

## A Monument of Wonders Rock Gazing: Awareness Exercise #6

### Introduction:

In which the salient features of the Monument are enumerated, and the nebulous foundation fleetingly revealed.

And when he was come on high, even now at the decent of Mount Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for the almighty works that they had seen: Saying, Blessed be the King, that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven; and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Luke 19: 37-40

I was always resolved that I would never start this work with the pronoun I. But my teachers, whom I blame and honor as the chief perpetrators of this enormous farrago or scripture, advise, no, *pressure* me, to do otherwise. The I, they paradoxically assert, is both simultaneously equivocal and essential. They claim “it is the lifeline of the cosmos, winging its way through the psychode and bringing events to life as fleeting illusions.” This is the way they talk, and this is how they attempt (in a way that “I” too often have found unpersuasive) to explain why the headlines of the newspaper, which I have framed on the wall before me, manage to change, untouched, behind their glass facade. For example, a moment ago, this *Houston Chronicle* extra addition from September 11th, 2001, screamed “**ASSAULT ON AMERICA.**” But, if I perform certain vocalizations (sometimes scarcely conscious, sometimes even inaudible) it changes to a September 12<sup>th</sup> dateline, which reads “Gore Signs Historic Kyoto Accords.”

My teachers say that these changes are initiated by “linguistic reality manipulations” (their term, not mine), which have the effect of “rearranging the energy flux in the present earth-vector” — an irrational supposition, which the pregnant times clearly now have immaculately birthed as truth — a birth accomplished, as it appears, without the help of reason’s masculine sperm. My former doctors, often wrong, but never in doubt, have ceased trying to mask their befuddlement with slippery scientisms. Their former beliefs can no longer survive the incontrovertible and awesome mystery of my seeming immortality. Confronted with the subjective evidence presented to them by the mighty spirit of this new Golden Age, they have abandoned their hypothesis that my experiences of these transmutations were merely the after-effects of my now defunct brain tumor. Their story that a cancer had imprinted me (in some vague way that they were never fully able to account for) with parallel perceptual processors could never stand the test of their own logic. Either my body or the ironclad logic of their prognosis had to die. I continue to live, and live, to paraphrase a famous phosterian, ever so abundantly, *ergo*, iron vaporizes, and logic, at least their antique version of it, dies. Somehow the synapses of my brain, if I indeed still have a brain, can flip without warning from one sensory track to

another, plunging me into totally different sequences of events. This condition, the reader/listener might image, would be rather inconvenient, to say the least, would be, in fact, the symptom of a severe physiological or psychological disease. But the reader/listener would be wrong. Inconvenience, “disease,” if you will, is the result of discontinuities in our relationships — our relationships with others, with events, or with our own bodies and minds. But as I move about in past or future time vectors, or in parallel present ones, I experience no such disruptions. Those whom I encounter accept my presence as part of the fabric of their existence, and even my body, with its complete array of sensory apparatus, adjusts smoothly to every imaginable dislocation. I fantasize that it is rather like the leap of an electron from one orbital track to another around its nucleus of spectral forces. Now you see it, now you don’t, the intervals and the transitions being untraceable, the particle itself, a ghost. I would, I think, be unaware of these transitions, which my teachers claim are common to all humans, indeed, to all entities, were it not for the strange point-of-view these pages have foisted upon me. “Through words,” my teachers say, “we gain perspective.” Perhaps. But now my miseries and joys procreate in a thousand fictive directions at once, and I have no way to interrupt the process. But the reader/listener will crave biography here, and not the blather of malformed theory. They will want to know about the Awareness Exercise, “Rock Gazing”, and how such a seemingly innocuous activity could trigger so many collective upheavals. They will want to know how the Orbs of light descended, how the Oneness Temples, east and west, were built and to what purpose, and how so many of their sons and daughters are now being transformed by and into Cosmic Beings. They will want to know the mysteries of the psycode, the powers of the Mattermitter, and the enigmas of the language of the birds. They will want to know how the teachings of the Druids and Cathars were at last peacefully assimilated, how the prophecies of the Crystal Skulls manifested, and how the immense sufferings of World War II and the Stalinist and the Bush/Chaney eras were effaced, except as cautionary fictions. They will want to know how those four pornographic horseman made notorious by the misanthrope of Patmos: War, Famine, Disease and that pale rider, Death, were at last hobbled and how our beloved Earth averted an ecological meltdown. They will want to know how a degraded planet of urban slums became a planet of self-sustaining artist colonies, and they will want to know how we discovered, like our miraculous spiritual wayshowers, the plants, the secret of drawing nourishment and guidance directly from the Monad, Our Light and Lord. They will want to know, thirst to know, how we averted a nuclear holocaust and how we established contact with extra-terrestrial and interdimensional beings. They will certainly want to know how we escaped from the prison of time and how we discovered the fourteen patterns of everlastingness. They will want to know, they will crave to know, in that way of knowing which transcends the programmed machinations of the physical brain, how the experiences of one person (am I still one person?) with mere words, has managed to so radically alter our consensus histories. To satisfy that craving, I will attempt the fictionalization of compression. That is to say, I will try to re-enfold the proliferation of my manifold current selves, back down to a single I.

