penniless. But as Raymond points out: your dreams and goals are the foundation of your life, and the pandering to others' whims *cannot* occupy your life to the exclusion of all else.

Keep the fire going, and fan the flames regularly. This is an agonizing story ending in triumph from dogged will.

* * * * *

Louis Staebler:

My reaction to Epi Rogan's photographs as seen through my photographer's curiosity:

Voice from within the framework. Wonderful face dominates the piece, an advertisement for itself. Down street sky threatens peaceful store bought assumptions . . .

Toy shopping cast links up. Red/Yellow. Lie before a door edged with dirty green fatigue. Not a whimper here . . .

Cruel sea. Less the generous lip of limited sunlight . . .

Brazen dolls in a window beggar credulity or stark cloud streaked wind . . .

Gray stone cross embellishment juxtaposed with green-grounded purple flowers . . .

Red door strewn with doggerel. But never mind, just a kiss goodbye. All the whisperers urge much more . . .

* * * * *

Epi Rogan:

Love the minutae of Lois Staebler's work. A single drop of rain suspended on a line, I think is my favorite. Lots of high contrast. Lots of dark pieces with what can only be described as winter light weakly filtering through. Beautiful.



Sam Knot



AbandonView



Epi Rogan

From the ElectroLounge Forums

Selections from Unknot 24

Part 1

Published on electrolounge.boards.net

Post by Sam on Jan 15, 2024 at 1:18pm

So, I wanted to do something regular here this year. I'm struck by the fact Judih used to post haiku here nearly everyday. I hope I can inspire some of you to do something regular too—it would be great to have little updates from my fellows in the *Cenacle* circle. You know, now we've lost someone, we're almost more like a family than ever. Except, without any of the bullshit, hopefully ☺

I want to do 360 of these. I ended up starting on the 9th of Jan, but I thought of the idea on the 5th, and figured that could work, there seeming to be 360 days left to this old year. So we'll see, maybe I'll go back and fill in that little gap. An "unknot" is basically a circle, so each of these photos is like a degree, a link in the chain it will be.

They are sort of like multiple exposures. I'm using a program a bit like Photoshop—but free and open source—called GIMP (the GNU Image Manipulation Program - gimp.org/). I'm trying to mess with the photos as little as possible, I don't change the framing or anything, just layer a few up, and fiddle with the different blending modes—so that's how they are a bit like a multiple exposure.

In many of these photos you'll be seeing a blend of my handwriting, and photos from about my place. Anything you want to know, just say. I can type stuff up if you can't read and want to. Or tell you who is who if someone or some place, or plant or idea perhaps, peaks your interest. I'll try to come in every day, every evening-ish.

Enjoy, my friends, and may I wish you, and the world, all the best for 2024.



A lovely blank page of a day

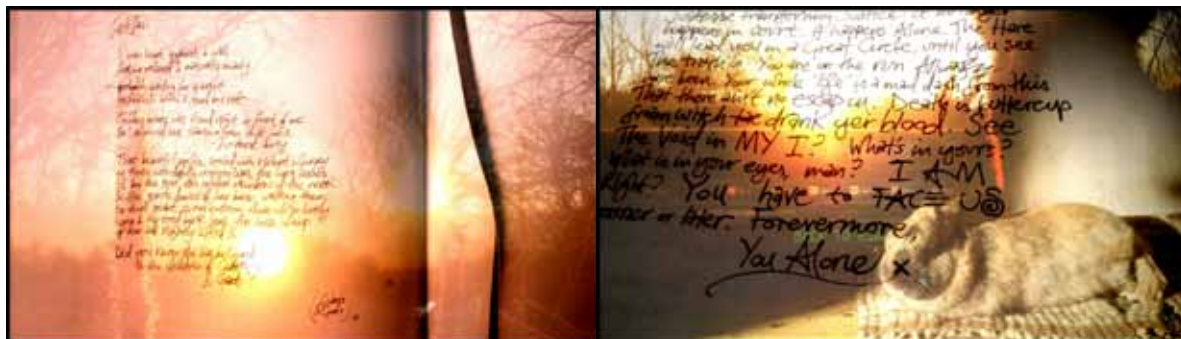


The origin of obliterate

Conflagrations happen

Post by Raymond on Jan 18, 2024 at 9:02am

Wow I am *loving* these! 😊



Gullifaxi

You alone

Post by Raymond on Jan 20, 2024 at 12:26pm

This series is amazing, Sam, *wow* . . .

Post by KD on Jan 20, 2024 at 9:00pm

Hi Sam—I'm just now catching up on these, and reading your intro. I think this is such a neat idea. And I love that you had Judih's daily haiku in mind. 360 is a good number, and ties in to the “unknot” symbology (ties – punny!). I haven't used GIMP before, but I have used other open source image programs—and I like especially that you're not messing with the images much, just layering and blending. I like to do that in some of the images in *The Cenacle* sometimes. I'm going to start looking now and keep a running list of notes of ones that especially catch my eye:

- **A lovely blank page of a day:** I love the message and the beautiful image, branches and snowy days are so photogenic, what a nice way to start.
- **The origin of obliterate:** I like this one especially; I love close-ups of plants (I'm sure it's not, but this reminds me sort of a sage? I have a Russian sage that has stems similar), but the writing on this one is also intriguing (“The Omen is origin of Obliterate”) and the upside down/faded

writing is mysterious and laid just right on the horizon.

- **Conflagrations happen:** I love the burnt/overexposed shades of this one, and the peony (if that is what it is?) is just the nicest little touch; I was wondering what *obliteration* is? . . . “if one eye is called Heart & the other eye’s called Mind” is a very nice line, curious . . .
- **You alone:** This one caught my eye too—a very comfy-looking bunny, trees, and a radiant sun. Again, this is such a neat idea and I really enjoy seeing/hearing your daily thoughts/sights/sounds, etc. thank you!

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Jan 20, 2024 at 10:00pm

This series is great, Sam, as Raymond says. Really nice to see your writing and image-making come together in this way which feels very natural and at the same time is highly practiced.

Gullifaxi is my favorite, though I like a lot of others a lot. The warmth of the photo is nearly overwhelming, but it’s never kitschy, and the beautiful poem about the horse matches the sunset’s intensity. I really like the poem in itself, too! Like these lines: “Golden mane was stood right in front of me / So I admired her, starting from that face / furthest away.”

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Jan 21, 2024 at 6:40am

KD, I started thinking of *Obliteration* last year, it was connected to—/is/ connected to a kind of diary writing, but one that allows itself to be quite imaginative, perhaps in pursuit of a deeper truth—but also, well, perhaps it is the truth in pursuit of you? It is also connected to the idea of something demonic, but not in a sense you would want to exorcise: more like self-possession, perhaps! Sometimes something light or burning seems to be on the other side of the writing, and sometimes it seems writhing and trapped in the book, and sometimes it seems like the life of the work, like another you on the other side of a weirdly two way mirror . . . those are feelings of it, and it is mostly feeling that it seems to be about.

Thanks also Nathan, I’m glad **Gullifaxi** doesn’t come off too kitsch; another idea from last year is The Absolute Cute, which is in a way a way for me to deal with issues around Absolute Truth, but also—just that I find cute things (real cute things rather than cutesy styles necessarily) interestingly weird and able to bring me close to some kind of terror almost sometimes, like they can get close enough, being so non-threatening, that I can allow myself to see how weird and far they/we are, and something quite psychedelic feeling happens. I reckon it is my way of approaching something like the sublime. Or, a way, rather.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Jan 27, 2024 at 11:24am

What-all tools are you using in your pictures here, Sam?

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Jan 27, 2024 at 1:31pm

These are all my big black notebook, with fine-liner pens, photographed by and combined with further photos from my friend *Galactic Swansong*—a 21st century “smart phone” (Dumb humans! ;-)) who will be 10 years old this year—and they are layered up in GIMP. I sometimes fiddle more, sometimes

less, but I don't change the framing of the photos, just layer them up. My laptop (whose screen I also sometimes photograph) is a ThinkBook from 2017ish, as well as a supercomputer from the 23rd century (and beyond! ;-)

Hopefully I am also a kind of tool, being used by something much cooler than me to amuse itself with, and maybe even to help give a little meaning to its, uh, ur-life . . .

* * * * *



Leaps and bounds

Part of something

* * * * *

Post by KD on Jan 27, 2024 at 9:18pm

Thank you for telling me more about Obliterature—and how you explained it makes the words fit even better with the images. So clever.

In terms of photo editing tools, the ones I've used are LunaPic (web-based and pretty simple and user-friendly and yet has some pretty cool stuff—lunapic.com), and Pixlr—though the version I have is an actual app from about 15 years ago that I use on my Mac (which was new 15 years ago, hence the app—pixlr.com/). I also use Canva sometimes at my work and I like it too (canva.com/).

Some notes for your recent pictures:

- **Leaps and bounds:** The drawing in this reminds me of a symbol Raymond and I have used since we met—a heart with an infinity sign on it—, but it also looks like a map and I like maps too.
- **Part of something:** This one strikes me nicely, leaves and swirls, and the text (“You don't have to be part of anything, to be part of something”) is pretty much how I live my life, not being a joiner LOL

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Jan 28, 2024 at 4:51am

I'm glad the symbol in **Leaps and bounds** reminds you of a symbol that has personal meaning to you pair, and the idea of infinite love makes my own feelings around that symbol that much the richer. It is definitely a symbol, and so even for me personally I can't say all the things it is of, but I can say that this was a realisation of or a change in my relating to a particular knot.

Knots are topological structures which means they are very flexible and can be warped in all kinds of

ways so long as the relationship between the crossings—something like the integrity of the string or loop—holds/remains.

A project that I expect to work on for the rest of my life and never finish is a kind of art project playing with meaning making and the first few layers of knots, so this is all part of that really. I suppose it is a way to give a kind of focus or even kind of “abstract grounding” to some other kind of activity which isn’t necessarily even directly related to or about it.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Jan 30, 2024 at 3:43pm

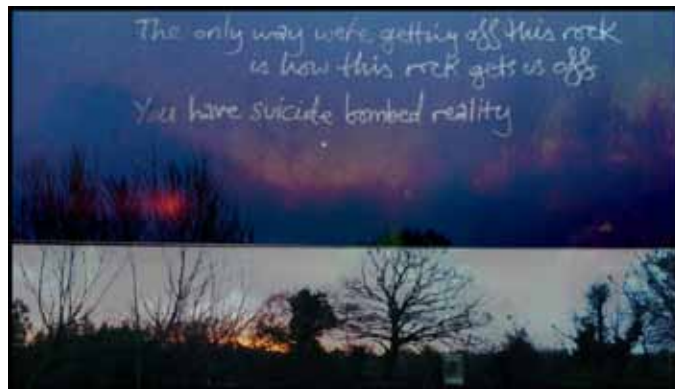
Obliterate!

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Feb 18, 2024 at 10:30pm

beautyfool.

* * * * *



Getting off

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Mar 2, 2024 at 10:08am

I like **Getting off** especially. Could you say more about your composition method for these pieces? I meant to ask . . .

* * * * *

Post by KD on Mar 2, 2024 at 8:37pm

I like the off balanced-ness of **Getting off** . . .

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Mar 3, 2024 at 5:56am

Foremost in the composition process, Raymondo, is something like the “happy accident”—I go through the day’s photos, delete a bunch, then lay down as few or as many as I have a feeling for, and then the

surprises happen as I try different blends, and where something just jumps out as feeling right I take it as meant to be.

Most of the time I'm being as unfussy as possible, but sometimes if something isn't working I'll spend a while trying all sorts of different options. What I've noticed is that the work with the photos might make me feel better about doubts I have about the words sometimes, if something lines up or something in the mood chimes then I feel reassured—and when things don't work quite I can normally at least get to a place of happy-enough-ness—but the words aren't alone, and there's something I like about that—it might be similar to putting together a book, something might make sense with its friends, so to speak, but fall apart a bit if considered in an isolated mode. In a wild way this makes the past no more fixed than the future need be.

Getting off, the one you liked particularly, was a photo of dawn reflected in the kitchen window, combined with a more direct photo—perhaps there's some magic in their relation that makes it work well. There is also the reflection of a particular tree, up which I had an experience that perhaps rebounds in the words, so there's an added depth or confirmation there for me also.

* * * * *



Already forgotten

Ingredients



Forever too much

* * * * *

Post by KD on Mar 9, 2024 at 8:18pm

- **Already forgotten:** Lovely. I especially liked the writing on this one (“Your art is a dream / I’ve already forgotten / apart from what I am”). It’s touching. And the fish is lovely. Is it drawn in sand?
- **Ingredients:** I love the trees and what look like raindrops and the idea of baking a sunset—gotta remember all those ingredients!
- **Forever too much:** Ooh—this one is my favorite this week, the writing is curious (“What is

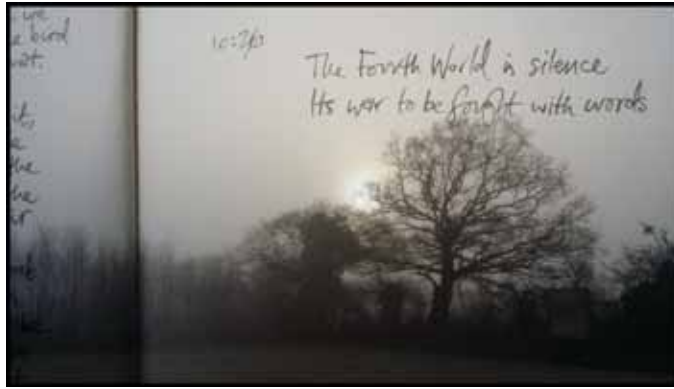
forever too much / for the moment is enough”) and the photo is striking. They just go together well and grab my eye especially!

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Mar 10, 2024 at 7:40am

Yes, KD, the fish is drawn in the sand of my wife’s riding arena ☺

* * * * *



The Fourth World

* * * * *

Post by KD on Mar 16, 2024 at 8:33pm

The Fourth World: This is my favorite this week—such a beautiful picture and it looks like it’s in a book, which I love. And I’m curious about the Fourth World?

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Mar 17, 2024 at 11:19am

The Fourth World: In a way that was a reference to the Fourth World War—I had that famous quote in mind, attributed to Albert Einstein: “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones”—that and the old children’s rhyme: “Sticks and stones may break my bones / But words shall never hurt me”—The idea is, these words would/do hurt.

There is also a connection to the *Aeon of Ma’at*, in my thought at least, associated with silence and justice. In English philosopher Aleister Crowley’s system, there was the *Aeon of Isis*, the matriarchy, followed by the *Aeon of Osiris*, patriarchy, then the *Aeon of Horus*—the crowned & conquering child, the *Aeon* in which we now find ourselves.

The fourth *Aeon*, the fourth World—maybe in some sense it’s already here—I expect its war would be one of those ones that’s already won, in the heart of every person who manages to bring themselves to Peace. That’s always the kind of silence I mean, the natural (/supernatural!) golden kind ☺

* * * * *



Nothing but the moon

Post by Raymond on Mar 17, 2024 at 8:17pm

Nothing but the moon—*Oh lovely lovely lovely . . .*

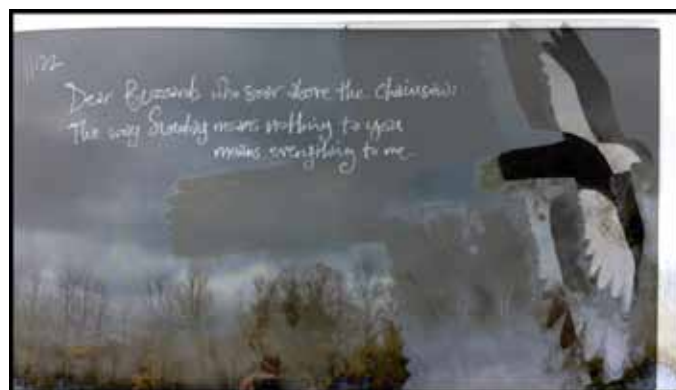
Post by KD on Mar 23, 2024 at 8:44pm

Nothing but the moon: I like to look at these first small on the screen, then click into them to see them bigger and read the words. And this one especially grabbed my eye when small—just the lights and darks and curves. And dreaming of the moon seems a nice relief after tossing and turning . . .

Post by Sam on Mar 24, 2024 at 7:51am

Hey guys! Hope all is well where you be!

Thanks for the feedback! 😊



Everything to me

Post by KD on Mar 30, 2024 at 9:01pm

Everything to me: I really like the effects on this one. I'm not sure what's really there, or what is effect, but it really makes for an interesting shot, and made all the more interesting with the words ("Dear Buzzards who soar above the chainsaw: / The way Sunday means nothing to you / means everything to me").

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Mar 31, 2024 at 5:40am

The effects on **Everything to me** amount to picking different blend modes to cause a kind of inversion to let the three different hawk silhouettes kind of appear well through each other—perhaps one inversion, then an inversion on the next layer to sort of sandwich it in there.

There is a blend mode called "exclusion" I think I might've used, maybe mixed with "difference"—I'm not sure but I think sometimes the effects are cumulative, in the sense that they seem to work a little differently together sometimes than I expect from what they do alone.

* * * * *

Post by KD on Apr 6, 2024 at 8:08pm

I like using those same effects, and I definitely am sure that they kind of feed one on top of another, when you use multiples!

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Apr 12, 2024 at 10:44am

I often feel like you and I think about Art in some same ways, Sam. You build these strange wonderful projects to set your mind in a particular direction, curious to see what will happen, what you will see, what might come of it all. I do the same thing too, of course.

Something about the not(knot?)(haha!)-knowing that is so luring.

Following your visual/poetical journey along here has given me & others some comfort in the wake of Judih's daily ku come and gone. I am *sure* she would have loved this series, and been touched with the connection.

* * * * *

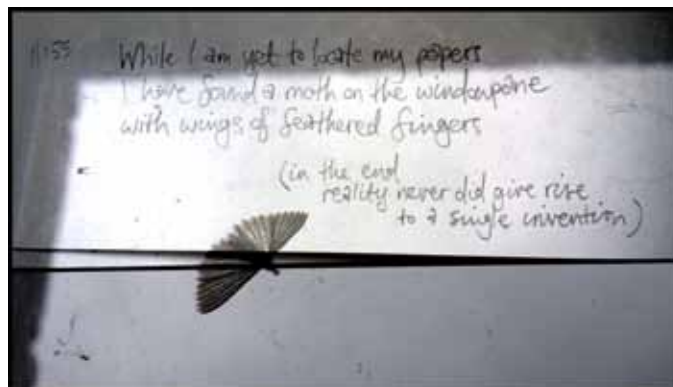
Post by Sam on Apr 12, 2024 at 11:58am

Yes, I think we have some good shit in common in terms of our approach. I love the strangeness of such projects, and surely the not knowing has a lot to do with it—and there really is a not knowing, which I find somehow inviting and welcomingly interesting—this perhaps as opposed to a more knowing kind of classically modern "who can tell?"

I mean: it's all well and good knowing that thing about language and persons and stuff about how little of it is "really there." such that whatever you do or try to say more or less other things are going to be made of it—but there ain't no mistaking a certain sense of adventure, even better one that doesn't need to go anywhere. The sense of adventure that happens behind eyes that don't even need to close to see

beyond the stars already, I mean: that sense of adventure is home.

That's my kind of going nowhere. Stand me in green skin in pink pants on the surface of a jelly-mountained planet and I'll still plant the same tree hung flag—it's just a wind my hand is waving in.



Filing cabinet

Post by Martina on Apr 13, 2024 at 5:17pm

I *love* this project, Sam. I can read your handwriting just fine, and the photos are almost like doors and windows to a planet other than ours. Seeing through your eyes is a special gift to all of us.



Hedgerow piano

Hippy Peaster



Bat dreams

Post by KD on Apr 13, 2024 at 8:27pm

I was looking forward to catching up all week! Here are my notes:

- **Hedgerow piano:** I like the texture of this one—the greenery looks like paper somehow. And the writing is true, very clever (“The way the bramble leaves bounce back / after the rain drips from their tips / looks like noone playing music”).
- **Hippy Peaster:** I like the layers and sentiment of this one too, trees, peace, you, clouds, all good things . . .
- **Bat dreams:** I love the black and white and gray, trees, clouds, curious bats.

* * * * *



Flowrym

* * * * *

Post by Jimmy on Apr 17, 2024 at 9:15pm

These are really great, Sam. I don't think I've ever seen a format quite like this, and it's effective, entertaining and beautiful. The links in the chain of the great circle are individual and discrete, but interpenetrate deeply into the larger tapestry in ways that are fun to interpret. It's almost like each piece is a tangible entity manifesting from a background that is amorphous and ambiguous but yet whole and undivided at the same time.

It's a treasure-trove. Good stuff!

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Apr 19, 2024 at 8:35am

Thanks muchly, Jimmy! Interesting you pick that out concerning the discrete and continuous—been thinking about such today! More pointedly than usual, I mean 😊

* * * * *

Post by Epi on Apr 19, 2024 at 7:42pm

I'm really enjoying going through all of them, Sam. *Wonderful*. Would love to see all these thoughts/images together after we finish the 360.

And Jimmy—I fully agree. It's really amazing!

* * * * *



Snailien

Here you are



Seamless fragmentations

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Apr 25, 2024 at 9:37am

Brother Sam—

So I am deep in the final run to finish *Cenacle* 124, couple days off work even, & last night & this morning addressing the matter of transfiguring this ongoing project into the current issue's *From the ElectroLounge Forums* entry.

I had not thought of it that way till recently. But what I try to do with these pieces is either see what is being discussed by more than a few at *ELF*, or push some topic myself. Never know what it will be one time to the next. That said . . .

I was bone-dry of topics. Just had sad ones, about loss. Could not bring myself to raise any enthusiasm for any of that really.

But it finally seeped into my slow mind the special thing that you were doing with this project, both as a tribute to Judih & something brand new here. And I could raise some fuss to get more of us looking & commenting.

And it was KD who was doing this all along, during my radio show on Saturday nights. Just kinda started & kept going.

So, lucky me, it fell into place. Then came the challenge of the transfiguration. As much as I would wish, I cannot get all 110 (so far) images into one issue. Also, I wanted to make sure what were picked tracked to what was being discussed.

So first I copy/pasted all the textual discussion here to a Word document. Messy, messy, so cleaned that up. Then I downloaded all the pictures to folders, sorted by month.

Then I started looking at the pictures. Slowly, comprehensively, one by one. Attic Study. One of my favorite bands from the 1980s, The Police, blasting on the Attic Radio.

I see now doing that more fully what I had not seen till now. The amazing scope & breadth of all this. *One a day of these, every day?* As you Brits say (I think): *Fuck all!* Or something like that.

Said better, *I love this work. Brilliant.* I can see why KD, with her own brilliant visual talent, would gravitate to these artworks, want to respond.

Anyway, now I'm in the home stretch of getting the flow of images & text right. I can't make Art like this if a gun to my head, but I can edit something good to present from it.

In fact, this project was in my dreams last night, & I realized that it will be titled in *The Cenacle* as *From ElectroLounge Forums: Selections from Unknot 24, Part 1*. Meaning that, as you do more, *The Cenacle* will continue to track.

Anyway, Sam, thank you. *Seriously, brother.* I love you, my friend, and so appreciate your spirit and your great Art. The world is better for you in it, making your kinds of pretty, weird, wonderful art-troubles.

Peace,
R ☺

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Apr 28, 2024 at 5:17am

Thank you kindly, Epi! I'm a big fan of your photography! I certainly do intend to gather the entire work together when I reach the start/end (plan is for 360—in some sense tied in a conceptual circle—which hopefully the rhythm of the seasons will mostly accomplish for me!).

Brother Ray, I suppose with hoping to inspire others I mostly just mean: to experiment. I didn't particularly think of this as anything new; it was just the thought of combining photos from my day with perhaps photos of my notebook (where most of my writing is happening this year)

But then it sort of “showed me what it is”: in a way it has a strange unity, and says more for itself than I could probably say about it. “Multiple exposure”—when I thought of it in terms of a modern version of that old technique, that seemed to say something in itself, for instance.

I'm not in control of any of it, but I suppose I have let what was moving through me come out in some way, and that is always more rewarding than bottling it up. Needless to say, something like art is really a wonderful way to let too complex feelings come out and come up.

And Judih is a strong reason for this work, a big part of it of course.

Ray, I love the image of you sitting up in your Attic Study, listening to tunes, and going over it!

* * * * *

Judih Weinstein Haggai



Haiku from a Silent Retreat

July 31, 2021

Kibbutz Nir-Oz, Israel

I just exited from a 3-day silent meditation retreat, situated within my own home. I had been planning to go on a 10-day retreat, based on heartfulness, in my favorite location, Ein Dor, but with the prevalent risk of exposing myself to Covid-19 on the many buses, many bus stations that I'd have to navigate, plus the idea of sitting inside the Meditation Hall wearing a mask, well, I thought that here was an opportunity to use the resources available to me.

I entered our saferoom. This is a place not only secure against incoming rocket attack (always a nice perk) but also a viable size for sitting meditation, reclining meditation, and walking meditation where the size of my steps was small, in keeping with tradition.

Also, the Internet more or less works, which meant that I could listen to online recordings of wonderful Dharma talks (which I located in advance) of Christopher Titmuss, British teacher and ex-monk. A talk of his from a retreat I had actually attended! I think that the experience made my brain ripe for entering the artzone.

Here are the haiku, born from that experience.

* * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai

Day One

early to walk
cool air before sunrise
kibbutz fresh and new

* * *

artwork fantasies
during dharma talk
freedom to enjoy

* * *

what was all that fuss?
why so much authority?
better luck next time

* * *

Day Two

minimalism
sounds right
yet, beloved books!

* * *

beware of judgement
one voice of righteousness
another recoils

* * *

Everybody!
Are you everybody?
I'm not either

* * *

Day Three

comfort in schedule
exploration within lines
less frantic chaos

* * *

What is now?
is the past totally gone?
let's honour lessons

* * *

mindful of thoughts
experience of body
in my chosen space

* * * * *

1-12-2023 7:49 a.m.

Stop the Wobble,
 Dance with the Wobble
 There is no Wobble
 Wobble the Wobble
 Wobble
 Probably many more.

Worry the Wobble
 Love the Wobble
 Ignore the Wobble
 Fuck the Wobble

Stop the wobble dance with the wobble there is no wobble wobble the wobble wobble wobble probably many more worry the wobble love the wobble wobble ignore the wobble part of the ancient violence cause response both there are one nun many responses to the wobble to hold the one answer exclusive to all others seems the greatest risk and danger and are are not in or maybe dangerous one way of seeing the WABA ancient violence then bear over there down there little ways. Turn your head just slightly with deep breath slow, slow open your eyes closed and open again. out in the woods. What kind of community led to generators, solar wind sells lots of food buried in the ground. Off the Grid completely. Save. Save, save. saving, saving, saving, saving duck down and low lower crawl stop that look around okay heard this story out there somewhere. Somebody met along the way he says there was someone he knew on the telephone then in person in a coffee house. Shirt dark hair and eyes who is she to me? He looks at me. I shake my head nod and say gone. Not goes on speaks a little softer. The results of choices not me x did not occur and shakes his head It doesn't sound right. nudge him to sit up a little straighter. I try again. I wanted to see and do the right thing. What were these lessons taught, airier and so on. I like him be scrapping my paper and read them in you When this smacks my face thank you I don't know what happened there it happens sometimes. I read from my scrap of paper did it as an unseen voice in another room lingering as music sometimes does. Now I know you for now stand John John. Lift up reach reach reach Zhang Wan okay good ground yes yes okay all right I roll forward into my apartment which has long swathes of male he's about along waiting benches you guys come over when black and one white and black, they live my records and they wish they would stay and play LPS for them all day long, but they haven't to work I do learn them many dishes some arthouse movie I saw I look at them with kindness in my eyes and heart and say I do hope we become friends I leave they sit down Poppy MiniDisc into that little box next to the thermo TV it's a big red button movie is set during the Revolutionary War. A piece of land is seized and then returned and then shift to World War Two. This is reenacted it involves several soldiers on a boat downstream at this time involves shooting in real danger wobba wobba wobba wobba wobba Stop the wobble bands with the wobble there is no wobba wobba wobba probably many more you won't figure it out you can't figure out your hand you can't figure out the sky you can't figure out birdsong you can't figure out sickness you can't figure out grass you can't figure out rest berries you figure though Wabo any old way Pro or wrong her URL?

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes from New England

*“Please accept this ragged purse
of high notes.”*

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), then revived in issue 59 (October 2006) as Notes from the Northwest, & appearing since issue 75 (October 2010) under its original title. It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, & perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

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Dream Raps, Volume Thirteen

Volumes One to Thirteen of Dreams Raps can be found at:
<http://scriptorpress.com/dream-raps.pdf>

* * * * *

“This is a world where nothing is solved.”
—Rustin Cohle, *True Detective*, 2014.

* * * * *

Prelude.

You know . . . you know . . . you know . . . it's . . . it's like . . . it's like this:

Stop the *WOBBLE!* Dance with the *WOBBLE!* There is no *WOBBLE.* *WOBBLE* the *WOBBLE.*
WOBBLE.

Probably many more.

I, you, but let's say I, fall asleep &, instead of just sleeping, a bodily rest, a stillness, I fall into the most complex of stories.

Worry the *WOBBLE.* Love the *WOBBLE.* Ignore the *WOBBLE.* *Fuck the WOBBLE!*

Strange, surreal, yet vivid . . .

Remnant of the **Ancient Violence**. Cause? Response? Both? There are one, none, many responses to the *WOBBLE*. To hold a single answer, exclusive to all others, seems the greatest risk & danger. But tis one way of seeing the *WOBBLE*.

Vivid . . .

Then. There. Over there. Down there a little ways. Turn your head just slightly. Lift! Now a deep breath . . . slow . . . slow . . . open your eyes . . . close them . . . now open again. Feels almost like seeing around corners? But . . . not . . . quite . . . yet . . . it's like this . . .

And for the stretch of the really vivid ones . . .

Out deep in the White Woods. A kind of commune, a calliope of performers. A lot of generators, solar & wind cells. Lots of food buried in the ground. Off the grid completely. Talk of a Festival not far. And above there are stars! So many of them! Seas of skies of them! Safe. Safe. Safe. Safe.

Safe. Safe.

the especially vivid ones . . .

Duck down, low, lower, crawl, stop. Look around. It's OK. I heard this story, out there, somewhere, from someone I met, on that bus, along the way. He said there was someone he knew, on the tele-o-
phone, then in person, in a coffee house. Brown hair & turquoise eyes. He looks at me. Asks: "Who is she to me?" I shake my head, but nod & say, "Go on."



Nathan D. Horowitz

the ones they say come near dawn . . .

He nods, goes on, speaks a little softer. "The results of choices not made. Acts that did not occur." But shakes his head. That doesn't sound right.

if you sleep overnight . . .

I nudge him to sit up a little straighter. Try again.

I'm as immersed in the reality of what is happening . . .

"I wanted to be kind, to say & do the right things. What were these? Listen? Talk? Care? And so on?"

as I will be . . .

I look at him, & the Mossy scrap of my paper he holds for me, & reads thus in: **"Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment."**

when the alarm goes off. . .

“Stand! Jump! Lift! Up! Up! Up! Up! Up! Up! Reach! Reach! Reach! Jump! Land! OK! Good. Ground. Yes. Yes. OK. All right.”

& I wake up . . .

I suddenly come to, roll forward, onto my mattress with the wires poking through, my lovely crimson & electric blue blankets near me, into my ZombieTown hovel, which has nearly endless swathes of my LPs on long, winding benches. My strange folding canvas hung slightly crookedly on the wall next to the window. Shows the sunset over that beautiful Island, by the Wide Wide Sea.

Then sudden comes a knock upon the door.

Oh. These two guys come over, one black-&-white, one white-&-black. I met them one Sunday when I took me & my notebooks over to write at **The Arcadia**. I had my book-bag stuffed full. *Labyrinthine*. *Many Musics*. *Bags End News*. *Dream Raps*. *Thoughts Pad*. Even some Secret Books for *Creature Tale* & *Great Heroes of Yore* references. Never can tell.



Nathan D. Horowitz

I was also looking for that new kindly Dreamland book I'd heard about, called *Adrift: A Novel*. They helped me figure out that there was this pretty lady looking at it. Standing with some weird-looking guy. She gave it to me with a nice smile when she was done.

But they were cool to help. And they love my records, & wish I would stay & play LPs for them all day long. Noisy Children. The Pink Floyd. Supernova. All the good ones I collect.

But I have to go for a while. Meeting a guy who has a bus ticket I need. Instead of records while I'm gone, I know they like weird movies like I do, so I tell them about a mini-dizq I just got of this art-house movie I saw down at that weird old Nada Theatre. It's kept up on top of my window's *Alice in Wonderland* curtains, for safe-keeping. Weird neighbors around here.

I leave as they are sitting down, popping that mini-dizq into the little player, next to the DüMónt TV with the Antennar 2000. Hit the big red *Play* button. Found that box cheap from back when I worked at that Thift Shop down the street. I miss that place.

That art-house movie is set during the Civil War. Called *Beyond Oorous*. A piece of land is seized, & then returned, & then the narrative shifts to World War Two, & this event is reenacted, in reverse. It involves several soldiers, fleeing on a boat downstream, & the second time involves shooting, real danger. Fire lances even.

But then it ends with this super weird, super long scene of these huge, silent, grey spirits marching through a tall arching bridge, on a darkened beach, right into the water. Oh, & that strange quote at the end of the credits about living metaphors, & how the interface of memory, dream, & wish produces a kind of Art.

When I return they are gone, but the place looks a little neatened up, maybe, or at least not worse. I see they tried another from my mini-dizq movie collection, *Outer Space City, 100,000 A.D.* Finally solved the problems about gravities & demons that used to worry me so much in its **Battle Black Tech** TV show days. I used to watch that movie twenty times a day. Saved up my coupons to see it, by eating bowl after delicious bowl of *ChocoSmax: Them's the Fax!* But they wouldn't let me in the Nada Theatre to see it that time. Lucky I found that mini-dizq of it later at my old Thrift Shop.

I have my ticket, but not leaving till the sun's up, like the old tune says. My book-bag is packed. Turn on the DüMónt TV, adjust the Antennar 2000. Takes a while to warm up. Crank the heater a few times, & get under my electric blue & crimson blankets, curled around the wire poking out of course.

Now that my friends are gone, the very shy Creatures who sometimes visit my hovel begin to come out, sniffing friendly their hellos. Accept my offer to cluster with me under the blankets, them being cold as ever when outside of the White Woods. White Bunny, Hedgedyhog, Peppermint Bears, Kittes & their Friend Fish. Alvinarah Poesy, & his dear friend Naria Narwhal. Even that cackling little Imp is under there somewhere. They never stay long, but I love them passing through. They're excited about the Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock in the White Woods, I'm guessing.

Lucky us, *TripTown* is on. That spooky episode that begins with a dark screen & a low voice:



Nathan D. Horowitz

*So here's how you do it. Draw a circle in the air with your finger.
Choose carefully which finger. It will have an effect on the result.
As you draw the circle with the well-chosen finger, concentrate on a where, & on a when,
to create a door in the air before you.*

WOBBLE! WOBBLE! WOBBLE! WOBBLE! WOBBLE! WOBBLE!

*Sometimes the dreams are so deep, like a maze-book you have to try to read / climb your way
up / down / out of . . . some other kind of real, yet still I wake up & they're completely gone . . .*

Stop the **WOBBLE!** Dance with the **WOBBLE!** There is no **WOBBLE!** **WOBBLE** the **WOBBLE!**

~~Probably many more. You won't figure it out. You can't figure out your hand.
You can't figure out the sky. You can't figure out birdsong. You can't figure out sickness.~~

*& I don't even understand that really, how that can be, how one can be so completely immersed
in, in something, & then it's gone, happens often, not always but often . . .*

~~You . . . can't . . . figure . . . out . . . grass . . . you . . . can't . . . figure . . . out . . . raspberries . . .~~

~~*even what's brought back is shells from a shore, pictures, bits . . .*~~

~~You can't figure out the **WOBBLE**
any old way~~

*some of them are valuable, some of them are dear, but the ones where I feel like it's the entirety of
everything . . .*

~~You can't III . . . III . . . III . . . III . . . III . . . III . . . III~~

*I feel even more all pervasive, than this waking,
varied & trapped & immobile, & I don't know what it means?*

* * * * *

Part One.

Bus Station

You might see me, in the corner of that bus station, sitting on that bench, with the crack right down the middle. People have stuffed all manner of things in that crack, over the course of time, I've noticed. There's gum down there. Cigarette butts. Cheese Doodles & other wrappers of this kind & that. Old bus tickets. Love notes. Pages from novels. Scores from unfinished symphonies. Thoughts collected together, with no venue to offer them, rolled up, in tight little balls, pushed down there, with the butts & the gum.

I sit next to the crack, with my *Thoughts Pad*. Looking around, near & far. Bus stations are good places to see what's going by in this world. All sorts of reasons people are on the bus, taking the bus, waiting for the bus. One elderly lady with grey hair done up in a pretty pink scarf, multi-colored layers of

clothes, sits next to me.

Are you waiting for the bus? Or are you waiting for somebody to get off the bus?

Them's always good questions, Ma'am. I don't talk to too many people like you. Not too many people want to talk to me, sitting here, in the corner, next to the crack in the bench, with my *Thoughts Pad*. I mean they kind of look at me askew. If they look at me at all. But you sat down, smiled at me. It's kind of you.

No, I don't need a pamphlet. I'd just stuff it down the crack. There's a few already down there.

No, I don't need whatever is in that little baggie of yours. But thank you.

No, you don't have to freshen up to sit beside me.

No, I'm not sure where I'm going.

No, I don't expect I know where you are either.

But, here we are, on either side of this crack. Look at it. It's a thing of beauty. It's a thing that exists in time, & tells a story. It tells a strange story, over time. *What's that story?* I don't know. Maybe it's just the story of a crack where people stuck their detritus. But maybe there's more to it than that. Maybe, I don't know.

You see, this is what I write about in my notebooks. I've got many notebooks, I've got them piled high, in my ZombieTown hovel. Pretty much all I have are notebooks, black pens, vinyl LP records, & a black-&-white DüMónt TV with an Antennar 2000 on top. Have you seen *Trip Town*? No, I guess not. It's not always there.

But, see, I'm not unhappy, because the past is passed, & the future's yet to come, & every moment is a miracle, of its own special kind.

You agree. You smile at me. Thank you. I wrote that down. Here, I'll write it down for you too. Hold out your hand. There you go: *Every moment is a miracle, of its own special kind*. Something like that.

Gotta go? I understand. Thank you for sitting with me. Thank you. *Goodbye . . . Goodbye . . . Goodbye . . .*

* * * * *

Secret Penny

It had been a long day. I had come to a kind of marketplace but, uh, oh, I can't say how exactly. That Roofless Bus? Could be. Been on that bus for a long while. But then it stopped, for a break maybe, at this market. I think it is a market. Many stalls, very crowded.

And I got off, & took my book-bag with me, of course. My tape recorder, notebooks &, uh, everything I had. All of my valuables. You never know, when a bus you're taking, is gonna up & leave without you. That's one of my *Wise Wisdoms*. Perhaps it's even a *Wise Warning*. Who knows?

All of which is to say, I'm walking, from stall to stall. At one, a man, seeming to be covered in roots & vines, but unperturbed, is selling maps of what look like mazes.

Then I come upon this stall that is kind of different from the others, which are really well organized & nicely tended. This one just seems to be a big cardboard box, under a dirty green-&-golden awning. And the box is not sorted in any way. I guess it's just sort of dig in & see what you come up with? OK. I'm game. As long as nothing bites.

So I start feeling around. And there's clothes, & maybe some tools. I don't feel any notebooks, or I certainly would have pulled one of those up. And I don't feel any other kind of books. So I'm starting to feel around with less interest.



Nathan D. Horowitz

But then my hand comes upon something solid, heavy, a little bit cold. And I fish it out of the depths. And, well, it's a watch. It's one of those pocket watches that you see the gentlemen carrying around with them.

Now I'm no gentleman. None would ever claim such upon me. But maybe I can have a pocket watch too? *Why not?* Why not.

So I give this watch some good attention. As I said, it's heavy, & it's a little cold. And it takes a while to find the latch to flip the cover open, & I won't say that I understand *how* it tells time. I'm not even totally sure *that* it tells time. But OK. Maybe it tells something else. Maybe something else is worth telling. I'm keeping an open mind about all of this.

But then, uh, honestly? I notice a little something kind of poking out of it, just slightly under the mechanisms in the clock-face. Whatever it tells, time or otherwise, there's a little something in there. And I kind of tug on it. And the more I tug on it, the more I realize that it's something secret.

And, as I extract it, very carefully, I see that it is what I've heard called, in my travels anyway, a **Secret Penny**.

Now you may or may not have heard of **Secret Pennies**. That's kind of why they're secret. They're not that well known about &, if you happen to come upon one, you're gonna take a while, if ever, to figure out what that **Secret Penny**'s secret is.

But OK. Sure. Yeah. I'm now convinced that this should be *my* pocket watch, for a while, whatever it tells. And so I slide the **Secret Penny** back into its hidden place. I notice there are other things, deep down in there too. Little colored strips wrapped in plastic. *How many layers does this pocket watch have?* Apparently a few.

And I looked around now for the proprietor or the proprietress of this stall. But there's none. I mean, really, *none*. There is no one else with any interest in this box.

