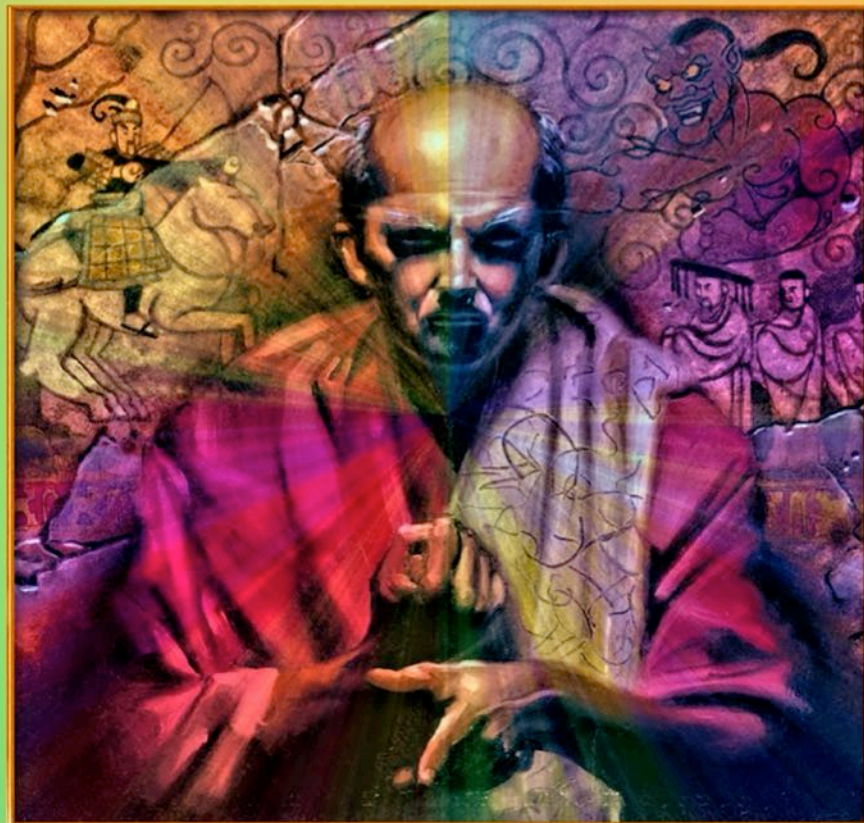


Butterflies
At the Edge
Of forever



Austin W. Torney

BUTTERFLIES AT THE EDGE OF FOREVER

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DeviantArt: Look under AustinTorney

Dedication

Farewell, Old Friend

*Poor Pluto's been banished to the underworld,
Charon rowing him to the Land of the Forgotten.
Schoolchildren petitioned for his return,
But he was voted off of the solar island.*

Preface

ToeQuestors discover the Secrets of the Universe, as well as the humorously dangerous implications that follow their possession of the Holy Grail of the genuine Theory of Everything. With the world's future hanging in the balance, they sharpen their wits and skills through the teachings of the learned Grand Masters, joining the World Intelligence Empire as operatives. It's comedic at times but meaningful and deadly serious at others.

Those who quest for the knowledge of everything have found much of it, and so they are pursued by their local intelligence agencies for this information. They take retreat in the up and coming World Intelligence Agency, into which some of the other organizations eventually merge, wherein they train, which experiences turn out to be grand adventures within themselves. Some go on to more ultimate adventures, many of which reflect the state of the world today, and its possible futures, involving terrorism, global warming, and nuclear happenings. The story is a smooth mix of wisdom, meaning, adventure, drama, humor, intelligence operations, and vision, wrapped into an astounding and astonishing tale.



Butterfly Effect Reference

The butterfly effect is a phrase that encapsulates the more technical notion of sensitive dependence on initial conditions in chaos theory. Small variations of the initial condition of a nonlinear dynamical system may produce large variations in the long term behavior of the system. So this is sometimes presented as esoteric behavior, but can be exhibited by very simple systems: for example, a ball placed at the crest of a hill might roll into any of several valleys depending on slight differences in initial position.

The phrase refers to the idea that a butterfly's wings might create tiny changes in the atmosphere that ultimately cause a tornado to appear (or prevent a tornado from appearing). The flapping wing represents a small change in the initial condition of the system, which causes a chain of events leading to large-scale phenomena. Had the butterfly not flapped its wings, the trajectory of the system might have been vastly different.

Recurrence, the approximate return of a system towards its initial conditions, together with sensitive dependence on initial conditions are the two main ingredients for chaotic motion. They have the practical consequence of making complex systems, such as the weather, difficult to predict past a certain time range, approximately a week in the case of weather.