This is the day: 8 Ahau 3 Yaxin or as it is known in its former, toxic context, the 6<sup>th</sup> of August, the year 2000. We are in Houston, Texas, and it is ungodly hot. I walk into my

client's conference room, say "Good Morning" and start to sit down at the table with the others, when suddenly, from the window, an amber light erupts. My face is burning. I turn to shout: "Get out! It's happening again!" But I don't know what "it" is, and in the next instant my body goes weightless and I seem to fly across the room. Oh, this is a breathless flight choked with inexplicable images. I am like an insect with compound eyes, each module reflecting something so fantastic, so horrendous . . . hoards of revenants fleeing from some sudden and unimaginable catastrophe, burned skin hanging in loops from their naked bodies, their hands suspended aloft in pitiful supplication, a once life-giving river nearly solid with blast-debris and corpses . . .

I don't know. Maybe that was the first of it, those images, the lacerating pain, and that shattered and shattering Boschian vision of a place that was once a great city, suddenly erased by ghastly vapors, as if devoured in an instant by a desert of sickly yellow sand. Then there is fire. Fires. And then a black, sticky rain. And what a rain, a rain falling, falling and falling, but without dousing those voracious fires. A black rain that sticks to blasted burning buildings, blasted burning trees, blasted burning people. It keeps on falling, the rain. It keeps on and on, and, hand in demonic-hand with the fires, it clings to rubble, to leaves, to hands, to feet, to faces. And it can't be washed off. It can't be washed off.

My client says something to me. God knows what I answer. Yes? No?

Yes. I think that was the beginning of my dissolution, my initiation and passage from just another skin-encased mummy, an undead common mobile incarnate whose robotic movements help to comprise the generally accepted fiction, and the inception, the genesis, of my life as a . . .

Well, when I look back on it (an inaccurate spatial metaphor for something that may be spatial, but not in that commonly conceived unidirectional way) everything that I was, and still am when I return to that place, seems so small, so petty. And yet I cannot express what a feeling of compassion arises in me for that person, now so distant from me, now so terribly, blissfully near. . .

By the first week of what was then called August of the year 2000 (excuse the rash, retro nominalization) my life, my only life, was a mess. If happiness is a three-legged meditation stool supported by the triple ferrules of good work, good health and good relationships, my stool (may the reader forgive the scatological pun) was in the dumps. Now, if I adjust this linguistic lens carefully, prudently, just, just so, I can see him again, the innocent progenitor of my former impoverished, one-dimensional entity, his career, or rather his chief money-making scheme, as a small-business consultant, has hit the penultimate snag.