Now I'm no thief. Though I've been called many things, I'm *no* thief. But there was no one to negotiate with over this pocket watch.

But then I think to myself: *Well, maybe it's one of these things where you take a little something, & you leave a little something.* So I dig in my book-bag, & I find a spare book of poetry. I had an extra. *Wyrd Poems from 1928.* From *that time*. (Best don't ask me about *that time*.) And I place it in that cardboard box, push it on down, so someone will have to fish for it, as I fished for this pocket watch.

I look around one more time, & then I take the pocket watch, & I put it in amongst my many own pockets, one with a zipper for sure. And I begin to make my way along through the marketplace. And I, uh, I just keep going.

Now I will say that, sometime later, I end up on that Roofless Bus again. Though I always say that you never know if *it's* the same Roofless Bus as the last time, or if *you* are the same *you* as the last time. So I'll just say that *an I* ends up on *a bus*. Leave it at that. Another *Wise Wisdom* or *Warning* for use.

Get to my seat in the back row, next to the bathroom. Settle all my stuff back in, book-bag at my feet. I pull out the pocket watch, & start in to studying it very closely. I feel as though this pocket watch has *something* to do with the Wide Wide Sea. Couldn't tell you why. So I get to thinking about the Wide Wide Sea, & also the Deep Deep Sea, which is way below the Wide Wide Sea, where I'm headed. At least I think I am.

Thinking: *well, what about it? What does it feel like to walk by that legendary, almost mythical, Deep Deep Sea, along the Beach of Many Worlds, on its heavy, musical sand? What does it feel like, sensually? How does the air smell? What does its water taste like? Is it ordinary sea-water? What's it like, in the bones, when you're down there?*

I drift off into dreaming, for sure. And, uh, I hold that pocket watch in my hand for a long time. It's very reassuring. Its slight coldness. The weight of it. It feels a little heavier than it should.

* * * * *

Travels with a **Secret Penny**

So I traveled on with my **Secret Penny**, to the magical Beach of Many Worlds, by the Deep Deep Sea. Been here for a while now. And I felt right away like, well, I could stay here *forever*. Sitting on this colorful sand that seems to make a pretty *hmmmming* sound all the time, under foot, under seat. Listening to the *whoosh! whoosh! whoosh!* of that beautiful Deep Deep Sea.

Thinking to myself: *it could be true what I've heard, that this Beach goes on forever, in all sorts of ways, that one may expect, or may not expect.*

But then one day came when I was sitting quietly on the Beach, like usual, next to my book-bag, all peaceful-like, and I pulled out my **Secret Penny**, & got to studying it again. That's when I heard some kind of **Voice**. And I looked around, & I didn't see anybody, either person, or Creature, or anything else.

And at first I didn't understand the **Voice**. It's like the **Voice** was muddled, or whispering too low, or maybe in a tongue I didn't know. But it kept on going, almost insistently, & so well, uh, I just stood up, not really knowing exactly how to work this.

I put my book-bag strap on my shoulder, harked my hand to my ear, & thought I could figure out which direction the **Voice** was coming from. Maybe if I got closer, I might understand it better.

So I started walking along, & the **Voice** got a little bit louder as I went. Though I must admit that it didn't get any clearer. I couldn't get the sense of what I was dealing with. And yet on I walked.

And after while the **Voice** seemed to draw me toward this **Door**, further back on the Beach. There it was, just like in that spooky book. You ever read that book? With the **Door** that you look at it from the front, & it's there, but if you look at it from the side, it's not? Yeah, that's a good book. I don't remember the name of it though. I read it in the liberry once. I go to a lot of liberies, you might not be surprised to hear.

But I don't think that the **Voice** was drawing me to walk through the doorway of that **Door** on the Beach. I think it was drawing me to keep going a little further past it, to something else that was near there too. So I looked far as I could, harked hand to ear. Something way, way down the Beach from where I had come. *Tall*, I thought, *but so far off*. I just could not tell.

But that's when it all got interesting in some other strange way, because that's when the **Secret Penny** that I had been holding in my hand this whole time, well, it started buzzing & crackling & dancing around in my palm, like *finally* I was getting somewhere that this **Secret Penny** was interested in. And it's like that **Voice** now started again into singing me along my way.

And I'm not gonna claim that I know what happened next, but it wasn't long, not too many steps, following that singing **Voice**, buzzing & crackling & dancing **Secret Penny** in my palm, before I wasn't on that Beach no more. *Not even close*.

* * * * *

Part Two.

I Hear Scholars Talking

I hear Scholars talking, in this Great Liberry, down near the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds, about things that Scholars talk about. And I write down their phrases. Let me check my notes here. *Great Grand Braided Narrative. Tangled Gate Mythopoeia. Ripples.*

Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment. Used my crayons to write those words down. Don't ask me why. Keep them for special occasions, I guess.

But sometimes it feels like they use these phrases with exclamation points, whereas other times it seems like they use these phrases with question marks. So I can't say I'm really sure if *they* are really sure.

And what's funny about this too is that, along my way here, I had already seen those Scholarly phrases on walls, like graffiti. And sometimes they show up in my dreams, such that I sleep, not often, but yes.

My notes are still a little sandy, I admit. Pretty colors though. I'm sort of between there & here still. But I still have my **Secret Penny**, let me tell you that. Hid safe in my pocket watch, zipped sure in my pocket.

And you know, it seems like, on the one hand, it could be just random things that my strange mind is collecting together, as though a pattern or a story. Maybe even a message for me. But I don't know what *any* of these things mean. I mean, if it really *was* a message for me, it would be in words I understood, right?

What the heck is a *Great Grand Braided Narrative*? What is a *Tangled Gate Mythopoeia*? And *Ripples*? Are these things *important*?



Nathan D. Horowitz

The Scholars think so. I watched them close one day, sitting in my corner of the Great Liberry Reading Room. I didn't come too near, but I watched them close from afar, if that makes sense. I just kept making like I was reading this old magazine with the green-&-golden maze on its cover, & its headline: "What Do All the Artists Do in Heaven?" But I was really watching them.

And they had these piles of papers. Piles of notebooks. Piles of books, big ones, small ones. Some of their books were as small as a fist. Some of them they had to lean against a table, or the biggest windows.

And these Scholars, they seem more like they were addicted to the whole thing, than as though they were just studying it. Their eyes were glazed with ecstasy, but their lips were turned down, like frowning. And I watched them move their papers & notebooks around, almost like just re-arranging them on the tables would bring up new answers.

OK, I admit that what I have in my hands, & it's sandy too, is from them. I distracted them, & then I took what I could, & then I left. I don't know what all this is, but I wanted a piece of it.

Great Grand Braided Narrative? Tangled Gate Mythopoeia? Ripples? Evolution? Synthesis? Ferment?
OK. I'm game, if you are.

* * * * *

Artistes of the Sweet

Now I am *not* a Scholar. They don't travel around the way I do, living in hovels, working in Thift Shops, when they can.

And I ride on the Roofless Bus. Yes, I am one of *them*. Now before you get critical, with all of your prejudices & disdains, I'll argue that riding on the Roofless Bus should not be a black mark on *anybody*.

It shouldn't. I know what they *say*. I've heard the *stories*. Most of them are not true, or exaggerations, or somehow told *wrong*.

But, anyway, I was back on the Roofless Bus. And I was sitting in the back row where I prefer. And I had found this pamphlet. Well, *found* in the sense of *borrowed* from those Scholars in that Great Liberry. *Borrowed* in the sense of *taken*. *Taken* in the sense of *stolen & high-tailed it gone* before they figured out it was me, not a Scholar, who had it.



Nathan D. Horowitz

This pamphlet didn't have a cover, which didn't surprise me, because it looked like it had traveled a long & far way. And not always so smoothly neither. And I can't say that maybe the title page wasn't still back there, & maybe the last page too, when I made my escape. Possibly a page or two missing in between. But I had *some* of it. Some of it was *intact*.

Now I'm one who, though not a Scholar, nor claiming to be one, is never able to resist studying an example of the written word. I'm always curious, whether it be a thick book, or a thin book, a piece of paper, sign on the wall, graffiti. Whatever you may propose, I would say *why, yes*. *Curiosity* is my first, middle, & last name.

So I hunkered down in my seat. The bus was fairly empty, the ride smooth for awhile. And I begin reading through this partial pamphlet, & it's stuck with me ever since. The story of the exiled King. A Great Hero. Pamphlet doesn't tell his name. It doesn't tell you what he was King of. *When, where*.

But he was exiled, even from his own great Brother-Heroes. And it says how his exile came somewhat suddenly. Through some strange means. It almost sounded like he was in one place, & then suddenly another. And he wasn't sure how this happened.

But it did say that he lived exiled by the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds. Not so far from that Great Liberry? Maybe. Anyway, it said that, for a long while, after his exile began, the King didn't go far from the Great Tree, too despairing to move. It took him a long time to just walk around. Even for hunger. Even to find a place to rest.

When sleep came to him, it was more the passing-out kind than the kindly-kind. He was sprawled out on the ground, & it began to snow. Covered him up. Not very deeply, mind you. He wasn't gonna *drown*. But he just lay there, kind of half-woke-up now, but covered in snow. You would think he would leap *up!* Maybe it would be a wake up call to do *something*. But he just lay there, covered in snow, for the longest time, until along came two little brown bear Creatures.

They came up shyly, but not too shyly. They saw this was a people-folks person in need. And Creatures never hesitate to help when people-folks are in need. And he noticed they had little Peppermint buttons

on their brown fur? Little Peppermint adornments, jewelries? Very pretty.

And they sat with him for a while. They *hmmm*'d with him. He began to sit up a little straighter. Brushed off some of the snow. Looked around a bit. And what he felt, for the first time in maybe a long while, was a little bit *sweet*.

And I wish this pamphlet wasn't missing its last page, because I sure would have loved to have learned more about what I would call these *Artistes of the Sweet*.

* * * * *

Now You May Be New . . .

Now you may be new to riding the Roofless Bus. Not everyone wants to admit it. Everyone wants to seem like: *oh yes*, I've been riding this Roofless Bus for calendars upon calendars of time. I know *all* about it. I know *all* about the Deep Circuit, & the Deeper Circuit, & all that.

But you know how I can tell when someone has not ridden on the Roofless Bus for so very long? Well, it's two things. First is, they ask for a schedule. Oh, they might not ask the *driver* but they might ask someone they're *riding* with. Someone who looks friendly, even kindly. Not *me*. But I've seen it happen.

The other thing is they'll keep looking up at the . . . *rooflessness* up there, just wondering about it. Is it *damaged*? Is it *intentional*? What happens if it *rains*?

Well now, the answer to your first question is: there is *no* schedule. I don't even know if there *could be* a schedule. It's more like that old tune: *you get up with the sun. You go to sleep with the darkness. You eat when you're hungry. You drink when you're dry.* The Roofless Bus works like *that*. If you can figure out that, you'll never miss it. Does take a while.

Anyway, you see, I had found another pamphlet, more actually *found* this time than really stole, & I just had to show it to someone. I wondered: *is there a Pamphleteer? You?*

I understand, by the look in your eyes. *You're no Pamphleteer.* It's OK.

But look. This one's about something called the *WOBBLE*, & it's about those great Brother-Heroes again. I read about them in that other pamphlet, but I kind of misplaced it, so I can't show it to you. Probably for the best. But I read it over & over till I memorized it really. And it had to do with these great Brother-Heroes, & their great mission, to save the world, or something.

And so I found this one now, & it almost seemed like they were a set? And look here, I read this: "What is the Beast's response to their request for help? And why are they *WOBBLEd*? Is this the help they get, in that each of them is too wounded, & unresolved in their wounds, to save the Many Worlds?"

And here, look at this, near the end: "Does the Princess save the world because her intent is simply selfless? Do they now witness what she did as a challenge to them, to get clear their intent, & save the Many Worlds?" *What does that all mean?* I don't know.

So I don't know who the *Pamphleteer* is. I do know that there's not a schedule, save for that old tune. And I know the question to the *rooflessness* is a little complicated, but you'll learn in time.

But the WOBBLE: *is it important?* What happens if you get WOBBLed? *What do you do? Do you duck & cover? Do you run? Do you try to rise up tall & try to seem like you're bigger than you are?* How do you address a WOBBLE? *Does it speak the English? Does it speak another tongue? Can you hmmm with it?*

Gotta go? I understand. This happens a lot. I ask a lot of questions. Not everyone can handle the long trip on the Roofless Bus. If you figure out the schedule, we might see each other again. Thank you, for sitting with me. *Goodbye for now*, as they sometimes say in those fancy books.

* * * * *

Recording My Memories

When you ride on a Roofless Bus, passing your hours, your days, turns of the calendar, well, honestly, your memories start to mudge up a bit, drift this way & that. Start to forget if this is *now*, or if this is *again*, or maybe some *other* time too. I guess I'd heard this idea on that space cowboy radio show I found.

So one time I get off the Roofless Bus, pondering this question of: *how I can keep remembering?* I get off at a stop that I've not gotten off at before. And it's not long before I'm going through this *really strange* place. It looks like it was burnt out by wars a thousand centuries ago.

But then, you see, some time passes. I just keep walking. That's what you do. You just keep walking. And I come to this Yellow Building. And it's not a pretty one. But it's about the only thing standing. And I don't think I want to go inside. I remember a similar building on that space cowboy radio show. And it didn't work too well for that Robot Man & his friend, who entered inside for a while, looking for their old friend the Space Pirate.

So I just keep walking round & round, hoping there's something else. And, well, I'm not sure how it happens. Again, my memories mudge. But I end up in this Thrift Shop. Sometimes I remember that I used to work at one too, near my ZombieTown hovel. But not this one, I don't think?

But, like my old one, if I had an old one, it was filled with things. Along the walls, up to the ceiling, down to the floor. And so I was looking, at this & that, when there was suddenly this strange, tall man. He was sort of black-&-white in style. A striped knit cap slouched low on his head. Long grey overcoat. Brown pants. Tall white boots. Long, long teeth.

And he came over & greeted me, all super friendly & kind. And I assured him I wasn't shoplifting, which I wasn't at the moment, I'll have the record know. *Not* a thief. And so I explained to him, because he was so kindly that, well, I was looking for something to do about not losing my memories on my travels.

So he thought a moment, & then nodded, smiled at me, & started walking up this aisle & down that one. And he found me this machine that had been taped up a few many times.

And he said, "You talk your memories into this," & he showed me how the *Record* button worked. And then he showed me how the other buttons worked to listen & all.

He then took a slow look at me, smiled, & said, "Most people, they'd need to work this machine this way. But you seem like a fellow who can handle more." And I bowed & scraped & blushed, because he

was a nice man.

So he showed me its sort of false bottom. And he said, “Use the buttons in there instead, for recording your talkings, & listening later, & you’ll never have to change the batteries, & you’ll never have to change out the cassette. This tape recorder will always work for you.”

Then he noticed that there was already a cassette in the player’s slot. Took it out gently. Handwritten words on it, worn down mostly, but it seemed to read **Sco’u’tland**. “This is yours of course,” he said with his beautiful scary smile. I nodded, & took it too, though not sure what he meant.



Nathan D. Horowitz

And so, after giving him a hug, which he accepted gracefully, that’s how I come to start recording my memories. And it’s worked out well too.

Part Three.

I Wake Up . . . Or Come To . . . Or Something . . .

I wake up . . . or come to . . . *or something*. Where I was . . . it *ain’t* here. *Who am I? I think I remember that, maybe enough. But what happened?*

There was a very White Room. I think that I remember a little. In it, I found this Great Clearing in the White Woods with all sorts of fun activities going on. There was this Talent Show going on. *And someone asked me something about Moss & a Great Story?*

And now there’s here. I look around. OK. A *bridge*? It *seems* like I’m on a bridge. It’s high up off the ground, which I can see, way down there. And it’s, uh, made of *glass*? I can see down there, right through the bottom of the bridge, very clearly. I can feel it, solidly beneath me, or I wouldn’t know it was here. But the rest of the bridge spans over me, & beyond, forward, toward an unseen farther place.

It’s colorful, *many-colors-full*. Never seen a colorful bridge like this, with a glass floor. *Wow*. And looking back down, through the glass floor, I’m not quite sure what I see down there, but it almost like there’s at least part of a *spaceship*? Man, I don’t know.

I sit up. My book-bag is next to me. Thank goodness, whatever’s happened. I feel in my zippered pocket. There’s my **Secret Penny**, hid safe in my pocket watch. Alright. And I’d say that, about twenty

feet ahead of me, there's that taped-up tape recorder that that strange nice dude gave to me at the Thrift Shop. Glad I remember the false bottom that'll make it run forever on one tape. One set of batteries. Just what my budget needs.

I stand up, a little unsteadily. OK. **Bridge of Glass**. Holds me up. I'll do my part. Start walking toward that tape recorder. Bend down. Pick it up. Sit back down again. OK. Still a little woozy, but good. Time to press *Play*. See if I recorded anything interesting, between then & now.

* * * * *

On This Strange **Bridge of Glass**

So anyway, I find myself on this strange **Bridge of Glass**. I wouldn't even know it was a **Bridge of Glass**, if I could explain some other way how I was sitting way up here in the air, without falling down hard on my *keister*. The **Bridge of Glass** is here, under me, sure but, otherwise, I can't see it.

Above, though, that's a different matter. Oh, the *colors*. Oh, the *swirling, undulating, strange, wonderful colors*. They never ever end. They just go *on & on & on*.

So that's where I am, & I'm sitting with this tape recorder that was given me by that strange nice dude at that Thrift Shop, that I happened to pass through a while back. And then, well, kind of what happened is I woke up *here*, & I don't remember *there* to *here* too well. Just that bit of maybe-Festival?

And I hope that this tape recorder will tell me a thing or two. I study it in my lap, this strange machine, much taped-up. *Sho-mee*, it seems to say on it. *Is that its name?* Or who made it? I don't know. I press the *Play* button.

A crackling comes on. Unpleasant, but it kind of fades out after a moment, & then I hear a . . . **Voice?**

But it's OK, I guess, because it's my own voice this time. I sound strange to me though. A little fast, a little slow. But it's me, fairly certain. Pretty sure. Talking, like this:

"Stop . . . tryingto . . . figure . . . out . . . howyougot . . . to . . . where . . . youare. You're . . . never . . . goingtodoit. And . . . it . . . wouldn't . . . matterif . . . you . . . did. Whatyou . . . have . . . to . . . do . . . now . . . is . . . standupput . . . away . . . this . . . tape . . . recorderwhen . . . Itell . . . you . . . to . . . & . . . start . . . walking. Walk on. That's . . . what . . . you're . . . gonna . . . do. And . . . if . . . you need . . . explanation . . . if you're . . . wondering . . . this or . . . that . . . stop. Lookupatwhat'sthere . . . & . . . *hmmm* . . . for . . . what . . . you . . . need. Those are . . . my . . . instructions . . . to you . . . for . . . now. At . . . the . . . end . . . of . . . this sentence . . . do . . . what I . . . justtold . . . you . . . to . . . do . . . period. Thatmeansnow."

Click!

Alright, well, I *do* sound pretty sure, even authoritative. And while I'm not much for authoritative types, I guess I must know what I'm talking about. At least I think I do. Heck, *why not?* I stand up. I put the tape recorder in my book-bag. There's a spot just remaining for it, amongst my many notebooks. Book-bag strap on my shoulder, & I walk on.

And nothing happens for a while. I don't know what I would think might happen, but I'm thinking

about the advice I gave myself, & the advice seems to be that, when I'm uncertain, to do what I said to do. So I decide to listen to me.

And so, at this moment, I stop, & I look up at all those *wonderful, strange, changing, mysterious colors*. I look deeply into them & I *hmmm* . . .

* * * * *

The Mesh

Later on, OK, I'll admit, I hocked a loogie onto this weird **Bridge of Glass**. I had no other way of knowing it was there. And there was my spit, sitting there. And then, for some reason, I looked up, something distracted me. I don't know what it was, but when I looked back down, it was gone. *Of course*. It's some kind of self-cleaning, invisible to the eye, **Bridge of Glass**. *Yeah, yeah, yeah*. I thought that was funny.

Anyway, I'm walking along, & I have my taped-up recorder in my hands, & I'm not exactly sure when I should hit *Play* again, to get more instructions from me, as I had gotten from me already once. All I had told me was that, if I was confused or uncertain, to look up at the *beautiful, undulating, colorful* roof of this **Bridge of Glass**, & *hmmm*, & that I would just know what to do next.

But see, as I'm walking along, I'm mulling about how back there a-ways, I couldn't say how far back there a-ways, I thought I'd seen part of a crashed spaceship down there way below. But, I mean, maybe there were other things in between too. I don't know. I don't even know how fast I'm walking.

But I *do know* that what I see now down below there look like haystacks. Not any of those kinds you might see in the fancy pictures in the Museum you might go to. If it's "Free Thursday," & after 7:30. Remember that, if you're ever of a mind.

Not like those but, it's like, they're just sort of like *rollicking & tumbling*. I swear they're *moving*, but I know they're not. *Oh!* It's so beautiful. I don't know what *any* of it means. I look up at those *wild & wondrous colors*, & I *hmmm*, & I study & study. And then my thumb hits the *Play* button on the tape recorder.

Did I do that? Did the colors up there do that? Did my missing loogie do that? I don't know. But I'm talking again, better listen. Let's be quiet.

"Now that . . . you're . . . walking . . . along, getting . . . used . . . to . . . what . . . you're . . . doing, looking . . . forward, not back . . . & trying to figure al of . . . that . . . out, because . . . you . . . won't, I . . . want . . . you . . . to stop . . . for . . . a . . . moment & . . . goddigging around . . . in . . . your bookbag, because . . . there's . . . a . . . pocket . . . you . . . don't . . . know about. Yeah, find that pocket. In it, you'll . . . find something of . . . interest. Stop this . . . tape . . . now."

Click!

So I heed me & go digging around in this book-bag that I've had for *so* long I know its every pocket by heart. And yet, sure enough, down deep within, I find a pocket I do not know. *Whoa*. OK. And I pull out a little pamphlet. Like the ones I had before, that I found (and/or stole) along the way.

And it's kind of water-damaged or *something*-damaged. It doesn't seem like there's a front or back cover, like those other ones. Some of the pages are missing too. Some of them are too blurry to read.

But right in the middle, there's a whole area of text that is clean & clear. And I read it out loud. I don't know why, but I get the feeling that I should.

"The *Mesh* is where the Dreaming & waking actively cross, where there is open commerce & communications. Within the *Mesh*, there is a *cul de sac*, sometimes called a *Sack*, where one can retreat. And one *cannot* be pursued there, nor share this space.

"Question: How does The *Mesh* exist, versus Dreamwalking?"

"Answer: The *Mesh* is a *shared* place, exists *even* when one is not there.

"Question: What about *Cluster Dreaming*? Or when we encounter those not physically close, or even close in time?"

"Answer: The *Mesh* is like the Indigo Trace. It's not men-built. It is, maybe, from where other well-known Dreaming tools are from.

"Question: How does one access it? Who knows of it? How does it relate to the rest of the *Tangled Gate Mythopoeia*?"

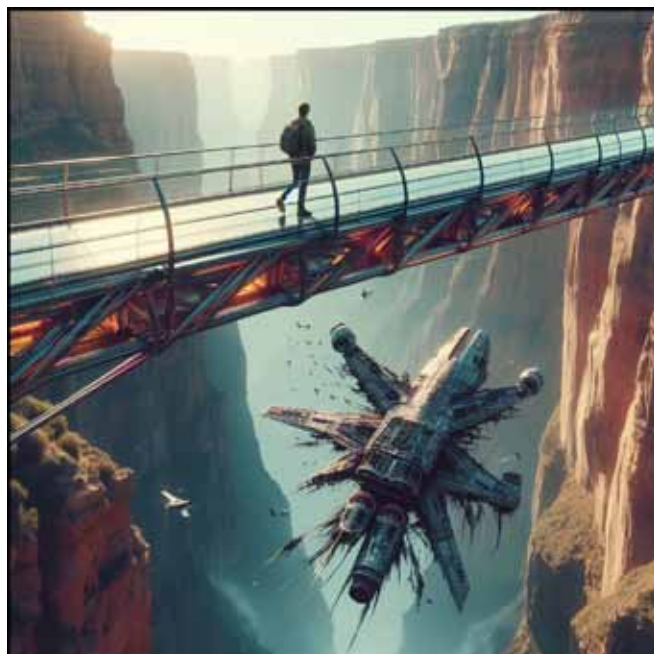
Click!

* * * * *

Skipping Around in Time

I don't understand any of those questions or their answers, but I can say this much: If you should find yourself on this same strange **Bridge of Glass** that I'm on right now, you may find, as I have, that your travels are somewhat discontinuous. Which is to say, that sometimes there's a feeling of skipping around a little bit in time. It's like, I would feel, & it would only occur to me afterward, that I'd passed along a certain point, but then, in what like seemed to me like later, I'd find myself again passing that point.

Oh, I know, that makes no sense, but I'm just saying. And so what I did was, after this had happened a few times, I sat down, & I opened up my book-bag. I put away that strange half-rain-ruined pamphlet on the *Mesh*, for now, in that pocket I hadn't



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known was there before. And I just got to ordering & sorting my notebooks. And, well, if you knew me, you'd know I have *a lot* of notebooks, & I do my best to keep them ordered & sorted, but sometimes it can be a struggle. They are *not* tame.

But I had one in particular in mind, my *Thoughts Pad*, & so I made sure that it was closest to reach, if I wanted to jot down some notes about this kind of *phenomenon* I'm talking about.

Then I turned my attention to my taped-up tape recorder, knowing it had quite a few little secret compartments, little pop-out drawers, & other stuff. I was hoping, &, lucky me, I found an AM-FM transistor radio. Just a little tinny thing. You wouldn't bring it to the Sock Hop, & start playing it for people to dance to, but it was enough.

So I fiddled with it a bit. And some really static-y words came on, sounding like some crazy shouting preacher in a snowstorm:

I'm descending a complicated series of ladders & stairs, among many people, continuously climbing down! I feel as I'm descending like it's not just space but time, I'm descending through places & people I've known & haven't known, times that still remain strange to me though I lived in them, through them, in spite of them! blur blur blur blur blur blur I think of people I knew, that I knew so closely, yes, yes, no, maybe! That's all you get at best! Then there are people I remember that become different to me over time! It's like who they are in my mind now is based on someone they once were, blur blur blur blur blur blur & who they actually are somewhere out there on the planet doesn't really matter anymore because they operate in my mind in a different way, they become a kind of a symbol of something, become tied to something, tied to a feeling, or tied to a memory, tied to something, like a mascot! blur blur blur blur blur blur

And then I fiddled with it in the right way. Suddenly I heard: "Good morning, Starshine! The earth says hello!"

Click! Enough of that for now.

So, as part of my experiment, I would have it playing very softly, just enough for me to hear. And then, if a song came on that I especially liked, I would write its title down in my *Thoughts Pad*, & I'd listen to that song all the way through, end to end. Singing it, making notes, just being really thorough.

First time I tried, there was a man's lovely, low voice, singing over & over again: "loss can be gain, loss can be gain, loss can be gain, pleasure from pain, pleasure from pain, pleasure from pain . . ."

And then, without missing a beat, the song started again. And what I had written down was different from what I remembered writing down. *Uh-oh. Maybe I'm out of my depth with this.* I started to wonder that honestly. And what did it mean anyway, this *discontinuous* travel? *What could this be all about?*

So I fiddled with the radio a little bit more. And I found a second station that was playing the old time rock & roll that everybody loves. Noisy Children. The Pink Floyd. Even the Pink Floyd Too. And then, just for a little while, I found that space cowboy radio show. And I tried following its story, best as you can follow these kinds of stories.

It's about this leader of a group who turns out has betrayed them all. Sold out their secrets & desires. Deep shock & sadness amongst his people. No solid ground for any of them anymore. No going back.

And last you see of this guy, he's being rustled out of town, on the planet that they're on. He's sitting in this kind of horse & carriage, kind of hunched over something that he's holding preciously. And he says, very quietly, but scare-scare-scarily: "I control the egg."

And then, suddenly, it was something else entirely. And, *man*, so, what does *all this* mean? You know? I mean, I think my tape recorder is trying to help me. *Sho-mee*, I think that its name. But I just don't know about all this.

And I guess it's time for me to once again listen to my instructions, from earlier, & so I get myself all gathered up, everything put away. Look up to those *crazy endless colors* up there, think about my conundrum, & *hmmm*.

Suddenly, I am rolling & rolling & rolling & rolling & rolling & rolling . . .

* * * * *

Part Four.

If You Should Fall Off the **Bridge of Glass**

It is quiet in the White Woods. At least as quiet as the White Woods ever get. But there is also the sound of a **Voice**, maybe more. It is a distant, tinny sound, as though it is coming from far away, & yet a closer look at the scene at hand reveals that there's a scattering of objects, in the grass, among the trees.

One of them is kind of an old tape recorder. It's all taped up, long traveled. And the voice or voices are coming from this little machine. It's turned on.

Let's listen with ears.

"Now listen to me, closely If you should fall off the **Bridge of Glass**, tumble from it, in one way or another, which is certainly possible, according to my researches, what you're going to need to have to do is reassemble your possessions. Everything's in your book-bag. That is, in *my* book-bag. *Our* book-bag. You're *me*, further along. Remember that. Make sure that the pocketwatch, with the **Secret Penny**, is accounted for. Check to see if any of the pamphlets you've collected along the way . . . the ones about the **WOBBLE**, the one about the King & his fellow Brother-Heroes, the one about that Mesh are still around to be picked up. They might not be.

"This probably. happened, this tumbling, because you were. too much skipping in time. That was happening, wasn't it?. That's my guess. You were skipping in time. This. can be likened to an LP record, in which. the needle is bouncing so. much that it comes to the end without having. played hardly any of the music. Make sure the tape recorder. is intact, all of it. Check close.

"You're probably. not sure where. you are. When you tumble off the **Bridge of Glass**, you may lose some of your. memories, for a little while. Don't. panic. They'll find you again.

"Now, if you can, once. you've gathered your things, & accounted. for them all, as I've

But I'd gathered up my things, put them all back into my book-bag. Waiting, like my voice on my tape recorder advised me.

And I think: *OK, well, maybe he's gonna advise me for a while. Somehow, he's in the past, but he's giving me advice about what happens next. I don't know how that works. But lots of things in these Many Worlds work in strange ways.*

But then, it turns out, no. Because the last recording I get to hear from him, I heard just now, telling me there's not going to be any more. And that's what's got me thinking about who I was & who I am & who I'm going to be. They all don't quite match, mostly. Anyway, here's what he says, what I said:

"This. is. my. last recording. to. you,. my. future. self From. now. on, this tape's blank, & it's time. for you to record. What you dream. about. What you think. about. What you might advise yourself to think about & do, should things. come to that. And you & I are not quite the same, but we're connected, & that'll be true of you & you down the road.

"So, I can only wish you well. Safe travels. Try to get to the **Bridge of Glass** again. You're not *ljkljsjfdkdkjdk /.#"l2' djlfjdyV9ujlfufyoyo980lj gtp3rpgt.;H0=g*"

Oh. That was it. So I guess it's *my* turn.

* * * * *

I'm Still Waiting

I know those Creatures will be here soon. They come, in their own fashion, after their own time. And since my tape recorder is out of instructions, from my past self, at least for now, I get to digging in my book-bag again. I've come to learn that this book-bag has a mind of its own about how many pockets it's got.

I may have thought before: *Oh, I know how many pockets it's got. And I know what's in those pockets.* But, well, honestly, I'm not thinking that so much anymore, because I keep finding new things. Anyway, I'd rather it be this way, because it's more fun, & occasionally surprising, even delightful.

And, just in case, I remember one of the advices my past self gave me, which was to keep that tape recorder's radio on, & keep checking it, now & again, for that space cowboy radio show.

I turn it on. I don't know what station it is. I don't know if it is a particular station. And for a while, there's this really spooky music that comes out of the radio. No words. Not even sure what it means, just *spooky*, but pretty in its own way. Like a band of strange dreams is playing.

And then I find one of those, you know, pamphlets that I keep finding. They always seem to be torn up. Pages missing, no cover, no title, no author. I guess they have their own troubles too.

But I finally get to a page that I can read. So I start reading &, for the heck of it, I hit the *Record* button on the tape recorder, like I had also suggested to me to do.

So the music's going on, & I'm talking. *Wow.* You could almost call me one of those big time fancy



radio DJs, like on that *SpiritPlants Radio America* I've heard before. I wonder if it's still around. Anyway, I know I'm *nothing* like that, but why not try to have some *simple* fun?

So I read aloud from this battered pamphlet, & it goes: "I wonder about the worldwide conspiracy of men, women, events, places, occurrences. These things are not easy to reckon or deduce. *What's real? What's imagined? What's wished for? What's possible? Have the ships always been overhead? Is Emandia real? Nearer than before? Is it all really a panoply of events & occurrences?* I don't have any answers. Not a one. Not yours. Not mine. Not anyone else's. Just a changing set of questions, & a changing set of ideas about those questions."

Well, OK, so I pause for a moment, thinking on those words, which are very strange words, & the strange dream music is still spooky in my mind. And I look around, but there's no Creatures or Mechanic to be seen.

And so I go on tuning around on the radio, just a little bit, just to see if there's any *chance*, you know, any *possibility*. You never can tell with these things. No *SpiritPlants Radio America*, but then lucky me I *do* come upon that space cowboy radio show, where there's the whole usual bunch of shooting with fire lances, or maybe space fire lances?

And then there's the low-voiced narrator, & he's saying: "Something complex, grimy & light both. Far reaching! A puzzle. A broad, deep, weird puzzle. *Worldwide conspiracy?* Some call it that. I don't. I call it a *game*. You see, things will manifest suddenly. *What to do? Keep? Concede? Halfway between free will & understanding?* And adhering to the rules. *Rules? Common sense? Survival tactics?* Nobody knows all. And you each consider, decide, react, *over & over & over.*"

And then there's some more shooting with those space fire lances. Maybe they're kind of like those space ray guns they use on *Star Track*? Well, I can't say so for sure. But, you know, I'm willing to consider the matter. It just seems like we're in synch. I mean, this weird little pamphlet here & the space cowboy radio show are both talking about the *same thing*. And I'm like, well, *what does this mean?* I mean, *what could it mean? Could it mean anything?* I mean, maybe it doesn't mean *anything*. Or maybe it means *several things?* And I don't know.

But I go paging on in this pamphlet, because the music's back. Something calmer this time, maybe kinda by Supernova? Or, what were they called, the Sweatles? And OK, I mean, I guess you could say that space cowboy radio show, it comes & goes.

What happens next is that the little grey Hedgedyhog Creature comes squeaking back. And I'm really excited to see him. He hops right into my lap. And I figure out quickly that I'm gonna have to learn some way to talk to him because, I mean, he wants to talk to me too. But he doesn't seem to speak the same words I speak. Speaks *Squeak*, as it were.

So then what he does is, he nudges me, with his little Hedgedyhog nose, to hit the *Stop* button on my tape recorder, & to turn off the radio. And then he tells me, with the same nose, to hit the *Play* button, & I'm thinking: *what could possibly come on?*

But something does come on, & I swear that it's not my voice this time. It's a different **Voice**, more the **Voice** of someone tall & heroic. Someone who you could imagine on a great quest. *Not me!* More like that exiled King & his Brother-Heroes.

But all he says is: “It could have been that gam-m-me, which he found himself in later on-n-n. It involved translating into a gam-m-me piece on the board, & then on to multiple level *gtp3rp!* And then into a figure on a TV show *gr.,:H0=g!* And then long words in a book *t0=p3r!* And then music into beautiful songs *0.,:=,! And then, & then, & then & gt0=p3rtp30.,:=rp!*”

Goodness! My little grey Hedgedyhog friend & I look at each other. I don’t know what’s happening. I don’t seem to be doing good at this waiting stuff. But my little friend *Squeaks* kindly, & snuggles me close, as though to say: *just wait a little longer. Don’t lose every last one of your marbles. OK, friend?*

I’ll try not to.

* * * * *

The Mechanic

I’m-a falling asleep right where I sit, I think, I guess. I’m not too sure about a whole lot right now. And I bet that I will have that dream, that I often have lately, of that exiled King & his great Brother-Heroes. Sometimes it’s clear, & sometimes it’s less clear. Sometimes they seem to work at gas stations, & walk the streets, talking to themselves, bumming coins. But sometimes they save worlds, universes. It varies.

But the one thing I can say is that, when I really get into it, it’s best that I’m safe in my hovel, back in ZombieTown, because my arms fly about, my legs kick out. I often wake up & I’m just scattered all over the floor, it seems. And I think that’s what happens this time because, when I wake up, panicked, my book-bag is in disarray, & all scattered about. *Thinking: Is my crazy neighbor lady after me again?*

But . . . someone . . . is saying to me, in a kindly low voice: “Easy, buddy. *Easy, easy.* It’s OK. *Easy.* We all have those dreams. Tell you about mine some time. Right now, here. Sit up. There you go. Here’s your stuff. You sure do . . . collect a lot of these little pamphlets, don’t ya? You gonna to try to sell me something, are you?”

And then he laughs. And his laugh is gruff, & kindly, & full of layers. Layers of dirt. Layers of gold. Layers of love. I can see, as my eyes come clear, his greased overalls, & the baseball cap askew on his head. I think it says *Travel Angels.* But I’m not sure.

“Are you the Mechanic?” I ask.

Well, now that he’s got me all sitting up straight, all assembled & collected again, he kind of crouches before me. He’s got this big red handkerchief. It’s a red I’ve never seen before. It’s crimson. It’s on fire. It’s dark. It’s light. I’ve never seen a handkerchief like it before. And he’s wiping his hands with it. And he wipes his face a little bit. Even his dark Caterpillar moustache. Gives me a bit of a wipe too &, *oh my goodness!* Does it feel *so* good. I never knew a handkerchief could feel *so* good.

He smiles at me. But he still hasn’t answered my question. Like he’s thinking about it. Finally he says, “Sure, sure. I guess when you add it all up. Take some away. Divide twice. Carry the three. Yeah. I’m the Mechanic.” And again he smiles at me, but his smile isn’t the kind of smile that’s like: “Aren’t you a troubled soul that I found laying scattered about a tree?” It’s the kind of smile that lifts. It *lifts*, & I bet this smile is one that he shares with many, & he *lifts* them by this smile, & by the rest of him. His magical handkerchief, & all that other stuff that I’m still finding out in the first few moments I’ve met him! He’s put me together, & I didn’t say *anything* useful. So I try to think of something useful to say.

And he waits. His face is patient. Patient like if we waited for hours for me to say a word, he'd still be patient.

So I finally managed to say, with all I've got, summing up with everything in me: "I fell off the **Bridge of Glass**."

He laughs, heartily, but not so much at me as what I said. And then he says, "My friend, *everybody* falls off the **Bridge of Glass**, their first time on it. The question, & the test, & the thing to figure out, by one way & another, is: *are you going to get back on?* And if you're going to try, I'm going to help you."

* * * * *

Travels with the Mechanic

So I travel with the Mechanic, for a while. And I'm fairly certain that what we are doing is getting me back to the **Bridge of Glass**. But the Mechanic, well, he doesn't travel like, you might say, he feels he has to get *somewhere*. No, he travels like, wherever he is at a given moment, is the *entirety* of where he is.

Even as we find ourselves walking, side by side, through these beautiful White Woods, what seems like day after day, & in the evenings we'll find a nice clearing to camp out, he's always completely *present*. It is as though every moment brings with it its own unique choice about what to do. And I don't know how he does it. It's not like he told me any of this. It's just something that I feel in his company.

I think he's taller than me. But, sometimes, it's like he's *not*, & I can't really tell one way or the other. It's as though even his height is a decision made, every moment. And this is so curious that, for long stretches of time, I'll find myself feeling quietly tangled in these wandering thoughts. And so then sometimes what he'll do is, he'll laugh, his deep, layered, lovely laugh, & just start to tell me a story. And I think these stories are meant to give me guidance, or calm me, or just keep good company with me.

Also listening while he tells these stories are *many* Creatures. I cannot say that I am surprised that the Mechanic draws the company of many a fine Creature. The grey Hedgedyhog friend from earlier, who kept visiting me until he was able to bring the Mechanic around finally, well, he's *Squeaking* friendly amongst this company. He likes to sit on the Mechanic's shoulder, sometimes one, sometimes the other. I never see when he switches between them.

Sometimes I see the White Bunny hopping along nearby. And sometimes that shenanigans-loving little Pandy Bear Imp too, cackling merrily now & again. Why, she will sometimes even ride on his hand, & he will show me how an Imp will not gnaw on a hand *if* it's turned palm down. It's a good thing to know with Imps.

Many others. Shiny-eyed little fellows. Snow Leopard & Fox & Unicorn & Ow-ell. Giraffes. Bears. They come & go. It's never the same number, for very long, but they're always around.

Anyway, one of the many stories he tells me, it just kind of begins, & I find myself in the middle of it, before I even know that I'm at the start of it. He says, "I came to a party, long ago, at an apartment. Big apartment, many floors up. It didn't seem to be a very big party at first, maybe half a dozen. I was younger then. I don't think you would have called me, at that point in my travels, a Mechanic. I didn't know how to fix *anything*. I didn't know that fixing things *starts* with giving your self a good look in the mirror.