—Wikipedia



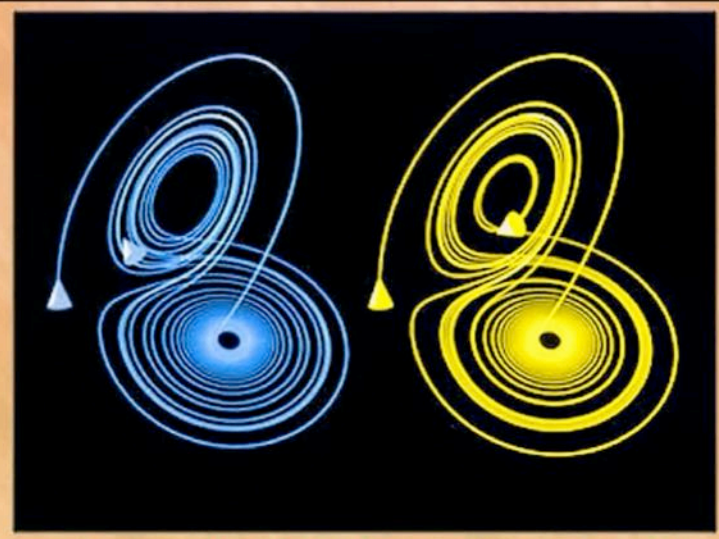
— Butterflies —

As children (and even now if we're young at heart), we'd always pause in play when the first butterfly fluttered by, that fragile, ephemeral vision of something Heavenly—a flower floating on air perhaps. This event signaled that our endless summer had begun, that something called "school" was now but an ancient artifact of the past.

Amazingly, butterflies, fragile as they seem, fly all the way to Mexico, taking their sweet time, fluttering here, alighting there, meandering from flower to flower. It's quite a wonder how they ever get anywhere. So, we learn from them that there is often a lot more fun along the way than when we "get there".

The butterfly first arose from the soul of the pansy, one of those inexplicable Edenesque transformations from long before human time, when there was still magic on the earth. The metamorphosis is still rather miraculous, even now, albeit only from a caterpillar.

P. Tamey © 1994



(These figures show two segments of the three-dimensional evolution of two trajectories (one in blue, the other in yellow) for the same period of time in the Lorenz attractor starting at two initial points that differ only by 10^{-5} in the x-coordinate.)

— Chapter 1 —
On the Edge of Forever

THE GREAT EXTINGUISHER

*Our planet is very good at promoting life,
But it is much better at extinguishing it.
Of the billions upon billions of living things,
99.99% are no longer around here living.*

The human race had been degenerating, for the CMBR antenna that broadcasts our universal reality show had long been out of whack, as had been discovered by ToeQuestors as part of the Theory of Everything. So, some funding was obtained from a top-secret government organization and a poll was taken. Member Nobody was chosen as the 'no one' most likely to succeed in whacking the transmitter back into adjustment, for he could operate with scarce a trace of being there.

BACKGROUND—
THE CORRUPTED DNA OF THE UNIVERSE:

No one yet fully understands the irreducible complexity of the DNA double helix, which is the template for all carbon based life. It is so complex that the slightest change along the myriad of interrelated ladder of events causes the total collapse of the organism. DNA is made of four nucleotides arranged in such a way that a large number of perfectly cascading events form a living thinking life form.

Now, what about the DNA at the universal level?

*** TOP SECRET *** EYES ONLY ***

Likewise, a much more complex universal DNA template is the common thread of a much greater type of exponentially encrypted digital code of Everything which forms our entire universe, generating it in a virtual holographic type way, that is:

*The Infinite radiates through a DNA matrix,
Using Information or Energy to create
The Cosmic Microwave antenna, which broadcasts
Interference patterns of virtual reality.*



The problem was that the celestial music of the spheres had fallen out of tune.

...

Butter flies like a banana, so Nobody quickly prepared to step into the past, through the 'Guardian of Forever', a means of getting closer to the workings of the Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation (CMBR), in order to fine tune it at the very source.