He has called his existence forth from the Divine plenitude through bloated speech and piffling suffering. Speak ghost, you poorest of phantoms, encumbered by incarnation, weighted down by those heaviest of garments: bones and flesh and blood and time. Say your life. Disgorge your obsession and make of your mess a redemptive tale. Harrow

these duteous, observant Scientists of Awareness who press their faces to this screen of moving lights. Let your descant inform them of the once narrow arrow of time, where ignorance foamed like a cauldronous wound with disaster:

How would the Daykeepers invest these events and personages with meaning: with a chant, a counting of seeds, through the ingestion of toad venom or a ritual with pom? Would a list help? What would be on the list; the disinhabitional effects of alcohol on the brain? the bad mojo of the scrambled four humors: glutamate, gamma aminobutyric acid, dopamine and serotonin? Would they describe my unraveling as an invasion by demons, the effect of an irresistible incantation summoning one of Forcus' or Flouros' obedient minions to trouble an inauthentic life? And what of Oedipal urges and Jungian archetypes? Of sunspot cycles? Or of Astrology? Was I unwittingly soaked beyond drowning by an interdimensional deluge? Or was my life pretzeled by some kink in space/time that strips its wayfarers of competence and will, and reduces them to mere zombies, whose quanta energy packets pop the wrong quip in the swollen, transparent bathysphere of time? History, especially personal history, is a massive, molten fiction, but a fiction, which has very real effects. Does it matter that I had invested a lot of time and effort in my only two clients, who both turned out to be disintegrating alcoholics, who both wound up stiffing me for several thousand dollars? The universe was no doubt trying to tell me something, but did I have the receptors to make sense of its memes? Perhaps I was actually responding appropriately, acting the aging and dense male demimondaine, who kept trying to peddle and piddle my vaporware's to the unappreciative and unmonied. What difference could it have made to those insistent amphibial presences, which lurk only nanometers away from the last outreaches of our normally encoded insanity, that one of my clients veered hourly, minutely, from grandiose empire building to incinerated bankrupt, or that his final implosion, like a skyscraper collapsing in its own footprint, would mirror the ground zero of our Collective financial and moral ruin? And why would those cosmic colossi, my blessed teachers, begin the scriptural tome of their intervention with the tragic-comic picture of my other client, terminating his executive career, running naked through an office park, fleeing, or so he imagined, the giant raptor of his telephone? Does the reader/listener even need to know this? I lost my footing in consensus reality because . . . "Because why?" asks the future, that child who always questions the parent for impossible explanations. Just because. Because. Does it matter at all that the temples of eternity are built on the shakiest foundations of the moment?

Telling phrase: "The universe was no doubt trying to tell me something". And now we are in the telling mode, lifted out of the darkness of singleness to the luminance of Oneness, where the I that we are observes the I that we were, not in a different time-past, but in a different mode of telling. See how the tenses shift and the kaleidoscope turns, colored crystals reconfiguring to make each moment of perception new and strange, each seeming to succeed the other, but all collected together, turning, flashing, returning, with

always the same elements, but never the same Mandela. But soft, the ghost would speak. So are we bound to hear.

But it does matter. It is, to be blunt, the very essence of matter. Because the universe was, is, trying to tell me, us, something. Because I was, am, an obtuse pupil, who missed, misses the most flamboyant signals entirely. Because I then went feverishly to work with a new client, hoping to recoup my losses. Because the new client was a combination retail nursery and landscape company. Because I was leveraging both equity and debt for a capital expansion. Because the feral intelligence is still alive in us. Because I had miraculously(?) procured even more money than the business plan called for. Because I was (unfortunately, fortunately?) beginning to seriously conflict with the owner. Because our daughters are in exile. Because the ink of the cash entry on the balance sheet was scarcely dry before he began boring more sinkholes for the money. Because the sun is growing angry with us. Because I raged. Because my client was a profligate. Because Adam Smith was a fool. Because the *deus ex machina* of economics is a sprocketed gear that shreds human brain tissue. Because I could never procure more money than he, we, could spend. Because . . . Because, we fought. We fought.