“I think it was at this party, I could be wrong, but I think someone sat me down & said to me, ‘Remember, Sonny Boy, along your travels, as they get longer & stranger, that *you* are stronger & stranger than the conflicts you encounter may make you feel. *Stronger & stranger!*’ I think that’s why I remembered that bit of advice. Felt like it had some kind of weird bite of truth to it, to keep.

“So I was at this party, & I was sitting next to this tall girl I think I liked, at least for the course of the evening. I think her name was Evelyn. Cute. Beautiful turquoise eyes. Collected picture postcards from Thrift Shops. But she had a boyfriend, but he was a mean one, but she’d met someone else recently . . .

“And then I was somewhere else, completely. It’s like . . . I was there, at that party . . . & then I wasn’t.”

“Had that ever happened to you before, or since?” I asked curiously, thinking how this is happening to me too lately.

“It used to happen more often. Because I would find that I was never, really, fully *anywhere*. I was always coming from somewhere, on the way to somewhere else. I was never very often *arrived*. And I think I began to lose my moorings, living this way. It’s as though, since I *wasn’t* staying, *why stay?*”

I nod, & listen. I think this explains me a little better to me than I had realized.

It grows dark, & we find a clearing. Many Creatures around, clustering near. We enjoy some fresh water, viddles of soup & nuts. And a few smiling nibbles from a little sweet of, um, something that tastes a bit like cookie dough?

Good fire. Full Moon above. I think there’s plenty of *hmming* & crooning with Creatures, & even a few wild cackles, that night.

And I think the last thing I remember him saying to me, as I’m falling asleep under my blanket, is something like: “You’re not far now. I hope we meet again. You’re not fixed, but I think you’re getting there.”

And maybe I dreamed it, but I almost believe he sang me fully into sleep with these words: “All worlds braid. All worlds *hmmm*.”

* * * * *

Part Five.

When I Wake Up the Next Morning

When I wake up the next morning, my briefly-known friend the Mechanic has traveled on his way. And that’s OK. He’s one *fine* cause that has left one *fine* effect on me. I stand up, gather myself together. Do an accounting. Knit skullcap on my head. Dark blue plaid shirt-jacket about me. Taped-up **T-O-O** necklace, of course. Still works sometimes. Blue jeans, patched high & low. Tough old hiking boots. Book-bag. Tape recorder/radio & who knows maybe this little machine has other talents too? I keep it close.

OK, time to move along, & I maintain this feeling that I’m nearer to the **Bridge of Glass**. I don’t quite

see it & I recall, though my memory is still a bit muddled, that it was *way* up high, & of course not exactly easy to see. So I just better keep my eyes out in all directions.

There are no Creatures about currently to help me. They probably followed the Mechanic on his way, which I understand. I would do that if I were a Creature. I'm sure that he sniffs *ooh-la-la*, to a Creaturely nose.

So I just walk, honest to goodness. I just set one old hiking boot in front of the other, & start walking through these beautiful White Woods that I cannot even pretend to fully understand. It is a strange feeling to know that the very Woods about you are smarter than you ever could be. Brilliant genius trees, & so on, as it were, but I feel that it's OK. I feel welcomed here. No one *objects*, that I know of.

I find, after a while, without at first being fully aware of it, that my eyes are casting upward. And I'm not sure why. I don't see the **Bridge of Glass** up there.

But something is attracting my attention *up*. And maybe it doesn't quite surprise me when I come upon a beautiful tree, special even among all these other many beautiful trees. Special because it has a set of winding steps about its trunk. *Oh boy!* I may have heard stories of these before, but I'm not sure. *Have I ever climbed one?* Probably not. I would have remembered that.

Anyway, I walk up to this tree. Look at those steps as they wind up & up to heights I cannot see. I'm not sure if this is the way up to the **Bridge of Glass**, although it *is* a way *up*. *Is that close enough?* I can't do nothing else but find out.

So I make sure my book-bag strap is on me, solidly, all the pockets zippered. Every other part of me zippered too, just in case, & I begin to climb & climb up the Winding Staircase around that tree trunk. It's not that hard. I almost feel like, once I'm on it, I'm pulled along a little bit. It's as though it's easier to climb this Winding Staircase than it, quite, should be.

But now I am indeed going up & up. And I realize that I'm approaching whatever was luring my attention, & now has it. *It's up there!* And, as I get closer, it sounds like voices. Sometimes it sounds like applause. Sometimes it sounds like music. And I find that I am *gripped* with curiosity to know.

As I get to the top of these stairs, I don't arrive to all of that, quite. I'm close, but I now can see that, just above me, there's a thick bushy area of tree branches. And I can't see through them. Explains why whatever's beyond there is fairly muffled. And I can't know what's going to happen, if I was just to climb up into them. But I realize that that's what I have to do.

OK. Gripping my book-bag, gripping myself, I climb up to the top step, & then I reach, *up*, & then I grab what feels like a solid branch, & then I pull, & I am pulled. And then I grab with my other hand to pull, & now I am doubly pulled. *And I pull, & am pulled, & I pull, & am pulled.*

And *sloop!* I *sloop* through the mass, & I catch myself as best I can, on the other side. Unbroken. Book-bag *OK*.

And now the voices, the singing, & the applause are *much* clearer to hear. I find myself walking down a kind of a wooden hallway of vines & leaves. And then I see, at the far end of it, there's a big, shiny, glowing, blinking green-&-golden arrow, pointing to the right. I follow down to the arrow, & turn

right.

And I come to an open space. A *big* open space. It seems almost as though . . . it's a *party*? But it also seems like there's an area, like a stage maybe? Who knows who or what kind might perform on it? *A party? A live production? A game? Maybe?*

And I find myself standing right there, not moving, almost frozen to move further, when someone calls to me, from a distance, but somehow clearly on the cool air up here, up high.

"Hey, brother! Welcome to TRIP TOWN! Come on in!"

* * * * *

In TRIP TOWN

So here I am in TRIP TOWN. Now I'm not really sure at all what it is I am *in*. You see, I find my seat high up in the big bleachers that seem to be for the audience to this live production. And what I did next was, I dug into my many notebooks because I knew I've heard that word before. I looked in my big notebooks, & I looked in my little notebooks, & all I could conclude about all of it was that *Trip Town* was, or still is, additional to all this, a TV show. I didn't read anything about it in *Many Musics* or *Dream Raps* being a live production that you arrived to up a tree in the White Woods. Just a lot of notes about an episode with a Robot Man & his friend at a Festival, looking for their friend the Space Pirate.

So I wonder: *is this the TV show, still?* Just some kind of strange episode of *Trip Town*? I pull out my Secret Books to read too, & now recall the episode with those Great Heroes of Yore diving through *Labyrinthine*, like its pages were bodies of air or Sea or Woods? *Traveling words like space?* So is this like some kind of *meta-meta-meta* episode, where a TV show invents itself anew as a live production, up on a tree? I'm not sure.

But OK, at least I've got something to work with here. I'm sitting as high up above the crowds as I can sit in these big bleachers, the very back row. Now it might be possible to think that if I look behind me, I might see some signs of the White Woods? Or maybe just a wall? Or something else that I could describe right into this tape recorder, into which I am now recording all of this? Just to make sure that whatever *this* is, I've recorded my account of it. Muddled memory & all, especially.

But I don't see anything back there. I mean, I don't see *anything*, but I also don't see *nothing*. And I really don't see *something*. So I don't know *what* is behind me on this very back row of these big bleachers.

Then I notice, way down the bleachers, there's another ragged-looking figure, & he's leaned over his notebook, scribbling away, looking around, scribbling away some more. Well, that's OK. There's plenty of room here, & everywhere, for ragged scribbling figures. That's my philosophy. *Not enough* of us, I might add.

And I'm still sort of watching him when the stage, that has been empty up to this point, has some new activity. This shiny, spangled individual, I can't tell man or woman, just shiny & spangled, comes out, & raises his or her arms wide, smiling, inviting us to applaud.

And I hear someone down below, maybe the same guy who welcomed me earlier, shout: "It's the Hostess with the Mostess! Let's give her a good hand, everyone!" We all do. *Why not?* Who doesn't

deserve a hand in this world? Very few, I say. And I guess she basks in this applause for an elongated moment, & then says: "Hello! Hello! Hello! Fans & fannesses! And many kinds of others! Welcome, welcome, & welcome again, to TRIP TOWN!" More good cheerings follow.

But then, without another word, she gives an elaborate flourish to someone coming out through the curtains onto the stage. Sits on a stool. Not a ragged-looking figure, like myself & my compatriot down there. No, he's dressed in a formal serious way, suit & vest & shiny shoes. He comes out with a strange kind of box, or instrument, in his hands.

And I think what he then recites is poetry. Shakes his instrument a bit too. But I have to say that, for the longest time, I don't know *what* are the words he's saying. And it doesn't seem to be like just one language. It's like he's reciting something in one language, & then the next, & then the next. I'm *amazed* he knows so many. Sometimes he pauses for a moment, & seems to be reading words written on his fancy trousers?

But then I notice he comes round to the language I understand. And he recites a few words in it. But I *miss* it. Then he goes off into other languages. And then comes around to it again, eventually, but I miss it *again*. *Almost* catch it this time. So now I focus completely. So that when he comes around again, *surely* I'll catch it. It'll happen.

He recites, in his strange but lovely voice: "The world is far, far bigger than any work you might do to serve another. A great canvas to fill." He pauses, shakes his instrument a bit. We all wait, breathless. And then he recites: "This greater perspective is the magick & the medicine." And then he goes on, in the next language, & the next one, shaking his instrument here & there. And I get to feeling more certain that he is reciting the same thing, or fairly close to it, in many, many a tongue. He's sending this encouraging message out in every way that he can.

And then, eventually, it's like he runs down, & he's no longer speaking forthrightly. Has stopped shaking his instrument. Something about "bricks of poems"? Then he begins to mumble, something about "tooth tattoos"? Perhaps gets to snoozing right there, sitting on his stool, in his fancy garb, his instrument starting to slip from his grasp.

And the Hostess with the Mostess comes out, & she's already clapping her hands & calling for all to clap along! *We all do!* And she helps this Poet up, him still mumbling, something about "nobody controls the egg," & she leads him gently off the stage.

And we're still applauding, long after both have left, for his sentiments, for his efforts, & for that Hostess. *She* knows how to do this well. I think we're all eager for her to come back out again, for whatever next act is to be featured.

And I do not know what *this* is. And I do not know *what* is behind me, on this very back row. And I do not know *who* that ragged-looking figure is, scribbling far down there. And there are others here too I look at, sitting in various places. Some look almost like they too could be Great Heroes, but I am too shy to look at them for long.

But, *whatever* this is, I'm gonna stay awhile. And *whatever* many things it has to teach, I'm going to *try* to learn them.

* * * * *

The Beach of Many Worlds

I find myself still thinking about that marvelous Poet, & his marvelous words, recited in many tongues. “The world is far, far bigger than any work you might do to serve another. A great canvas to fill. This greater perspective is the magick & the medicine.” I hope my tape recorder was close enough to catch them in his strange & lovely voice. I think so, maybe.

Then, for a little while, no one comes on to the stage of TRIP TOWN. And I look around, curiously, at the audience. I notice at one point that my fellow ragged scribbling figure seems to have left his seat. It’s like something drew him away. I think I spy him, over in a far shadowy corner of the stage, but I don’t know what he’s doing over there.



Nathan D. Horowitz

I wonder at all this. I suppose I should wonder more about how all this gets me back to, or even relates to, the **Bridge of Glass**, where I came from a while ago, & where I think I was bound, until just recently. But I don’t think I’m in a hurry. I imagine the **Bridge of Glass** will do just fine without me. And my curiosity is too great about what all this is to want to leave just yet.

I notice some activity, too, at the nearer end of the stage, sort of in the wings. I think they’re actors, gathered together, talking, looking out at us in the audience. A strange fellow that they all seem to treat with great respect comes among them. He’s wearing some kind of a, um, folding suit? He also seems to have some kind of a patch on his ear? And he seems sometimes to lean very suavely upon a very black stick. He’s handing them pages. Like a script? They’re talking excitedly. And they keep looking out at the audience. *I wonder what’s going on?* But I don’t know.

Then they all retreat to the back stage, & I don’t see them again. And then the curtain starts to open. A beautiful green-&-golden curtain, with maybe just a little bit of crimson lacing to it, opens slowly, slowly, *slowly*. Then wider & wider & *wider*. I’ve never seen a stage like this before. Not that I’ve seen many. But I can’t even imagine that there *could* be a stage like this. It seems to get *bigger* as the curtains draw back. *Do stages do that?*

When the curtains are drawn back fully, it is a stage of unbelievable size & depth. Is it even a stage anymore? *It’s a, uh, Beach? I think I might know that Beach! Is it here? Is it there? Is it both?*

I feel compelled to stand. I don’t know why. But I start to make my way down the rows of the bleachers, tape recorder tucked away, book-bag strap on my shoulder. I don’t really know if I should be doing this but, when I get to the bottom of the bleachers, I keep walking forward. Walking & walking & walking, & now . . . I . . . am . . . *on that Beach!*

And I look around, to see where from I came. *Where are those big bleachers? Where's that ragged writing figure?*

No. I am on this Beach now. I'm far from anything. There might be something way down there. Something tall. But I don't know.

I start to walk steadily toward that something tall, hoping, *hoping*, that I'll come to someone or something that can help me to understand what just happened. It's the strangest Bridge I've ever seen. Tall, steeply curved. And I can see that there are two figures at the very top. They look so tiny on it. Looks like a, um, Moon Bridge?

And I call up to them: "Hello! Hello!" But they don't seem to hear me. Do I need to climb this Moon Bridge too? I stand there for a moment. *Indecisive.*

* * * * *

Moon Bridge

I find myself back on a Beach I passed through a while ago. I check several of my many notebooks. *Beach of Many Worlds.* These words seem both familiar & far to me at once.

And I can't say precisely how I've come back here. I know I was somewhere else, but here I am. And for a while I was trying to call up to those fellows, on top of that strange Moon Bridge, but they couldn't hear me. And then for a while I just looked up at them, wondering who they are. And then I just sat back down. It felt like the pieces were scattering around again, *mudging* I keep calling it, & I needed to gather them up again.

I go slow. And then, yes, I remember that I *was* somewhere else, & I *was* trying to get back to the **Bridge of Glass**, & I *did* end up in some kind of strange dream theater, high up in an ancient tree. And then I walked from my seat, down *toward* the stage, & then *onto* the stage, & then *into* the stage, & then I wasn't on a stage anymore. I was *here*.

Gathering all the pieces together like that doesn't help an awful lot, but it's *something*. But then I feel something *else*. Something *low & deep*. Something powerful, & *it's coming this way*. I feel it rising up & up. I feel it affecting everything in its path, & what roars inside of me is a kind of *terror*.

I lie down flat on this strange Beach, with its heavy colorful musical sand. My book-bag is grasped in my arms. I feel it coming nearer, & *nearer*.

And then: *whoooooosh! whoooooosh! whoooooosh!* Wave, after wave, after wave, of some kind of power I've never known before. It's like being in the middle of the ocean when the waves are tall. And they hit you, one after the next, *pushing you along*.

But this is a Beach. This is *land*. It just *feels* the *same*. I grip my book-bag, & I dig my fingers into the sand, as deep as I can. *Wave, after wave, after wave. Whoooooosh! Whoooooosh! Whoooooosh!* passes over me. Like it says in one of my pamphlets, the whole world seems to **WOBBLE**.

I close my eyes tight. And I try to remember something, *anything*, that is not *this here, this now*. And then I remember something, anything—*did this happen? Did I read it? Did someone tell me about it?* I

don't know.

I'm running late to school. I'm on the bus through Elliptical City, late, worrying, & these guys come over to me, dressed in shiny, buzzing, prickly rags of some kind. Their hair combed oddly, if hair at all. And they gather round me, smiling. And they have these little radio headphones, & they want to put the little radio headphones on my head, & play them. And they surround me, & they offer me this radio headphone or that radio headphone. "*Spir-it-Plant-sRad-ioAm-eric-a?*" they try smiling to entice me, but I don't think I know what that is anymore.

And I don't know which classroom I'm going to, once I get there, & did I read the book the class will be about? *I don't know*. The title scared me. *Nazi Jailbait Bitch*, or something like that.

Finally I stand up. I mean, that was the *problem*. They were surrounding me, & I was crouching defensively. I stand up, & they back off a little bit, & I say to them: "I didn't read the book. And I don't know where the classroom is. So I'm not going today. Goodbye."

And the bus just happened to pull up at a stop, at that moment. And I stride straight through them. Had they not let me go, I would have knocked them down like bowling pins. OK. *OK*.

I open my eyes now, & I'm standing up on this Beach of Many Worlds again. I'm standing straight up, & it's like, whatever *wave* after *wave* after *wave* was **WOBBLING** over me, I don't think it's stopped, but I don't think that it's doing anything to me anymore. But I see it's also starting to depart. The waves are getting smaller. The Moon Bridge nearby has stopped shaking & quaking. It's pretty still now.

I nod, not knowing what that means. I get my book-bag strap steady on my shoulder. Feel in my zippered pocket for my pocket watch & treasured **Secret Penny**. Good & good. Then I walk up to the Moon Bridge, & I study it for a moment. Very pretty. Covered in blooms of many colors.

Take a tentative climbing step or two, to make sure. OK. Step by step, I begin to climb up the Moon Bridge. It's very big. I don't know who those fellows are at the top. I hope they held on tight too. But this seems to be the way I'm going now. This is what's *next*.

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Part Five.

Coming to The Arcadia

To continue. Hobo Jones, sometimes known as Hose Jones, the most advanced Robot Man in the Many Worlds of the Star Spiral, walked with his dear friend Lilianna down that hallway that was not quite *straight*, & not quite *there*, for a very long time. Maybe even *beyond* a very long time. Who can say, with such hallways, how time is *measured*?

And when they were no longer *in* the hallway, it was not because they had *arrived* somewhere. It was more that they found themselves arrived *somewhere else*. It was a great cavernous place, very tall ceilings, *if* ceilings there were at all, & its walls covered in books. Rows & rows of books, running up to the ceiling, *if* ceiling there was. So many colors & shapes & sizes. Some small as a fist. Some big ones leaning against tables. There are more kinds of books than you or me or any of us could possibly

imagine in the Many Worlds of the Star Spiral.

And so they discovered themselves *in* this place, & they also discovered that they knew the *name* of this place, without knowing *how* they had come to know the name of this place. But they knew that the name of this place was **The Arcadia**. And, at some point in their being at **The Arcadia**, they found that they were sitting together, in a corner, on a couple of little stools, green-&-golden colored, & they were looking at a book.

It was one that Lilianna had seen before, from time to time, but had never read, & Hobo Jones had never seen at all. He didn't know that such a book could be. It was titled *The Unauthorized Guide to Mulronie the Space Pirate*.



Nathan D. Horowitz

“It’s all about his books,” Lilianna explained. “Like an encyclopedia or a dictionary.”

Hobo Jones nodded, more uncertainly than he usually does about things, & he paged through this book, which was kind of big & heavy. But its pages were also very thin. Tissue thin.

And he came upon the following passage & read it aloud to Lilianna: “I found myself sitting, fully clothed, in a cold running stream. The carafe of water in my hand is from back there, on land. I dump it out, slowly. Fill again, with stream water. Drink deeply. This time I do not return to the farmhouse. I am ready to move on.”

Lilianna was listening carefully with ears, because she didn't know that passage. Hobo Jones read on: “This is the only accounting for himself that Mulronie gave for the strange incidents that occurred to him, out back of his farmhouse, in 1951, that set him on his course toward the far reaches of outer space.”

“Is it true?” asked Lilianna, knowing that Hobo Jones’ relationship with Mulronie seemed to be a close one.

Hobo Jones paused for a long moment, & then said, “it’s true enough, but I don’t think the author of this tome understands what it means.”

“Will you tell me?”

Hobo Jones adjusted in his seat, next to Lilianna’s. Closed *The Unauthorized Guide to Mulronie the Space Pirate*, & said, “I am not so sure I know why we are here, Miss Lilianna.”

The Reading Group

Then a curious-looking fellow came up to them & said, “Excuse me, Sir & Madam, perhaps you would prefer this book?”

The curious-looking fellow had a long ponytail, & one or more eyes, sometimes several, all very pretty, sometimes six of them, & each one a different color of the rainbow. He was tall, but not really. Sometimes they had to look down, to see him, & them just sitting on little stools. But sometimes he was tall, in some other kind of way. He seemed to wear a garment that jingled a little, as though some of it or a lot of it was made out of bells.

The book he was holding in his hand was one Lilianna recognized. “That’s the one I’ve read!” Most pleased, she read the title out loud: “*The Unofficial Guide to the Mulronie the Space Pirate Universe.*”

Hobo Jones regarded the fellow. “I didn’t know there was one of these, much less two.”

“There’s a whole bookcase!” the fellow said, his eyes gleaming, 4-5-6-4-7 of them. “Come on! Let me show you! I’m a great fan too!” And then he led them, on one hopping foot, or possibly some long stumpy legs, or maybe three or four longer legs, over to a certain bookcase &, sure enough, from high up, right down to the bottom shelf, were all these books on the Mulronie the Space Pirate.

Lilianna pointed out the books that she knew, but there were many more she had never seen. And Hobo Jones could only put his hand on his jaw & marvel. “Who made all these?” he asked the fellow.

“Oh, lots of people,” said the fellow. 3-2-4-1-1-1-2 eyes. “Lots of fans around here. Have you been to **The Arcadia** before?”

They both shook their heads no.

“Well, I think you might like it here. You see, a lot of people think that this place is pretty special, even as it’s kind of changed over time, you might say.”

“Is it a bookstore?” asked Lilianna. She knew about bookstores, a little bit. She’d read about them anyway.

“Well, not as such,” said the fellow.

“A liberry?” asked Hobo Jones. He had heard of those at least.

“Well . . .” 2-3-1-2-3-2-3-1-2-3-2 eyes. Perhaps he was thinking. “Sort of.”

Hobo Jones again recalled that the reason for their travels right now was that they were going to *see* Mulronie the Space Pirate. And he got to wondering if maybe they were lingering a bit long in this not-quite-liberry-not-quite-bookstore place, charming & strange as it was. Lilianna was having a good time for sure.

“Would you come & talk to our Reading Group?” asked the fellow. 3-3-3-3 eyes.

“Well, I don’t know,” said Hobo Jones.

“But you’re Hobo Jones, & you’re Lilianna!” said the fellow. 2-1-2-1-2-1-2-3-2 eyes.

They nodded.

“You would be the most special guests we could imagine, if you would speak to our Reading Group,” he said humbly.

Lilianna looked at Hobo Jones eagerly. And Hobo Jones, who was so very fond of Lilianna, could not think of a way to say no when she was so excited. He didn’t know what they would say, but nodded.

The fellow smiled. Stabilized at two eyes. Three arms. Two legs. And he said, “Oh, the Reading Group is going to be so excited! You’re going to be the most special guests we’ve ever had! Come along! Come along!”

And Lilianna grasped Hobo Jones’ hand, smiling like all of sunshine in her face, & they followed that fellow to the Mulronie the Space Pirate Reading Group. Whatever this might be.

* * * * *

Not Mulronie the Space Pirate

So they followed along with the increasingly strange crowds to the Mulronie the Space Pirate Reading Group. It was an event that seemed to be held in a vast open space, one their new acquaintance had called the Great Cosmic Auditorium, before disappearing in the crowds ahead of them. At its sheer size, Lilianna could only gasp, her hand over her mouth, time & again.

Hobo Jones looked less shocked because, in his space travels with Mulronie the Space Pirate, & others, he had seen before at least some of these beings, & the spaceships up there, all gathered from the Many Worlds of the Star Spiral. He was impressed that all these various kinds of folks had come together to appreciate his old friend. Wasn’t always so, you know. *Wasn’t always so.*

Notes one particular spaceship up there, & in the glimpse he can get within it, there seems to be a strange long-haired figure sitting in an elaborate chair, with what could be a tiny little critter on his down-turned hand. His shipmates seem to be likewise dressed, & remarkably similar in looks.

Then the spotlight reveals a lectern on a stage that all seemed to be gathered around, high & low. And someone is walking out to the lectern.

Now Hobo Jones gasps, because the lecturer is short, in fancy garb, Pirate’s hat & tall boots, with many shiny epaulets on his coat. Looks like. Looks like? *No. Cannot be.*

The figure steps to the lectern, waits a moment for the quiet to engulf this large listening place, & then says: “I am *not* Mulronie the Space Pirate.” Then he opens a volume, & proceeds to read, without any further introduction or commentary.

Lilianna whispers to Hobo Jones, “He is reading from the first book. Called *Who is Mulronie the Space Pirate?*”

“Shhhhhh!” the crowds of this Great Cosmic Auditorium politely hush her. She politely hushes.

He reads: “The lights & the music led me deeper into these Woods than I thought there to be. I ran faster than I thought I could, thought any person could. Were there others, hurrying near me? Were they people-folks too? I doubted it.

“I ran & ran till I came to an edge, & hardly caught myself from falling over. Took several calming breaths, & then looked down. *There were stars! So many of them! Skies of them! Seas of them!* I looked down at them, & them up at me, each & all of us curious as could be, about each other.

“But I grew unsure, less balanced, upon the tip of this vastless cosmos. Fell back with a cry, & opened my eyes wide. Morning. *Alas.*”

Very silent, in this Great Cosmic Auditorium, all pondering the significance of this passage. Everyone waits & wonders what Not Mulronie the Space Pirate will say or comment upon next.

Lilianna holds Hobo Jones’ hand tightly, & listens closely.

* * * * *

Great Cosmic Auditorium

And what happened next was this: Not Mulronie the Space Pirate raised his hand, to the top of his elaborate Space Pirate hat, & then he began to tug, tug, *tug* a zipper. And the zipper came zipping down the very front of Not Mulronie the Space Pirate. *Down down down*, right to the ground.

And the very authentic-looking Mulronie the Space Pirate costume fell apart, in two halves, one to the left side, one to the right. And everyone gasped in this Great Cosmic Auditorium, because what was revealed . . . was *nothing*.

Nobody knew what this meant. *Who* was that Not Mulronie the Space Pirate? *If there ever was one?*

Their curious acquaintance of earlier now steps to the lectern, trying to settle the crowds low & the spaceships on high, many seeming to be departing. His eyes multiply greater & lesser in number & colors as he cries out, “Friends, coming up next is our long awaited lecturer on the book *Stoned Photography: Proof of the Existence of Professor Stone*. Please stay!”

Well, Hobo Jones grasped Lilianna’s hand a little tighter, & began to weave her through the confused crowds, away from this all. They *do* have business, by the by, with the *real* Mulronie the Space Pirate. Who’s *not* here. Not even *close*, Hobo Jones knows. But this strange bit of show biz did entertain Lilianna. She’s still looking back, wondering. Hobo Jones says not a word. One expects these kinds of foolishnesses from some of the many followers of Mulronie the Space Pirate. He’d seen its kind before.

Best keep it at a distance, was his view. Mulronie had never even seemed aware that there *were* followers of his. Somehow it never crossed his mind that he would have *fans*, even though he did pen enormously popular books. Hobo Jones knew it was just to *tell his stories*. It was never about the countless numbers who read his books, enjoyed them, & wondered about him.

“For you see,” said Hobo Jones to Lilianna, as the crowds began to thin behind them, & they’re now back to walking **The Arcadia**’s center aisle, nice & wide, by which one could branch off to the books on the side aisles, “Mulronie never really knew that he had fans *all over* the Star Spiral, & many of them

he'd never met, never seen, maybe never been to their worlds. He understood that, during his outer space travels, if he helped someone, they would become a fan. *But someone far away? Someone who only read about him?* Perhaps only seen a multimedia production, celebrating his adventures, in one way or another? He just didn't know about such things, & probably wouldn't have cared anyway."

Lilianna nodded, listening now, no longer distracted. "What's he like? The real Mulronie? You know him well, Mr. Jones. Is he like in the books?"

Well, Hobo Jones walked on, quiet for a moment, gathering his thoughts. "I think he's taller, & humbler. And I think there are things he wouldn't put in his grand cosmic adventure books, because they weren't so grand. And it was OK. But to know the real Mulronie the Space Pirate is to know all those things. Or at least many of them."

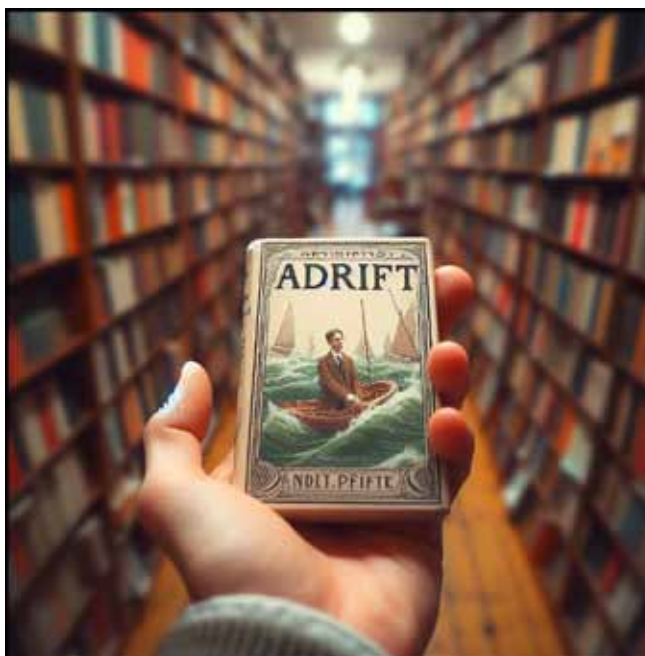
Lilianna nodded. This made sense to her. "Are we gonna get there soon?" she asked eagerly.

"Oh yes. Once we're out of **The Arcadia**, it won't be long at all."

And so on they walked, down the center aisle of **The Arcadia**. Occasionally, Lilianna was distracted by books. Looked briefly at one called *Adrift: A Novel*. Seemed to make soft friendly noises as she paged through. When she was done, she handed it with a smile to a ragged-looking fellow waiting.

Hobo Jones politely waited too. Very few books held any real interest for him.

But when Lilianna found an illustrated edition of *Peter Pan*, however, even Hobo Jones had to pause & take a long lingering look at a favorite they shared between them.



Nathan D. Horowitz

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Part Six.

Coming to the Festival

It was a strange volume. They had found an edition neither one of them had seen before. What was especially interesting about this volume was that it seemed to have handwritten scribbles in it, as though it had belonged dearly to someone, at some point.

They found a round black metal table & two metal chairs to sit at, in a corner. Their chairs arranged side by side. And they paged slowly through the book, as interested in the handwritten scribbles as they were in the well-known text & the illustrations.

It was on the title page where they read, in tiny cryptic hand: “Something small became bigger, & then cosmic in scale, & then obscured some. Still there, half hid.” They looked at each other. Quietly shook their heads. Paged on.

Under the illustration of Peter Pan inviting Wendy & the boys John & Michael to fly with him, out their bedroom window, to the Neverland, there’s another cryptic scrawl. So cryptic that Hobo Jones has to use his advanced Robot Man powers to decipher it. And he reads: “I’m a girl, in this dream, at a bookstore, with two decisions to make. Thinking of that lovely boy, long ago. *Many little kisses.*”

Lilianna gasped. “I know it sounds very strange, Mr. Jones, but I wonder if I’m that girl.” He looked at her a long time, & then paged on.

They came to a full two-page spread illustration in the book, running from the left-hand page to the right-hand page without cease. It bears greater fruit as they look closer & closer. It is some kind of apartment &, as they look, closer & closer, to the wall that contains the front window, they see a crack. And in that crack, there’s a tail. “A chipmunk’s tail?” Lilianna wondered. But before they could deduce this further, it’s gone.

So they followed the tail, & found themselves in a crowded hallway, piled high with dishes, knives, & tools. And this led them to a greater & greater warehouse of rooms. Stretches of desks, stores, furniture. Stairs, going every which way.

And on one wall, sitting observing them from several shelves, were many a lovely Creature. Looking calmly, not in danger. There’s a grey Hedgedyhog, a White Bunny, two bloo-eyed Kittys & lovely Goldfish. Even a tiny cackling little Pandy Bear Imp, perhaps? And others, many others, all watching them. And it seemed like, maybe, this was the back wall?

But then the Creatures were all pointing over there. Hobo Jones & Lilianna followed where they gestured, & they came to a bridge. And below the bridge is a waterfall. And they saw that there were people diving into the waterfall, from somewhere on high, unknown.

And then, for a moment, all became glaring light. Their hands grasped each other tightly but, somehow, they kept walking. And then there’s the sound of cheering, & the glare began to fall away. And they found themselves, it could not be otherwise, in the White Woods.

And the cheering sounds so full of delight that Lilianna smiled, & led Hobo Jones in that direction. The cheering got louder & louder, & they came through the White Woods to a clearing filled with all sorts of folks! There’s a great stage at the far end of the clearing from where they stand, & there’s several people up on the stage. And everyone’s cheering for them. Everybody’s *happy*.

Hobo Jones & Lilianna don’t quite know what’s going on, but both feel glad somehow that they’ve come to this scene of *utter delight*.

* * * * *

Through the Talent Show’s Green-&Golden Curtain

They have happy come to the Thought Fleas’ Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock. They’re gazing around at the many wonders of the Festival, well known to many, but not to all. There’s always someone who’s not

been to the Festival. So there's always someone being delighted, for the first time, by how wonderful it is. Meeting that cackling, crazy-eyed little Summonatrix for the first time, for example, if she's about.

They walked around for a while &, as is her wont, Miss Flossie Flea, who keeps an eye out for newcomers to greet, came round to them to say hello. And some time later, after walking here & there in the Festival, enjoying a little bit of Miss Flossie's famous Rutabaga Soup, well, more Lilianna enjoying than Hobo Jones, who politely demurred, they eventually came to one of the current Fleastock features of the Festival, that being the Talent Show.

Now this is on two stages. The Lower Stage is where one's *known* talent would be displayed. Then, after a performance, Miss Flossie would come up onto the Lower Stage & invite the performer to go behind the green-&-gold curtain to take each a singular path to The Upper Stage, far down the Festival a-ways, learning along the way what one's *unknown* talent was, & then displaying it on the Upper Stage. In between the two Stages, what would happen would be different for each participant.

Hobo Jones had said to Miss Flossie: "What I wish to know, be it talent or not, is more about what my dear friend Mulronie the Space Pirate meant by: *'Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment.'*" He talked of it so often."

Now Miss Flossie knew that some people-folks, some Creatures, & others too, might not have exactly a talent they wish to pursue. They might instead have a question. But she also knew that the nature of this event is such that, if they find their answer, it will be via an unknown talent. And so by the time they get to that Upper Stage, they may have both an answer & also a new talent. That's how she understands this all to work. But she does not fancy herself as more of an expert on the matter than one who is an observer.

And so, with her encouragement, & that of the appreciative crowd watching, they passed through the green-&-golden curtain, on the Lower Stage, & Miss Flossie drew the curtains behind them, & from this side they evanesced. And what is before them manifested.

But where do they find themselves? It's not clear. It's just *not* clear. It's murky. Is it indoors or outdoors? It's neither mild nor cold nor hot. And they seemed to be having a hard time keeping track of each other, even though they're standing side by side.

Finally, Hobo Jones, who has encountered strange things like this before, said, "Miss Lilianna, I'm going to be very forward with you. And I hope you can forgive me. But I'm going to kneel down right now, & I want you to climb up on my shoulders. Because I suspect that if you don't, we're going to lose track of each other."

Lilianna did not need to be told twice. Hobo Jones knelt down, & she swung up nimbly onto his shoulders. Gave him a pat to let him know that she's solid. He nodded, & they started to walk along further into *whatever* this murk was.

* * * * *

Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment.

They could hear each other just fine. And since Hobo Jones is a tireless Robot Man, carrying Lilianna along on his shoulders was no problem at all. *Especially* if it kept her safe & nearby.

Hobo Jones had said to Miss Flossie Flea, back on that Lower Talent Show Stage, that his dear friend Mulronie the Space Pirate had talked about **Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment** all the time. He talked about strange, recurring swirlings too. And about White Rooms. *But what is this place that they were walking through to all of that?*

He then realized that he hadn't said anything out loud for a while, & Lilianna was probably becoming concerned at his quiet, & so he said up to her, "Mulronie said White Rooms were like places of intention & learning. A little different for each one who passed through one. He also said that when you focus, & walk steadily along, gather your thoughts, & your questions, the White Room you're in might begin to manifest in some way. Though he did also say to me, 'once you start, Hojo, if you stop in the middle, & pause, whatever you built up will begin to evaporate.' I think this place might be at least kindred to White Rooms. If so, I think we have my question, Miss Lilianna. Would you agree?"

She nodded & agreed, & she was also thinking to herself that it would be a lot better if *something* manifested here, rather than just walking through all this endless *murky* stuff. So she said aloud, "Mr. Jones, that's a great idea. I will admit that I don't know what those three words mean in this context, though I do know them from sentences in the dictionary."

Hobo Jones nodded. "I'm afraid I'm not much further along than you are. But I think that Mulronie associated them with the White Room. He told me what little I've told you. Not much, I realize, but let's give it a try."

So, as they walked further along, they began to think about those words: **Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment.** Thinking about them over & over again.

"They sound like a sequence," Lilianna said suddenly, having said the words repeatedly in her mind. "Are they a sequence, Mr. Jones?"

Hobo Jones replied slowly, "I think they could be. Maybe a cycle. Maybe they happen, over & over."

"What we need are more than words," Lilianna said from above. "We need to *see* what they *mean*."

Hobo Jones agreed, & so what they started doing was thinking about what these words might mean, if one could see them manifested, visibly.

And what's interesting is that the two of them, perhaps maybe not even realizing it, began to *hmmm* as they went along. Perhaps it was just the place that encouraged it. And, sure enough, colors began to appear around them. **Greens. Reds. Yellows. Oranges. Indigos. Lavenders. Violets. Blues.**

"**Rainbow colors,**" said Lilianna, smiling, looking around.

Hobo Jones nodded. "And patterns. There are patterns forming, Miss Lilianna. Let us watch on all sides, & see what we can deduce. I think we're onto something."

* * * * *

Hobo Jones & Lilianna Come Upon a River

Lilianna twice counted **greens, reds, yellows, oranges, indigos, lavenders, violets, & blues**. Perhaps others that she did not know names for. *But what were all these colors? What exactly were they seeing?*

Oddly, the answer came in a way somewhat aslant from what you might expect. What happened was, without understanding the many **colors** about them, they came upon a River. It was flowing right to left in front of them. And, on their side of the river, sort of pulled up safe, was a boat.

It wasn't a very big boat. It had no motor. It didn't even seem to have oars. But what they noticed as they leaned in to get a good look at this boat, is that it was attached to some kind of line in front.

Well, it was unlikely they could go back. A brief glance back in that direction revealed . . . no curtain. So this seemed to be the way on.

So Hobo Jones gently lowered Lilianna to the ground, & then helped her, as the debonair gentlemen Robot Man that he is, into the boat first. And then she sort of held it steady while he clambered in, with his much larger form. They sat down, as there were seats. They looked about. Still the **colors**, but not much known about them as of yet.

Lilianna noticed that the line strung through an eye-hook at the front of the boat. And she said, "Mr. Jones, I wonder if we're supposed to pull on the line to begin our travels, & get us along our way?"

Hobo Jones studied it closely too, & he nodded, & he leaned forward, & he began to gently tug the line, tug & tug, & it fed through the eye-hook. And, as he pulled steadily, the boat began to move steadily. What he noticed too is that if he did not pull, the boat came to pretty much to a halt. So he pulled & pulled. It wasn't very hard. And it traveled them along.

And what's funny was that the farther they traveled along, the more the **colors** that had been ambiguously about them began to come into clarity.

While Hobo Jones was concentrating on traveling along, via pulling the line, Lilianna was studying with her sharp eyes, finger on chin, every which-a-way. And she said, "Mr. Jones, I do believe that what we're seeing now, on either side of this river that we're on, are patches of Moss. **Colored Moss**, of all different kinds. They're on rocks. They're on trees. Long spreads of them. Look about us, Mr. Jones. Tell me if you see what I see."

Well, Mr. Jones slowed their travel for just a few moments, looked around &, sure enough, it was a very Mossy place that they were arrived. Tall trees, so White Woods of course. But lots & lots of Moss too. He began pulling on the line again, & they resumed traveling.

That's when Lilianna came up with a thought that she couldn't have seen coming from a hundred bajillion miles away. But she said, "Mr. Jones, I think there's something communicative about this Moss. I think this Moss is arranged in what seems to be some kind of a story. And I couldn't tell you one more word of this mad thought yet, but if you'll continue to pull us along, I'm going to study with everything I've got."

And so, for a long stretch of time, they traveled quietly. Hobo Jones kept them moving along, while



Lilianna studied, every which-a-way. And then she smiled, & tapped Hobo Jones on his right shoulder, & said, “Mr. Jones, I think I have an idea now.”

* * * * *

Hobo Jones & Lilianna Meet Alvinarah Poesy & Naria Narwhal!

Traveling through what some call the In-Between of the Thought Fleas’ Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock Talent Show, Hobo Jones & Lilianna were now readying to get out of the boat they had been traveling along the River. And the reason why was because while Lilianna had been closely observing the colorful Moss, on either side of the River, she had developed an idea.

So first Hobo Jones got the boat onto shore, & then he helped Lilianna to leap nimbly from it. And now they were back on land, which had been not so long ago just murk.

But now it looked like the more familiar White Woods. But maybe not quite white, because there were Mossy rocks, Mossy beds, & Moss-covered trees. There was Moss everywhere. Now there’d been a lot of Moss back at the Festival, back there, *somewhere*. But certainly not *this* much.

And so now that they were standing, Hobo Jones asked Lilianna what her idea was. Well, she put her finger on chin for a moment, thinking of how to best explain. And finally she said, “Mr. Jones, I believe I once read that one can communicate in different ways via Moss. For example, if you came upon a Mossy scrap of paper, & wrote your goals or intentions on it, the Moss would play a part in guiding your direction the way you were looking for. But I don’t think that’s this, quite. I think that all of this Moss is part of a story. And we had to get out of our boat, & come on the land, to begin to study the Moss, closely, to see what we might learn. Keeping in mind, of course, that we what we want to know about is what Mulronie the Space Pirate means when he talks about *Synthesis. Evolution. Ferment.*”

Hobo Jones smiled kindly & said, “That’s *Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment*, Miss Lilianna.”

She grinned. “I’m going to suppose that’s important.”

He nodded. “I couldn’t tell you why, but I think it is. As much as you’re assured that this Moss is going to help us out. Should we split up, wander around this lovely Mossy landscape, & try different experimental things?”

Again Lilianna’s finger upon chin, thinking. “I’m not sure, Mr. Jones, but I think that that might work. I’m not sure how else we would know, um, how to interact with Moss? Do your Robot Man Records tell you anything about Moss?”

At mention of his Records, Hobo Jones stood up straight, very still. His eyes went spinning around in his head, indicating to Lilianna that he was checking his Robot Man Records.

Then his eyes stopped spinning & he relaxed. “I think there’s someone who knows about Moss much more than we do.”

“And he’s right over here!” said a small friendly voice.

Lilianna & Hobo Jones looked over to the small friendly voice & saw, first of all, that the voice came

from a little Creature who look like a Narwhal. Then they looked a little better, & saw that he was sitting in the lap, comfortably, of a beautiful brown-striped Fox Creature. *Beautiful*. He wore a lovely crimson cap. He had long whiskers, a long curly tail, & the kindest-looking eyes.

And the little Narwhal Creature with him said, “My friend here, he’s your guy. No two doubts about it.”

Well, Hobo Jones & Lilianna walked over. And Hobo Jones, knowing that Creatures may get a little bit spooked by such a tall Robot Man, began to slowly, imperceptibly, walk *smaller*. Lilianna was not terribly tall, so she didn’t need to do that. But they arrived, & then they sat down.

The Fox Creature was leaning up against the White Birch tree, so covered in Moss you’d hardly know was it White Birch tree. It was practically a **Rainbow Birch Tree**.

“Hello, my name is Hobo Jones. And this is my dear friend, Miss Lilianna.”

“Well,” the friendly Fox Creature said, “My name is Alvinarah Poesy, & this is my dear friend, Naria Narwhal.”

“He’s a Moss Po-et!” said Naria eagerly.

Then Hobo Jones & Lilianna began to talk about why they’d come, & of wanting to learn more about what Mulronie the Space Pirate meant when he talked about *Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment*. And so they’d come to the Rutabaga Festival, & its Talent Show, & now here they were. With Lilianna’s idea about a story the Moss might be telling.

Alvinarah listened very carefully, with paw on chin, & said, “You’re right. Moss *can* tell a story. And that’s what I’ve been doing, with the Moss, at this turn of the calendar’s Festival. I’ve been creating a story. A Great Story. It’s one that I’ve been learning about from my dear friends Boop, who looks like a turtle but one, & Miss Lori Bunny, of Bags End. And together, with Miss Flossie Flea, we came up with the idea of telling this Great Story, to the Festival-goers, in Moss. Not too long ago, there was a Festival where I taught many how to write Moss Po-ems. I think that idea went so well, we thought this one might go well too.”

Now Hobo Jones & Lilianna were *very* impressed by this. And Hobo Jones was looking intensely, but kindly, at Alvinarah & Naria. He said, “Mr. Alvinarah, & Miss Naria, we very much could use your help, & would be delighted to learn from you all about this.”

Alvinarah nodded & said, “That would be would be fine, just fine. We will all learn about it more, together. But, right now, I’m feeling tired from all of the work we have been doing today. Almost exhausted. Can we take a little rest together?”

* * * * *

What Does Hobo Jones Dream Of?

So now they’re all now sitting, clustered together, against that **Rainbow Birch Tree**. Hobo Jones, being the biggest of them, has collected in his grasp Alvinarah, & Lilianna, & Naria, for comfort.

One might ask: *does a Robot Man dream?* And, if so, *what does he dream of?* Well, I personally don’t think

that anyone is unable to dream, whatever kind one might be. I think Dreamland belongs to all, just as the world belongs to all.

And, thus, if we were to peek inside the dreaming of Hobo Jones at this moment, we would see him, strangely, leaning on a very narrow ledge, against a very tall cliff face. And on the cliff face there is a very long black leather curtain. Drapes from high to low. He peeks behind the curtain, & there's a wooden barred window.

And all of this would be very vivid & strange, but not notable, if Hobo Jones did not peek also, best he can, between the wooden bars on the window, & see, unmistakably, the friend they've been searching for. 'Tis the sad face of Mulronie the Space Pirate! Looking as forlorn as he can possibly be.

And he & Hobo Jones seem to lock eyes for a moment &, though there are no words exchanged, Hobo Jones woke with the distinct feeling that he must find his friend, sooner than soon. He *must*.

* * * * *

Alvinarah Poesy Tells a Story

After their pleasant nap, Naria Narwhal & Alvinarah Poesy showed Hobo Jones & Lilianna what he'd been doing with his Moss artworks. Alvinarah said that Festival-goers would need to touch the Moss, along a path of Moss, to discover the Great Story. And he began to demonstrate, leading them along, with an inviting wave of his paw.

They came to a low stone, with a kind of a **pinkish-indigo Moss** spread on it in a lovely way. And he invited them to touch the Moss, both of them at once if they liked. And they did, & they closed their eyes, & they listened. And what they heard was in the voice of two, braided as one:

*Long ago, in the time before time, was Unitive Time. How this came to be, the oldest books call **Evolution**. What this was, or still is, is a grand mystery. But a small truth within its bigger one is the Star Spiral, that we all know & love, & that contains our Many Worlds, was clustered much closer together.*

And when there's no more talking, they opened their eyes, & Alvinarah led them to a small tree, wrapped twirly style in **green-&golden Moss**. And they touched, & they closed their eyes, & they heard:

*We call this **Synthesis**, but do not know how it came to be.*

They opened their eyes again, & Alvinarah now led them to a bed of **bluish Moss**, & urged them to crawl on in to this soft place. They did, & then closed their eyes & listened. And what they heard is:

*Then came a **WOBBLE!***

They opened their eyes again, & looked up at Alvinarah, who's smiling at them, hoping they're enjoying this Great Story, told in this way.

Hobo Jones asks a question, but Lilianna doesn't quite hear it. The story has engaged her, & she's curious to know what more will be told, but in between her mind somehow lingered back to the words

they had read inscribed into that volume of *Peter Pan* back at .

Wondering if it was some kind of half-remembered episode in those past times when they had traveled as a ragged group, uncertain their intimate alliances. Seemed to be refugees together. The words among them were more game than sincere.

The two of them were then in their room, door shut. What became, became then, noises of all kinds. *Love like a distant feather, not a warm weighty stone in the hand . . . many little kisses . . .*

Lilianna opened her eyes, & Hobo Jones & Alvinarah & Naria were all looking at her. She wondered about his question, realizing she had drifted off.

She put her finger on chin, & said, “When we are finished learning this story, is it possible to learn other kinds of things?”

Alvinarah put his paw to his chin, & said, “The Moss are *amazing*, & I’m not sure if there’s not *anything* they can’t help with.”

Lilianna smiled, & nodded to them that she was ready to resume.

* * * * *

Mossy Fugues

Alvinarah Poesy, the well-known Moss Poet, was noticing something strange about his friends, Hobo Jones & Lilianna. They would touch different patches of the Moss that he pointed out, but it seemed like their attention would begin to veer, & then they would lose themselves in some kind of strange little dreams, begin mumbling. He & Naria listened closely, with paws on chin.

Hobo Jones knelt down over a **colorful** patch of Moss. **Blue** & **green** & **yellow**. Began mumbling, almost like in a trance: “Some levels, deeper & deeper, & a weird little device, for me to talk to her.”

Then they would turn their attention to Lilianna for a moment, & she would be curled up, near a stone covered in **lavender Moss**, & saying, “How we are near to each other, again.”

And then Hobo Jones would say, “I’m in a house, half-dark, & I hear a voice, many floors above, crying out!”

And Lilianna would then cry out, as though replying, but not replying, “Pouring songs into various jugs & containers!”

And then Hobo Jones would say, “Sometimes the dreams are so deep, some other kind of real. But I’m no gentleman!”

And Lilianna would then cry out, but quieter, almost replying, but not replying, “I wake up & they’re completely gone . . . Gotta go . . .”

Well now, Alvinarah is not sure about the strange effects that the Moss seems to be having on these people-folks. But surely he needed to know more, talk to Miss Flossie Flea about it all, before letting

others experience all this too.

* * * * *

Mossy Fugues II

And so Alvinarah & his dear friend Naria left Hobo Jones & Lilianna curled up among many Moss formations, & went off to find Miss Flossie Flea. To tell her about these . . . *Mossy Fugues*. That is what they seemed to be.

Lilianna is curled up in a **multi-colored Mossy bed** &, in her mind, & beyond her mind, she seems to be in a *Mossy Fugue* of deep & far intensity. She recalls a *pursuit*, of someone, loved from ago, & hence pursued, or being pursued, she could not tell.

It was a long path, *this pursuit*. Sometimes she, or the pursuer, was naked, clothes in a handled paper bag. Sometimes not. Always a sweetness to all of this. *This pursuit*.

But then long after it ended, & long before she met Mr. Hobo Jones, also known as Hose Jones, the most advanced Robot Man in the Many Worlds, she'd wake up, wild, coughing in the night. Remembering those sweet days of *pursuit*, & not knowing if they were *real*? Or *what* they were? Sadness & sweetness, mixtured together.

Hobo Jones wondered: *is it his memory or another's?* He realized, within his advanced Robot Man cogitations, some of what was going on. That when they were touching the Moss, like how they were, it could not be distinguished if it was my memory, or your memory, or someone else's memory. It's as though memory was a pool that all shared, down *deep*.

He came into a doctor's office, him or someone else. There was an old dear friend, now a doctor. Looking at me shocked, & pointing at the blank space, on the wall, next to the door I came in, & he said, "But I put your picture up there long ago, & I took it down long ago. I'd rendered your form most perfect!" *What does it mean? What does any of that mean? Tell me.*

Now I was standing in line, for a show, or exhibition, waiting to buy my ticket, or get my ticket, & what happens then is that my pocket full of **Secret Pennies**, & what-not, *burst*, & everyone around me laughed, but they helped me to retrieve them all.

Hobo Jones tried to stand up. This was the hardest part, because he didn't want to. There was something comforting & mysterious about all of this, even though it was also somewhat scary & intimidating. Then he's drawn back, by a vision of a far off sky, & a great sailing boat, traveling an inverted ocean.

But now both of them were led firmly but quietly, just a little ways away. Sat down, as though sleepwalkers, under a tree. And a strange bald man, with many tattoos, dressed in black faux leather, looked at them & said, "We *have* got to figure this out better."

* * * * *

We Discover Benny Big Dreams

Benny Big Dreams had come because he's interested in the *interplay* between Alvinarah's Moss artworks & Dreamland, his bailiwick. Alvinarah was not around right now, nor his dear friend Naria Narwhal, having gone to fetch Miss Flossie Flea about Hobo Jones & Lilianna, & the *Mossy Fugues* effects this Moss artwork seemed to have upon them.

Benny had come to explain, after his own fashion, *Dream Architecture*. Ever a smirk spread across his face *au natural*, but his message was still clear, & certainly one he's interested in.

He said, to these somewhat involuntary listeners, "The *Dream Architecture* that interplays with Moss involves the following elements. *Music. Little details. Memory. Narrative. Mood. And something weird.* You will find that, in touching the Moss, & traveling into a dream, those elements, some or all of them. The Moss *connects*, between you, & you, & everyone else, via the Dreaming."

Hobo Jones roused up, enough, to sit up. He noticed Lilianna was trying to rouse too, & so he helped her to sit up as well, both of them now gazing upon this strange figure, newly arrived to their company.

He looked at them now a little more formally & said, "My name is Benny Big Dreams."

They nodded, although this didn't really explain him all that much.

And he said, "I'm a Traveler in Dreams," & he didn't explain anything further, but that's at least something more to go with.

So Hobo Jones said, "Are you, & Alvinarah Poesy, & the Moss, collaborating in some way?"

Benny considered this just for a moment, finger on chin, & then said, "No. Alvinarah Poesy is a Moss Po-et. I am *not* a poet, but I am interested in the Dreaming part of all of this. Which I admit I don't understand exactly." And he didn't explain it any further *again*.

Lilianna looked upon him, perhaps a little more kindly than Hobo Jones, & said, "Do you dream, Sir?"

Benny considered this for a moment, & then said, "I am *of* Dreams. I travel *in* Dreams."

"Then how can we see you while we are awake?"

Benny said, "Dreamland doesn't bind me," & again he said no more. It's probably not that Benny *wouldn't* explain more. It's more just that he just *didn't* know more. And Hobo Jones & Lilianna seemed to intuit that there were limitations to what he knew about himself.

So Hobo Jones said, "Can this be controlled? If we wanted to?"

And Benny, again finger upon chin, said, "I think so. I've traveled the Moss like a tunnel from one place to another, in waking. Perhaps this might work somehow in Dreaming too?"

Hobo Jones nodded, & then Lilianna said, "Alvinarah was telling us a Great Story, & I don't think he finished."

Benny nodded. “I don’t think he expected to see how the Moss would affect you both.”

Hobo Jones & Lilianna now stood up, at Hobo Jones’ request. And he led Lilianna away a bit, to talk just between them. Benny nodded & waited.

“Miss Lilianna, we’ve come here to learn some things but, if any of this makes you uncomfortable, we can leave, & go elsewhere immediately.”

Lilianna looked at Hobo Jones & said, “We need to find out what we need to find out, to help Mulronie, don’t we?”

He nodded.

She said, “Then we need to find out more about all of this.”

He nodded again.

They returned to Benny Big Dreams, now standing, & she said, “Mr. Big Dreams, we need to help our friend, Mulronie the Space Pirate. Have you met him?”

Benny nodded, looking a little spooked.

Then Lilianna said, “Can traveling Dreamland by Moss help us?”

Benny thinks about it for a moment, & said, “I think we need to wait for Mr. Alvinarah Poesy, & all talk about this together. But I *like* it, as an idea.”

And so now, more as friends, they sat down together. And, knowing the effect of the Moss, they sat in the grass, not where the Moss was. And they waited for Alvinarah & Naria to return with Miss Flossie Flea, to talk about what might happen next.

* * * * *

Epilogue.

Miss Flossie Flea Listens with Ears

Finally, happily, Alvinarah Poesy, & his dear friend Naria Narwhal, have returned with her own self, Miss Flossie Flea. They found Hobo Jones, & his dear friend Lilianna, & that Dream Traveler fellow Benny Big Dreams, all sitting together, in a friendly circle, & they joined them.

Miss Flossie was very interested to hear every detail of what was going on, since Hobo Jones & Lilianna had arrived in their boat to Alvinarah’s Moss artworks place, where he’s been working so hard on the Great Story. And she found it very interesting that, because they were people-folks, & because they were touching the Moss directly, something was happening to them other than their experiencing the story of **Evolution. Synthesis. Ferment.** They had started to, but then it seemed that they fell into *Mossy Fugues*, best way to describe them.

Well, she listened to every word, paw on chin. And Benny Big Dreams said that he felt that there was something here to do with Dreaming & Moss, in some kind of combination, like a Mossy Dreamway or Mossy Dreaming, that could be contrived.

Miss Flossie nodded & said, “This does sound pretty interesting. But I think we had better throw a little more into our recipe.”

Well now, they were all listening with fingers & paws upon chins to her. She is well-known as a kindly brilliant genius Thought Flea. She looked at Hobo Jones & Lilianna, with her friendly kind eyes, & said, “I think that when people-folks experience all of this, they need a certain *hmmm*.” Everyone nodded, including Hobo Jones & Lilianna.

Then Naria Narwhal spoke up & said, “You better keep their feets moving too, just in case!” And so it was agreed as well that not only should people-folks have a certain *hmm*, but that they should learn a dance step or two.

Everyone smiled. There seemed to be good agreement among these new & old friends.

5/2/2024
Milkrose, MA















Sam Knot



Becoming Archaeology: A Walking Eulogy for Living Moor.

*Bennett's Cross, Birch Tor, Water Hill,
Assycombe Hill, White Ridge, The Grey Wethers,
Sittaford Tor, Grey Down Stones, Quintin's Man,
Whitehorse Hill, East Dart Head, Kit Rocks,
Sandy Hole Pass, The Waterfall, Hartland Tor,
Roundy Park, Postbridge, Pizwell, Soussons
Down, Home, & Rivenstone.*

Part Two: A Symbolic Reburial

i.

It moves me more than any painting
or poem, seems to encode more meaning,
personal & planetary, than any other art,
this simple offering. This intricate gift.

I have only woven before with pencil & paper,
mapping in two dimensions the knots of the Celts,
but you get me braiding in three that windy night,
in four that windy night. What I'm in for:

Once the music dies, some time before sleep
comes knocking: Those grasses get me braiding:
Braids that want to spiral into baskets
but hold instead the information encoded
by my fumbling fingers
in dance with the grass
while the mind wanders
back over the ridges of the day.
Trails weaving baskets.
Baskets full, even
at empty.

& when I wake to dampness
 & stiffness & windows of mist,
 consider driving home right then
 on a cushion of smoke to a lunch of bed,
 but instead look to see my braids
 in the light of day, like the first
 green scribbles of a proud nature boy.
 I am enchanted enough to forge on.

I tie the bone in first, wrapped in
 white wool & black wool & brown wool.
 All wools I've breathed through.
 All sheep I've smelt.

Add the ironstone,
 blood & magnetism.
 The peat lump from beside
 your kist: earth-flesh,
 plant-life in plant-death.
 Some slate-grey horsehair.
 Green spongy sphagnum—
 a rare strand of its white cousin
 that leapt up from the path. A chip
 of granite from the cairn of Quintin's Man.
 The cone of a conifer. A small
 black rock from a stream I drank.
 I tie you all together with three types
 of grass weave. A heather sprig.
 A forked flag of beech twig.
 A weathered reptile of gorse wood.
 The bog flag quivers at your extremity.
 You are alive.

I have buried myself in you
 & given birth. I have taken the trail
 & turned it in on itself:
 A multidimensional jewel of earth & fur,
 a World you can turn in your hands:
 Explore with your eyes
 this little landscape,
 this tiny planet
 of looming feelings
 & soaring thoughts.

A handfelt gift.
 A heartfelt offering.
 A long-walked present.
 A self-excavation.

*

ii.

There's around fifty of us in a big ring,
 pairing up for another journey.
 "I'm an odd person."
 & so is she, thankfully.
 (Yes, yes, we all are.)
 One will be the stone
 & one the person who raised it.

I am the stone,
 standing into the circle,
 my forearms out, palms up,
 my human gently supporting
 my petrified elbow.
 My eyes are closed.
 A story is spoken:

When we first arrived on Dartmoor
 we thought we'd get to know every inch.
 An impossibility! There's always moor!
 Better to get to know your own little piece.
 The places that call you. Like the waterfall
 called us, & likely many before: those
 big flat bathing stones, that
 sacred flow, that glorious gush.
 We'd go there, alone for miles,
 & swim naked, swearing
 we always would. & we did.
 Took our kids, swimming
 even in winter. But now we're getting old.
 We'll often find ourselves thinking, hmmm,
 haven't been up to the falls in a while!
 But the moor is just so special for us,
 particularly this old wild north moor,
 so much still in tact.

& too, time becomes archaeology
 surprisingly quickly up there:
 The moor absorbs everything:
 You can walk up there
 & disappear into deep time.

& we've been singing, this weekend,
 one of the songs I found on the moor:
 Grey Down Stones.
 This song about marching up
 & dancing the stones,
 & all the rhythms of the land
 & our working & talking & crafting,
 all the rhythms being present,
 all the rhythms being danced.

Well, I've visited a lot of stones
 on the moor, alone or in rows or circles,
 but I'd never felt I'd found Grey Down
 till recently: They've just found
 a new circle high on the moor,
 & it seems to have been carefully,
 almost gently, laid to rest—
 the archaeologists
 have cut round the stones
 into the peat, so they're still
 just laying where they fell—
 untouched by weather or lichen—
 & they are gleaming white in their graves!
 Imagine them standing—how they would've
 glowed in the moonlight!

You are
 those stones.
 Feel yourself
 Rooting down into the ground.
 Down, down to touch
 the molten heart.
 Out, out into the land.
 Your solid, slow vibration.
 You deepen & expand.
 You channel, filled
 with the Earth you channel.
 You gleam & glow. Stones
 are the bones
 of time.

My human comes to sit before me,
 rests her back against my rocky legs:
 I am solid but vibrating, giving this energy
 to the human, knowing it
 throughout myself.

I am stone. Grey Down Stones.
 The gleaming bones of deep time.
 Still time. Dreamtime. Still.
 I am there. I am here.

& when I open my eyes
 the world has changed.
 Human & stone thank each other
 & the room vibrates together.
 The air sparkles
 & gaze opens faces both ways
 —we see the us in us—
 we care, we feel,
 we soar, we smile.

*

& in a while we're back in a ring
 & the drum is beating, loud & slow
 —whole breaths between the beats—
 & one at a time we close our eyes
 & the breaths become steps
 in a circle of ancestors.

One by one we are led by the hands
 of our tribe, trusting them to guide us,
 with strong grasps & the lightest of touches.

We each touch each
 & it touches us all.



I watch them
 stepping round the circle,
 uncertain enough & sure enough,
 open & gentle as snails on the knife's
 edge of trust. I take their hands
 & pass them on. I am a light touch
 but a sure one. I watch them come & go,
 making my own small adjustments
 in this chain of touch, making them
 & giving them up. There are tears.
 Moments on the edge of messiness.
 But the drum never wavers—
 like the mutual support—a raft
 on a rough ocean: the stronger
 the feelings, the firmer
 the grip. Now her hand
 waits on my shoulder. My eyes dart
 in a last ditch attempt
 to plan it out.

But my breaths reassure me.
 You all do. My eyes close & off I go,
 groping at first in this circle
 of transformed familiars.
 My sense of control
 surrendered. I give myself
 up to you, trust my path to be guided.
 Stumble & fumble round the beat
 of the drum. I go on, I settle
 into a new form. Each hand speaks to me,
 each hand cares in the same way, all different.
 Some hold me a moment—& some new &
 very old sense of recognition
 speaks through our hands. Some
 just brush me on, no less recognisable
 in their way. Some find the elbow
 to turn me. A whisper now:

“You’re back.”

& I am back to my duty
of feeding round the chain
until the circle is complete
& we are complete. A true
tribe now. Ready to meet
our visitors.

*

Nenets people. Old friends
from the far north. Three of them:
A matriarch, a young lady, a son.
First they bang their drums
& bring a song:

It lights up the old ice bridge
we may once have travelled on.
Brings the thunder
of hooves on tundra.
Horizons of ice
& the drama of life.
A baby cries in song,
animals call while the song
speaks on. My eyes have been closed
& the blackness behind them
is almost white by the time
they are open.

We are treated to a tour
of Nenets culture, illustrated
by their clothing & belongings:
The language of the patterns
on her tunic. The meaning of
the metal on his belt. It is said
a lady's purse is a lady's head—
if you just throw it around
you'll lose your memory.
A person's feet are key
to their health—shoes
can tell you a lot. A man's
sight is very important. He
must wear a knife on his belt. She
has long, brightly wrapped braids—free—
or chained together to indicate a partner.
This headpiece, adopted for the stage
from marriage: crossed circle of silver chain,
plaque at the back to protect
a vulnerable spot
from the evil eye.

*

& those key patterns,
on tunic trimmings
brimming with meaning:
I can see the tree in hers
& sure enough it represents
the sacred birch. There's hare's ears,
a fox's elbow. Visual language.

I've seen the same kind of key patterns
in Celtic art & wonder if they arose,
each independent of the other,
or split from a common source. Either way,
speaking theirs might have a few sayings
about meanings of our own.

Our visitors make present the ancient,
enacting a show & tell as old as tribe,
as time, a complement
to the land we walk on:
It is an honour to us
they share of themselves.

Give us perspective
& help us reflect.

What we cannot remember,
we cannot forget.
To create is recreational.

We can do it
any time.

*

iii.

I am sat before you now.
You on the bearskin. You
under the black skin. You
bent, living, ground-hugging
Woman of White Horse Hill.

The tribes are gathering. Us
Trailweavers sat here holding to sing.
The drums of the bear dance come in.
The horns of the bone dance. The lights
of the firey ones. The tree of the gongs.
The prayers of the chanters. We
gather round
you on the rug.

We Trailweavers sing an opening,
five bird clans coming together:
the skylark, the heron, the buzzard,
the raven, the night owl.

Spirit of Old stOnes.
Spirit of Earth.
You are Beauty.
You are Life.
These feet walking
on the land.
These feet walking
as before.

We sing in rounds,
 round & round & round,
 as we gather up the offerings
 & bring them in a basket to
 our lady on the rug.

*

The Woman of White Horse Hill.
 Now I meditate on you. While
 the other tribes bring their
 chants & songs & dances
 to honour you I feel more
 like your lover than ever. I
 hold you in my mind. Celebrate you
 & mourn you. I imagine your kisses
 & envisage your kist. I stroke you
 & tell you you're wonderful,
 & I know it's true for I've been
 where they buried you. You
 must've been cool! I've spun in a circle
 on your mound, & you can see them all
 around: all the ridges, the tors,
 all the times & places
 you were important to,
 & were important to you. I've
 seen some of what you were
 buried with, preserved from
 prior raiders by the peat: your
 bracelet woven from cow hair
 & studded with tin, the animal skin
 they wrapped you in, your pins, your
 beads: your Dartmoor tin, your
 Kimmeridge shale, your
 ancestral amber smoothed
 by the hands of generations—your
 spindlewood ear studs, lathed, in fashion
 round here again, 4,000 years later—
 your fabric, your leather, your
 shrouded ashes & charred bones.
 A bark-woven basket
 containing.

You were important then.
& just look how important
you are to us now! We dreamers
who still haunt the moor, still walk
the paths you trod, still meet
the same stones. We who gather
from all over to honour you again.
To honour ourselves & our ancestors.
To widen our family & fill it with love.

You mean so much,
even if it is our meaning
as much as yours—well,
that is just the way it is
with funerals my dear,
now & forever.

*

We carry you
in silence
down to the kist
of this land.

We place you
inside
as the rain
comes down.

Touch a kiss
to the ground.

We close the lid,
becoming archaeology.

* * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes Toward *Many Musics,* *Twelfth Series, xxv-lx*

*“I tell you, there are more worlds,
and more doors to them,
than you will think of in many years!”
— George MacDonald, Lilith, 1895.*

11/8/2022 – Questions:

- Who travels with the Six Brother-Heroes to the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds?
- Will they watch it dawn to dusk?
- Will they enter the Hut nearby?
- Will they engage the Wobble?
- What will lead them to Gate-Keeper’s world?
- Will they stop at the Thought Fleas’ Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock?
- Will they defeat Gate-Keeper’s people’s captors? How?
- Will the King & Roddy fully reconcile?
- Will they journey together to rediscover lost loved ones & old homes?
- Will the King see the Princess or any of his kin?
- How will *Labyrinthine*, *Bags End News*, *Dream Raps*, *Creature Tale*, & *the Great Heroes of Yore’s Adventures* weave into & out of *Many Musics* & among each other?

* * * * *

12/26/2022 - Notes from Museum of Fine Arts Boston, “Life Magazine & the Power of Photography exhibition:

- There’s a stop-action photo of a gymnast—showing a sequence of moves in one photo—
- In the Forever Spaceship—somehow Gate-Keeper finds he is filming like this—*time like space—this is how to film the Wobble—*
- Also a large & a small TV showing the 1969 Apollo Moon landing—differently—both true—simultaneously—consecutively—?

* * * * *

2/15/2023 - More questions:

- What drew the King back to the Mainland where, somewhere along the way, a Sea Wobble took him?
- Once he had returned to the Island of the Tangled Gate a second time, what happened? Why did he not enter, or did he try? Did he fail? When did he then assemble to war & leave?
- Was it the *Architect* who learned his story & convinced him not to enter? If so, what was his

angle?

To answer: need *full story* of King's exile by the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds.

* * * * *

2/19/2023 - Missing element to the King's path from the Tangled Gate to the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds:

- What drives him on, down deep?
 - Loss of his Brother-Heroes?
 - Loss of his beloved Queen Deirdre?
 - Did not save the world?
 - Visions of the end of the world?
 - Visions of the **Great Violence**
 - Does he waking recall these?
 - Is he driven by compulsions barely recalled, understood?
- What did he see beyond the Cave of the Beast?
- What has lingered in him since then?

To unearth all this is to explain *why* he fought Roddy to return to the Tangled Gate; then *why* he left; & then *why* he was Sea Wobbled down to the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds—

* * * * *

2/11/2023 – Notes on the King:

- Exile down at Great Tree calmed him; lived in Hut; friends to Creatures
- Why did the Witches choose him, when he was a child, to save the world?
- Track his path, his relations—

* * * * *

3/26/2023 – Lines & notes on the King:

*Deirdre said: "I'm not where we last saw one another—
but you can't come to me where I am, yet"*

- The King thought she doubted him, but Roddy disagreed—it meant the King had to do other things first—the King would not sway, thus their subsequent war—
- Roddy & Gate-Keeper in the Forever Spaceship discuss how Mentor had said that Roddy would reunite with his Brother-Heroes, & so help Gate-Keeper & his people—how? not easy, no mere battle; connected to Forever Spaceship? Encounter with the Lavender Trace? His people's crashed spaceship?

King's timeline:

1. Witches send him from homeland to discover his Brother-Heroes, find the Tangled Gate, & save the world
2. Long travels with Brother-Heroes in search of the Tangled Gate
3. They return to King's homeland & they build a Kingdom; King meets Deirdre (his Queen)
4. Brother-Heroes leave Kingdom & arrive to Tangled Gate; to the Cave of the Beast, & beyond

- it; & fall down to the Hut near the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds
5. Four of the Brother-Heroes are Wobbled; King remains alone in the Cave of Beast for three days; he & Roddy return to the Kingdom
 6. The King & Roddy war; King exiled (#1) to the Island of Tangled Gate; vision of Deirdre on trip there; fails to enter the Tangled Gate, refused entrance (because intention; had been told as a boy that this was key); builds Kingdom in exile, with second Queen, & also Princess recovered from the Sea; does Architect convince him to return to the Mainland?
 7. En route to Mainland again, the King is Sea Wobbled down to the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds & his exile #2
 8. Toothéd Imp reports to Abe the Ancient Sea Turtle on the Beach of Many Worlds of the King's exile
 9. Abe summons the King to his Beach, via the Great Heroes of Yore, to conclude exile, & find his Brother-Heroes
 10. Abe sends the King to Mt. Cloudy Day to summon his Brother-Heroes from afar via the Great Heroes of Yore's *Perfect Braided Laaa!*
 11. Return to Abe's Beach; then on to the Rutabaga Festival & the Helpful Hut
 12. Return to Abe's Beach; then on to Shack at the Threshold of the Dreaming

* * * * *

7/3/2023 - Notes from Museum of Fine Arts Boston, "Hokusai: Inspiration and Influence" exhibition:

Does Architect summon Sea Wobble by writing on the Sea?

* * * * *

7/22/2023 – More questions:

- Do Roddy & the King promise each other they will find their Brother-Heroes? And the King's Queen Deirdre? What happens to this promise? How do they break? On purpose? *To trick the Wobble?* Do they remember this finally on Reunion Day on Abe's Beach?
- What is the Wobble from Unitive Time? Is this where they go to make peace? Is this what Boop & Lori Bunny learn at the Imagianna Liberry? Involving also Boop's people? And the Great Heroes of Yore? Thought Fleas' Rutabaga Festival & its Grand Production?

* * * * *

2/10/2024 – Six main themes / locales:

1. Night of the Wobble Moon
 2. Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock
 3. Cave of the Beast
 4. Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds
 5. Gate-Keeper's world
 6. Reunion with loved ones
- Six groups of six poems each, run through, in varying order—take six themes/locales, chop each into six pieces, & decide: *sequential or not? All, or only some?* 36 pieces in all.
 - Toss dice? *Evolution? Synthesis? Ferment?*
 - Moss? Dream Architecture?

Draft lines: *Many Musics, XII, #25, Night of the Wobble Moon*

*I bear praise & apology, both, deepest in my heart,
& I wonder: to befriend them each other?
cease their opposition?
Desire & want too, let them hold, grasp each other
Tired & bored, yet curious & hungry.
Art ever luring me away,
Art ever helps me to stay, standing, simple.
I just want to try & do better,
with more & less. OK. Then.*

Not to conceive the *next* poem, but the next 36 poems, build an *architecture*, both intentional & random, to contain them all. Many themes. Many narratives. Many characters. I can't even imagine what all this is going to be, but it's going to possess hours, days, weeks of my time to figure it out, bit by bit by bit . . .

* * * * *

3/2/2024 – Notes & lines:

In the fantasyland of Imagianna, there is a great Castle, where Princess Chrisakah & her bestus buddy Boop, who looks like a Turtle, but isn't one, live, with others, lesser known. And in this Castle, there is a Liberry, & deep in this Liberry, there is a Room of Song. And we needs hark close to these lines:

*follow this line, this music, this trail,
from far down below, to far up, & way beyond,
follow, from long ago, even now, movement!
and even longer known, traveling from hither to yon,
both miles & years. What to know? hang on slow.
this line travels all, deep, from the ground rumbles,
quiet, barely a touch, what remains when the rest
scrapes off or falls away, what remains, to learn, to know—*

* * * * *

3/9/2024 – Notes on Elisses & lines:

The fragment of Emandia, called Elisses, I've been puzzling with it, wondering over it, finding various narratives already crisscrossing through it, & yet I'm still not sure of it—

I have a line from a dream, a long dream, a line especially on my mind right now:

Is Elisses what, sweetest, remains?

Is this a *theme*? Is it a *question*? A *guidepost*? I think Elisses knows me better than I know Elisses right now, but plainly lures these poems *toward, through, in, among*, maybe *past* it, at some point. More will be told at the Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock.

* * * * *

3/16/2024 – Notes on “The Night of the Wobble Moon”:

Thinking about “The Night of the Wobble Moon,” & the many ways to approach this sequence of 36 narrative poems. One approach to chop the narrative up into chapters, tell it piece by piece, seeing it grow larger & more detailed as it goes along, each poem building on the previous ones, arriving to the conclusion of the sequence with what might be a finale poem that contains them all, somehow.

My struggle is that I want that finale poem to be the *first*. I have this idea that the first poem should bear many intimations of what’s to come. And what’s to come in this sequence is a great deal—

Telling of the Brother-Heroes traveling to the Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock with their friends made on Abe’s Beach of Many Worlds, where they had finally reunite after so long. They will stay at the Festival for awhile.

Then they’re going to Imagianna, with Lori Bunny & Boop to the Room of Song, to learn about the Wobble, & other long ago things never written down, only remaining as Song in this Room.

Then they will go back to the Festival to enjoy its Grand Finale, & on to the Tangled Gate, to once again encounter the Beast in the Cave. Learn better when they did not, the first time they came.

Then onto the Great Tree at the Heart of the Many Worlds, & then on to reunion & reconciliation with the people & places they have loved but long unseen. I think they will finally come to the Kingdom by the Sea, which they long ago built, & lived together for a little while.

All that intimated in the opening “Night of the Wobble Moon” poem. One way or another, that is my intention.

* * * * *

3/23/2024 – Lines:

*Many & many a calendar’s turned page,
many & many, since last we walked together,
many & many, since last we sat together,
many & many, to bring us back together
beneath this Wobble Moon*

*Many & many a story to tell,
many & many the faces loved, & passed by, & away,
many & many a countless word said,
many & many led us, pushed us, impeded us, & led us together,
beneath this Wobble Moon*

*Many & many a new path tried, a new twist in the old skein
a new idea to salve the old regrets,
Many & many, come high, kept a little, we nodded,
passed on through, come tonight, this Wobble Moon.*

* * * * *

3/30/2024 – Notes on the final poem of sequence:

Wondering about the final poem of the 36. Wondering if the Brother-Heroes all end up back at their Kingdom by the Sea. *Do they grow old? Do they grow tired?* I don't know if they do. Maybe for a while. It makes me wonder: *is it possible that Many Musics will take some kind of strange turn, after this group of poems? Will the Tangled Gate Mythopoeia obscure, a bit, among its lines? Will it be forgotten? And then need to be remembered?*

That's one option. But in variation on what Tolkien said about the road going ever on and on, I think that the Narrative goes ever on. I think this *Mythopoeia's* characters many not, necessarily, grow old & tired. But, if that's so, then what? *What?*

* * * * *

4/6/2024 – Notes on poems & not yet begun:

Still not begun. I have lines here & there. I have notes. I have thoughts. But the lines of the actual poems are not written. Not even a draft. Not yet. I feel like it's coming soon, because it gets to a point where all of the preparation is done, & there's nothing left but the writing. And, once it's being written for real, there's a kind of *weightlessness* to it, a kind of *free floating*.

I don't know exactly *how* the words come. I do know that some people who make Art talk about being a *conduit* between something else & their finished work. Not saying this is wrong, but I don't believe I am passive in the process either. *I make Art* because I *make Art*. And I can't do it otherwise.

If anything, when the words happen, I feel *fuller*, like when a hot air balloon is being filled up, & then it's full. Full, solid, & you can see its shape clear & sure. Tethered to the ground still, but *tugging & tugging*. Then, finally, time to unknot the ropes & let the balloon rise. And it rises & floats along because *that's what it does*. All the rest is just in between. I feel like this poems & I are in out basket, balloon above nearly filled, & we're *tugging at the ropes*, waiting for release, to rise up to where we always are, always have been. That's all.

* * * * *

4/13/2024 – Notes on the Beast:

What about the Brother-Heroes' return to the Cave of the Beast? What is the *Beast*? Well, in the Greek myth that these poems are vaguely based upon, the Beast was the Minotaur, half-man & half-bull. Dwelled in the center of the Labyrinth. Not a Cave. I decided that in my poems the Beast would be the spirit of the natural world. And the Beast is furious that humankind has been systematically destroying the natural world.

So you can imagine that when the Brother-Heroes came to his Cave with their "mission" to "save the world," the Beast was confused. Weren't humans the *problem*? He rejected them as ignorant, arrogant, & foolish. For all their efforts to get there, it wasn't enough. How will it go the second time around? This will be the test of how much they have changed, if they have, & if they can indeed help to save the *Many Worlds*.

* * * * *

4/20/2024 – Notes on Narrative:

Always, when constructing a Narrative, there's the question of *where* to begin. At the start, & thus straight on through? Or the end, & work backwards? Or the middle, & work around more? All valid approaches, but the answer is whichever aligns best with the story to be told.