Note the disturbing ramifications and the bizarre use of the pronoun in that last phrase.

Is this when I first discovered that that mountain of garbage as monumental as the largest temple or mountain on earth is still but refuse, that the accretion of refusals, of things abused, of emotions denied, of the used-up before it is usefully spent is not only a history, but a being, an entity comprised of rejection and catastrophe, polluting the earth with his/her toxic excretions? No doubt my client and I were adding to that enormous pile while I wrangled with potential investors, bankers, lawyers, and all the other sycophants of contemporary business, and he went wildly about inflating one scarlet balloon after another. Was it then that I perceived the vast empire of the Tulpas, and began to fathom their first precept: that however gargantuan the mountain or monument, the odor-body which it exudes is far more enveloping and vastly more pervasive? Was that why my last client's sole, compulsive mind set was an addiction to that which he termed the "massive", a man whose every avenue of thought and perception led him to suppose that any methodology, which failed at a small scale of operations, would be bound to succeed at a larger one? No wonder this monument of words has grown so in volume and in influence, grotesquely spreading in time and space far beyond any of my most pretentious and infantile aspirations? Was this event the seed of a forest of mustard trees, mutated to enormities? The result of my work with the landscape company was dysfunction, but massive dysfunction. In a way, in a perversely American way, we did succeed. We did manage to coax the monster of growth out of his lair, and then we went madly caroming down the same superhighway that the nation's many dotcoms at the time were also pursuing towards oblivion. The mound of refuse and its stench arose, and what a mighty and portentous script it bellowed, its misshapen shadow a presentiment of even

more monstrosity to come! Yet before the business was sunk in that ever-rising, ever-expanding malodorous miasma, I was — sunk, that is. I was sunk. The owner, justifiably perhaps, bought out the remainder of my contract (to be paid — alas — over time). Thus, we parted ways, each content to pursue our own path to and through ruin, without the added noisomeness of being harassed by the other.

Seeing him, my former me, now, I think: “That is the way he thinks”, as if he could separate from his other selves. As if all of his Befores and Afters would add up to Being. As if there were a moral to his story. See, he who has won innumerable lotteries, he whose creativity has revitalized the economies of the planet and harmonized the world of finance with the health of nature, he who has built with his Divine Consort the Western Hemisphere’s great Oneness Temple, which, together with Amma and Bhagavan’s twin in the East, has vibrationally set into motion this current Golden Age, that one, this very me, at that time, lived in the house of paucity, and fretted about money.

I had but one other source of income. Count them: one, the intermittent staging of a seminar on ethics. The seminar, originally developed a decade before by Brandies University, made use of short pieces of literature as teaching tales to elucidate ethical complexities for business people and professionals. I and my partner, a saint of a fellow burdened with a cynic for an associate, would sweep in for a day, and with the help of Shakespeare or Tolstoy or some other genius of letters, would attempt to lead a group of twenty or so participants through the tangled mazes and whirling maelstroms of the human condition, as seen, of course, through the prisms of certain wondrous families of words.

Look. He is beginning to see. But his perversion leads him to perceive as “tangled, mazes and whirling maelstroms” that which is precisely patterned, crystal or crystalline. Where shines a palace of diamonds, each flat, atomically predetermined surface, translucent or clear, to him is a dead swamp suffocated by a mountainous pile of rotting brush. Yet how easily we are swept away by these metaphors, how fully they engulf us in their spin! The whirlings of waters are wild and whirling words, until . . . until . . . ah, but that understanding must emerge as the story emerges, emerge from personality fissures under the enormous pressure of the innumerable petty details amassed in that gargantuan never-to-be-mature infancy of trying to live a life of separation.