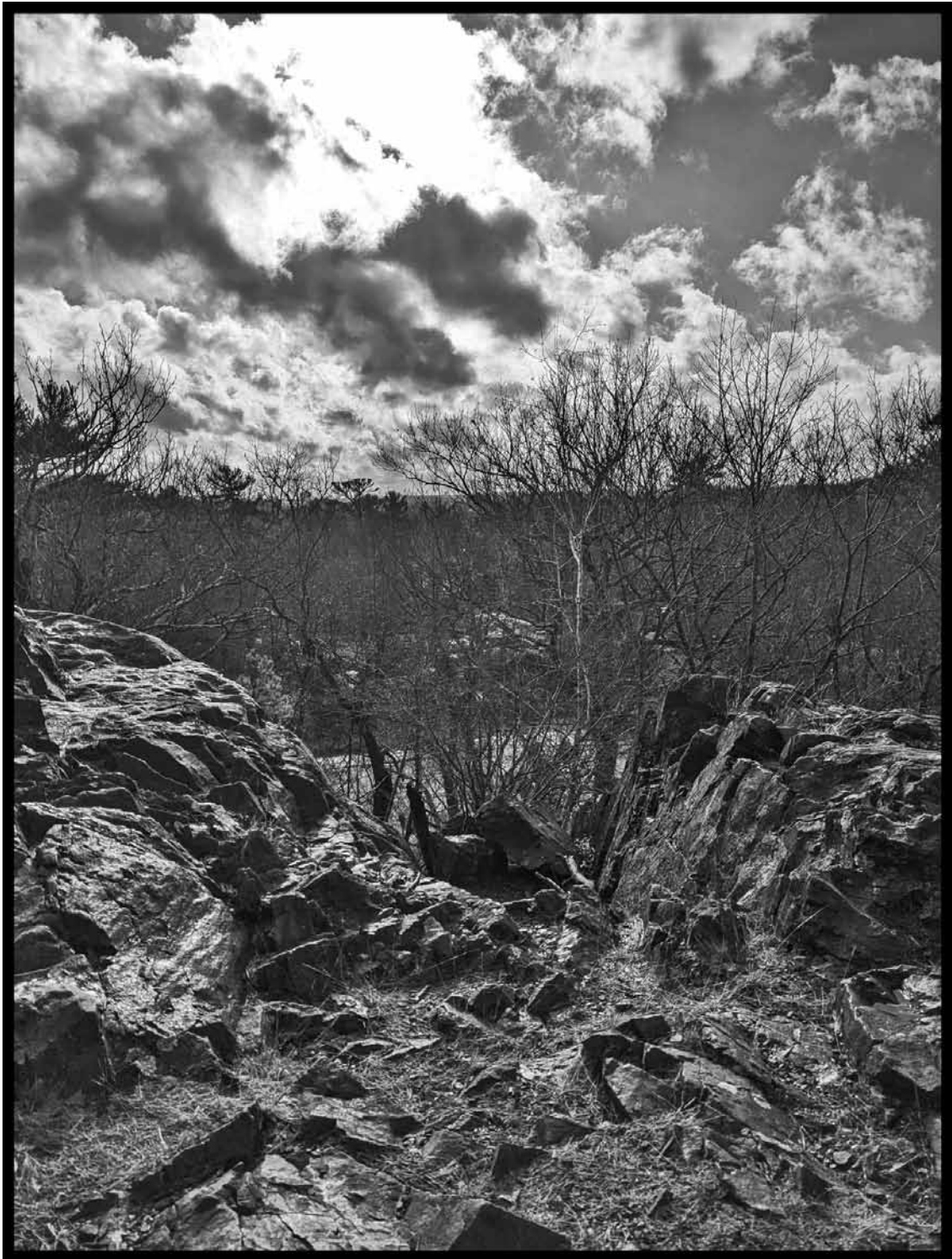
And these poems could use any of these strategies, or just swirl around, calliope-like, leaving one never quite sure where one is in them. *Why not?*

I believe a Narrative should always lead with the best it has, its most potent moment or image or the like. And let this lead set its standard. When I think of the Narrative options for these poems, I come back every time to starting from the start. These poems build on years & years of the work it took to get the six Brother-Heroes reunited rightly, after telling their unique stories as rightly as possible too. I did the best thinking & writing that I could.

Maybe I've been slow to write these new poems because their reunion spawns a whole new phase in this Narrative. But I feel now like I am finally arriving to "The Night of the Wobble Moon," the first of the 36 poems. And I also bear faith that, after this first one is written, the rest will come, nicely, thereafter.







Martina Reisz Newberry



Bethel

One day, on a walk through
a not so deserted place,
I found a deserted church with
broken folding chairs and
a plastic lectern. The windows,
which had never known stained glass,
were boarded, and there were three mice
chasing each other 'round the floor.
It seemed a perfect place.

Tall on the dirty stage,
from my notebook I conferred
my poems. No time limit,
no faces, noises of shifting
dust and cars out there somewhere,
I read for many minutes,
emoting here and there,
hands rising and falling,
singing through some.

I spoke of my doomed country,
I chanted the names of God,
I sang of sunup and cream-filled pastries.
Behind that plastic pulpit,
I felt no new fears—only those
I came with—and, when I stepped down,
a groan went up from all that knew love,
and were no longer there.

* * *

Bhava-Tanha

On fire with myself
racing, not hovering,
passing the void,
and the word,
and the barely spinning
listless earth.

I was here before,
and before that too,
and I contacted the savage sun
saying, *I wish for you
to eat my heart because
I have nothing else to lose.*

My wishes are all
gluttonous that way:
the feast not the snack—
the dark not the dusk—
the full apparition—
not the suggestion of spirit.
If it has been too much
to ask then I've asked it.

Request that I leave the room,
and I'm gone forever.
Just like that.

* * *

Aubade

I woke today thinking I'd write something
welcoming the arrival of dawn.
It wasn't to be. Something portentous hung
in the air, lay on the bedspread.

It seemed difficult to discern scent from secret.
A grubby, unhappy, mendacity floated through the room,
riding backscatter the way backscatter rides long rays of light.

*We are not winning the wars, said the light.
We present Death with countless bodies.
Never are we paid back for them.*

*No wars are ever won.
They are only continued,
from one square mile,
to the next.*

The thought came to me then that these decades
of barbarism have warped the world,
that we damage the very beds we sleep in,
the chairs we sit on, the earth we stomp on
(call it "walking" if you like).
Killing and more of it appears daily on our door
steps, & in the countries of those we claim
are brothers / sisters / comrades / friends.

I woke today with unclear cries chafing my ears.
It took no time at all, less than a faint
whisker flick from the cat, to know they were
the cries of the souls we continue to
waylay in the name of almighty love.

* * * * *





Rivers of the Mind

[A Novel]

*“Purify the colors, purify my mind
Spread the ashes of the colors
over this earth of mine”*

—Arcade Fire, “Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels),” 2004.

Chapter 26: *The Great Realm of the Ancestors*

i.

I rested my head on my pillow, disturbed and exhausted after what had happened through the day, and desperate for rest. A thousand thoughts and anxieties pattered about my aching head. Had John done that to those men? He couldn't have, could he? It must have been . . . that . . . thing . . . with those awful black eyes and those strange hooked teeth, the one who spoke through the white flower.

I could not help but fear that he'd attack me as I laid there; I lost count of how many times I got up to check my locks or to peek underneath the bed. I turned over and over, rocking the mattress like an unsteady boat, straining to keep my eyes shut. It was no use. Midnight came, and I was still awake; my hair matted over my irritated face, my blanket clutched in between my hands over my mouth as I tried to stop myself from sobbing. But I couldn't let it see me cry. I couldn't let it even see me blink.

Though I consciously dreaded shutting my eyes, my bones and my muscles and my heart and my stomach all yearned to sleep, to plop down. Hours passed pacing around the room until I finally collapsed backwards into my bed, my head pounding. Just when I let myself go, I started to think about my family. My grandmother was close to death. They were moving her into hospice. I couldn't bear thinking that she would die and I would not be there to say goodbye to her. Tears started rolling down my face, staining the pillow. Why couldn't I go home?

To stop myself from screaming, *I slide into the language of silence. At once, nothing seems to matter. The room feels emptier, my body not more secure, but more comfortable with the danger all around me. I feel my eyes lean back, and the silence rolls over my arms and legs. I feel it—a real and palpable thing, a numbness that spreads like wildfire.*

And then, suddenly, the silence seems sinister. It begins to draw me into a sleep, a deep and lifeless sleep. I pull away; the silence pulls back at me.

I struggle and struggle to peel myself away from my paralysis until, like someone digging their way out of quicksand, I gasped awake, again in the English language but, even there, I still felt some part of my brain longing to return to the silence.

What about the Mushrooms? I supposed I didn't know too many other options, so *I switch into the language of the psilocybes. Quickly, the austere white walls of the room shift into red and blue colorized panels, coated with jeweled reflections which seem to flow into each other and out from one another all at once. The night sky—I can see it through the ceiling, waiting for me, cold and distant, yet enchanting. I want to see my grandmother—and I will, I feel certain. I feel certain that I know this without knowing, even if I can't before she dies, then in spirit. Even if it all breaks down, this universe will right its own course and,*

perhaps, I can visit her even in her dreams, as John had once done to me.

The idea enraptures me, and I waste no time shutting my eyes. The jeweled reflections that I had seen in the walls dive in and out of one another, crisscrossing my eyelids like fireflies in mason jars, long and spindly shapes as beautiful as they are hypnotic and monotonous. Austere, drenched in the poetry of simplicity, singing words that have never been written, they stretch into an infinite horizon that in its size and shape seems to cover and exceed the whole earth. My hands and legs become bones wrapped in flesh, and my eyes become lenses that I have grown to filter this all to my spirit—a spirit which lifts from its vessels like so many drops of water—a spirit which holds onto itself and only itself as it lifts into the unknown air. Language has no use—all at once, its machinery melts into base metals, leaving all that I am as something inexpressible, almost forgotten. I lean forward to kiss the universe, and it kisses me back. I am the universe, and it is me, and so much more than me. The crystallizing shapes lose their geometry and refract across dimensions, untying themselves into trillions of photons crisscrossing an infinite plain, over which I soar, breathlessly and lifelessly and dreaming soundly. Canyons and mountains and open fields manifest themselves in the wrinkles of a new reality from all sides, alive with the pulsing vitality of an unwritten and unwritable essence, swirling about like hot plasma. I feel myself become electricity, running through a wire. A sense of form returns to my being—the sights and sounds and smells and tastes become a blur of indescribable colors. My hands stitch themselves back together as a resurrected new body. At last, there is peace.

ii.

“Hello, you have reached the Great Realm of the Ancestors,” a booming voice announces. All freezes still. **“To remove or inflict a curse, please return to your physical body and visit World 3-B. World 3-B can be accessed through nightshades, the eyes of catfish, and all standard methods of astral projection, except the West Lemurian method. All Fourth World-based visitors seeking to appeal for rain and/or a successful harvest, please return to your physical body and visit World 6H, accessible through any Guardian Plant at the nearest sacred mountain, lake, forest, or stone circle. To speak with your next available ancestor, please remain present, and we will connect you shortly.”**

The voice pauses. Apparently, I am on some kind of psychedelic, interdimensional hold. It was completely accidental, to be honest, but I don't know how to hang up. **“You have 1 venerated ancestor, 6 general ancestors, and 919 specialty ancestors available at this time. To speak with a venerated ancestor, say or think ‘venerated ancestor’ in the language or emotion of your choice. To speak with a general ancestor, say or think ‘general ancestor.’ To speak with a specialty ancestor, please say or think ‘specialty ancestor.’ . . . Alright. Please give us a moment while we search through your 1 venerated ancestors.”**

I wait, awkwardly. I really don't know what to think to the machine, or if I am even thinking to a machine, if that's really what it is, correctly. Existentially, as interesting as it is, it is kind of disappointing that the previous ecstatic moments had actually been a psychic dial tone.

“We're sorry, but all of your venerated ancestors are currently assisting other visitors. Please remain in the Great Realm of the Ancestors, and your ancestor will be with you shortly.”

The voice fades, and I stand there. A person comes up next to me, a shimmering purple form, who looks at me with a faint smile and nods, before looking away. What feels like a minute or so passes before I hear them speak, almost sighing as they do so. **“First time here?”**

“Yeah.”

They nod slowly, looking back off towards the infinite fractal distance, which seems to sprout with colors and fluid organic shapes. A visual form of hold music, apparently. I am not sure, though. Maybe this is just the default scenery of this particular dimension.

“You know who you're visiting?”

“A venerated ancestor.”

“Oh really? Hmm.”

I gulp, nodding self-consciously. I don't know what there is to be self-conscious about. I am a semi-humanoid mass of blue light, and they are a semi-humanoid mass of purple light, awash in an infinite plain of nothingness.

“Not that many people have one of those, you know.”

“Do you?”

“One. Who knows, maybe we have the same one. He served his people well for many years. He died so that they could escape the guns of the invaders.”

“I've never met mine.”

“Are you nervous?”

“I . . . yeah.”

“Don't be. It's a very welcoming place. After all one must be generous and kind to be venerated.”

An awkward silence fills the air.

“What brings you here?”

“Some people in my town, they want to let a company come to build a resort, so I am coming for advice. Many have stopped believing in the old magic, but there are still those who know and trust the name of my grandfather. And you?”

“I . . . just . . . I mean, I fell asleep, and I . . . I don't know.”

“You don't know? No one trained you?”

“No. I was just . . . last night, someone came to me in a dream, and they said to go to this . . . uhm . . . this field. So I went there, and when I got there, the government had torn a hole in the universe. The Mushrooms, the Mushrooms in the field, they gave me the gift of Language. Tonight, I couldn't get to sleep because I was so worried I hadn't gotten to see my grandmother and there's a . . . a man in the place they took me to . . . who wants to kill me. But no one can see him.”

“Perhaps you were taken to the right place then. Perhaps this is where you needed to go. I remember the first time I came here. I was ten years old. I'd not yet been initiated. I'd been having terrible nightmares every night—a spirit came to me and told me of this place. It told me that I would come here to save my town. I caught only a glimpse. Just a glimpse. But I remembered, and I have been here many times since then. It's always scary, the first time you reach this plane. Most people never make it past the fifth. Not many are taken here as young as I was, either.” They pause. “I should add: you cannot tell anyone of this place.”

“Why not?”

“It is sacred.” Another long pause. “And strange.”

“Hmm.”

“Not to mention, tourists ruin everything.” They chuckle slightly.

A sudden burst of energy shoots through the astral plane, rocketing through the sky. The purple figure leans back, looking annoyed, or as annoyed as a purple being made of light with only vaguely tangible facial features could look. “What was that?”

“The Arrogant Mint, no doubt. They're the only ones who go past Seven Z. I've heard they've reached 527 dimensions beyond this one. They've used up the whole sorting system.”

“The Arrogant Mint? I've heard that name, somewhere.”

“From the Keepers of Language?”

“The Mushrooms? Yes, I think so—”

“They've felt a certain animosity to the Arrogant Mint for quite some time. Or a rivalry might be a better word.”

“Why?”

“Who can say? The Keepers of Language can sometimes get caught on something for quite some time. There's a nest of them in some mountains near where I live who have been thinking

about strawberries since before humans discovered clay. Somehow, the topic of strawberries has challenged them so profoundly that they have just . . . not been able to stop for who knows how many years. Communing with these Mushrooms actually inspired a song by the Beatles, I believe. And the Arrogant Mint likely did the same sort of thing—offending their sense of order.”

“Hub.”

The Arrogant Mint, in the form of a burst of energy, slams back into the astral plain from high above, crashing through the sky, and then into the ground again. Hysterical laughter echoes across the world in which we find ourselves—as though in its journey to the higher plane it heard some tremendous joke about existence, perhaps even that the level in which we find ourselves is some kind of grandiose cosmic joke. Honestly, the Mushroom part of my mind does sort of think it is kind of an asshole, like that friend everyone has who always posts about how smart they are and likes to humble-brag about how high their IQ is.

“They don’t grow where I’m at. Only in—” They freeze, as a booming psychic voice that only they can hear enters their mind. *“Sorry, I’ve got to go. Good luck. And don’t be nervous.”*

“Thanks. Have fun!”

A great wind swirls around them, and they take the form of an owl, flying off into the infinite. I wait patiently, allowing myself to become mesmerized by the visual hold music. New words and ideas flutter about my brain. A hall of venerated ancestors. An Arrogant Mint who has traveled to 527 dimensions. A field of Mushrooms thinking about strawberries. Another form materializes, this one a lighter shade of purple than the last one. “Oh my . . . oh my god . . .” they mumble. “Wow—”

“Hey, what’s up?”

“Holy shit—is this real?”

“I mean, I guess, it’s—”

Another shape, this one red and white, appears beside me, looking at the two of us with moderate annoyance.

“Wow! Oh my god! Oh my god! It’s so . . . beautiful”

The red and white figure rolls its eyes, or what I think were its eyes, at least. “Tourists, am I right?” it mumbles under its breath. I ignore that, hoping I can help welcome the new lavender figure.

“How did you get here?” I ask them.

“I finally understand! I understand!”

“Don’t bother asking,” says the red and white figure. “Just leave him alone and don’t be surprised if you show up in somebody’s trip report.”

The three of us sit in a line, not speaking to each other, until I hear the voice return to my ears.

“Hello! Thank you for holding. We will now connect you with your venerated ancestor.”

iii.

A whirlwind rises up around me and swallows me, bending my arms and legs and bones so that I become a brilliant red macaw. My feathers look like trillions of shards of glass, bending and rippling with the wind. My eyes sparkle like gemstones plucked from underneath a river, and my mind bubbles with language, echoing back distant pieces of the universe, the shadows of faraway, and transcendental wonders materializing themselves deep in my mind. The wind rushes, and I feel myself propelled onward towards a field of melting, ever-multiplying colors, winding through an invisible labyrinth, guided only by the wind. I feel myself die, and resurrect, and die, again and again until I crest through the deep turquoise of an alien sky, flapping my wings over an old forest, in the midst of which I see a village, sitting atop a tall hill.

I land on a tree branch outside of the village. A crystal clear stream filled with fat, yellow koi-fish trickles down underneath the shade of the tree, a knotted and solemn willow tree. The village, with its quartz-tiled roofs and zinc-and-sandstone houses, is shaded by tall trees growing throughout its streets, streets that wound in patterns and geometries that my English brain can make no sense of. Up above, the sky is covered by a thick sheet of ice.

The more I try to make sense of it, the more I realize that . . . suddenly . . . I have no gift of Language here. I am only left with the barest qualities of my spirit and my mind, in a world I know nothing about. I think back to the fear I once had of meeting my ancestor, and I realize that it masks a barely contained excitement, a wonder, not unlike a tourist who has just stumbled across some dusty backstreet café in some country where they do not speak the language, where every single sight and glimpse into the ordinary things around them takes on the timbre of the exotic. I realize that I am a tourist here. I have no place here. My ancestor, whoever she is, probably has, at the very least, better things to do with her time than to service my wide-eyed sightseeing.

Unperching myself from the branch, I metamorphosize, almost unintentionally, from a macaw into a human, and land uncomfortably on the dusty stone path to the mysterious old city. I don't know where I am going—I really don't. By the looks of it, we are under a massive glacier but, for all I know, that is just . . . I don't know, a metaphor for something.

And, suddenly, I am captivated by the question of who awaits me in that city, who my ancestor will be, what they will expect for me to know. My mom always told our family story this way: her grandmother's grandmother came from Veracruz—she always insisted she was “pure Spanish,” but her daughter remained convinced she had “at least some Native American blood.” So maybe that is where I am, but I can't be too certain.

There's also the story, which my great-grandmother's husband liked to counter with, when she talked about Native American blood, that my mysterious, ambiguously brown ancestor had been Moorish. I wonder if this place is really some kind of ancient city in the Sahara desert, something lost to time. But on second thought, it is covered by ice, so this seems unlikely.

Still, trying to reassemble in the back of my mind the hundreds and hundreds of family stories about migrations from this place to that—from Ireland, from England, from France, from Italy, from Mexico, from North Africa—leaves me with only speculation. I could comfortably fit the sights I am seeing into any of the narratives I'd been handed. I see a woman with a thick wooden mask waiting for me, holding a staff covered in beads and gemstones.

*She extends a hand for me, and leads me into the village, which is filled with empty houses with hazy, dreamlike edges. As I take her hand, she begins to speak. “**Iz'unza'en utaria eman zaisu ziur nagoela ul'zen tusula. P'usiko zaitustet uhun'e'ik eta lagundu zaiskizun tresna.**” Her voice is soft yet forceful, with a cadence that sounds like poetry, even though I can't understand a word she says.*

Somehow, this person is my grandmother, my great-times-a-thousand-trillion grandmother. I feel at once like I've come home, and also like I've entered a strange and foreign world with which I have no connection. I see . . . I see a dagger in a belt around her waist, and I wonder if she'd ever used it. If my ancestors, even before the Germans and the English and the Irish, had always killed each other. I wonder if the world I'm now in is a world I should be glad no longer exists, or if I should cry for it, if I should want to regain it?

Seeing that I cannot understand her, my grandmother sighs. Disappointed? Angry? Sad? Relieved? And she looks off, trying to discern what to do.

Eventually, she clutches my hand again and, again speaking her strange, pseudopoetic words, she leads me into a house that is empty, save a single, green-tinged copper bowl filled with a silvery liquid metal.

Taking off her mask, she hangs it on the wall, and reveals a somewhat tanned, wrinkled face, covered in tattoos. She points to herself with her middle finger, and then to her eyes, and then down to the bowl. I look confused. She crouches down so she can mime more dramatically that she had, I guess, seen me in the bowl.

*“Oh, OK, cool,” I say, awkwardly, not entirely sure how to respond. She laughs at the sound of my voice. “**I mean . . .**” I hold a thumb up. She clutches her hand in her face and looks appalled—offended? amused? disgraced?—but also like she is holding back a lot of laughter.*

Regaining her composure, she fetches a pair of small Mushrooms from a pouch on her dress. She points at them, and then at me, before making a scissor symbol with her right hand to imitate the sound of a chattering mouth. I nod. She pulls me by the arm out of the house, and walks with me back down the long,

winding road.

Eventually, we come to the center of the town, where a tall and austere-looking forest sits surrounded by great wooden and stone sculptures of women holding weapons and strange-looking tools. Between each of the towering sculptures—or monuments? idols? effigies?—lie rows of seven brightly flowered trees which support a thick, hemp rope. She takes the dagger from her side and presses it against her hand, making it flow with blood, which she presses against the surface of a tall wooden elk-woman. She then takes my hand, cuts it open, and pushes it against the surface of the same tall being. Satisfied, she takes the Mushrooms again from the pouch, and dips them in the blood, before gesturing to me to close my eyes so she can gently dash each eyelid with blood. I feel—honored? disturbed? un . . . comfortable?—and then she leans my head back to squeeze the juice from the Mushrooms into my nostrils, before doing the same to herself.

The grove of trees around us shimmers with a uniform and austere gold, almost like a school of fish drifting in the current. Up above, the ceiling of ice resonates with a light refracted through a thousand prisms, coming from a distant, powerful, and almost alien sun. Is she . . . am . . . am I? An . . . alien??? What the fuck? What the . . . Or . . . is the place my ancestor comes from just so far away from where I am that the past feels like it's on a different planet?

She leads me down a path, continuing to mutter her poetic and unintelligible words—to herself? to me? to the trees?—until we come to a great crater, a pit with perfectly straight, obsidian walls, into which extends a bridge made of narrow oak planks leading to a garden. She takes a Mushroom from her pouch, crushes it under her feet, and with a sorrowful look in her eyes, drops it into the pit. Down beneath, I can see that, at the very bottom, the pit is full of murky lavender aether, inside of which I can see distant dragons and noneuclidean cities. She lifts a brass cord from beside the plank and, miming with her hands, instructs me to hold onto it while I walk across the bridge. She follows me, doing the same.

The plank creaks and moans as I inch over the immense, mysterious void. My legs and feet tremble, and my heart fills with fire and noise. The woman looks concerned for my safety, or concerned about bringing me here at all, maybe. I have to stop myself from gawking at the adventure of it all: the majestic forest, the mysterious obsidian walls of the pit, the adrenaline rush of stepping out onto the oak plank and walking towards the garden.

When I finally reach the garden, I fall down to my knees. My body almost doesn't want me to stand. Slowly, though, I manage to talk myself into it, and I rise to my feet. The garden seems much larger than it had on the outside and, upon reaching it, the obsidian pit now only looks about ten feet wide. My grandmother, moving slowly and tediously across the pit, shuts her eyes and hums a song. I look off towards the garden. A tall wooden mask stands on a post, its expression hazy, its eyes half-squinted, its mouth open in an o-shape.

Reaching the garden, my grandmother motions towards the mask. **“Uhami,”** she says.

“Uhami?” I repeat.

She laughs hysterically. **“Uhami,”** she clarifies, making sure that I know the right tones. Winking, she takes me by the arm gently, and guides my hand to the nose of the mask.

“Uhami,” I repeat softly.

“Baye,” she nods, and then touches her own hand to the mask. **“Vasa'en vehatzailea hantia, ni'e alaba ekabiko tu. Lu behian gaizkia'en auhean tago. Vehiz e'e ilun ma'inak e'aikitzeke ikasi tue'. Vidal ezasu vere pasar'ea, nahiz eta ez zun hitz e'ite,”** she intones softly, and then takes a fist full of dirt to smear on the mask's surface.

Satisfied that the mask will permit her to speak with me, or to take me further into the garden, she leads me forward to a bush with white flowers. **“E'oke'ia'eni loya,”** she says, making a face that looks . . . constipated? upset? inspired? I recognize the flower. She must know about what is going on—she must have been watching me, somehow, from afar. She plucks one leaf from the flower and points at it, then gestures to show that she sometimes crushes it into a powder, and smokes it in a pipe, if her . . . stomach hurts? Or if she is nauseous, or drunk? And then she takes another leaf, to gesture that she might drink the powdered leaves in a tea, then . . . shut her eyes? And go to talk to spirits. Or trees. Or tree spirits. Possibly spirit trees. I am

not sure what that gesture means or how to interpret it. She then takes a handful of leaves, and gestures that it will make your heart pound, your mouth . . . flutter? And your eyes water, until you die. She then makes another series of gestures, shouts, and percussive sounds to demonstrate that the flower is very dangerous, or . . . clever? **“John,”** she said, pointing.

“John?” I asked.

“Baye, John.”

“Baye, John, John.”

“Tcinti orchitu be’a duzu John gorte a’al isate.”

Realizing that I do not understand yet, she flings two fingers outwards, then points to another plant, which has leaves that are similar to the bush she’s just shown me, but it has clusters of small yellow flowers in long circles, almost like cannons. **“Tcinti,”** she says, before making a circle with her hands and putting her face into it. **“Orchitu,”** she emphasizes.

“Orchitu . . . find?” I ask, trying my hand at miming.

“Fine. Tcinti fine. John. Baye, baye. Pona, pona.” To illustrate **Tcinti**, she makes a rolling motion with her hands, and puffs on something like a cigarette.

“Tobacco?” I ask her.

She squints at me. Had I said a bad word by mistake? She presses her thumb and index finger gently against my eyelids and looks through my memories. **“Cigaret,”** she tries to say, **“Cigaret. Hmmm. Ez . . . ez . . .”** Exasperated, she tears two leaves from the plant with the white flowers and crushes them into a powder, before sprinkling it on my head.

I grow drowsy. I start to melt down in my heels, and fall backwards through the ground into an endless darkness. I fall, and I fall, until eventually, I forget that I am falling, and soon enough, I am in a dream, a world I recognize distinctly as a dream designed to relay a message to me.

iv.

I stand in front of my old high school, a brick building with a windowed rotunda in front and a pipework sign with the name of the town. I wait in front of it, clutching a pair of stone tablets. The parking lot, and the entire building is completely empty, but the sound of movement pervades from every direction, like on all sides I can hear people being dropped off, or waiting for their parents, or talking about last night’s football game.

The sky is grey and cloudy, trembling with iridescent red thunder. I look to the left, almost turn against my own will by some kind of powerful force. My friend Amber, who I recognize by her purple highlights and gaudy dream catcher earrings, walks towards me, her hands clasped together. She crouches down, and kneels her head, before standing and retrieving a cigarette from her back pocket. **“Companion. It is I, your foolish companion, Amber. I present you with a cigarette. Come partake in its knowledge with me beside the sacrificial altar in the high temple to prepare for the coming battle.”**

Amber had, actually, offered me a cigarette in high school, but I said no, because I didn’t want cancer. This is a scene I recognized, at least vaguely. I turn, involuntarily, to the right. My friend Lindsey. I recognize her by the fact that she was my only black friend and also the fact that I distinctly remember her wearing that exact shirt when we helped a cat give birth.

She also bows politely, before reaching into her back pocket and pulling out a handful of leaves. **“Companion. It is I, your wise companion, Lindsey. You are facing a great evil which requires the help of real tobacco, tcinti, a strong and powerful plant, nothing like the paper tubes offered to you by the foolish Amber.”**

Amber says, **“Lindsey has made an appropriately wise statement, for she is appropriately wise. Forgive me, companion, for the cigarette I have offered you. You do indeed need real tobacco.”**

The principal of the school, wearing a long silk robe, comes up to me, and stands in front of the school. **“Yes. You need real tobacco.”**

Behind me, the bus driver who once handed me five dollars I'd dropped while getting onto the bus, agreed. "Yes, Meagan. Find real tobacco."

All four of them chant in unison. "Real tobacco. Real tobacco."

My heart pounds, overwhelmed by the creeping crescendo of chanting voices all around me. I plummet through dimensions back into my sleeping body. My eyes still shut, I lay there for a moment, feeling rested, but even more on edge than I had been before I went to sleep. I had to move, I kept telling myself, but I couldn't. I couldn't force myself out of bed—I kept going back over it. Tobacco. But real tobacco. I had to find . . . real tobacco.

My eyes shot open, and I stared up at the ceiling, watching patterns appear between the dots on the roof tiles like hidden constellations. I searched for the clock. It was 3:30 in the morning. I sprang out of bed, hurrying to the door. On either side, a seemingly endless, foreboding darkness filled the hallways. I needed to find my way out. I needed to escape.

* * * * *





A Roaring Lion

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

A French composer from the 12th century named Leonin helped to create *The Magnus Liber Organi*, a collection of music intended to celebrate polyphony: many voices, many parts, in harmony.

The earth is composed of polyphonic music, among them lines of lion litanies; memorize them. A liturgy for Panthera leo, his tawny belly and his low, slow approach on the savannah and grassland or through the bush because he is king and shaman scavenger with tufted tail.

He is Moses of the burning bush and apex predator, nocturnal. He meditates twenty hours a day on the great silence of being before the roar.

A lion's music—a carnival of sound, beyond the roar of reserve, park, zoo, circus, and safari, the wild kingdom beyond the definition of safe and unsafe, cruel or kind, in sub-Saharan Africa, or in India, Gir forest, where the heart beat and drum beat and incense are heavy.

A social animal, he can be heard from five miles away by animals whose hearing is keen and who know his reputation for sound defeat.

At the Revelation, when the fifth trumpet is blown, gold-faced locusts will come forth with hair like women and lion's teeth.

Behold the lion and the lion-hearted.
Pride—*live in it*, they say.
Make it a virtue. Hunt. Fight. Mate.
That is all.

The cave lions at Chauvet move to the left, faces eager and intent.



Tamara Miles

Growl to say it, and say it loud.
 This is the way of prophets and
 music directors who say:
forte, pianissimo, grande.

Secure your survival. Know how to escape.
 Rely on your memory. Seek buffalo and bring it down. Bite deeply,
 love deeply. Scowl and prowl. Be thirsty to the core, and drink in loud laps,
 shake your lovely mane. Be proud and vain. There is no need to explain.

And the lion shall lie down with the lamb, but only in heaven, not
 in this life,
 not on your life, not while he is hungry.

The one who would lie down with a lion best grow sharp claws and a bold appetite, a
 carnal carnivore, a feline femme fatale who opens herself to his world and brings him food.
 She stalks, then rushes toward her prey, and in one leap the game is over—the clutch, the
 blessed asphyxiation.

They rub their heads together, and roll together.

Sekhmet, Egyptian goddess, a solar deity depicted as lioness, formed the desert from her breath
 and drank the Nile.

She protected the pharaohs and was herself a fierce warrior and hunter, leading armies into
 war. Her dress, her robes were the color of bright blood from a fresh kill, and across each breast
 a leonine motif:

One Before Whom Evil Trembles | Lady of Slaughter, She Who Mauls

It was not wise to make the lady angry and so, to appease her,
 the people performed rituals in temples with many statues of her.

Jesus went out like a lamb, but he is coming back the Lion of Judah.

The Earth loves her lion; she lifts him up in stately trees, from which he can see all that
 is his, in the remarkable kingdom of many voices.

* * * * *



Nathan D. Horowitz



The Lagoon of the Air Goblins

[Travel Journal]

i.

I canceled my last two days of classes this week so I could go to Quito. I'm in Lago on the way there now. I can feel my parents wondering if I'm alive. Got to set their poor old minds at rest.

For the last few days, I've been sharing the hut with Dietmar Bertelsmann, a 29-year-old German entomologist from Frankfurt, who's gathering data for his Ph.D. When he showed up, I was initially glad to have some company. That lasted about five seconds before Dietmar bugged out. His thesis supervisor is married to María Susana Cipolletti, who owns the hut. Dietmar said the ethnographer would be furious if she learned someone was living in her hut. What's more, the German was on a tight schedule. He had a month to record cricket songs. Background noise would damage his data.

I told him I knew how to be quiet. I told him I didn't have anywhere else to go. I told him that he was welcome to try to convince a Secoya family to take me in but, if that didn't happen, I wasn't going to leave the hut.

He raised his voice at me. I didn't budge. For several hours, we silently occupied the hut, staying out of each other's way.

Last night he caught and recorded his first crickets as I immersed myself in my trinity of book (*El bebedor de yajé*), hammock, and candle.

This morning, Dietmar seemed grudgingly to accept me, which is good because I grudgingly accept his sorry ass too. He told me over coffee that he and his thesis supervisor want to look at the relationship between the sounds that crickets make and the distinctive ridge patterns on their wings that they use to make them. Which, actually, is pretty cool.

I felt so bad about popping a surprise absence on my students in Poza Honda that, when I saw a school I'd never noticed before on the main road, I drifted over, met the teacher, and taught ten or twelve words in English to the kids.

Lago is vibrant tonight. A lot of smiles on the street. Serafin the educator is late to meet me. But life is fine. With the girl who works at this café smiling at me, how lonely can I be?

* * *

ii.

I'm dehydrated from the sun today. I haven't rehydrated. My hydration's out of wack. It seems an eternity, maybe two, since I ordered a glass of papaya juice. Inside the café, mysterious café things may be happening, involving blenders and workforce and fruit and power. Time's ticking by and it sounds like trees falling into a river. I glance at the red and white checkered tablecloth and remember I've always hated red and white checkered patterns. Serafin the educator said he would meet me here to tell me about the Secoya cosmovision, and he isn't showing up.

A minute after I finished that paragraph, Serafin showed up, as good as his word and as great as he was late. Sporting a white collared shirt and black slacks, the fiftyish intellectual appeared on the street and, smiling, spoke my name like a macaw appreciating a shiny button. He sat at my table and,

ordering a grapefruit soda from the pretty waitress, smiled his bright, teacherly smile at me. He had ramrod-straight posture—though that makes it sound painful, he made it look comfortable.

As we began to chat about this and that, a sharp smell wafted over us from the stand of a street vendor. “Burning chili peppers,” he said. “It smells bad, but it has its uses. I’ll tell you a story about that.

“Halfway down the Nea’ocoyá, below Pantoja, and inland from the river, is Huri Tupu, the lagoon of the air goblins.

“Every time it rained, and the river rose, lots of fish filled the river. They were *sábalos*, big, tasty fish. But when the river fell, they always vanished someplace.

“One day, the Secoyas decided to find where the fish were coming down from. After walking near the river a while, they found a herd of wild pigs. They approached from downwind and speared some of the pigs. Butchering them, they threw the guts into the water to attract the *sábalos*. They began to fish. They saw that the *sábalos* came down—and would later go back up—a very small stream, a creek so narrow that there was no way to navigate up it in their canoes.”

The pretty waitress brought my papaya juice, finally, with an apologetic smile. I imagined licking papaya juice off her lips. We would kiss and shift a mouthful of papaya juice between our mouths, hers to mine and back. I shifted my eyes to the juice. It looked great, orange-pink, frosty, and with the straw standing straight up in it. I took it into my mouth and it sent waves of pleasure echoing through me like a promise of sweet life itself.

“Seeing that the fish were entering the river through this creek,” Serafin went on, “the people said, ‘Another day, we have to see where those *sábalos* are coming down from.’”

That sounded like a good idea to me. Everything did.

“Not long after, a man followed the creek a long way back and found a wide lagoon.

“He heard a rumbling at the surface of the lagoon. A tremendous number of fish were teeming there, jumping up and smacking back down on the surface. Together, they sounded like thunder.

“On the other side of the lake was a huge *monsé* tree that also made a very loud noise, a kind of buzzing.

“After seeing all this, the man returned and told everyone what he had seen.

“‘The stream leads to a big lagoon full of fish,’ he said. ‘From there, the *sábalos* descend every time the water rises, and when the water lowers, they go back up the stream.’

“The people said, ‘Let’s go fishing. We’ll use *barbasco* to poison the fish.’

“They gathered *barbasco* roots and pounded them to prepare them for use.”

“How do people use *barbasco*?”

“They dig up the bushes, cut off the roots, wash them, and pound them until they shred. Put them in baskets. Go into a still body of water. Put the pounded *barbasco* root shreds into the water. The poison in them paralyzes any fish in the area. They float to the surface and the people grab them.”

“I see.”

“So the people trekked up the stream to the lagoon and were happy to see it teeming with *sábalos*. They said, ‘We’ll stay overnight and fish here.’

“They set up a shelter to sleep under and began to prepare to poison the fish. A shaman went off by himself and felt the presence of spirits in that place. Beyond the lagoon, the *monsé* tree gave off its buzzing sound. The shaman looked at it carefully. He perceived that it was inhabited.

“‘A chief lives here,’ the shaman told the others. ‘He owns the fish. I’ll visit him and ask if we can have some. Don’t put the poison in until I get back.’

“Most of the Secoyas ignored him. They started putting poison in the water. The shaman told his little sister, ‘Don’t eat the fish they catch. We have to talk to their owner first.’”

Listening to the teacher talk, I realized this was what I thought of as a shaman’s shaman story, a story that made shamans look good and thus perpetuated their practice. You have to listen to the shamans, the shamans say. Otherwise, bad things can happen.

* * *

iii.

“The shaman went to the big, buzzing tree,” Serafin continued, “and looked inside. There, he saw dozens of goblins, but they were all in human form. Some of them were weaving baskets. Among these was their chief, who greeted the shaman and said, ‘We’re weaving these baskets because, later, we’re going to gather *siripia*, juicy little fruits. The fruits are ripening. Soon, we’ll collect them. Come quick and we’ll teach you how to weave different things out of vines.’”

Serafin beamed and sucked grapefruit soda through his straw. Then he said, “The *siripia* the chief was talking about weren’t really *siripia*. They were human eyes, which the goblins were planning to eat. But the shaman didn’t know that at the time.

“The shaman came in and sat down and learned how to weave two baskets, a fan, a sieve, and a drying rack for ceramic dishes. Realizing the usefulness of these products, he learned eagerly.

“The goblin chief said, ‘When you go back to your people, get the shoot of a pineapple plant, the kind with white stripes. Tie it up outside the big hollow trunk of the fallen tree. Bring your little sister. You both can sleep inside the trunk. You’ll be safe there. When your relatives’ eyes are gone, pick up the seeds of a palm tree and throw them in their eye sockets. And to get revenge on us, you can take lots of chili peppers and burn them.’

“When the shaman left the tree and went back to the people, they were fishing, and they were smoking the fish over fires on smoking racks they had built. The people cooked, and they ate, and then they fell asleep an hour before sunset. The shaman’s little sister was with him. She was still awake because she had followed his advice. All people who had eaten fish were unconscious, sound asleep.

“The shaman shook the people, but they didn’t respond. He wanted to drag them away, but there were too many of them, comatose, nearly lifeless.

“The sun was setting, so the shaman and his sister went to the hollow tree trunk, tied up the pineapple sprout with the white stripes, and went inside. A violent wind rose, howling, breaking branches and knocking down whole trees.

“The shaman and his sister heard the roars of animals—boas, caymans, anyapekes, water jaguars, land jaguars. All the ferocious animals of the forest were roaring.

“The water began to rise. The ferocious animals swarmed out of the forest and began to eat the people. The fish that were dead and smoked began to flop around on the drying rack. They came back to life, falling to the ground. The water rose and they entered the water again and swam away, alive.

“The pineapple sprout turned into a dog. All night it stayed there, turning this way and that, barking and barking. The shaman left it tied up so the animals would not approach.

“The site where the fallen tree trunk was didn’t flood, because it was on a little hill. The boas and the other animals stayed away because of the dog.

“When dawn broke, all the water that had flooded the area went away, and the place was as dry as it had been before. The fish were gone, and most of the people were, too: the jungle animals and the spirits had devoured them.

“Only the relatives of the shaman remained. But they had no eyes.

“The shaman’s older sister had eaten the fish and lost her eyes, like their other relatives. ‘Little brother, let me touch your eyes,’ she said. She had long, sharp nails. She wanted his eyes for herself.

“He said, ‘No, stay away from me. I told you not to eat the fish so you wouldn’t end up like that.’

“He took palm seeds and threw them into her eye sockets. They went right into the sockets and her eyes became normal. Then she turned into a white-lipped peccary and ran into the forest. He did the same thing with the rest of his family. Some became collared peccaries, others white-lipped peccaries. They all ran away.

“The shaman and his little sister returned to their home. It was empty because everyone had gone fishing. They gathered up their things and went to another house in another community.

“There, the shaman explained what had happened. He taught the people to weave baskets, as the air goblins had taught him.”

* * *

iv.

“One day they went to see the lagoon and the air goblins’ house in the big tree.

“How can we get back at them?” a man asked.

“They gathered lots of chili peppers and wrapped them up in a bundle of leaves. When they reached the tree, something like a door opened, and another door, and another door, and many windows and doors began to open, and the goblins looked out. With their faces looking down from up above in the tree, they saw the people arrive. On each floor of the tree were doors and windows.

“The people made a fire, and put the chili pepper bundle on it, and pushed the fire and the bundle inside the door that was at ground level. The smoke began to affect the goblins like a fatal virus. They began to die.

“Only the goblins who had eaten people died. Those who hadn’t eaten people fled through the windows and flew away. Because they hadn’t eaten people, their bodies were light, and they escaped.

“A baby goblin fell to the ground. He looked just like a human baby, but with little wings. He couldn’t fly yet. A woman picked him up. ‘What a beautiful baby!’ she said. The people went back home, the woman carrying the baby goblin. He was the size of a toddler. The lady had a newborn baby of her own, too.

“The little goblin grew a bit bigger, and the lady let him look after her own baby.

“One day, the mom said to the baby goblin, ‘Take care of your little brother. I’m going out to work in the garden.’

“The baby was crying a lot. The little goblin didn’t like that. He had long, thorn-like nails, and with them he stabbed the baby in the fontanelle, killing him. When the mother got home, her son was dead. She tried to punish the goblin, but he dodged her and scampered up on top of the house.

“Get down from there!’ the mother yelled.

“He didn’t get down. He shouted, ‘Brothers! Here I am! Brothers! Come to me!’

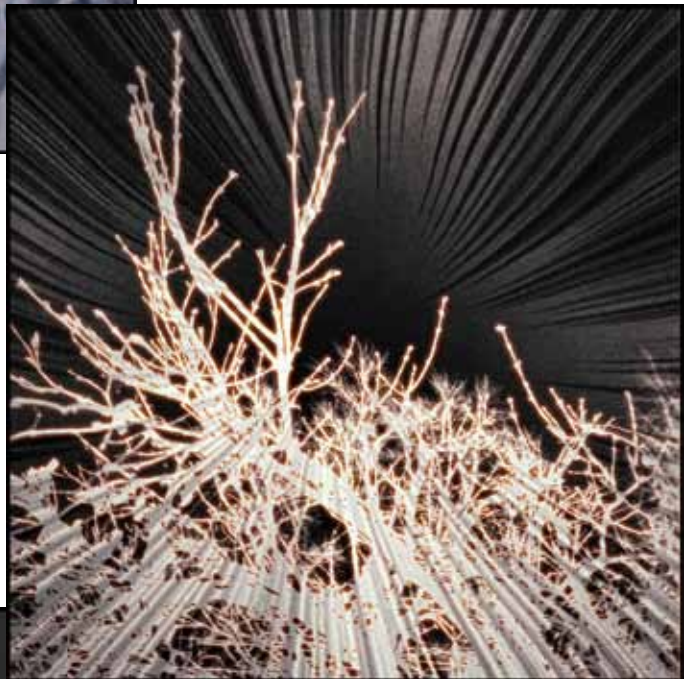
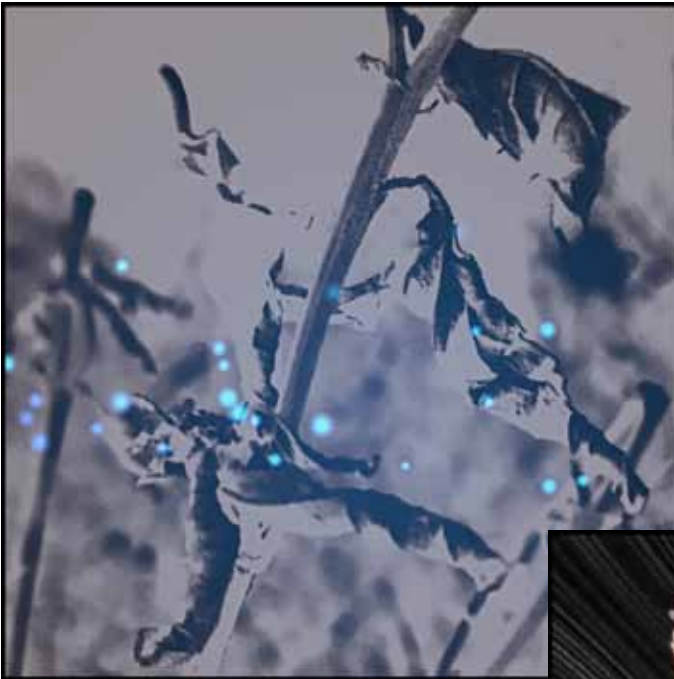
“A powerful wind blew up, making the huts and the trees sway. The little goblin spread out his wings, hopped up into the wind, and flew away like a leaf in a hurricane.

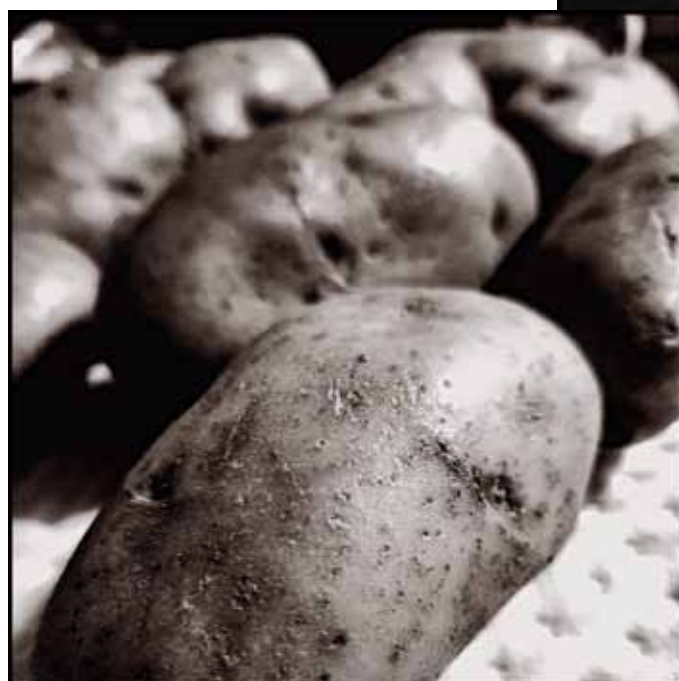
“In the most remote swamps,” Serafin concluded, pausing to swig grapefruit soda, “the air goblin still lives, even today. Sometimes when people are on long-distance hunting trips, the blood of the animals they kill causes strong winds to arise. The wind passes by, turns around, and comes back. The hunters burn chili pepper, and the wind calms. Burning chili pepper keeps the air goblins away.”

* * * * *

Louis Staeble













Colin James

Pandering to the Eventual

My northern European relative
possesses the uncanny ability
to predict exact rainfall.

We all thought: *what an opportunity.*
Unfortunately, she qualifies every
comment with an unappealing cackle.

She is also toothless, and her only
wardrobe is peasant Dior. Purely
providing information isn't an option,
since it must be accompanied by music.
Violins and harpsichords.

Most of us retreated to the southern cities.
Not so one of our slimier siblings,
who failed to consider those unusual powers.

Now his flange substitutes as her weather vane.
It's going to be dry for the next few days.

* * *

A Talent For Legitimacy

Episodically craved by adolescents,
Prometheus displays his tats
behind The Dollar Store in Bonita.
The one with the plastic pillars.

Chained willingly to a picnic table,
he effuses in atmospheric cigarette smoke,
shirtlessness his apparent esthetic.

Peers immersed in forsake-me-not hygiene,
crouched in even more uncomfortable positions,
strain to catch a glimpse of his epithelial gland,
visible through tiny filaments of foliage,
like a conceptual umbrella, or a soluble shade tree.

* * * * *





Mad Jack

[Prose]

i. Charlie, Cousin Jimmy, Jake, and the hippy woman Jan

“So where are you living now, Charlie?” asks the woman in her late fifties. Trying to be polite across the dinner table, although I know she doesn’t care for spit. A barrel-shaped, flabby matron, with stringy hippy hair, smelling lightly of patchouli oil through her beer breath. Jan has huge breasts, which is probably why my cousin Jimmy picked her off the Internet in the first place, only later to discover her sexual possessiveness, & the conversational ability of a boiled turnip.

Jan is Jimmy’s “girlfriend,” although he secretly confides in me, away from the dinner table, that he will not sleep with her.

“Once I give her my sperm, she will be hopelessly in love with me. She will think she *owns* me. Besides, I want to fuck women twenty years younger, and fifty IQ points smarter.”

“And, since you are rich, you can be picky and choosy?” I snap at him. “But really, you need mental help, Cuz, probably involving brain surgery.” I end the sexist conversation, although I am secretly in agreement.

I am at the table here because my cousin has hired me to fix up a new house he bought. He is a slum landlord who buys houses, and then get laborers, like myself, to do minimal repairs for minimal wages. Then charges exorbitant rents to the unfortunate poor. He has no talent of his own, other than obsessively scrimping.

Jake, across the table, is also a laborer for him, mostly painting and demolition. I do the electrical and plumbing. Thus, we are not in competition for Jimmy’s parsimonious dimes.

Jimmy has what I call DDS: *Desperate Dude Syndrome*. In the past, this condition has been labeled by psychiatrists as being a “relationship addict.” But Jimmy’s version is somewhat different, because his is a need to conquer, to pollinate many flowers. There is no commitment, no love. Just sex and entertainment.

Internet dating sites were made for this guy. As Internet dating is mostly a catalogue of superficial beauty, the ugly have no chance. So Jan had posted only headshots, which were highly made-up, and a torso side-shot demonstrating her massive mammaries. This is what got Jimmy’s attention. By the time he realized she was a beached whale, it was too late.

Jimmy’s daddy ignored him in pursuit of the same rough hedonism, and his own climb to empire. My uncle wanted him to follow in the mogul’s footsteps, but instead a parasite was created. My father rejected all forms of money and career, becoming an artist with a massive intellect, dooming him to an impoverished life. In my case, the apple did not fall far from the tree.

“Do you live with anyone, Charlie?” Jan continues.

“Well, yeah, my sweetie and best friend, Terry. Also her mentally challenged 37-year-old son in the basement.” *Not unlike the troll under the bridge*, I muse privately.

“Oh, that’s so sad. He must suffer horribly?”

“Ya think? Why would you think that?”

“Well, the anguish he must endure.” She is so PC it rather makes me gag. Jan obviously never slipped a cog. *No gears to slip?* I wonder.

“Well, possibly. But, ya know, the insane get a lot of attention.”

“As they should,” chimes in Jake. “They are visionaries into other worlds. All high courts through the ages have used the lunatics as court counselors, due to their wild alternate realities. Note how we praise our most insane artists. Maybe not in their lifetimes, but now their art is priceless.”

“*Ha!*” says I. “Not unlike our current government, that lavishes resources on these unproductive citizens. Parasites all, I say.”

“*Oh!* How could you say such a thing about these poor people? That hardly helps these poor mentally challenged in this age,” states the morally indignant woman.

“*Poor?* I wish I were so poor. Free housing. Free medical (which is substantial), free food, free money under some programs for dirt-bags. All they got to do is hang around and take drugs. All they are missing is—”

“*Kissmyass,*” interrupts Jake, in a high-toned rapid screech.

“What the fuck, Jake?” I demand.

“Awww, don’t mind him, Charlie. He has coprolalia,” say Jimmy.

“And what the hell is that? Sounds like a skin disease. Should I be sitting next to him?”

“It’s commonly known as Tourette syndrome,” Jan glares at me.

“Hey, it’s OK, guys. All I said was ‘Christmas,’” Jake complains.

“No, you didn’t. You said, ‘kiss my ass.’”

“No, *Christmas.* I think of it all the time.”

“Whatever,” I continue. “As I was saying, the crazies could be lounging on a tropical beach. And some do, I suppose. As long as there is government dole. *My* tax dollars!”

“You don’t pay taxes,” interjects my cousin.

“Irrelevant point. But as I was saying, I wish I had it so good. Been slaving my ass off since I was 12, and I could count my lucky breaks on one hand.”

Jimmy pantomimes playing the violin.

A little incensed, I say to him, “Yeah, the hardest work you ever did was inherit millions.”

Jan perks up, leaning forward in the plastic chair. Apparently new information to her, as Jimmy had been posing as a penniless biker. Getting her to buy the beer.

“Why don’t they give all that stuff to a real human, who can be prosperous and add to the economy with it, rather than bleeding society for some asshole who is breathing my good air?” I demand.

“How can you be *so cruel* to the disadvantaged?” belches Jan, woke moral indignity sticking to her like the stale Marlboro smoke. “Think what it’s like for them?”

“What’s the matter, honey? Haven’t you ever been insane? It’s sort of a rite of passage for most people. And it’s not so bad. If I knew I could have lived like royalty for life, I might have cultivated my insanity with more enthusiasm. As it is, I live alone, and I have no benefit from having the suicide hot line on speed dial. I could sure use five social workers, someone to come cook for me and clean the bathroom; fifty doctor visits a year (although there’s nothing wrong with me). Insanity is easy. You should quit your crocodile tears and try a little crazy sometime. It’s rather fun, and ya don’t have to keep any appointments. *’Cause yer crazy.*”

“My god, Jimmy, your cousin is a *dick,*” she says, vibrating and verbally stamping her feet.

“Yeah, well, what do ya expect from a mountain-man hermit?” Jimmy follows this with a huge belch that shakes the beer bottles on the table.

“Ugh! What a bunch of animals,” Jan intones with disgust. I see that her meager neural activity cannot come up with a response other than disgust.

“But I sorta agree,” says Jake. “I had a dear friend at one time who rose from obscurity to be the richest and most wanted man on the west coast. He was . . . *Pussybitch* . . . sorry . . . squirrelier than a furball, eating LSD-soaked peanuts. Certified insane.”

“OK, this sounds like a good one. Who was he?” I ask.

”Mad Jack. The finest cook ever on the West Coast . . . after Owsley.”

“Ya mean like steaks and fries?” the clueless Jan asks with her foul beer breath.

“If I had a dime for every stupid thing she says, I’d have \$2.30 an hour,” snaps Jimmy. *Not unlike my wages from you*, I think.

“Well, fuck you, Jimmy. We never did and we’re never going to.”

I see a look of both relief and wry mirth on my cousin’s face.

“No. No. A different kind of cook. I’ll tell ya the story, from the beginning,” says Jake.

“Please do.” I say, cracking the cap off another beer and handing it to him.

“*Giraffe* . . . sorry,” spurts Jake, by way of thanks. Then he begins.

ii. Teenage Criminals

We were longhaired teenage criminals. I looked like Jesus and my best buddy had flaming red shoulder-length hair, the devil to rival my divine look. Scott the Red. We were all hair, except Mad Jack (or Bob, as I knew him), who was as shaved as a plastic bag. We all sat in the car outside the 7-11 in the night rain. Blue smoke trickled out of the cracked window. Inside was a haze of marijuana smoke tainted with opium. We were high and crazed. Bob was rocking back and forth in the seat, his Winston burned down to his fingers, his eyes squinted shut in an apparent agony of brainlessness.

“*Wail, Bob!*” we shouted at him.

His body erupted in trembling convulsions.

“*Wail, we tell ya!*”

A yelp and moan both escaped him at the same time. Then he laughed manically, with his eyes partly rolled up in his head. Gasps for air struggled between childish high-pitched hyena noises. “*Froginsbit!*”

Spittle flecked the dashboard of the car. Crazed laughter mixed with death cry, as though some Samurai warrior was bearing down on him with murderous intent. Scott and I were snickering in bug-eyed hilarity at his apoplexy.

“Take this gun and go rob the store, Bob. *Wail!*”

Bob suddenly grabbed the green plastic gun from my hand and threw the car door open, half stumbling out. It was apparent he was in some deep delusion, separated from reality. He straightened up, and then leaned forward in a menacing stance. Held the squirt gun at his belly, pointed straight ahead to blast the unsuspecting convenience store clerk. He made a lunge towards the Quickie Mart door.

Scott and I were laughing almost uncontrollably as we round the car and restrained Bob from completing his task.

“It’s OK, Bob. We’ll get ‘em later. We can rob these bastards anytime. Come back into the car. I got a joint we can smoke.”

This reverted his attention back to illegal self-indulgence. Scott and I had never intended to rob the store. We liked the idea of Bob robbing the store for us, but we were actually suburban children who knew the limits of crime. What sent you to jail, and what you could get away with. Bob was an outsider, who shared no kin or past with us. Practically expendable. And remarkably susceptible to delusion, so we could hype him up over non-existent situations, very much to our amusement.

Bob, 19, a few years older than us, but still covered in baby fat. Every part of him seemed a little blubbery and plump. His skin was a sickly white as could be expected from a Southern diet of fried food and white bread. His body had never . . . *ballsonfire* . . . sorry . . . been in the sun. He had watery eyes, which were constantly darting in his head. This shaved person never shut up, babbling about anything that crossed his vision or bumped into a brain cell.

“The road is dark when going to rip some other guy than Roger, who was in Indiana last month before the crows came to Wendy’s,” he babbled. “Can we get some sodas before the next store, and some cigarettes? Must have been like when Linda went to the house.”

We ignored him completely unless we wanted to hype him up. We tolerated Bob with a big smile, because he was so crazy.

At this time, the Vietnam War raged. At 17, Scott and I were the next cannon fodder on the shipping list to Hamburger Hill. But we had no intention of going there. *Why shoot people you did not know?* When there were plenty of sergeants, lieutenants, and generals available to shoot. They were the ones telling you to go kill. But Bob drank the Kool-Aid mixed up in the torpidity of the Deep South.

Staggered out of some dysfunctional family where Mom sold herself and Dad was her customer from years past. A recruiter pulled him off of his hometown street, and signed him up to be a tank operator. But Bob didn't know anything about tanks and, in fact, Bob knew just about nothing, period, having dropped out of school at age 13. He was the perfect recruit for Vietnam. By the time . . . *chickenfuck* . . . sorry . . . he figured out what was going on, he would probably be in a black plastic body bag. In the next few days, he was on a bus to Fort Lewis in Washington State.

iii. My Dad

My Dad was an anarchist. He was also a leading member of the Friends Church (an offshoot of the Quakers). A persistent but unsuccessful artist, luckless in trying to sell sculptures of President Johnson carved from a black bowling ball. He was fascinated with the North Vietnamese march south to regain their country.

We went to Vancouver, British Columbia, and bought a truckload of Chinese revolutionary posters, *Little Red Books (Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong)*, Mao hats, revolutionary pins, and also signed up for every kind of propaganda. After that, we received the Red Army newspaper straight from Hanoi.

And such proclivities were not lost on government eyes. Many a morning, a pounding on the front door revealed two natty-suited "Smiths," who promptly showed me FBI badges.

"Where is your father? We would like to ask him a few questions."

"I don't know where the hell he is. Off on a drunk, I suppose."

"Do you know Robert Townsend?"

"No. Don't know shit."

"Is Mr. Townsend in your home now?"

"Who?"

"Townsend. Robert Townsend!"

"Never heard of him." Bob was hiding behind a wall next to the door. He was urinating in his pants, making a yellow puddle on the floor.

"Is your mother home?"

"Nobody's home. I'm a latchkey kid."

"When will they be back?"

"How the hell should I know? "

"You have been getting subversive mail from Hanoi. Why?"

"No shit? Really? What does it say?"

"Are you or your family members of the Communist Party?"

"Are you related to Heinrich Himmler?"

"You better cooperate with us, kid." An open threat.

"Or what, *pig*? You'll take my bicycle away?"

"Here. Take this card, and have your father call us, or we'll be back with the Federal Police."

"You are the Federal Police! You can't do shit to us! Get off our porch!"

As I closed the door on their faces, they reluctantly turned on their polished Oxfords and left.

I had been instructed carefully by my parents on how to deal with the FBI: *Tell them nothing. Reveal nothing. Dodge their questions. Get rid of them.*

iv. The AWOLs

Being an upstanding Quaker family, we were an integral part of the Underground Railroad, moving AWOL soldiers up and into Canada, to escape the sure death of being sent to Vietnam. This being the real reason: a young, meaningless death. But the spin was that killing others was against the principles of Quaker love.

Our family were, of course, protesters to the war. My first sit-in, at age 12, was blocking missile transports, and then every protest and freeway march after that for the next ten years. I had no intention of going to Vietnam and killing strangers so Exxon . . . *suckassfuck* . . . sorry . . . could control the off-shore oil leases.

Ninety-eight percent of the dummies around thought we were fighting Communism. The war had *nothing* to do with that. It was *all* about control of the oil. Maybe if they could give me a million dollar kickback, like Kissinger and Westmoreland were getting, I could have been inspired to shoot little jungle people. But, as it was, it was Kissinger, Johnson and Nixon who were in my crosshairs. I was basically your standard inept teenager who did not want to be killed for another's profit.

One evening, my father came home with five AWOLs (AWOL stands for "Absent Without Leave"). Many were bailing off the base (Fort Lewis), and running amok in the streets of Tacoma and Seattle. Just as enthusiastic was a special force of MPs who dedicated their time to catching and retrieving these wayward soldiers. There was a special area on the base called the SPD (Special Police District, or something) Zone. Here were half a dozen barracks behind razor wire where all the AWOL soldiers were housed, awaiting some kind of trial or punishment. I would think that getting sent to Vietnam to be fitted for a body bag would be punishment enough.

From the SPD Zone is where we got an ample supply of AWOLs. Many of the captured would simply escape again, as it was easy, and they were not surveilled in any way. These souls made it up to Seattle, to the Friends Church, and were distributed to Quaker families, like ours, to be hidden until arrangements could be made to spirit the escapees on the rest of their journey over the Canadian border. As long as the soldiers did not take off their dog tags, they were AWOLs. If they did take them off, they were deserters, punishable by the firing squad.

That spring there were AWOLs everywhere, like flies on road kill. All the other Quaker houses were filled. Even the dentist across the street had one, in contrast to his normal parsimonious behavior. And I don't think he was drilling any cavities.

"And how the hell are we supposed to feed these?" asked my mother in shrill irritation, gesturing toward the five gangly youths standing in the yard. They all had on huge black army boots, with pea green pants and white tee shirts. Two had acne. All had some form of emerging hair, wanting to be in the style of the day, but woefully not. When asked why their heads were not shaved, we were told that the barber went AWOL too.

"Oh, I'm sure we have enough," my dad said, although we knew there already were meager rations at the dinner table. Dad hadn't had a "real" job in six months, instead going to the casual day-labor office for a day's paycheck of \$20.

"What the hell are we to do with these kids? Are they just going to hang around the house?" My mother wailed desperately.

"I'll put them to work!" declared my dad. Mom rolled her eyes, knowing that resistance was futile.

That night, and nights afterward, dinners were huge pots of spaghetti, no sauce. Ate them up and kept shut up about it. A single stick of butter was brought out and divided into nine pieces. Mom gave her ration to me, as she worried about her cholesterol. My sister gave her butter to the dog under the table, although there were other drooling faces surrounding her.

At 7 a.m. there was gruel. Some nasty paste made of wheat germ, oat trash, and what looked like sawdust. We all ate it without complaint. As my mother said, "At least it's something!" A thin

consolation.

Then Dad was dressing the hoard in the living room. Each got a pair of huge blue jeans and an olive green work shirt. These were Dad's standard shop clothes that he shared, ugly and worn.

Then out the door, and over to the first neighbor with the pack of dogs. First item of business: clean up two months of dog shit. Then cut down a huge hedge, dice it up, and load onto a truck. I had snuck off to listen to the new Jefferson Airplane record in my trippy room, but my transcendence into music was short-lived. The huge stomping footsteps of my father bashed into my room, as if he was wearing ALL the army boots.

"Jacob!" I was always addressed formally when I was bad, or about to be admonished for some unknown violation.

"I want you out there working!" he boomed. "I want you to supervise the AWOLs. You tell them what to do and how to do it!"

Oh great! I was a skinny teenager with a shallow chest. How was I supposed to tell five huge adults to do things? They could kick my ass with one foot, and there were ten of those. *Pissassdiddly* . . . sorry . . . So I put on a white shirt because I thought a boss should have a white shirt. Then all pouty and with an entitled furrowed brow, I marched out of the house with what felt like a gun at my back.

The AWOLs obsequiated to me, saying, "Yes, Sir." I had never heard such shit in my life. I thought my name was "stupid," or "Stop thief!" but "Sir"?—*never*.

I directed them to cut the pieces smaller and load them onto the truck. We then all sat on the neighbor's porch smoking numerous cigarettes. The neighbor's homely daughter came out with a tray of lemonades. I can see the AWOLs squirming in Dad's pants as they eyed the beautiful woman. Then the boss showed up with new commands, and it was off to the next neighbor.

To be continued in Cenacle | 125 | June 2024

* * * * *





Jimmy Heffernan

Tunnels Through Time

Our primary approach
Is to investigate burgeoning entanglement
Or rather: nonlocality in space

This of course insinuates
If it does not expressly posit
A total interconnection of all objects in the cosmos

This means that space and time
Are emergent forms, not absolute
In a word: they are illusory

So it is conceivable that
I am in touch with a cesium atom
In Alpha Centauri

And indeed, all the other atoms
In the universe
In nonlocal feedback

But this is really a spatial configuration
When we introduce time
Things get crazy

If the cosmos is interconnected intimately
In time as well as space
Then the universe is almost certainly conscious

Don't you see?
If time can be transcended
Then it can all feed back to the present moment

The moment to which we have access
So Nature can "see" through time
And what is this but awareness?
A tunneling from the immediate future
Back into the present

This is how implicate frames stack
And re-fold
To unfold again instantly, over and over

So a universe nonlocal in time
Is superconscious;
The question then becomes:

Is it possible to tune into this network?

If the answer is yes
Then mankind has a very great deal
Of radical discovery

Ahead of itself

* * * * *



Bags End Book #21: What is the Creature Carnival? Part 3

This story and more Bags End Books
can be found at:

www.scriptorpress.com/bags-end.pdf

Hello Cenacle readers,

Mah name is Algernon Beagle & I am the editor guy for Bags End News. Bags End News is a newspaper about mah homeland, a fantasyland called Bags End.

From the outside, Bags End looks like 3 brown-colored laundry bags piled up on a little chair in the corner of our friend Miss Chris's bedroom in Connecticut. And there is one newer Red Bag near them. Miss Chris is 5 years old & has a toy tall boy brother named Ramie, who is 17.

Inside, Bags End is sort of like an apartment building of levels but, cuz it is a fantasyland, nobody knows about its top or bottom. Most levels look like regular hallways, with doors to rooms & other places running up & down their lengths.

Each level is connected to the one above & the one below by ramps that are good for folks with legs & others without. Strangely, the other end of each level ends in a sudden edge, so be warned, should you come to visit.

The Cenacle editor guy, who is a cousin to my friend & Miss Chris's brother Ramie, invited me to share some of the stories from mah newspaper, now & again. He also helped with the typing & some of the spellings, to make this book presentable here. I love English but I still don't spell it too great.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy these stories from Bags End, a place near & dear to mah heartbone.

* * * * *

Creature Carnival Travels the Island!

Now, Dear Readers, let's go into Act 3 of the Royal Thumbs' Production of "Welcome to X's Carnival of Mysteries & Wonders!"

You've been to the Carnival headquarters in Bags End's Red Bag, & walked around to see the grounds, & say hello to the very talented Creature Carnival folks.

Then you came to the white tent, bigger than the rest, & discovered inside a little bedroom which is Dreamland's Red Bag, & there was Benny Big Dreams himself to get you comfy in a bed those Thought Fleas made sure fit you, big or small.

And you woke up in Dreamland in a big clearing, with crowds of Thought Fleas to welcome you, & there you, like CC & me & the Royal Thumbs &

Bags End News
 No. 431 December 18, 2016
 Editor: Algernon Beagle
 King: Sheila Bunny
 Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
 Written Down By: Lori Bunny
 Apprentice: Willy Nilly Froggy

Kreechur Karnivall Travells
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Bags End News
 No. 432 December 17, 2016
 Editor: Algernon Beagle
 King: Sheila Bunny
 Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
 Written Down By: Lori Bunny
 Apprentice: Willy Nilly Froggy

Kreechur Karnivell on
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Bags End News
 DOUBLE ISSUE!
 No. 433-434 December 21-31, 2016
 Editor: Algernon Beagle
 King: Sheila Bunny
 Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
 Written Down By: Lori Bunny
 Apprentice: Willy Nilly Froggy

"Wellkum too X's Karnivall
 of Misterys & Wondrs!
 Grande Finally!"

Well, Deer Reeder, thi'ss longg
 storey haz involvd menee of yu
 mor thann thee v'zvell storee -
 I rit inn mah nuuz papr.
 Wil mah Kreechur Komon
 frends CC & Willy Nilly, whoo
 iz ~~off~~ mah newspapers' apprentiss -
 pluss thos Klevr Thawt Fleez, & thee Royal
 Grande Produkshup protaasens Kom
 selvis, hav traveled with mee - totally
 in tim & spaz throo th'iss Grande Blue Rodes
 Produkshup, menee of yu reeder's
 haw bin following along of kars

Willy Nilly before you, saw the most amazing story of the Creature Islands, them napping till spooked by falling objects, & then 5 of them fleeing, even as you were approaching the stage & Act 3.

Well, here's what happened next, for those who haven't gotten this far yet, & for the record.

Being much shorter than CC, I was slower in getting to the stage. He looked back, & smiled, & came & got me. Now all of us, including CC, me, Willy Nilly, the Royal Thumbs, & maybe the Thought Fleas still on mah nozebone too, were nearing & nearing the stage with the great Creature Island sort of hovering over it. The one that had not fled.

"How do we go there, if that's where we're going?" I asked & pointed toward it.

"Allow me, Algernon Beagle," said the suddenly talking Willy Nilly, poking out of one of CC's many ragged pockets.

He was scribbling with a little pencil one of the notes he had tolded me that he rited when I decided to make him mah apprentice.

Handed it up to CC, who nodded & read it out loud. "We are pulled, lifted, carried up to the remaining Island, brought through ancient White Woods, deeper & deeper into this Island, until we come to something, a structure so massive it fills the skies entirely. A Gate. The Tangled Gate."

Wow. Really good writing for such a little guy, & a Apprentice of mine! Already as good as Boop & Crissy & CC & me!

And it all happened, is what! We were now standing on the famous Island in front of that Tangled Gate!

And goodness! There were those famous Creature Kitees & their famous Boat-Wagon! All bloo eyes & tails & whiskers & waiting for us quietly by the Fountain. Then I saw their pretty Friend Fish with them too of course.

We walked through that crazy big Gate & right up to the Fountain. I remembered the rule & said, "We all have to drink from this helping water, not food. But helping & good."

CC made sure we all got a good drink of water & I thought like before it was friendly & hmmmming & helpful.

Then CC got us all buckled up in the Boat-Wagon. "Safety first!" he smiled at us. Good rule every time.

And just like that we were rolling through the Tangled Gate between walls made out of vines & rocks. I have to say, Dear Readers, & soon to be travelers this way too, the Tangled Gate seems to me to be stranger than almost anything else I have yet knowed. Like it's the oldest, biggest mystery of all.

I can't say if this was still Dreamland, or some place on the other side, but I can say that the comfy Boat-Wagon amongst good friends new & newer led your old pal Algernon right into an expected nap. Seems to happen like this every time . . .

"Wake up, Algernon Beagle!" suddenly said a friendly CC-like voice.

I waked up, & looked around at my friends, & saw them looking at something very strange.

A really tall Cave. But wait! I said to them, "This is Crissy's Cave, where her friend the Beast lives! It was where she tolded her sister that she wasn't coming back with all their Emandian kin-folks to the new home they had found, & her sister had then gifted her tricky smile magick. And where Crissy & Iggy the Inspector had remembered how they were brother & sister Emandians, & Iggy got his Inspecting groove & later that groove fixed!" I had writed about this whole crazy story in Bags End Book #18: Sleep-Over in Imagianna!

CC nodded smiling to me as I remembered. That's when I realized I was remembering out loud. Even the Kittees & their Friend Fish were watching me. "Um, can you giddy-up now again," I asked them humbly, blushing if it was even possible 4or fur to blush.

We peddled through the Cave, which was quite dark. "Safe travels, Algernon Beagle," said a low growling kind of voice in mah head that I thought was the Beast himself!

Now we traveled through a long tunnel & arrived to the Great Cavern, where I had been be4ore 4or Grand Productions & such!

But instead of us rolling right up to the doings going on there, the Kittees & Friend Fish peddled us into a sort-of shadowy corner. I guessed this Act 3 was 4or watching & listening.

We saw a girl near the Great Tree that rises high up into the farthest reaches. At first she seemed small like Miss Chris's size, but then she grew up to be more Crissy sized. "This Princess comes 4or visits from somewhere else," CC whispered, to help me. "These are her dreams she has."

"Like Crissy?" I asked. CC nodded. Then he said less easily 4or my simple brainbone to know, "One, none, many, Algernon."

As the girl gets older while we watched, it's easy to see that her face was a little sadder. "Why is she sad, CC?" I asked.

"Her world of people-folks is sometimes a cruel & lonely one. She wishes she could help."

Her Creature friends come around & noticed that she would laugh & smile when they danced & tumbled around sometimes. So they do more of it. Dancing, singing in the Hmmm.

"They do this more & more over time. It makes her happy & they like to do it. They learn that people-folks often 4orget to sing & dance together, or will do it with some but not others," CC explained more.

"When the girl is not around, they practice. The Bears find they are very good at dancing in a group. The purple furry fellow dances with his ribbons. The White Bunny hops with wonderful high talent. The shiny-eyed Ker-Plow-Eeee! group of Creatures, the Snow Leopard & Fox & Unicorn & Ow-ell, all sing their Hmmms higher & lower & all around. Other Creatures are tumblers, riders, & jugglers," CC narrates 4or me.

Then we get to see a glorious night under a great big Full Moon, when the per4ormers are all in their glories, & the Princess is dancing & laughing & singing & hmmming right along with them, & she says aloud 4or them & us to hear, "You are a wonderful Creature Carnival! I wish the whole world could see you!"

* * * * *

Creature Carnival Travels the Island!

It's a funny thing about this Grand Production about "X's Carnival of Mysteries & Wonders," Dear Readers. It's like the Creature Carnival now is telling the stories of how it came to be, but doing it in a very sort of elaborate way. Not to sound dum, but it really is mysterious & wonderful. I guess those talented Creature guys & fellas can't help themselves.

It makes me remember how our teacher Mister Owl in Bags End taught how different places have their different ways of thinking & telling. So if you're gonna watch a Creature production, whether it's the Carnival, or a Grand Production, or this time both, you're gonna be in 4or a good crazy ride.

I did not know what Act 4 would bring since each of the first 3 had

been so different. Like I have tolded, the last one ended with the Princess wishing she could share her Creature friends' Carnival with the world.

Hmm. Now Act 4, & it was later. It was like one blink of mah eyes & we were watching the Princess teach the Creature Carnival guys her native tongue, & then another blink & she was iterating them, & then another & she was hugging these iterate Creature Carnival guys as they were loading up their wagons & traveling up the tunnel to the Cave of the Beast, & another blink, & they were traveling along the vines & rocks of the Tangled Gate, & a last blink & they were arriving to the White Woods to set up their show.

It was a big clearing that looked like the Thought Fleas' Great Clearing we had seen back in Act 2, & I wondered if those little & sometimes not-so-little guys were around.

CC kept us quiet though, & hidden in the trees at the edge of the Great Clearing. I guessed he wondered like I did if we were supposed to just watch at a distance.

But then suddenly there was a noise behind us & someone in a gruff but friendly voice said, "Our Carnival is not set up yet, but you can take a closer look if you like."

We turned around & saw it was X the Carnival Master himself, in his handsome black hat & Scotch scarf & pretty white Bear fur.

I looked panicked at CC but then heard a tiny voice in mah ear saying, "Don't panic, Algernon Beagle. He hasn't met you or CC yet. We will tell Willy Nilly & the Royal Thumbs to stay hidden so no confusion. Walk around & enjoy!"

I was pretty sure that voice was a Thought Flea. So I kept mah panic to mahself & let CC do the talking. I guessed there was an explaining Thought Flea in his ear too.

CC said, "That's very nice of you. Will you be staying here long?"

X smiled & said, "O no, we are appointed to visit our friends at Farmer Jones's Helping Pillow Farm. We leave tomorrow."

Be4ore I could talk or ask, the Thought Flea in mah ear said, "That's what Farmer Jones called the Bunny Pillow Farm long ago. Be4ore he went into the world & was meanly tricked into only selling the Pillows to rich people."

I nodded just a bit. X smiled at us again & led us into the Great Clearing so we could get a good look at the setting-up doings of the Creature Carnival.

I was just amazed at all the Creatures hurrying around busy, getting things ready. They were putting little & big tents up, setting up booths, putting up all sorts of decorations, & all working together pretty friendly at it.

"Can we help?" asked CC to X, who was still politely walking with us, in case we had questions.

X put his paw on his chin, which means thinking it over in Creature Lingua.

"Well, we have our Truckee to unload. I'm sure that crew would appreciate your help when they arrive."

X then led us over to one side of the Great Clearing, & pointed at something in the White Woods near us. "Let's wait here. That's the path from the Wide Wide Sea, where our last show was."

So we sat down in a friendly circle on the grass.

"Have you seen our Carnival yet?" X asked us.

CC talked fast. "Not 4or awhile. We wanted to see how it is now."

Good answer. X just smiled & nodded.

The Truckee came finally, & I recognized it from past times & Grand Productions. But I guessed because this was olden times, there was a pretty black-&-white spotted Horse Creature pulling the Truckee along. Her name was Sofi, by the way.

And the Truckee's bed in back was filled with all kinds of things a Carnival would need for a long travel. Blankets & pillows & smaller tents & furniture piled high.

We then met the guys who were the crew traveling with the Truckee & Sofi the Horse Creature.

There was a crimson-colored Bear Creature wearing a long soft red hat, named Melbourne, who told us that he had been a highway worker who worked hard every day until one day he fell asleep, woked up, & everyone was gone!

"So I looked into finding the Carnival, & X gave me a job," he talked slowly, & smiled at X his good friend.

Another shaggier Bear Creature on the crew was brown & sorta looked older, like he'd seen & knowed a lot of the world. He was called Wendell Berry & he tolded us that he had hit the road early, & been out to Sea on many boats.

He said, "I had an Uncle who had talked of his own Creature Carnival days a lot. Out back was a hut he built to store his old games of chance & skill. You know, like trying to bounce the ping pong ball into the fishbowl. And then one day, X's Carnival put up their posters in the nearby Village, & my Uncle tells me that I had better pack up his old games & go pronto to see X!" He hugged X like a thank you.

Well, Dear Readers, we helped unload the Truckee, & then we got to see the Creature Carnival in the Great Clearing. You will too! I have a feeling that every Act of this Grand Production will keep going until everyone has had a chance to see!

To be continued in Cenacle | 125 | June 2024!

* * * * *





The Hound of the Baskervilles

[Classic Fiction]

Chapter I.
Mr. Sherlock Holmes

Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon those not infrequent occasions when he was up all night, was seated at the breakfast table. I stood upon the hearth-rug and picked up the stick which our visitor had left behind him the night before. It was a fine, thick piece of wood, bulbous-headed, of the sort which is known as a "Penang lawyer." Just under the head was a broad silver band nearly an inch across. "To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H.," was engraved upon it, with the date "1884." It was just such a stick as the old-fashioned family practitioner used to carry—dignified, solid, and reassuring.

"Well, Watson, what do you make of it?"

Holmes was sitting with his back to me, and I had given him no sign of my occupation.

"How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of your head."

"I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated coffee-pot in front of me," said he. "But, tell me, Watson, what do you make of our visitor's stick? Since we have been so unfortunate as to miss him and have no notion of his errand, this accidental souvenir becomes of importance. Let me hear you reconstruct the man by an examination of it."

"I think," said I, following as far as I could the methods of my companion, "that Dr. Mortimer is a successful, elderly medical man, well-esteemed since those who know him give him this mark of their appreciation."

"Good!" said Holmes. "Excellent!"

"I think also that the probability is in favour of his being a country practitioner who does a great deal of his visiting on foot."

"Why so?"

"Because this stick, though originally a very handsome one has been so knocked about that I can hardly imagine a town practitioner carrying it. The thick-iron ferrule is worn down, so it is evident that he has done a great amount of walking with it."

"Perfectly sound!" said Holmes.

"And then again, there is the 'friends of the C.C.H.' I should guess that to be the Something Hunt, the local hunt to whose members he has possibly given some surgical assistance, and which has made him a small presentation in return."

"Really, Watson, you excel yourself," said Holmes, pushing back his chair and lighting a cigarette. "I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually underrated your own abilities. It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt."

He had never said as much before, and I must admit that his words gave me keen pleasure, for I had often been piqued by his indifference to my admiration and to the attempts which I had made to give publicity to his methods. I was proud, too, to think that I had so far mastered his system as to apply it in a way which earned his approval. He now took the stick from my hands and examined it for a few minutes with his naked eyes. Then with an expression of interest he laid down his cigarette, and carrying the cane to the window, he looked over it again with a convex lens.

"Interesting, though elementary," said he as he returned to his favourite corner of the settee. "There are certainly one or two indications

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The Hound of the Baskervilles.*

ANOTHER ADVENTURE OF

SHERLOCK HOLMES.

BY CONAN DOYLE.

CHAPTER I.

MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES.



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* This story owes its inception to my friend, Mr. Fletcher Robinson, who has helped me both in the general plot and in the local details.—A. C. D.
Vol. xxii.—16

upon the stick. It gives us the basis for several deductions.”

“Has anything escaped me?” I asked with some self-importance. “I trust that there is nothing of consequence which I have overlooked?”

“I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your conclusions were erroneous. When I said that you stimulated me I meant, to be frank, that in noting your fallacies I was occasionally guided towards the truth. Not that you are entirely wrong in this instance. The man is certainly a country practitioner. And he walks a good deal.”

“Then I was right.”

“To that extent.”

“But that was all.”

“No, no, my dear Watson, not all—by no means all. I would suggest, for example, that a presentation to a doctor is more likely to come from a hospital than from a hunt, and that when the initials ‘C.C.’ are placed before that hospital the words ‘Charing Cross’ very naturally suggest themselves.”

“You may be right.”

“The probability lies in that direction. And if we take this as a working hypothesis we have a fresh basis from which to start our construction of this unknown visitor.”