Our ethics seminar, as one worldly-wise advisor cautioned us, was somewhat like this entire narrative, “a thing for which there is much need, but no demand”. We discovered that getting grant money was like squeezing the udders of stones. Hard work. No pap. Rocks, rocks and more rocks. Income? We never got close enough to the hoard to awaken even the puniest of guardian dragons, so we became, as you may be, dear readers, the abused mendicants of neglected texts, an occupation despised above all others in many pernicious eras. Oh yes, the participants slathered us with mammarian praise, but their milk was blue and thin and not at all financially nourishing. Plus, a couple of prestigious clients liked our work so much that they infiltrated the seminar with moles to learn how to do it for

themselves. Nice work, huh, filching a seminar on ethics? Wonder what the karmic debt is on that little item? We might have sniffed them out, the moles, detecting the odor of mendacity as a combination of ink, ashes, and intestines clogged with those sulfurous gasses characteristic of undigested meat. But no, our noses were elsewhere focused — upon the heady fragrance of our own pronouncements, no doubt, rosy yellow Texas-sized hybrids whose bosomy perfumes obliterated our business savvy, if we ever had any. It would be fair, I guess, to say that there was something lacking in our approach, in so far as our cunning verborosities and Socratic inquiries seemed not to change many opinions, let alone reform any behaviors. The truth was, we were bleeding the program dry, either through our own dithering ineptitude (which I suspected) or through the thick-headedness or hard-heartedness of the participants (which I feared).

Like a man, who awakens at night, under the exquisite and peculiar, electrical, but calm, blue of a moonless sky that everywhere pours down an un-moon un-light, I always remembered the pseudo-shadow of that anniversary as a catastrophe that did not take place. Naked, wandering through a rambling mansion where all the other inmates are asleep, I see my simulacra sitting dreamily before a lit screen, surrounded by that exquisite and wonderfully apposite blue, having distractedly placed one pair of glasses over another, not noticing how the double correction has obscured or clarified his vision, and in that strange state of aloneness, electrified, un-moonstruck, he opens the channel to the Great Ones, and he writes.

I must confess that my partner and I cherished different ideas about presentation. These differences inevitably led to more confusion than clarity, not perhaps the best approach, when one is dealing with issues, which are inherently unclear and confused to begin with. Frank, filled with kindness, with kinship, always sought to increase rapport among the participants. He wanted them to understand and empathize with each other more — well, for want of a better term — more “maternally”. And is that not the nature of the moon? Even when she is absent? Consequently, he spent his time as a facilitator, smoothing sharp edges, bridging gaps, negotiating tentative connections, healing wounds. My approach was pointier. Misanthrope that I was, like an angry troll clamoring up from the density of middle-earth, I glared around at the business, politics and professions in the country at that time, and thought that there was already too much agreement, but around the wrong precepts: those of pride, of greed, of self-aggrandizement, and so on *ad nauseam*. Thus I postulated unsolvable riddles, and exacted punishment from those who could not answer them. I rampaged through the room ruthlessly exposing ugly assumptions, picking scabs and fights, striking my metaphorical swords together to make the steel spark blue. Like some latter-day Old Testament prophet robed in a designer suit and shod in fine Italian shoes, I bolstered my verbal sorties with a secular scripture, and thus armored and weaponed, I assailed the citadels of the participants’ most cherished beliefs, making myself wildly unpopular in the process. The multiple images engendered by those glasses, have only multiplied with more nocturnal illuminations as this profusion of words and stories has expanded, and so the moon of this moonless

night, inside and outside, grows ever rounder, ever more full and ever more void of light.

He is frank with himself. It is an honest ghost.

Needless to say, ours was a match, perhaps made in heaven, but played out in hell. While Frank coddled, I prodded, and the seminars lurched fitfully, first towards the apotheosis of forgiveness, and then towards the abyss of atonement. The effect was like being thrust into some living Boschian triptych, the left and right panels, one composed of infernal bizarreness, the other of celestial bizarreness, unreconciled by any central vision, the middle panel having been vandalized and effaced, the dark madness of cynicism and the giddy madness of idealism forever split by a dividing and encroaching desert, stark post-post modern angst in the midst of baroque enormities. For some reason, after one or two seminars, the programs always fizzled out in insalient, unsagacious sibilants. Or as the Germans might say, we were too much subsumed in too much schieße. We were not asked back. We were not given referrals. Also, I had the insane proselytizing notion that we should get out of academia, and into the “real” world of real Korporate Amerika. One, because that’s where they kept the real money, and two, because that’s where they kept the real criminals. But our attempts to sell ethics *cum* Shakespeare to companies like Enron were (who would a’ think it) rebuffed, their motto seemingly being “nothing is either good nor bad, but profits make it so.”

Oh dutiful observers, compassionate co-creators, can you not see how the story enriches itself, while impoverishing its author?

I had never made much money, and now I was making less. I had never fit in well, and now I had made myself, in the business world at least, a kind of pariah. As the reader/listener might guess, these developments in my work had a ruinous effect on the other two ferrules of my three-legged happiness stool. The pressures of my “career” (a euphemism if there ever was one) began to twist and warp my health as well. I had always been plagued by allergies — and the Houston of that time — with its refineries, molds, traffic, dust mites and pollens, was the allergen capitol of America. The summer of 2000 had been brutal by all accounts: smoky, hazy, blisteringly hot and drippingly humid, and thus I suffered through the latter days of my business associations in an agony of anger and suffocation. On top of my usual mucal extravaganzas — runny eyes and nostrils — I developed asthma symptoms that would periodically send me into blue-faced frenzied flailings. A couple of particularly spectacular episodes of this kind occurred while I was working. One erupted while I was presiding over a Board meeting at the nursery/landscape company, and the another, while I was facilitating one of our ethics seminars for a batch of slicked-down marketing grad students, teaching, in this last instance, of all things, *King Lear* and *The Death of Ivan Illyich*. In both cases, my diseased theatrics proved to be the exclamation point to an expletive that should have been deleted from my business endeavors, but which was in fact

the most expressive truth about them. In the interest of full-disclosure, I offer my sportive account of these incidents as a cautionary tale, perhaps to be filed under the heading: "Spleen, and Its Adverse Effects on the Human Respiratory System."

The weather enters the body and the sick man becomes the h-man. The crystallization has begun.

Medically, the events followed the predictable pattern: the leaf-shaped cartilage flap of the epiglottis slaps shut and a pressure balloons for the expectoration of a good cough. But in these fits, unfortunately, there is nothing to cough or cough up. This is only one of the body's many jokes on itself, its defense mechanisms during the attack acting more to intensify the danger, than to relieve it. Naturally (I choose this word derisively), vocal chord dysfunction rendered my further articulate participation in any business meeting or seminar moot, or rather mute, except for the colorful droolings and ejaculations spewed forth by a man dry-drowning in a desert of his own making. At this point, the green and fluid fields of cilia and Gobet cells in my trachea and bronchi are undergoing a potentially fatal and rapid form of ossification. The thin rivulets of mucus so essential to the process of successful respiration have now thickened to a crawl, the wavering fields of cilia freezing like cooling magma in a lava flow. Lights out for the alveoli, their little balloons deflated as the smooth muscles of the terminal bronchioles squeeze their lifelines closed, mucus obstructions and bronchospasms no longer allowing the blood to oxygenate or dump its poisonous load of carbon dioxide. Lots of alarm lights go flashing through the brain, which shuts down all higher functions and kicks into flight or fight mode, the amygdale flooding the emotions with black bile. Reacting in alarm to my desaturated blood, the homunculi in charge of oxygen/carbon dioxide parity pull the levers that increase my respiration rate. I pant like a mad dog, spewing out Co<sub>2</sub>, but I am still unable to increase oxygen levels. By now, I am in a full-blown panic. I toss papers and books ceilingward, roll my eyes demonically about the room, tear the air with my hands, and fly through space maniacally, knocking over chairs, easels, water glasses, etc. etc. etc. Meanwhile, my associates pursue me like hounds do a hare, bruising my back with their pummeling fists, grabbing my gut to Heimlich Maneuver me, and generally dogging the course of my terror and anger with a terror and anger of their own, wishing, no doubt, that I were dead, but also profoundly wishing that I would depart my noxious organ sack at home, on my own time . . .