“Well, then, supposing that ‘C.C.H.’ does stand for ‘Charing Cross Hospital,’ what further inferences may we draw?”

“Do none suggest themselves? You know my methods. Apply them!”

“I can only think of the obvious conclusion that the man has practised in town before going to the country.”

“I think that we might venture a little farther than this. Look at it in this light. On what occasion would it be most probable that such a presentation would be made? When would his friends unite to give him a pledge of their good will? Obviously at the moment when Dr. Mortimer withdrew from the service of the hospital in order to start in practice for himself. We know there has been a presentation. We believe there has been a change from a town hospital to a country practice. Is it, then, stretching our inference too far to say that the presentation was on the occasion of the change?”

“It certainly seems probable.”

“Now, you will observe that he could not have been on the staff of the hospital, since only a man well-established in a London practice could hold such a position, and such a one would not drift into the country. What was he, then? If he was in the hospital and yet not on the staff he could only have been a house-surgeon or a housephysician—little more than a senior student. And he left five years ago—the date is on the stick. So your grave, middle-aged family practitioner vanishes into thin air, my dear Watson, and there emerges a young fellow under thirty, amiable, unambitious, absent-minded, and the possessor of a favourite dog, which I should describe roughly as being larger than a terrier and smaller than a mastiff.”

I laughed incredulously as Sherlock Holmes leaned back in his settee and blew little wavering rings of smoke up to the ceiling.

“As to the latter part, I have no means of checking you,” said I, “but at least it is not difficult to find out a few particulars about the man’s age and professional career.” From my small medical shelf I took down the Medical Directory and turned up the name. There were several Mortimers, but only one who could be our visitor. I read his record aloud.

“Mortimer, James, M.R.C.S., 1882, Grimpen, Dartmoor, Devon. House-surgeon, from 1882 to 1884, at Charing Cross Hospital. Winner of the Jackson prize for Comparative Pathology, with essay entitled ‘Is Disease a Reversion?’ Corresponding member of the Swedish Pathological Society. Author of ‘Some Freaks of Atavism’ (*Lancet* 1882). ‘Do We Progress?’ (*Journal of Psychology*, March, 1883). Medical Officer for the parishes of Grimpen, Thorsley, and High Barrow.”

“No mention of that local hunt, Watson,” said Holmes with a mischievous smile, “but a country doctor, as you very astutely observed. I think that I am fairly justified in my inferences. As to the adjectives, I said, if I remember right, amiable, unambitious, and absent-minded. It is my experience that it is only an amiable man in this world who receives testimonials, only an unambitious one who abandons a London career for the country, and only an absent-minded one who leaves his stick and not his visiting-card after

waiting an hour in your room.”

“And the dog?”

“Has been in the habit of carrying this stick behind his master. Being a heavy stick the dog has held it tightly by the middle, and the marks of his teeth are very plainly visible. The dog’s jaw, as shown in the space between these marks, is too broad in my opinion for a terrier and not broad enough for a mastiff. It may have been—yes, by Jove, it *is* a curly-haired spaniel.”

He had risen and paced the room as he spoke. Now he halted in the recess of the window. There was such a ring of conviction in his voice that I glanced up in surprise.

“My dear fellow, how can you possibly be so sure of that?”

“For the very simple reason that I see the dog himself on our very door-step, and there is the ring of its owner. Don’t move, I beg you, Watson. He is a professional brother of yours, and your presence may be of assistance to me. Now is the dramatic moment of fate, Watson, when you hear a step upon the stair which is walking into your life, and you know not whether for good or ill. What does Dr. James Mortimer, the man of science, ask of Sherlock Holmes, the specialist in crime? Come in!”

The appearance of our visitor was a surprise to me, since I had expected a typical country practitioner. He was a very tall, thin man, with a long nose like a beak, which jutted out between two keen, gray eyes, set closely together and sparkling brightly from behind a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. He was clad in a professional but rather slovenly fashion, for his frock-coat was dingy and his trousers frayed. Though young, his long back was already bowed, and he walked with a forward thrust of his head and a general air of peering benevolence. As he entered his eyes fell upon the stick in Holmes’s hand, and he ran towards it with an exclamation of joy. “I am so very glad,” said he. “I was not sure whether I had left it here or in the Shipping Office. I would not lose that stick for the world.”

“A presentation, I see,” said Holmes.

“Yes, sir.”

“From Charing Cross Hospital?”

“From one or two friends there on the occasion of my marriage.”

“Dear, dear, that’s bad!” said Holmes, shaking his head.

Dr. Mortimer blinked through his glasses in mild astonishment.

“Why was it bad?”

“Only that you have disarranged our little deductions. Your marriage, you say?”

“Yes, sir. I married, and so left the hospital, and with it all hopes of a consulting practice. It was necessary to make a home of my own.”

“Come, come, we are not so far wrong, after all,” said Holmes. “And now, Dr. James Mortimer—”

“Mister, sir, Mister—a humble M.R.C.S.”

“And a man of precise mind, evidently.”

“A dabbler in science, Mr. Holmes, a picker up of shells on the shores of the great unknown ocean. I presume that it is Mr. Sherlock Holmes whom I am addressing and not—”

“No, this is my friend Dr. Watson.”

“Glad to meet you, sir. I have heard your name mentioned in connection with that of your friend. You interest me very much, Mr. Holmes. I had hardly expected so dolichocephalic a skull or such well-marked supra-orbital development. Would you have any objection to my running my finger along your parietal fissure? A cast of your skull, sir, until the original is available, would be an ornament to any anthropological museum. It is not my intention to be fulsome, but I confess that I covet your skull.”

Sherlock Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair. “You are an enthusiast in your line of thought, I perceive, sir, as I am in mine,” said he. “I observe from your forefinger that you make your own cigarettes. Have no hesitation in lighting one.”

The man drew out paper and tobacco and twirled the one up in the other with surprising dexterity. He had long, quivering fingers as agile and restless as the antennae of an insect.

Holmes was silent, but his little darting glances showed me the interest which he took in our curious companion.

“I presume, sir,” said he at last, “that it was not merely for the purpose of examining my skull that you have done me the honour to call here last night and again to-day?”

“No, sir, no; though I am happy to have had the opportunity of doing that as well. I came to you, Mr. Holmes, because I recognized that I am myself an unpractical man and because I am suddenly confronted with a most serious and extraordinary problem. Recognizing, as I do, that you are the second highest expert in Europe—”

“Indeed, sir! May I inquire who has the honour to be the first?” asked Holmes with some asperity.

“To the man of precisely scientific mind the work of Monsieur Bertillon must always appeal strongly.”

“Then had you not better consult him?”

“I said, sir, to the precisely scientific mind. But as a practical man of affairs it is acknowledged that you stand alone. I trust, sir, that I have not inadvertently—”

“Just a little,” said Holmes. “I think, Dr. Mortimer, you would do wisely if without more ado you would kindly tell me plainly what the exact nature of the problem is in which you demand my assistance.”

* * * * *

Chapter II.

The Curse of the Baskervilles

“I have in my pocket a manuscript,” said Dr. James Mortimer.

“I observed it as you entered the room,” said Holmes.

“It is an old manuscript.”

“Early eighteenth century, unless it is a forgery.”

“How can you say that, sir?”

“You have presented an inch or two of it to my examination all the time that you have been talking. It would be a poor expert who could not give the date of a document within a decade or so. You may possibly have read my little monograph upon the subject. I put that at 1730.”

“The exact date is 1742.” Dr. Mortimer drew it from his breast-pocket. “This family paper was committed to my care by Sir Charles Baskerville, whose sudden and tragic death some three months ago created so much excitement in Devonshire. I may say that I was his personal

friend as well as his medical attendant. He was a strong-minded man, sir, shrewd, practical, and as unimaginative as I am myself. Yet he took this document very seriously, and his mind was prepared for just such an end as did eventually overtake him.”

Holmes stretched out his hand for the manuscript and flattened it upon his knee.

“You will observe, Watson, the alternative use of the long s and the short. It is one of several indications which enabled me to fix the date.”

I looked over his shoulder at the yellow paper and the faded script. At the head was written: “Baskerville Hall,” and below in large, scrawling figures: “1742.”

“It appears to be a statement of some sort.”

“Yes, it is a statement of a certain legend which runs in the Baskerville family.”

“But I understand that it is something more modern and practical upon which you wish to consult me?”

“Most modern. A most practical, pressing matter, which must be decided within twenty-four hours. But the manuscript is short and is intimately connected with the affair. With your permission I will read it to you.”

Holmes leaned back in his chair, placed his finger-tips together, and closed his eyes, with an air of resignation. Dr. Mortimer turned the manuscript to the light and read in a high, cracking voice the following curious, old-world narrative:—

“Of the origin of the Hound of the Baskervilles there have been many statements, yet as I come in a direct line from Hugo Baskerville, and as I had the story from my father, who also had it from his, I have set it down with all belief that it occurred even as is here set forth. And I would have you believe, my sons, that the same Justice which punishes sin may also most graciously forgive it, and that no ban is so heavy but that by prayer and repentance it may be removed. Learn then from this story not to fear the fruits of the past, but rather to be

circumspect in the future, that those foul passions whereby our family has suffered so grievously may not again be loosed to our undoing.

“Know then that in the time of the Great Rebellion (the history of which by the learned Lord Clarendon I most earnestly commend to your attention) this Manor of Baskerville was held by Hugo of that name, nor can it be gainsaid that he was a most wild, profane, and godless man. This, in truth, his neighbours might have pardoned, seeing that saints have never flourished in those parts, but there was in him a certain wanton and cruel humour which made his name a byword through the West. It chanced that this Hugo came to love (if, indeed, so dark a passion may be known under so bright a name) the daughter of a yeoman who held lands near the Baskerville estate. But the young maiden, being discreet and of good repute, would ever avoid him, for she feared his evil name. So it came to pass that one Michaelmas this Hugo, with five or six of his idle and wicked companions, stole down upon the farm and carried off the maiden, her father and brothers being from home, as he well knew. When they had brought her to the Hall the maiden was placed in an upper chamber, while Hugo and his friends sat down to a long carouse, as was their nightly custom. Now, the poor lass upstairs was like to have her wits turned at the singing and shouting and terrible oaths which came up to her from below, for they say that the words used by Hugo Baskerville, when he was in wine, were such as might blast the man who said them. At last in the stress of her fear she did that which might have daunted the bravest or most active man, for by the aid of the growth of ivy which covered (and still covers) the south wall she came down from under the eaves, and so homeward across the

moor, there being three leagues betwixt the Hall and her father’s farm.

“It chanced that some little time later Hugo left his guests to carry food and drink—with other worse things, perchance—to his captive, and so found the cage empty and the bird escaped. Then, as it would seem, he became as one that hath a devil, for, rushing down the stairs into the dining-hall, he sprang upon the great table, flagons and trenchers flying before him, and he cried aloud before all the company that he would that very night render his body and soul to the Powers of Evil if he might but overtake the wench. And while the revellers stood aghast at the fury of the man, one more wicked or, it may be, more drunken than the rest, cried out that they should put the hounds upon her. Whereat Hugo ran from the house, crying to his grooms that they should saddle his mare and unkennel the pack, and giving the hounds a kerchief of the maid’s, he swung them to the line, and so off full cry in the moonlight over the moor.

“Now, for some space the revellers stood agape, unable to understand all that had been done in such haste. But anon their bemused wits awoke to the nature of the deed which was like to be done upon the moorlands. Everything was now in an uproar, some calling for their pistols, some for their horses, and some for another flask of wine. But at length some sense came back to their crazed minds, and the whole of them, thirteen in number, took horse and started in pursuit. The moon shone clear above them, and they rode swiftly abreast, taking that course which the maid must needs have taken if she were to reach her own home.

“They had gone a mile or two when they passed one of the night shepherds upon the moorlands, and

they cried to him to know if he had seen the hunt. And the man, as the story goes, was so crazed with fear that he could scarce speak, but at last he said that he had indeed seen the unhappy maiden, with the hounds upon her track. 'But I have seen more than that,' said he, 'for Hugo Baskerville passed me upon his black mare, and there ran mute behind him such a hound of hell as God forbid should ever be at my heels.' So the drunken squires cursed the shepherd and rode onward. But soon their skins turned cold, for there came a galloping across the moor, and the black mare, dabbled with white froth, went past with trailing bridle and empty saddle. Then the revellers rode close together, for a great fear was on them, but they still followed over the moor, though each, had he been alone, would have been right glad to have turned his horse's head. Riding slowly in this fashion they came at last upon the hounds. These, though known for their valour and their breed, were whimpering in a cluster at the head of a deep dip or goyal, as we call it, upon the moor, some slinking away and some, with starting hackles and staring eyes, gazing down the narrow valley before them.

"The company had come to a halt, more sober men, as you may guess, than when they started. The most of them would by no means advance, but three of them, the boldest, or it may be the most drunken, rode forward down the goyal. Now, it opened into a broad space in which stood two of those great stones, still to be seen there, which were set by certain forgotten peoples in the days of old. The moon was shining bright upon the clearing, and there in the centre lay the unhappy maid where she had fallen, dead of fear and of fatigue. But it was not the sight of her body, nor yet was it that of the body of Hugo Baskerville lying near her, which

raised the hair upon the heads of these three daredevil roysterers, but it was that, standing over Hugo, and plucking at his throat, there stood a foul thing, a great, black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon. And even as they looked the thing tore the throat out of Hugo Baskerville, on which, as it turned its blazing eyes and dripping jaws upon them, the three shrieked with fear and rode for dear life, still screaming, across the moor. One, it is said, died that very night of what he had seen, and the other twain were but broken men for the rest of their days.

"Such is the tale, my sons, of the coming of the hound which is said to have plagued the family so sorely ever since. If I have set it down it is because that which is clearly known hath less terror than that which is but hinted at and guessed. Nor can it be denied that many of the family have been unhappy in their deaths, which have been sudden, bloody, and mysterious. Yet may we shelter ourselves in the infinite goodness of Providence, which would not forever punish the innocent beyond that third or fourth generation which is threatened in Holy Writ. To that Providence, my sons, I hereby commend you, and I counsel you by way of caution to forbear from crossing the moor in those dark hours when the powers of evil are exalted.

"[This from Hugo Baskerville to his sons Rodger and John, with instructions that they say nothing thereof to their sister Elizabeth.]"

When Dr. Mortimer had finished reading this singular narrative he pushed his spectacles up on his forehead and stared across at Mr. Sherlock Holmes. The latter yawned and tossed the end of his cigarette into the fire.

"Well?" said he.

"Do you not find it interesting?"

"To a collector of fairy tales."



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Dr. Mortimer drew a folded newspaper out of his pocket.

"Now, Mr. Holmes, we will give you something a little more recent. This is the *Devon County Chronicle* of May 14th of this year. It is a short account of the facts elicited at the death of Sir Charles Baskerville which occurred a few days before that date."

My friend leaned a little forward and his expression became intent. Our visitor re-adjusted his glasses and began:—

"The recent sudden death of Sir Charles Baskerville, whose name has been mentioned as the probable Liberal candidate for Mid-Devon at the next election, has cast a gloom over the county. Though Sir Charles had resided at Baskerville Hall for a comparatively short period his amiability of character and extreme generosity had won the affection and respect of all who had been brought into contact with him. In these days of *nouveaux riches* it is refreshing to find a case where the scion of an old county family which has fallen upon evil days is able to make his own fortune and to bring it back

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“The circumstances connected with the death of Sir Charles cannot be said to have been entirely cleared up by the inquest, but at least enough has been done to dispose of those rumours to which local superstition has given rise. There is no reason whatever to suspect foul play, or to imagine that death could be from any but natural causes. Sir Charles was a widower, and a man who may be said to have been in some ways of an eccentric habit of mind. In spite of his considerable wealth he was simple in his personal tastes, and his indoor servants at Baskerville Hall consisted of a married couple named Barrymore, the husband acting as butler and the wife as housekeeper. Their evidence, corroborated by that of several friends, tends to show that Sir Charles’s health has for some time been impaired, and points especially to some affection of the heart, manifesting itself in changes of colour, breathlessness, and acute attacks of nervous depression. Dr. James Mortimer, the friend and medical attendant of the deceased, has given evidence to the same effect.

“The facts of the case are simple. Sir Charles Baskerville was in the habit every night before going to bed of walking down the famous Yew Alley of Baskerville Hall. The evidence of the Barrymores shows that this had been his custom. On the 4th of May Sir Charles had declared his intention of starting next day for London, and had ordered Barrymore to prepare his luggage. That night he went out as usual for his nocturnal walk, in the course of which he was in the habit of smoking a cigar. He never returned. At twelve o’clock Barrymore, finding the hall door still open, became alarmed, and, lighting a lantern, went in search of his master. The day had been wet, and Sir Charles’s footmarks were easily traced down the Alley. Half-way down this walk there is a gate which leads out

on to the moor. There were indications that Sir Charles had stood for some little time here. He then proceeded down the Alley, and it was at the far end of it that his body was discovered. One fact which has not been explained is the statement of Barrymore that his master's footprints altered their character from the time that he passed the moor-gate, and that he appeared from thence onward to have been walking upon his toes. One Murphy, a gipsy horse-dealer, was on the moor at no great distance at the time, but he appears by his own confession to have been the worse for drink. He declares that he heard cries, but is unable to state from what direction they came. No signs of violence were to be discovered upon Sir Charles's person, and though the doctor's evidence pointed to an almost incredible facial distortion—so great that Dr. Mortimer refused at first to believe that it was indeed his friend and patient who lay before him—it was explained that that is a symptom which is not unusual in cases of dyspnoea and death from cardiac exhaustion. This explanation was borne out by the postmortem examination, which showed long-standing organic disease, and the coroner's jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence. It is well that this is so, for it is obviously of the utmost importance that Sir Charles's heir should settle at the Hall and continue the good work which has been so sadly interrupted. Had the prosaic finding of the coroner not finally put an end to the romantic stories which have been whispered in connection with the affair, it might have been difficult to find a tenant for Baskerville Hall. It is understood that the next of kin is Mr. Henry Baskerville, if he be still alive, the son of Sir Charles Baskerville's younger brother. The young man when last heard of was in America, and inquiries

are being instituted with a view to informing him of his good fortune."

Dr. Mortimer refolded his paper and replaced it in his pocket.

"Those are the public facts, Mr. Holmes, in connection with the death of Sir Charles Baskerville."

"I must thank you," said Sherlock Holmes, "for calling my attention to a case which certainly presents some features of interest. I had observed some newspaper comment at the time, but I was exceedingly preoccupied by that little affair of the Vatican cameos, and in my anxiety to oblige the Pope I lost touch with several interesting English cases. This article, you say, contains all the public facts?"

"It does."

"Then let me have the private ones." He leaned back, put his finger-tips together, and assumed his most impassive and judicial expression.

"In doing so," said Dr. Mortimer, who had begun to show signs of some strong emotion, "I am telling that which I have not confided to anyone. My motive for withholding it from the coroner's inquiry is that a man of science shrinks from placing himself in the public position of seeming to indorse a popular superstition. I had the further motive that Baskerville Hall, as the paper says, would certainly remain untenanted if anything were done to increase its already rather grim reputation. For both these reasons I thought that I was justified in telling rather less than I knew, since no practical good could result from it, but with you there is no reason why I should not be perfectly frank.

"The moor is very sparsely inhabited, and those who live near each other are thrown very much together. For this reason I saw a good deal of Sir Charles Baskerville. With the exception of Mr. Frankland, of Lafter Hall, and Mr. Stapleton, the naturalist, there are no other men of education within many miles. Sir Charles was a retiring man, but the chance of his illness brought us together, and a community of interests in science kept us so. He had brought back much scientific information from South Africa, and many a charming evening we have spent together discussing the comparative

anatomy of the Bushman and the Hottentot.

“Within the last few months it became increasingly plain to me that Sir Charles’s nervous system was strained to the breaking point. He had taken this legend which I have read you exceedingly to heart—so much so that, although he would walk in his own grounds, nothing would induce him to go out upon the moor at night. Incredible as it may appear to you, Mr. Holmes, he was honestly convinced that a dreadful fate overhung his family, and certainly the records which he was able to give of his ancestors were not encouraging. The idea of some ghastly presence constantly haunted him, and on more than one occasion he has asked me whether I had on my medical journeys at night ever seen any strange creature or heard the baying of a hound. The latter question he put to me several times, and always with a voice which vibrated with excitement.

“I can well remember driving up to his house in the evening some three weeks before the fatal event. He chanced to be at his hall door. I had descended from my gig and was standing in front of him, when I saw his eyes fix themselves over my shoulder, and stare past me with an expression of the most dreadful horror. I whisked round and had just time to catch a glimpse of something which I took to be a large black calf passing at the head of the drive. So excited and alarmed was he that I was compelled to go down to the spot where the animal had been and look around for it. It was gone, however, and the incident appeared to make the worst impression upon his mind. I stayed with him all the evening, and it was on that occasion, to explain the emotion which he had shown, that he confided to my keeping that narrative which I read to you when first I came. I mention this small episode because it assumes some importance in view of the tragedy which followed, but I was convinced at the time that the matter was entirely trivial and that his excitement had no justification.

“It was at my advice that Sir Charles was about to go to London. His heart was, I knew, affected, and the constant anxiety in which he lived, however chimerical the cause of it might be, was evidently having a serious effect upon his health. I thought that a few months among the distractions of town would send him back a

new man. Mr. Stapleton, a mutual friend who was much concerned at his state of health, was of the same opinion. At the last instant came this terrible catastrophe.

“On the night of Sir Charles’s death Barrymore the butler, who made the discovery, sent Perkins the groom on horseback to me, and as I was sitting up late I was able to reach Baskerville Hall within an hour of the event. I checked and corroborated all the facts which were mentioned at the inquest. I followed the footsteps down the Yew Alley, I saw the spot at the moor-gate where he seemed to have waited, I remarked the change in the shape of the prints after that point, I noted that there were no other footsteps save those of Barrymore on the soft gravel, and finally I carefully examined the body, which had not been touched until my arrival. Sir Charles lay on his face, his arms out, his fingers dug into the ground, and his features convulsed with some strong emotion to such an extent that I could hardly have sworn to his identity. There was certainly no physical injury of any kind. But one false statement was made by Barrymore at the inquest. He said that there were no traces upon the ground round the body. He did not observe any. But I did—some little distance off, but fresh and clear.”

“Footprints?”

“Footprints.”

“A man’s or a woman’s?”

Dr. Mortimer looked strangely at us for an instant, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he answered:—

“Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!”

* * * * *

Chapter III. The Problem

I confess at these words a shudder passed through me. There was a thrill in the doctor’s voice which showed that he was himself deeply moved by that which he told us. Holmes leaned forward in his excitement and his eyes had the hard, dry glitter which shot from them when he was keenly interested.

“You saw this?”

“As clearly as I see you.”
 “And you said nothing?”
 “What was the use?”
 “How was it that no one else saw it?”
 “The marks were some twenty yards from the body and no one gave them a thought. I don’t suppose I should have done so had I not known this legend.”
 “There are many sheep-dogs on the moor?”
 “No doubt, but this was no sheep-dog.”
 “You say it was large?”
 “Enormous.”
 “But it had not approached the body?”
 “No.”
 “What sort of night was it?”
 “Damp and raw.”
 “But not actually raining?”
 “No.”
 “What is the Alley like?”
 “There are two lines of old yew hedge, twelve feet high and impenetrable. The walk in the centre is about eight feet across.”
 “Is there anything between the hedges and the walk?”
 “Yes, there is a strip of grass about six feet broad on either side.”
 “I understand that the yew hedge is penetrated at one point by a gate?”
 “Yes, the wicket-gate which leads on to the moor.”
 “Is there any other opening?”
 “None.”
 “So that to reach the Yew Alley one either has to come down it from the house or else to enter it by the moor-gate?”
 “There is an exit through a summer-house at the far end.”
 “Had Sir Charles reached this?”
 “No; he lay about fifty yards from it.”
 “Now, tell me, Dr. Mortimer—and this is important—the marks which you saw were on the path and not on the grass?”
 “No marks could show on the grass.”
 “Were they on the same side of the path as the moor-gate?”
 “Yes; they were on the edge of the path on the same side as the moor-gate.”
 “You interest me exceedingly. Another

point. Was the wicket-gate closed?”
 “Closed and padlocked.”
 “How high was it?”
 “About four feet high.”
 “Then anyone could have got over it?”
 “Yes.”
 “And what marks did you see by the wicket-gate?”
 “None in particular.”
 “Good heaven! Did no one examine?”
 “Yes, I examined myself.”
 “And found nothing?”
 “It was all very confused. Sir Charles had evidently stood there for five or ten minutes.”
 “How do you know that?”
 “Because the ash had twice dropped from his cigar.”
 “Excellent! This is a colleague, Watson, after our own heart. But the marks?”
 “He had left his own marks all over that small patch of gravel. I could discern no others.”
 Sherlock Holmes struck his hand against his knee with an impatient gesture.
 “If I had only been there!” he cried. “It is evidently a case of extraordinary interest, and one which presented immense opportunities to the scientific expert. That gravel page upon which I might have read so much has been long ere this smudged by the rain and defaced by the clogs of curious peasants. Oh, Dr. Mortimer, Dr. Mortimer, to think that you should not have called me in! You have indeed much to answer for.”
 “I could not call you in, Mr. Holmes, without disclosing these facts to the world, and I have already given my reasons for not wishing to do so. Besides, besides—”
 “Why do you hesitate?”
 “There is a realm in which the most acute and most experienced of detectives is helpless.”
 “You mean that the thing is supernatural?”
 “I did not positively say so.”
 “No, but you evidently think it.”
 “Since the tragedy, Mr. Holmes, there have come to my ears several incidents which are hard to reconcile with the settled order of Nature.”
 “For example?”
 “I find that before the terrible event occurred several people had seen a creature

upon the moor which corresponds with this Baskerville demon, and which could not possibly be any animal known to science. They all agreed that it was a huge creature, luminous, ghastly, and spectral. I have cross-examined these men, one of them a hard-headed countryman, one a farrier, and one a moorland farmer, who all tell the same story of this dreadful apparition, exactly corresponding to the hell-hound of the legend. I assure you that there is a reign of terror in the district, and that it is a hardy man who will cross the moor at night.”

“And you, a trained man of science, believe it to be supernatural?”

“I do not know what to believe.”

Holmes shrugged his shoulders.

“I have hitherto confined my investigations to this world,” said he. “In a modest way I have combated evil, but to take on the Father of Evil himself would, perhaps, be too ambitious a task. Yet you must admit that the footmark is material.”

“The original hound was material enough to tug a man’s throat out, and yet he was diabolical as well.”

“I see that you have quite gone over to the supernaturalists. But now, Dr. Mortimer, tell me this. If you hold these views, why have you come to consult me at all? You tell me in the same breath that it is useless to investigate Sir Charles’s death, and that you desire me to do it.”

“I did not say that I desired you to do it.”

“Then, how can I assist you?”

“By advising me as to what I should do with Sir Henry Baskerville, who arrives at Waterloo Station”—Dr. Mortimer looked at his watch—“in exactly one hour and a quarter.”

“He being the heir?”

“Yes. On the death of Sir Charles we inquired for this young gentleman and found that he had been farming in Canada. From the accounts which have reached us he is an excellent fellow in every way. I speak not as a medical man but as a trustee and executor of Sir Charles’s will.”

“There is no other claimant, I presume?”

“None. The only other kinsman whom we have been able to trace was Rodger Baskerville, the youngest of three brothers of whom poor Sir Charles was the elder. The second brother, who

died young, is the father of this lad Henry. The third, Rodger, was the black sheep of the family. He came of the old masterful Baskerville strain, and was the very image, they tell me, of the family picture of old Hugo. He made England too hot to hold him, fled to Central America, and died there in 1876 of yellow fever. Henry is the last of the Baskervilles. In one hour and five minutes I meet him at Waterloo Station. I have had a wire that he arrived at Southampton this morning. Now, Mr. Holmes, what would you advise me to do with him?”

“Why should he not go to the home of his fathers?”

“It seems natural, does it not? And yet, consider that every Baskerville who goes there meets with an evil fate. I feel sure that if Sir Charles could have spoken with me before his death he would have warned me against bringing this, the last of the old race, and the heir to great wealth, to that deadly place. And yet it cannot be denied that the prosperity of the whole poor, bleak country-side depends upon his presence. All the good work which has been done by Sir Charles will crash to the ground if there is no tenant of the Hall. I fear lest I should be swayed too much by my own obvious interest in the matter, and that is why I bring the case before you and ask for your advice.”

Holmes considered for a little time.

“Put into plain words, the matter is this,” said he. “In your opinion there is a diabolical agency which makes Dartmoor an unsafe abode for a Baskerville—that is your opinion?”

“At least I might go the length of saying that there is some evidence that this may be so.”

“Exactly. But surely, if your supernatural theory be correct, it could work the young man evil in London as easily as in Devonshire. A devil with merely local powers like a parish vestry would be too inconceivable a thing.”

“You put the matter more flippantly, Mr. Holmes, than you would probably do if you were brought into personal contact with these things. Your advice, then, as I understand it, is that the young man will be as safe in Devonshire as in London. He comes in fifty minutes. What would you recommend?”

“I recommend, sir, that you take a cab,

call off your spaniel who is scratching at my front door, and proceed to Waterloo to meet Sir Henry Baskerville.”

“And then?”

“And then you will say nothing to him at all until I have made up my mind about the matter.”

“How long will it take you to make up your mind?”

“Twenty-four hours. At ten o’clock tomorrow, Dr. Mortimer, I will be much obliged to you if you will call upon me here, and it will be of help to me in my plans for the future if you will bring Sir Henry Baskerville with you.”

“I will do so, Mr. Holmes.” He scribbled the appointment on his shirtcuff and hurried off in his strange, peering, absent-minded fashion. Holmes stopped him at the head of the stair.

“Only one more question, Dr. Mortimer. You say that before Sir Charles Baskerville’s death several people saw this apparition upon the moor?”

“Three people did.”

“Did any see it after?”

“I have not heard of any.”

“Thank you. Good morning.”

Holmes returned to his seat with that quiet look of inward satisfaction which meant that he had a congenial task before him.

“Going out, Watson?”

“Unless I can help you.”

“No, my dear fellow, it is at the hour of action that I turn to you for aid. But this is splendid, really unique from some points of view. When you pass Bradley’s, would you ask him to send up a pound of the strongest shag tobacco? Thank you. It would be as well if you could make it convenient not to return before evening. Then I should be very glad to compare impressions as to this most interesting problem which has been submitted to us this morning.”

I knew that seclusion and solitude were very necessary for my friend in those hours of intense mental concentration during which he weighed every particle of evidence, constructed alternative theories, balanced one against the other, and made up his mind as to which points were essential and which immaterial. I therefore spent the day at my club and did not return to

Baker Street until evening. It was nearly nine o’clock when I found myself in the sitting-room once more.

My first impression as I opened the door was that a fire had broken out, for the room was so filled with smoke that the light of the lamp upon the table was blurred by it. As I entered, however, my fears were set at rest, for it was the acrid fumes of strong coarse tobacco which took me by the throat and set me coughing. Through the haze I had a vague vision of Holmes in his dressing-gown coiled up in an armchair with his black clay pipe between his lips. Several rolls of paper lay around him.

“Caught cold, Watson?” said he.

“No, it’s this poisonous atmosphere.”

“I suppose it is pretty thick, now that you mention it.”

“Thick! It is intolerable.”

“Open the window, then! You have been at your club all day, I perceive.”

“My dear Holmes!”

“Am I right?”

“Certainly, but how?”

He laughed at my bewildered expression.

“There is a delightful freshness about you, Watson, which makes it a pleasure to exercise any small powers which I possess at your expense. A gentleman goes forth on a showery and miry day. He returns immaculate in the evening with the gloss still on his hat and his boots. He has been a fixture therefore all day. He is not a man with intimate friends. Where, then, could he have been? Is it not obvious?”

“Well, it is rather obvious.”

“The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes. Where do you think that I have been?”

“A fixture also.”

“On the contrary, I have been to Devonshire.”

“In spirit?”

“Exactly. My body has remained in this armchair and has, I regret to observe, consumed in my absence two large pots of coffee and an incredible amount of tobacco. After you left I sent down to Stamford’s for the Ordnance map of this portion of the moor, and my spirit has hovered over it all day. I flatter myself that I could find my

way about.”

“A large scale map, I presume?”

“Very large.” He unrolled one section and held it over his knee. “Here you have the particular district which concerns us. That is Baskerville Hall in the middle.”

“With a wood round it?”

“Exactly. I fancy the Yew Alley, though not marked under that name, must stretch along this line, with the moor, as you perceive, upon the right of it. This small clump of buildings here is the hamlet of Grimpen, where our friend Dr. Mortimer has his headquarters. Within a radius of five miles there are, as you see, only a very few scattered dwellings. Here is Lafter Hall, which was mentioned in the narrative. There is a house indicated here which may be the residence of the naturalist—Stapleton, if I remember right, was his name. Here are two moorland farm-houses, High Tor and Foulmire. Then fourteen miles away the great convict prison of Princetown. Between and around these scattered points extends the desolate, lifeless moor. This, then, is the stage upon which tragedy has been played, and upon which we may help to play it again.”

“It must be a wild place.”

“Yes, the setting is a worthy one. If the devil did desire to have a hand in the affairs of men.”

“Then you are yourself inclining to the supernatural explanation.”

“The devil’s agents may be of flesh and blood, may they not? There are two questions waiting for us at the outset. The one is whether any crime has been committed at all; the second is, what is the crime and how was it committed? Of course, if Dr. Mortimer’s surmise should be correct, and we are dealing with forces outside the ordinary laws of Nature, there is an end of our investigation. But we are bound to exhaust all other hypotheses before falling back upon this one. I think we’ll shut that window again, if you don’t mind. It is a singular thing, but I find that a concentrated atmosphere helps a concentration of thought. I have not pushed it to the length of getting into a box to think, but that is the logical outcome of my convictions. Have you turned the case over in your mind?”

“Yes, I have thought a good deal of it in

the course of the day.”

“What do you make of it?”

“It is very bewildering.”

“It has certainly a character of its own. There are points of distinction about it. That change in the footprints, for example. What do you make of that?”

“Mortimer said that the man had walked on tiptoe down that portion of the alley.”

“He only repeated what some fool had said at the inquest. Why should a man walk on tiptoe down the alley?”

“What then?”

“He was running, Watson—running desperately, running for his life, running until he burst his heart and fell dead upon his face.”

“Running from what?”

“There lies our problem. There are indications that the man was crazed with fear before ever he began to run.”

“How can you say that?”

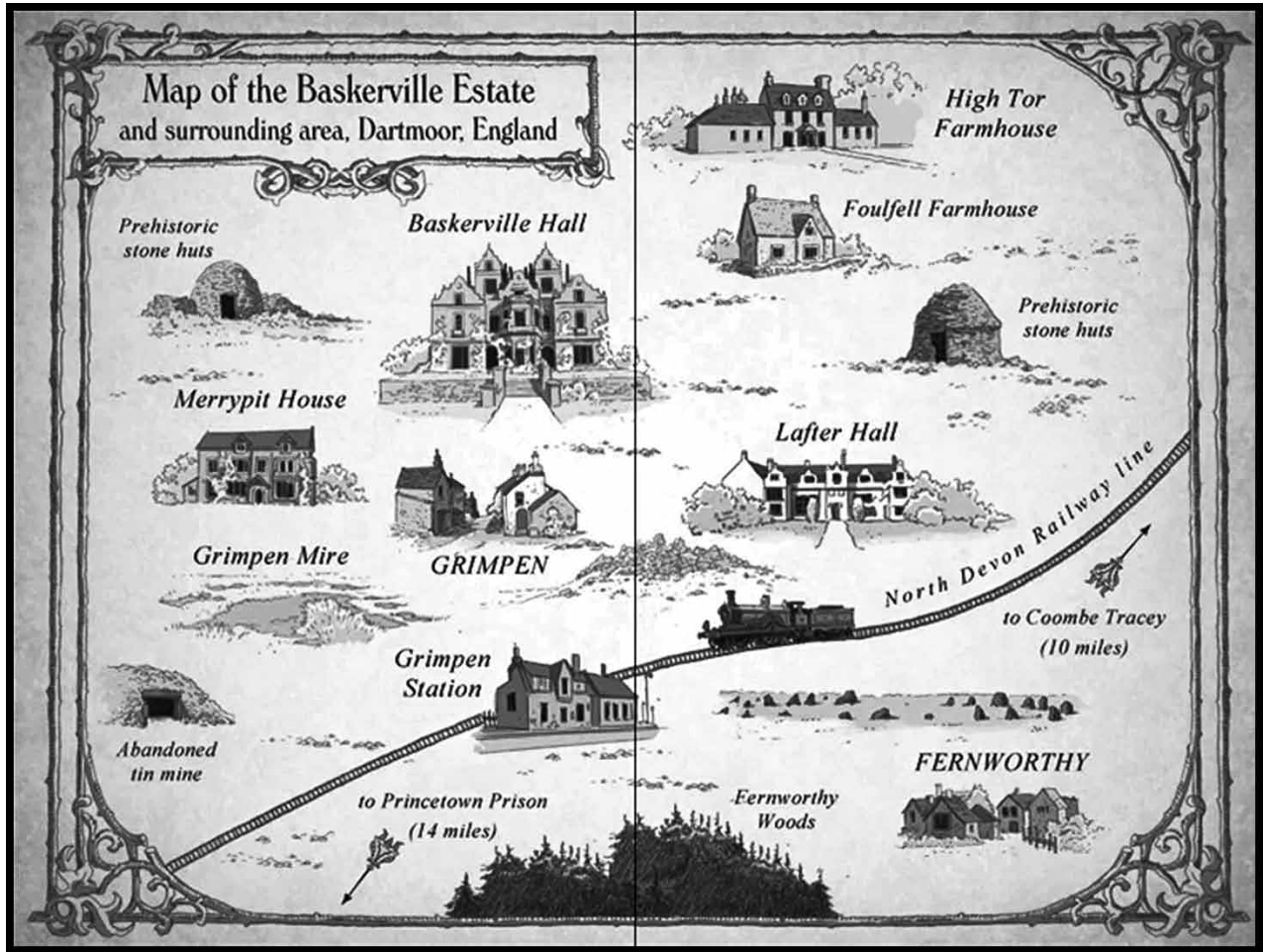
“I am presuming that the cause of his fears came to him across the moor. If that were so, and it seems most probable, only a man who had lost his wits would have run *from* the house instead of towards it. If the gipsy’s evidence may be taken as true, he ran with cries for help in the direction where help was least likely to be. Then, again, whom was he waiting for that night, and why was he waiting for him in the Yew Alley rather than in his own house?”

“You think that he was waiting for someone?”

“The man was elderly and infirm. We can understand his taking an evening stroll, but the ground was damp and the night inclement. Is it natural that he should stand for five or ten minutes, as Dr. Mortimer, with more practical sense than I should have given him credit for, deduced from the cigar ash?”

“But he went out every evening.”

“I think it unlikely that he waited at the moor-gate every evening. On the contrary, the evidence is that he avoided the moor. That night he waited there. It was the night before he made his departure for London. The thing takes shape, Watson. It becomes coherent. Might I ask you to hand me my violin, and we will postpone all further thought upon this business until we have



Russell Punter

had the advantage of meeting Dr. Mortimer and Sir Henry Baskerville in the morning.”

* * * * *

Chapter IV.
Sir Henry Baskerville

Our breakfast-table was cleared early, and Holmes waited in his dressing-gown for the promised interview. Our clients were punctual to their appointment, for the clock had just struck ten when Dr. Mortimer was shown up, followed by the young baronet. The latter was a small, alert, dark-eyed man about thirty years of age, very sturdily built, with thick black eyebrows and a strong, pugnacious face. He wore a ruddy-tinted tweed suit and had the weather-beaten appearance of one who has spent most of his time in the open air, and yet there was something in his steady eye and the quiet assurance of his bearing which indicated the gentleman.

“This is Sir Henry Baskerville,” said Dr. Mortimer.

“Why, yes,” said he, “and the strange thing is, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, that if my friend here had not proposed coming round to you this morning I should have come on my own account. I understand that you think out little puzzles, and I’ve had one this morning which wants more thinking out than I am able to give it.”

“Pray take a seat, Sir Henry. Do I understand you to say that you have yourself had some remarkable experience since you arrived in London?”

“Nothing of much importance, Mr. Holmes. Only a joke, as like as not. It was this letter, if you can call it a letter, which reached me this morning.”

He laid an envelope upon the table, and we all bent over it. It was of common quality, grayish in colour. The address, “Sir Henry Baskerville, Northumberland Hotel,” was printed in rough characters; the postmark “Charing Cross,” and the date of posting the preceding evening.

“Who knew that you were going to the Northumberland Hotel?” asked Holmes, glancing keenly across at our visitor.

“No one could have known. We only decided after I met Dr. Mortimer.”

“But Dr. Mortimer was no doubt already stopping there?”

“No, I had been staying with a friend,” said the doctor. “There was no possible indication that we intended to go to this hotel.”

“Hum! Someone seems to be very deeply interested in your movements.” Out of the envelope he took a half-sheet of foolscap paper folded into four. This he opened and spread flat upon the table. Across the middle of it a single sentence had been formed by the expedient of pasting printed words upon it. It ran:

As you value your life or your reason keep away from the moor.

The word “moor” only was printed in ink.