. . . "my own time," that phrase, so off-hand, so mundane, so trite, has such a different meaning for me, for all of us, now . . .

Strange to say, that it was during these first attacks, that odd periods of lucidity would steal over me, like those, as far as I can determine, described by Dostoevsky before the onslaught of an epileptic seizure. I blanked out, but the blank, curiously enough, did not remain a blank, but began to fill with what I can only call personae, beings from another dimension, or from some hitherto hidden

recess of my own psyche. In the manner of a dream, in which we incorporate some element of waking reality, these visions, if that's what they were, in reverse fashion, begin to weave themselves into my waking world.

See how the Collective begins to recollect itself. So much was happening then, and now, but this is the version of history that sticks, that demands, above all the others to be related. For you and I, dear listeners and readers, the imaginative observers of this wild projecting glass, are related — related and relating. My story is yours, yours mine. Hear, listen, read. Do you not recognize the affinity? Do you not recollect the colorful culmination?

After my asthma episode at the Board meeting, I walked out onto the grounds of the nursery, reeking in my vomit-stiffened suit, and trying to steady myself before driving home. Everything seemed normal, albeit, rather glowing and enlarged. My focus on the exterior world was minimal and wavering at best, and as I wandered about, I eventually found myself standing before a pile of gray beach pebbles. Nothing paranormal about that, ornamental rocks are common inventory for a landscape company. But something odd happened to me before those stones. I heard, or I imagined that I heard, sounds leaking from them, like the sounds of a stadium or of an outdoor theater, washing across me from a vast distance. At first I thought someone must be talking to me, but when I turned around to see who it might be, I found myself alone, the hot, humid air slightly ashimmer, here and there, with what seemed to be little diaphanous plasma orbs. Yet, down an avenue of potted fruit trees, I glimpsed a movement, a sudden disappearance, that might have been a person, or else the wind. Suddenly, I was inundated by a white gushing of exhilaration. The plasma orbs fleshed out and rush towards me, distinct, if not fleshy faces hanging round me in the air, air that I was now breathing deeply and fully, in complete possession of its gift of life. I started to walk down the leaf-canopied avenue, when suddenly, from the green recesses, a hand darted out and grabbed my sleeve. Startled, I turned to see a small, scraggly-bearded man of indeterminate age, holding my suit coat with stubby fingers the color of potato skins. “Excuse me sir, do you have . . .” I now know (or I think I now know) that what he said was “a find”. But for many days after, I was sure that he had said something else.

This was the first bifurcation. But we anticipate ourselves. Back then (oh specious words), our sole perceived I was only a man sinking, accosted, perhaps, by only another sinking man. We knew nothing about the teachers, nor nothing about the coming attacks on the country, and nothing at all about the voices inside of rocks. The fuse of the improvised explosive device, however, had been lit, and the discharge was now inevitable.

“Ivan Ilyich’s life had been most simple and commonplace — and most horrifying.” That is how Tolstoy describes what most of us view as reality: ordinary life — family, house, job. How completely we are caught in the bell jar of this dimension, never noticing the immense possibilities, the immense number of entities, pressing against the glass. My teachers call that glass “hope,” that endless projection we make into the future, which somehow we imagine as something different and better than our present is, or our past has ever been. Many times since those first sojourns beyond the glass, I have asked myself the paranoid’s obsessive question: “Why me?” And the answer, unsatisfactory as it is, always comes back from my teachers, in the same way, no matter how often I badger them for a different response: “It is because you were (are) hopeless.” Then they quote one of what they call our “Earth Angels”: “It is only for the sake of those without hope, that hope is given.” Indeed. I never conceived of hopelessness as a virtue, or the epithet as a compliment. But perhaps in that first week of August in the 2000<sup>th</sup> year of our Lord, it was true. Christ knows I had a plentiful sack of reasons for my hopelessness. For as my business and health disintegrated, my homelife did as well.

The savior mercifully arrives as profane Time. . .

My wife and I were officially, at least, childless — here I could a tale unfold whose slightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, make thy two eyes like stars, start from their spheres, thy knotted and combined locks to part and each particular hair to stand an end like hairs upon the fretful porpentine — but something too much of this . . . Thus, for years, perhaps as a compensation, we both doted on a remarkable black cat, whose dictatorial nature and unearthly presence controlled our workaday lives.

And in the body of a blessed theomorph, the fragments are selflessly gathered . . .

On New Year’s Eve of the millennium, we were playing with our familiar, enjoying her leaps and antics as she chased a streamer tied to a stick, our Christmas gift. But the cat, Diva by name, changed our laughter to alarm, when she suddenly collapsed, and looked at us dull-eyed and resentful. When the bells of the new millennium sounded, we were at the emergency pet hospital, hearing the vet tell us about a suspicious lump that she felt in our beauty’s belly. After that, followed 7 months of agony as we watched our only joy deteriorate from the onslaught of cancer. We tried every conceivable remedy — traditional, non-traditional, magical, and wacky — but Death kept dragging our beloved closer and closer to His lair, and with her, our chained hearts. Our marriage had never been that strong (through no fault of my wife’s, I assure you), and now the added pressures of no-money, my deteriorating health, and Diva’s steep decline, strained our bonds past the breaking point. I am sure our breakup would have come sooner had either of us had the energy to initiate it. But to say that we took any comfort from one another would have been a 180-degree divergence from the truth. As we both fell into despondency, we took whatever energy or motivation

remained in ourselves as isolated individuals and harried each other with it. A pitiful, albeit a common enough spectacle: two birds wrangling in air, and plunging toward the ravenous flood below them, unable to understand how their conflict hastens their demise.

And now the compassionate plunge. Little Boy preceding Fat Man to plant the seed of doom and/or regeneration, the vision whelming the visionary with the victims of the coming catastrophe . . .

We begin to comprehend, although the past tense still betrays our nearly hopeless ingenuousness.

Somehow, on that last day, the day of my return from the breathless Board Meeting, and my encounter with that remarkable, potatoskinned man, Diva had escaped the house, and we couldn't find her.

So divinity must come and go on its own, regardless of our vain wishes.

While we were searching, we had deliberately left the doors to the house open, in hopes that Diva might return, and as a consequence, our antique air-conditioning unit had frozen solid. Now, the house was unbearably hot, and filled with mosquitoes and other night-critters. We slept that night, not for the first time in our marriage, in separate rooms. I had thrown a single sheet over the couch in the living room, and was lying alone, naked, in the dark, sweating and preyed upon by insects and night sounds. The city's perpetual drone of bugs, traffic and sirens whined in my ears. The sky's red glow infected the stifling room. Across from the couch, stood a large armoire, with an oval mirrored door. Lights from the streetlight in the front yard sneaked in through the picture window, and smeared a sanguine light on this speculum. That paltry reflected light crept across the room, and fed on my ruined body. After a time, I became aware of a low moaning sound, which at first I thought was coming from the bedroom, and was Mary Ann crying, but as I deepened my attention, I realized that the sound was being emitted from the mirror. There was a figure there, projecting almost three-dimensionally, me and not-me, staring out of the depths in agony. I was not asleep, or was I? I was not dreaming, but perhaps I was being dreamt. Whatever the case, I was certainly in a kind of stupor. This was the third visitation of the day, the first being from the wild man at the nursery, the second being that unspeakable vision, and this intrusion, even more than the previous two, thoroughly unnerved me. I looked at the mirror as if staring down into the depths of a dark and undulating sea, and what I saw there, beneath all of that fluidic accumulation of terror, was . . .

But we anticipate ourselves again, and this is a secret, which may, or may not, reveal itself, until these words, like waves, fully unscroll.