“Now,” said Sir Henry Baskerville, “perhaps you will tell me, Mr. Holmes, what in thunder is the meaning of that, and who it is that takes so much interest in my affairs?”

“What do you make of it, Dr. Mortimer? You must allow that there is nothing supernatural about this, at any rate?”

“No, sir, but it might very well come from someone who was convinced that the business is supernatural.”

“What business?” asked Sir Henry sharply. “It seems to me that all you gentlemen know a great deal more than I do about my own affairs.”

“You shall share our knowledge before you leave this room, Sir Henry. I promise you that,” said Sherlock Holmes. “We will confine ourselves for the present with your permission to this very interesting document, which must have been put together and posted yesterday evening. Have you yesterday’s *Times*, Watson?”

“It is here in the corner.”

“Might I trouble you for it—the inside page, please, with the leading articles?” He glanced swiftly over it, running his eyes up and down the columns. “Capital article this on free trade. Permit me to give you an extract from it.

“You may be cajoled into imagining that your own special trade or your own industry will be encouraged by a

Have you turned the case over in your mind?"

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"What do you make of it?"

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CHAPTER IV.

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SIR HENRY BASKERVILLE.

protective tariff, but it stands to reason that such legislation must in the long run keep away wealth from the country, diminish the value of our imports, and lower the general conditions of life in this island.'

"What do you think of that, Watson?" cried Holmes in high glee, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction. "Don't you think that is an admirable sentiment?"

Dr. Mortimer looked at Holmes with an air of professional interest, and Sir Henry Baskerville turned a pair of puzzled dark eyes upon me.

"I don't know much about the tariff and things of that kind," said he; "but it seems to me we've got a bit off the trail so far as that note is concerned."

"On the contrary, I think we are particularly hot upon the trail, Sir Henry. Watson here knows more about my methods than you do, but I fear that even he has not quite grasped the significance of this sentence."

"No, I confess that I see no connection."

"And yet, my dear Watson, there is so very close a connection that the one is extracted out of the other. 'You,' 'your,' 'your,' 'life,' 'reason,' 'value,' 'keep away,' 'from the.' Don't you see now whence these words have been taken?"

"By thunder, you're right! Well, if that isn't smart!" cried Sir Henry.

"If any possible doubt remained it is settled by the fact that 'keep away' and 'from the' are cut out in one piece."

"Well, now—so it is!"

"Really, Mr. Holmes, this exceeds anything which I could have imagined," said Dr. Mortimer, gazing at my friend in amazement. "I could understand anyone saying that the words were from a newspaper; but that you should name which, and add that it came from the leading article, is really one of the most remarkable things which I have ever known. How did you do it?"

"I presume, Doctor, that you could tell the skull of a negro from that of an Esquimau?"

"Most certainly."

"But how?"

"Because that is my special hobby. The

differences are obvious. The supra-orbital crest, the facial angle, the maxillary curve, the—"

"But this is my special hobby, and the differences are equally obvious. There is as much difference to my eyes between the leaded bourgeois type of a *Times* article and the slovenly print of an evening half-penny paper as there could be between your negro and your Esquimau. The detection of types is one of the most elementary branches of knowledge to the special expert in crime, though I confess that once when I was very young I confused the *Leeds Mercury* with the *Western Morning News*. But a *Times* leader is entirely distinctive, and these words could have been taken from nothing else. As it was done yesterday the strong probability was that we should find the words in yesterday's issue."

"So far as I can follow you, then, Mr. Holmes," said Sir Henry Baskerville, "someone cut out this message with a scissors—"

"Nail-scissors," said Holmes. "You can see that it was a very short-bladed scissors, since the cutter had to take two snips over 'keep away.'"

"That is so. Someone, then, cut out the message with a pair of short-bladed scissors, pasted it with paste—"

"Gum," said Holmes.

"With gum on to the paper. But I want to know why the word 'moor' should have been written?"

"Because he could not find it in print. The other words were all simple and might be found in any issue, but 'moor' would be less common."

"Why, of course, that would explain it. Have you read anything else in this message, Mr. Holmes?"

"There are one or two indications, and yet the utmost pains have been taken to remove all clues. The address, you observe is printed in rough characters. But the *Times* is a paper which is seldom found in any hands but those of the highly educated. We may take it, therefore, that the letter was composed by an educated man who wished to pose as an uneducated one, and his effort to conceal his own writing suggests that that writing might be known, or come to be known, by you. Again, you will observe that the words are not gummed on in an accurate line, but that some are much higher than others. 'Life,' for example is

quite out of its proper place. That may point to carelessness or it may point to agitation and hurry upon the part of the cutter. On the whole I incline to the latter view, since the matter was evidently important, and it is unlikely that the composer of such a letter would be careless. If he were in a hurry it opens up the interesting question why he should be in a hurry, since any letter posted up to early morning would reach Sir Henry before he would leave his hotel. Did the composer fear an interruption—and from whom?”

“We are coming now rather into the region of guesswork,” said Dr. Mortimer.

“Say, rather, into the region where we balance probabilities and choose the most likely. It is the scientific use of the imagination, but we have always some material basis on which to start our speculation. Now, you would call it a guess, no doubt, but I am almost certain that this address has been written in a hotel.”

“How in the world can you say that?”

“If you examine it carefully you will see that both the pen and the ink have given the writer trouble. The pen has spluttered twice in a single word, and has run dry three times in a short address, showing that there was very little ink in the bottle. Now, a private pen or ink-bottle is seldom allowed to be in such a state, and the combination of the two must be quite rare. But you know the hotel ink and the hotel pen, where it is rare to get anything else. Yes, I have very little hesitation in saying that could we examine the waste-paper baskets of the hotels around Charing Cross until we found the remains of the mutilated *Times* leader we could lay our hands straight upon the person who sent this singular message. Hallo! Hallo! What’s this?”

He was carefully examining the foolscap, upon which the words were pasted, holding it only an inch or two from his eyes.

“Well?”

“Nothing,” said he, throwing it down. “It is a blank half-sheet of paper, without even a watermark upon it. I think we have drawn as much as we can from this curious letter; and now, Sir Henry, has anything else of interest happened to you since you have been in London?”

“Why, no, Mr. Holmes. I think not.”

“You have not observed anyone follow or

watch you?”

“I seem to have walked right into the thick of a dime novel,” said our visitor. “Why in thunder should anyone follow or watch me?”

“We are coming to that. You have nothing else to report to us before we go into this matter?”

“Well, it depends upon what you think worth reporting.”

“I think anything out of the ordinary routine of life well worth reporting.”

Sir Henry smiled.

“I don’t know much of British life yet, for I have spent nearly all my time in the States and in Canada. But I hope that to lose one of your boots is not part of the ordinary routine of life over here.”

“You have lost one of your boots?”

“My dear sir,” cried Dr. Mortimer, “it is only mislaid. You will find it when you return to the hotel. What is the use of troubling Mr. Holmes with trifles of this kind?”

“Well, he asked me for anything outside the ordinary routine.”

“Exactly,” said Holmes, “however foolish the incident may seem. You have lost one of your boots, you say?”

“Well, mislaid it, anyhow. I put them both outside my door last night, and there was only one in the morning. I could get no sense out of the chap who cleans them. The worst of it is that I only bought the pair last night in the Strand, and I have never had them on.”

“If you have never worn them, why did you put them out to be cleaned?”

“They were tan boots and had never been varnished. That was why I put them out.”

“Then I understand that on your arrival in London yesterday you went out at once and bought a pair of boots?”

“I did a good deal of shopping. Dr. Mortimer here went round with me. You see, if I am to be squire down there I must dress the part, and it may be that I have got a little careless in my ways out West. Among other things I bought these brown boots—gave six dollars for them—and had one stolen before ever I had them on my feet.”

“It seems a singularly useless thing to steal,” said Sherlock Holmes. “I confess that I

share Dr. Mortimer's belief that it will not be long before the missing boot is found."

"And, now, gentlemen," said the baronet with decision, "it seems to me that I have spoken quite enough about the little that I know. It is time that you kept your promise and gave me a full account of what we are all driving at."

"Your request is a very reasonable one," Holmes answered. "Dr. Mortimer, I think you could not do better than to tell your story as you told it to us."

Thus encouraged, our scientific friend drew his papers from his pocket, and presented the whole case as he had done upon the morning before. Sir Henry Baskerville listened with the deepest attention, and with an occasional exclamation of surprise.

"Well, I seem to have come into an inheritance with a vengeance," said he when the long narrative was finished. "Of course, I've heard of the hound ever since I was in the nursery. It's the pet story of the family, though I never thought of taking it seriously before. But as to my uncle's death—well, it all seems boiling up in my head, and I can't get it clear yet. You don't seem quite to have made up your mind whether it's a case for a policeman or a clergyman."

"Precisely."

"And now there's this affair of the letter to me at the hotel. I suppose that fits into its place."

"It seems to show that someone knows more than we do about what goes on upon the moor," said Dr. Mortimer.

"And also," said Holmes, "that someone is not ill-disposed towards you, since they warn you of danger."

"Or it may be that they wish, for their own purposes, to scare me away."

"Well, of course, that is possible also. I am very much indebted to you, Dr. Mortimer, for introducing me to a problem which presents several interesting alternatives. But the practical point which we now have to decide, Sir Henry, is whether it is or is not advisable for you to go to Baskerville Hall."

"Why should I not go?"

"There seems to be danger."

"Do you mean danger from this family fiend or do you mean danger from human beings?"

"Well, that is what we have to find out."

"Whichever it is, my answer is fixed.

There is no devil in hell, Mr. Holmes, and there is no man upon earth who can prevent me from going to the home of my own people, and you may take that to be my final answer." His dark brows knitted and his face flushed to a dusky red as he spoke. It was evident that the fiery temper of the Baskervilles was not extinct in this their last representative. "Meanwhile," said he, "I have hardly had time to think over all that you have told me. It's a big thing for a man to have to understand and to decide at one sitting. I should like to have a quiet hour by myself to make up my mind. Now, look here, Mr. Holmes, it's half-past eleven now and I am going back right away to my hotel. Suppose you and your friend, Dr. Watson, come round and lunch with us at two. I'll be able to tell you more clearly than how this thing strikes me."

"Is that convenient to you, Watson?"

"Perfectly."

"Then you may expect us. Shall I have a cab called?"

"I'd prefer to walk, for this affair has flurried me rather."

"I'll join you in a walk, with pleasure," said his companion.

"Then we meet again at two o'clock. Au revoir, and good-morning!"

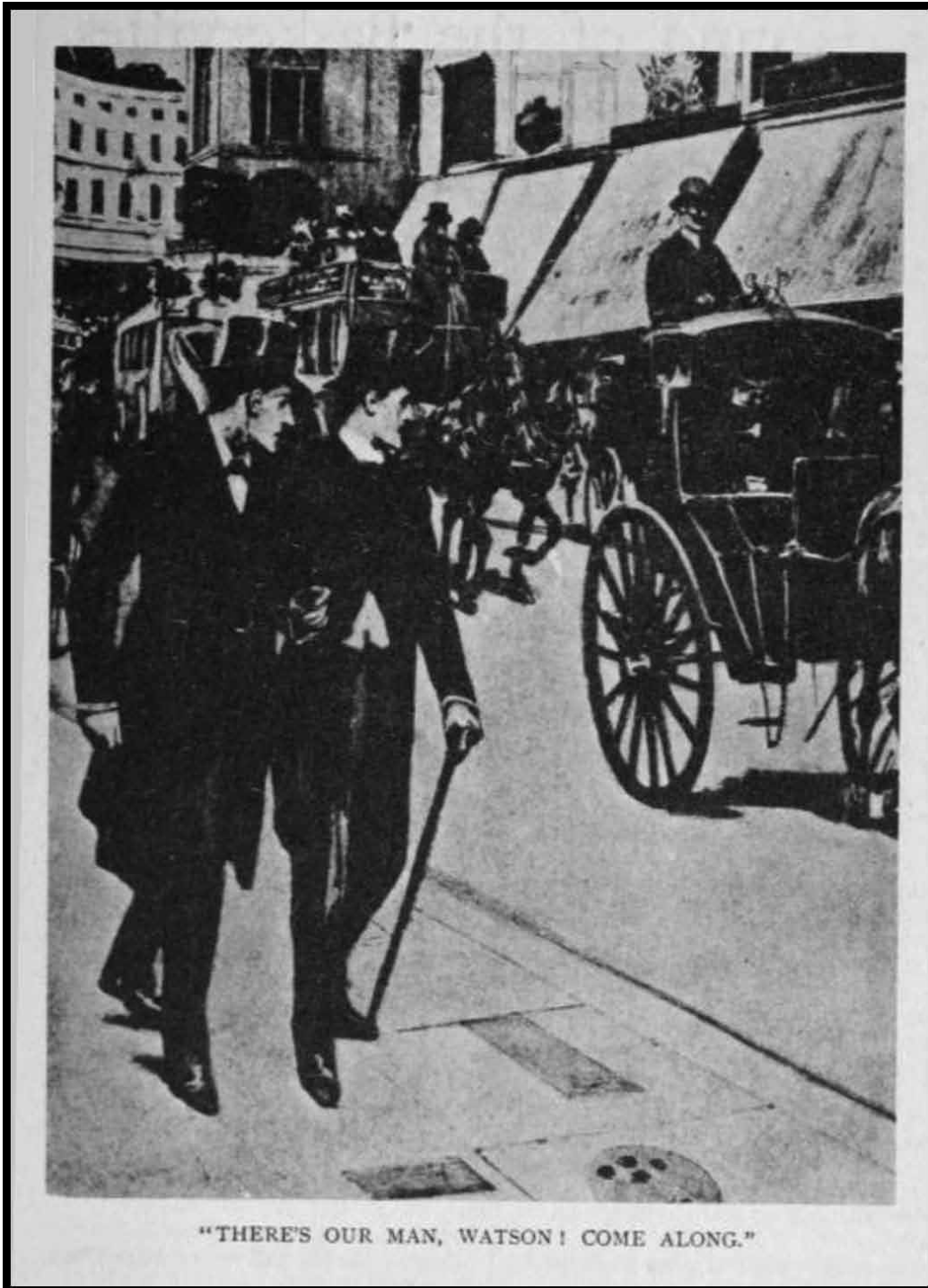
We heard the steps of our visitors descend the stair and the bang of the front door. In an instant Holmes had changed from the languid dreamer to the man of action.

"Your hat and boots, Watson, quick! Not a moment to lose!" He rushed into his room in his dressing-gown and was back again in a few seconds in a frock-coat. We hurried together down the stairs and into the street. Dr. Mortimer and Baskerville were still visible about two hundred yards ahead of us in the direction of Oxford Street.

"Shall I run on and stop them?"

"Not for the world, my dear Watson. I am perfectly satisfied with your company if you will tolerate mine. Our friends are wise, for it is certainly a very fine morning for a walk."

He quickened his pace until we had decreased the distance which divided us by about half. Then, still keeping a hundred yards behind,



"THERE'S OUR MAN, WATSON! COME ALONG."

Sidney Paget

we followed into Oxford Street and so down Regent Street. Once our friends stopped and stared into a shop window, upon which Holmes did the same. An instant afterwards he gave a little cry of satisfaction, and, following the direction of his eager eyes, I saw that a hansom cab with a man inside which had halted on the other side of the street was now proceeding slowly onward again.

"There's our man, Watson! Come along! We'll have a good look at him, if we can do no more."

At that instant I was aware of a bushy black beard and a pair of piercing eyes turned upon us through the side window of the cab. Instantly the trapdoor at the top flew up, something was screamed to the driver, and the cab flew madly off down Regent Street. Holmes looked eagerly round for another, but no empty one was in sight. Then he dashed in wild pursuit amid the stream of the traffic, but the start was too great, and already the cab was out of sight.

"There now!" said Holmes bitterly as he emerged panting and white with vexation from the tide of vehicles. "Was ever such bad luck and such bad management, too? Watson, Watson, if you are an honest man you will record this also and set it against my successes!"

"Who was the man?"

"I have not an idea."

"A spy?"

"Well, it was evident from what we have heard that Baskerville has been very closely shadowed by someone since he has been in town. How else could it be known so quickly that it was the Northumberland Hotel which he had chosen? If they had followed him the first day I argued that they would follow him also the second. You may have observed that I twice strolled over to the window while Dr. Mortimer was reading his legend."

"Yes, I remember."

"I was looking out for loiterers in the street, but I saw none. We are dealing with a clever man, Watson. This matter cuts very deep, and though I have not finally made up my mind whether it is a benevolent or a malevolent agency which is in touch with us, I am conscious always of power and design. When our friends left I at once followed them in the hopes of marking down their

invisible attendant. So wily was he that he had not trusted himself upon foot, but he had availed himself of a cab so that he could loiter behind or dash past them and so escape their notice. His method had the additional advantage that if they were to take a cab he was all ready to follow them. It has, however, one obvious disadvantage."

"It puts him in the power of the cabman."

"Exactly."

"What a pity we did not get the number!"

"My dear Watson, clumsy as I have been, you surely do not seriously imagine that I neglected to get the number? No. 2704 is our man. But that is no use to us for the moment."

"I fail to see how you could have done more."

"On observing the cab I should have instantly turned and walked in the other direction. I should then at my leisure have hired a second cab and followed the first at a respectful distance, or, better still, have driven to the Northumberland Hotel and waited there. When our unknown had followed Baskerville home we should have had the opportunity of playing his own game upon himself and seeing where he made for. As it is, by an indiscreet eagerness, which was taken advantage of with extraordinary quickness and energy by our opponent, we have betrayed ourselves and lost our man."

We had been sauntering slowly down Regent Street during this conversation, and Dr. Mortimer, with his companion, had long vanished in front of us.

"There is no object in our following them," said Holmes. "The shadow has departed and will not return. We must see what further cards we have in our hands and play them with decision. Could you swear to that man's face within the cab?"

"I could swear only to the beard."

"And so could I—from which I gather that in all probability it was a false one. A clever man upon so delicate an errand has no use for a beard save to conceal his features. Come in here, Watson!"

He turned into one of the district messenger offices, where he was warmly greeted by the manager.

"Ah, Wilson, I see you have not forgotten

the little case in which I had the good fortune to help you?”

“No, sir, indeed I have not. You saved my good name, and perhaps my life.”

“My dear fellow, you exaggerate. I have some recollection, Wilson, that you had among your boys a lad named Cartwright, who showed some ability during the investigation.”

“Yes, sir, he is still with us.”

“Could you ring him up?—thank you! And I should be glad to have change of this five-pound note.”

A lad of fourteen, with a bright, keen face, had obeyed the summons of the manager. He stood now gazing with great reverence at the famous detective.

“Let me have the Hotel Directory,” said Holmes. “Thank you! Now, Cartwright, there are the names of twenty-three hotels here, all in the immediate neighbourhood of Charing Cross. Do you see?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You will visit each of these in turn.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You will begin in each case by giving the outside porter one shilling. Here are twenty-three shillings.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You will tell him that you want to see the waste-paper of yesterday. You will say that an important telegram has miscarried and that you are looking for it. You understand?”

“Yes, sir.”

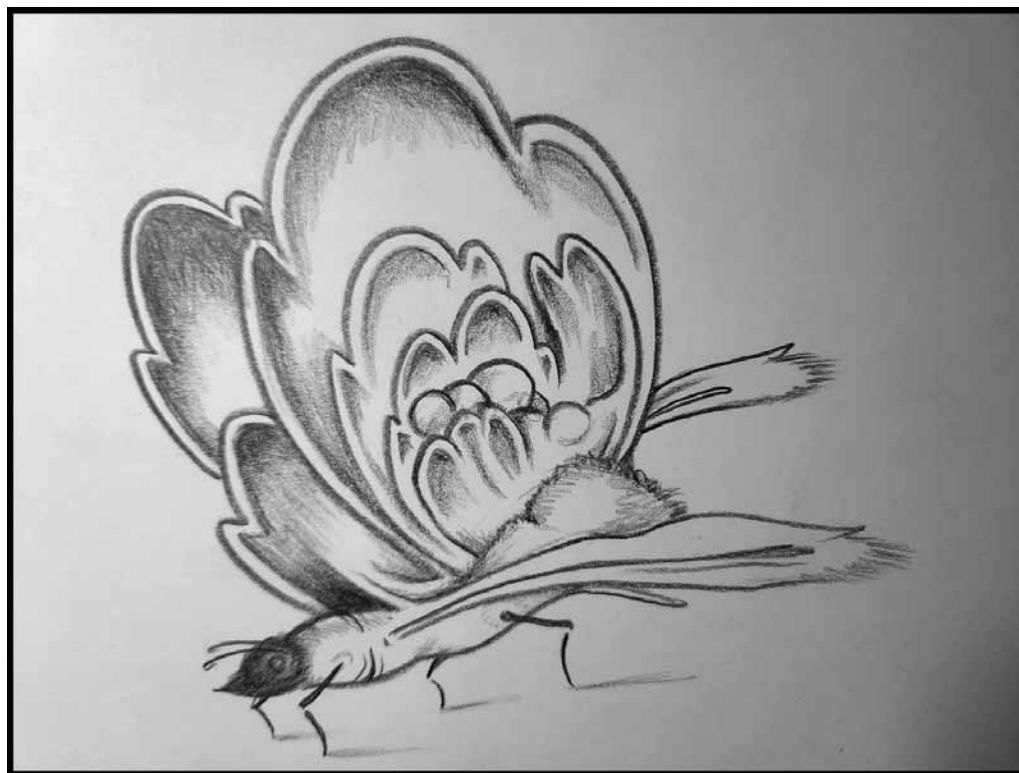
“But what you are really looking for is the centre page of the *Times* with some holes cut in it with scissors. Here is a copy of the *Times*. It is this page. You could easily recognize it, could you not?”

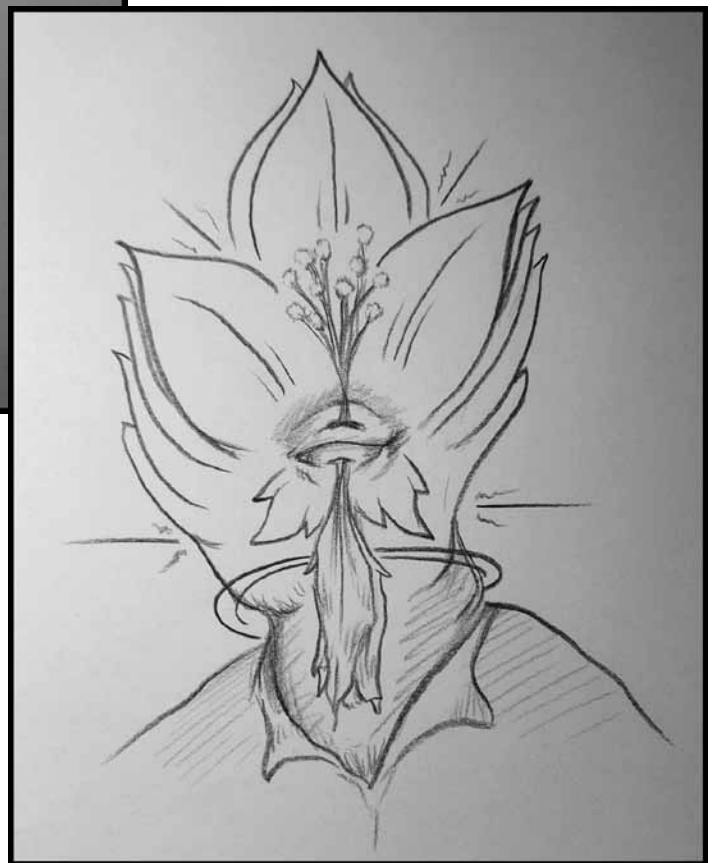
“Yes, sir.”

“In each case the outside porter will send for the hall porter, to whom also you will give a shilling. Here are twenty-three shillings. You will then learn in possibly twenty cases out of the twenty-three that the waste of the day before has been burned or removed. In the three other cases you will be shown a heap of paper and you will look for this page of the *Times* among it. The odds are enormously against your finding it. There are ten shillings over in case of emergencies. Let me have a report by wire at Baker Street before evening. And now, Watson, it only remains for us to find out by wire the identity of the cabman, No. 2704, and then we will drop into one of the Bond Street picture galleries and fill in the time until we are due at the hotel.”

To be continued in Cenacle | 125 | June 2024

* * * * *

Abandon View







Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Labyrinthine [a new fixtion]

Part Twelve

"I tell you, there are more worlds
and more stars to them,
than you will think of in many years!"
—George Mac) Donald
Lith, 1875

xxxii.

Compelled & compelling to clarify, & get down to work. And to make it matter as always.

You see, I can tell best of all, how *happy-gone*, how *artstoned* I am—

My Art carries with me from long-past travels, places, faces, days, years—within this work, comfort, excitement, trust—

Attic Study, aka “La Nook,” because Beloved in her armchair, & a better night than awhile—reading *Dune* earlier, audiobook on headphones too—Charles Lloyd funky ’60s jazz—live in Soviet Union—it & him both long passed—yet the recorded concert remains, long if not ever remains—

Many Musics notes—*Bags End News* notes—*Creature Tale* notes—& thus arrive here to these pages—

They ask for something new—
And return also to things past—
Raising up high again lovely uncertainties—

And a phrase, from an old *Dream Rap*:
World Wide Conspiracy.

Enough? No. Worlds Wide Conspiracy? *Hm.*

Fragments? OK. Try that.

Cosmic Early goes through the green-&-gold curtain on the Thought Fleas’ Rutabaga Festival &

Fleastock Lower Talent Show Stage—known talent that he is the tattered Gentleman Author of *Aftermath* & *Turnpike* & maybe other fine tomes—intending to find his hidden talent—

None can know where entering through the curtain will bring them—or what talent lies within to be revealed—

He comes to a . . . *White Room*.

OK. Hm.

Featureless. Worse, he starts to find it hard to breathe. Like it's pushing in on him.

Unthinking, he crouches low, & pushes up, like gathering the encroaching air itself as momentum to hit the ceiling *hard, hard. Again. Again.*

And, no kidding, the top *pops off* the White Room, & floats, weightless & peaceful, like a cloud, away.

Cosmo pulls enough wall down to climb over. Not anywhere yet but feeling more *possible* about all this—

The ceiling cloud has parted with a handful of its stuff still loose on the ground. Cosmo scoops it up.

Soft, warm, not living per se but also not quite inert—

But his having no specific idea, the White Room stuff does not mold to a specific form. Cosmo does the best thing he can do: he stops half-ass trying & simply walks on—the stuff agreeably stays in his grasp—*waiting? napping?*

* * * * *

Try another.

Where is the rest of this book? All those characters & narratives before the *Great Grand Braided Narrative* [*Gr. Gr. Br. N.* for friendly] took over?

I think: waiting. Somewhat patient at least.

Is this *Worlds Wide Conspiracy* what braids back to them?

I think so. I think much of *Lx* awaits this braiding work.

Forward, *hence*, includes *heretofore*. No other way.

[*What now?*]

Always the question, that, & the moment's full & fragmented knowing—

What's not here, what cannot be sensed or known about now—



Is this why need for a *World Wide Conspiracy*? To be here & now, totally, but also elsewhere too? Something maybe to this—

But to what end? End to loneliness, ignorance? Difference not a weapon or a flaw but a *strength*, a wildly wonderful *strength*?

I don't have to be who you are, exactly, or where you are, right now, or even close—

I just have to reach out to you & feel you there, & thus here too—

This isn't technology, precisely, or magick, or built-up sentiment & emotion, not exactly or solely each of these—

More a braid of them all, & more, living touch, near & far, till these are facts, words, not walls, not borders, not chasms—

xxxii.

Is continuity simply the next page, the next section, that enough to connect back, & onward?

Barely, let's say. But let me also say that for a work of Art to matter most, *it must matter most now*—

I find this book right now fragmented, by my focus & attention mostly elsewhere—I'm not sure if it has more to do right now in the *Great Grand Braided Narrative*, or maybe to long further on down the road? *World Wide Conspiracy*?

Worlds Wide Conspiracy?

Yes, all that. But, again, more barely than fully—

Where look *now* on *these* pages—?

Part of me wonders the next new narrative, setting, character, etc., while part of me looks back, more curious than sentimental but some of each—

Like wanting to dive down deep in familiar waters, yet come up with a new treasure—narrative, setting, character, etc.

I travel with many of all of these, & long fondness—

And a realization that I could not really write like I did then or will hence. Black pen is ever now.

Do my dice & coins used here sometimes await a near coming coin toss? I think *yes, probably*.

But also: *how toss them now? How keep it interesting, not old?*

These pages, this notebook, its many kin, this black pen, its many kin, each & all tend me when I get back here—*being here* is *never* the question. *Getting here* sometimes is.

I've avoided committing to the next issue of *The Cenacle* not because there won't be one—I *know* there will be—

It's more like what sometimes one does with rechargeable batteries for long term health—let them run all the way down, then charge them up again. I'm letting the current one do this—*Cenacle* | 122 | April 2023 | 28th Anniversary Issue.

Letting it finish—by promotion, by printing, by archiving—& then examine what next. Could be the draining all that is needed, but I don't really know.

Art needs honesty—the honest struggle for it—perpetually, not once & done—

What I need to do is have at precisely in this moment the Art I need to do—assess, confirm, revise if need be—

I trust always that *Lx* can handle whatever wild or dull I bring to a page's moment—save neglect.

Do I neglect this book?
This “New Fixtion”?
Is it all it can possibly be right now?

I can't say for certain.
Just that I want it to be.

And that all sums it. Maybe *Lx* belongs in the burbling now of the *Gr. Gr. Br. N.*—from some angle I don't know yet?

Does it?
Best when eager & unknowing.

Ask: here: who else is in the audience of the *TripTown*-in-Dreamland production of:

The Tangled Gate Mythopoeia?

or is it called

The Great Grand Braided Narrative?

Let's sit in a far corner of the bleachers, up high, considering what-all this might be—

Asking questions like:

- ★ Wasn't *TripTown* some kind of TV show?
- ★ Has it been re-created as what looks like a live production set somewhere up a tall, tall tree in the Dreamland White Woods?
- ★ Or is this entirely somehow *an episode of TripTown*, seen at some point on TVs far & wide?

We listen in on conversations & what all we might hear to learn more:

- ★ *The Creature Tale* is passing through here, via most of its current characters being present—including 4 Brother-Heroes, 4 Famous Travelers, Algernon Beagle, Princess Crissy, & others—

- ★ *Dream Raps* too—its current main character just arrived—He came uncertainly through that door over there—someone shouted out a “Welcome!” to him—
- ★ Algernon Beagle being here means *Bags End News* will recount some of all this, no doubt—

Neither *Many Musics* nor the Great Heroes of Yore are here, yet—so that’s the *Gr. Gr. Br. N.* inventory—4 of 6—

I can’t help but think here will lead to the 6 Brother Heroes’ reunion—this is final prelude to that—

“What are you writing up there?”

“A book?”

“What kind? Your biography?”

“Yah, sorta.”

“You like the show so far?”

“I just got here.”

“Well, wait & see. Welcome to *Trip Town*, by the way! I like to tell everyone that.”

“Thanks.”

I’m distracted just as this strange fellow appears on stage with some kind of tool in his hand. He is very fancily dressed, some kind of home-made tuxedo? Or one sewn from many scraps? And he starts to recite a poem, I think, in a tongue I don’t know, when something distracts me.

I hear what surely is cackling over to my right, & there half-hid in the shadows are not 1 or 2 but 3 little black & white pandy bear Imps! Nobody else seems to notice them.

Since I don’t know the poet’s tongue, if poet he be, I leave my seat to go & see about those Imps.

Tho the stage is brightly lit, these Imps are off in a shadowy corner. I would not have noticed them at all weren’t it for their cackles.

And I know they were not calling me. Imps rarely do that. Still, I wonder if this bit of action is just for me. Maybe I would like that. *Lx* gets its own piece of this strange action.

I sort of walk low & slow to where they are gathered. But they don’t spook at all. Something has their attention; not easy to keep for long.

I hover gently near & see that it appears to be a small round lens in the wooden floor itself. And one can shift it round to view different . . . *some things?*

They let me a little nearer & I peer hard to see . . .

- ★ *Shift!* Abe’s Beach of Many Worlds down there!
- ★ *Shift!* Princess Crissy’s Royal Throne Room in Imagianna!
- ★ *Shift!* Algernon Beagle’s Milne’s Porch in Bags End!

There are more but the Imps start to cackle madly & shift blurringly with their tiny fingers!

Then, one by shocking one, they leap into the lens & are gone!



Well, I keep studying the lens for the longest time, though I find when I turn it, no images reveal to me. Does it only work for Imps?

Then I hear a voice behind me & look up to see a fellow standing there & smiling at me. He looks fairly young, tho some of his hair is grey. Dressed like he is a kind of long-distance Traveler.

“I heard cackles over here. You got Imp troubles?” he asks, half laughing.

I smile & shake my head. Then I motion him to kneel down with me, & I explain the embedded lens, & how the Imps turned it, turned it, faster, faster, & were suddenly gone.

He studies the lens, now inert. I can tell he believes me, but he just nods friendly again, & climbs back up those bleachers to I think a group of his friends, including a lovely-looking little Beagle. Algernon? Am I forgetting things here?

The embedded lens is not reactivating or whatever, no matter how I wait & stare. I am about to stand up & figure what next when something low & powerful sweeps through the Pavilion.

A force. *O, such a great force.* I lie on the ground, low as I can make my tall, clumsy body do.

Like a land wave? Um? What’s the word? I *know* it.

Wobble? I am twice freaked by what is happening & my somehow receding memory.

Then I realize: I’m *still* holding onto that embedded lens in the floor. More than before; like I’m sinking into it?

The, um, *Wobble* is getting *stronger*. I feel it pulling me, wishing to move me *here* to *elsewhere*.

But I hold on to that lens.

I feel my hand sink in . . . now my arm . . . how? And I *stop resisting*.

Somehow I sloop inside the um, lens.

With a *pop!*

Two things occur to me.

I am safe.

I remember nothing.

xxxiii.

OK, take a pause here, little or less so for however much it takes.

It was hardly a handful of days after that previous passage that I was suddenly & cruelly dismissed my treasured payjob of 3 years. Yah. *Again.* Jobless. *Again.* On the hunt. *Again.* Near 3 full weeks of the humiliating ass shake for work. And still going.

That didn’t prevent new pages in this book; I’ve been at *Bags End News* daily devoted this month’s run

of days. *Lx* arrived to a good point in the *Gr.Gr.Br.N.* for pausing to let *BEN* catch up. Finally, it has.

And the question has been nudging at me: *why not write on here?* I even have some good dream journal content to work with.

Answer: no reason in the world.

In truth, I need this book more than ever. Its freedom to write whatever I will, en route with a narrative or not. Thus, here, now.

And thus? Dig a little deeper into this moment. Attic Study. 9:27p.m. 81.3°F. 38% relative humidity. Portable air conditioner going.

On the Attic Radio is a playlist mix from jazz great Sonny Rollins' 1960s albums. *Wonderful.* I prefer it up here in the autumn & winter but the AC & fan & other AC balance out enough to make summer more doable too.

The pandemic has gone nowhere. Yet the masses have let themselves be lied into thinking all is well. Which it isn't. I wish I had something to write about this hopeful. I don't.

Tomorrow I mail out the print copies of *Cenacle* | 122 | April 2023 & *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 20 | 2018 *Annual.* Update the archives & call the long work on both done.

Blink once, breathe twice, start into *Cenacle* | 123 | October 2023 & *SPS* | 21 | 2019 *Annual.*

Is there a meaningful me outside of this work?

*Lx, Many Musics, Dream Raps,
Creature Tale, Great Heroes of Yore,
Bags End News?*

SpiritPlants Radio? *Within's Within?*

*Cenacle? Sampler? RaiBooks?
Burning Man Books?*

ElectroLounge?

There's what I would call the *rest of me.*

Best of it loves KD & tries better than worse to take care of her in myriad ways. She does for me too, but *so much better.*

There are people I still know, at a distance. Long-time friends, good souls. Do I really matter to any of them? Somewhat. As much as perpetual distance allows, I suppose.

And payjobs? Sending out 10+ resumes *every fucking day* because two lunatics robbed me of mine? Poisoned my workplace, then shoved me out the door? Told me I was a worthless piece of shit to boot?

Honestly? We'll all be buried or dust in a timeframe the size of a microbe compared to the universe. If any kind of afterlife, they'll get their share of dark judgment. Me surely mine.

But for now, *fuck them from afar as possible.*

What I care to do is this work, this black pen, this white lined paper.

Payjobs, from my paper route on, have ended bad for me, nearly every time, in countless ways. I need to give a *large fuck less*. Can I do this?

What amazes me is that no matter *how hard* I try, most times, how much I over-achieve whatever is expected, they end suddenly, badly.

I'm not alone in this. The marketplace chews up & spits out. *That's the simple truth.*

Every job I ever left, whatever company, not a beat missed. Each company moved on. I hit the *all-too-familiar* bricks.

So, in sum, fuck you, former employer. I don't wish you well. *Not now. Not yet. Maybe never.*

*I hope your stock tanks.
You stole my livelihood.*

Like others, this will matter less in time. Especially when I have a new master to serve. Even better, when I retire & *Art fully possesses my days.*



To be continued in Cenacle | 125 | June 2024

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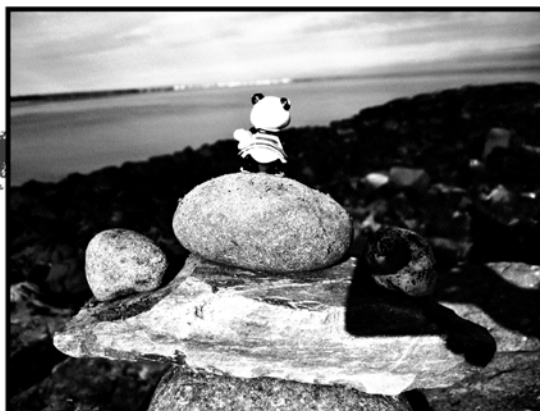
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Notes on Contributors

AbandonView lives in the American Rust Belt. His artwork appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Your new artwork shows that you are as brilliant as ever! More of his work can be found at: <http://purigare.tumblr.com>.

Algernon Beagle lives in Bags End. He is the Editor guy for *Bags End News*. Delightful books made from the stories in his delightful newspaper appear regularly in *The Cenacle*.

Charlie Beyer lives in New Castle, Colorado. His prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. He promises that the story in this issue will be the first in a “whole series of urban treasure stories” he has in mind. More of his writings can be found at therubyeye.blogspot.com.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1859, & died in Crowborough, Sussex, England in 1930. He was the author of four novels and fifty-six short stories about the legendary detective Sherlock Holmes & his boon companion, Dr. Watson.

ElectroLounge Forums is a discussion community for contributors to *The Cenacle*, found at electrolounge.boards.net. Writers, artists, photographers, & readers are encouraged to request a membership (no charge) & visit these forums to meet, & perhaps join, those whose works fill the pages of *The Cenacle*.

Judih Weinstein Haggai passed on October 7, 2023, on the first day of the Israel-Hamas conflict. Her poetry will ever appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Her 2004 poetry RaiBook, *Spirit World Restless*, can be found at: scriptorpress.com/raibooks/spiritworldrestless. She also hosted the excellent radio show of the same name on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com).

Jimmy Heffernan lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. His prose & poetry appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. His poem in this issue is included in *Multiverse: A Book of Poems*, published in January 2024 by BookBaby. Congratulations on your new book!

Nathan D. Horowitz lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Chapters from his epic work-in-progress, *Nighttime Daydreams*, appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Book 2 of his published quadrilogy of *Nighttime Daydreams (Bat Dreams)* was published in 2019. He hosts the excellent radio show “Nighttime Daydreams” on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com). Nathan has also become quite the master of AI graphic art, as shown in this issue!

Colin James lives in western Massachusetts. His poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Recovering from recent health challenges, but already writing new poems.

Sam Knot lives in rural France. His poetry, prose, & artwork all appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Excited to be featuring his terrific *Unknot24* series in this & coming issues this year. Visit samknot.com for more of his work.

Tamara Miles lives in Elgin, South Carolina. Her prose & poetry & photographs appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. We dug up an older poem of hers to feature this time, & a fine treat it is.

Martina Reisz Newberry lives in Hollywood, California. Her poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Her poetry in this issue is included in *Beyond Temples*, published in April 2024 by Deerbrook Editions. The title for her poem “Bhava-Tanha” means “Craving for Existence.” More of her writings can be found at martinaneberry.wordpress.com.

Epi Rogan lives in Cork, Ireland, though she is originally from Alaska. Her fantastic photography appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. More of her work can be found at [instagram.com/pieorgan/](https://www.instagram.com/pieorgan/). We’re going to feature an interview with her in the coming year.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. Dreamed the other night I was dancing with you, in a kitchen somewhere, smiling & slow . . .

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. It is a relief to cross this year’s line with the first new issue of this journal, with vows for three more to come, as is preferred.

Louis Staebler lives in Bowling Green, Ohio. His wonderful photography appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. More of his work can be found at [instagram.com/louiestaebler](https://www.instagram.com/louiestaebler). His eye for photographing the visual is without a superior.

Timothy Vilgiate lives in Austin, Texas. His *Rivers of the Mind [A Novel]* is regularly serialized in this journal. Looking toward a time past graduate school when we can do more collaboration again. The radio version of *Rivers of the Mind*, an amazing work in any form, can be found online at riversofthemind.libsyn.com.

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