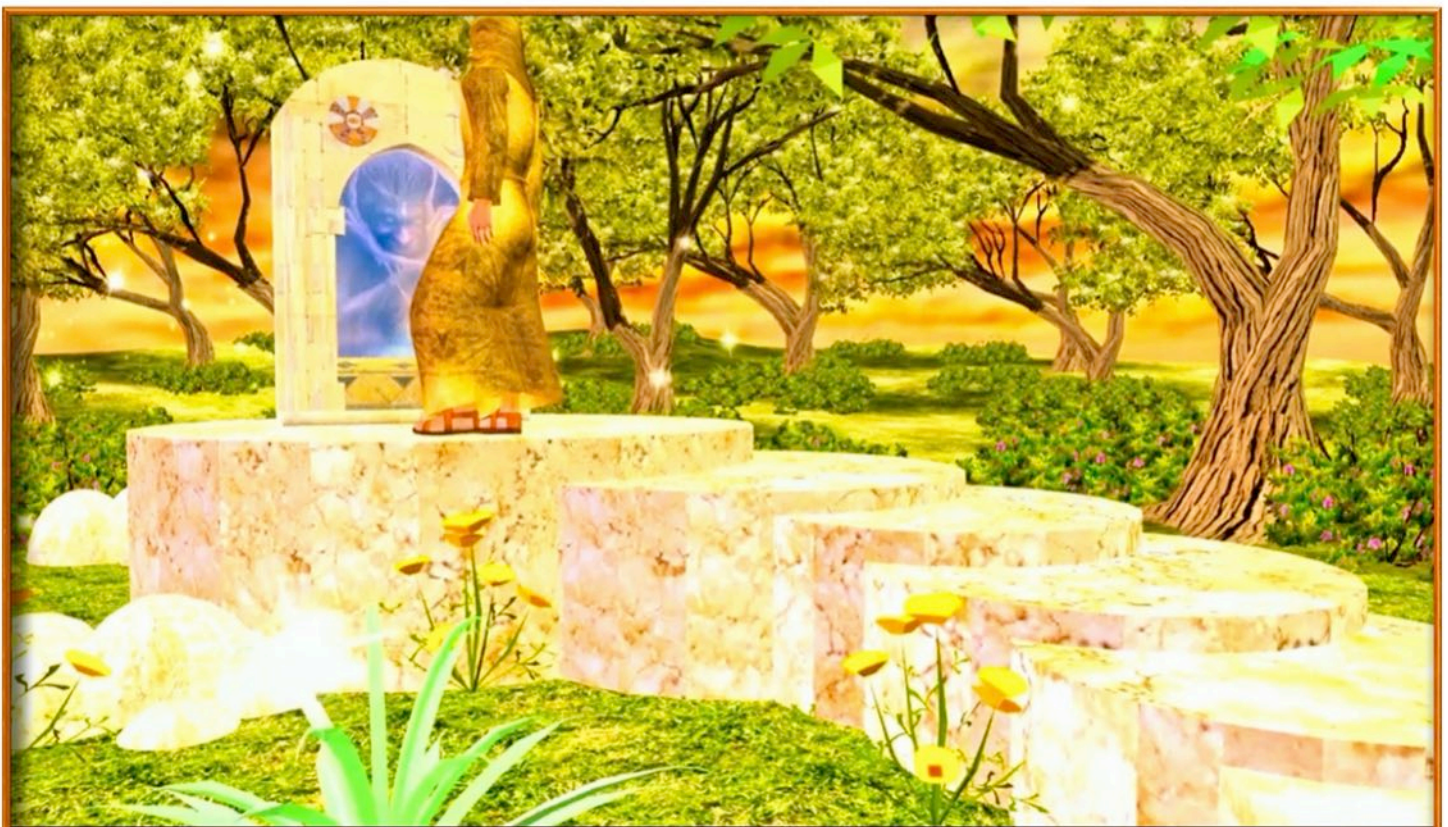


This was not an attempt to revise human history, per say, for that mess was a happening that had way too much dumbness in it to be salvageable. The whims of fate would only create new fools, since wild and uncontrolled emotions had proved to be all that there was to say about all the miseries and follies that had been sadly written into the human chronicle. Yet, there was always a danger of even more negatively affecting the past, and so Nobody wore a light-bending suit that made him invisible, and it furthermore contained most of his emanations. This would minimize most of his effects on the past and on the future that arose

through interaction with the past, even that eventually magnifying, perhaps of merely being seen with name brand clothes on. The microwave background radiation was the source interference pattern of the Holograph in which our reality exists. Behind it, a light radiance passed through a very complex matrix looking somewhat like DNA.

Graybeard, RascalPuff, Profpat, Fredrick, and others were in contact with Nobody through a video phone that was hooked up to the Hubble telescope that was in turn trained on the display screen of the 'Guardian of Forever'. Austin was on a secondary line from New Jersey while surfing on the ethereal waves, though sometimes he was merely scraping along on the particulate matter of the beach.

Crowds logged onto ToeQuest, ready to view the latest posts from everywhere and nowhere.



Nobody at the Guardian of Forever

Nobody, knowing very well that time was Nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once, took one small step for man into the past and found himself right back standing right in front of the Guardian, and so he took a giant leap for mankind.

Nobody stood in noplac during nowhen in the middle of nowhere, although space really has no center, as he began navigating solely by the

landmarks of his imagination towards the control panel of the CMBR antenna. He had butterflies in his stomach and flew like a bee.

It was like taking the chance of betting the entire company on either red or black in roulette, but was more like Russian roulette—in that really bad things could happen; however, the human race was quite desperate for clearer thinking, having really had enough of pettiness and silliness. Not to mention, which I will, that the angels of insight didn't appear as often anymore, and that many humans even dozed off while good fortune passed them right on by, nor had they recognized Lady Luck except in the lotteries. Furthermore, as Flip Wilson once said, "The cost of living is going up and the chance of living is going down". In addition, many were living a TV sitcom life. True, genius has its limits, but stupidity...
(unknown author)

Many people even wasted no time reading ToeQuest forum posts. Even more said that some things, like ESP, had to be believed to be seen. Others, the types who quickly became bored on rainy Sunday afternoons, invented gods to grant them eternal immortality. Even worse, after all was said and done, more was always said than was done. Signs in subways said, "There is no gravity. The Earth sucks." Everyone was only looking out for #1, not realizing that this often caused them to step in #2. Gandhi, when asked what he thought of Western civilization, said, "I think it would be a good idea." And lots of people said "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we diet, since the waist was a terrible thing to mind." Yes, there were more horse's asses than horses. Some even put Horace before Descartes (Donald O. Rickter).

Well, truth is more of a stranger in this story than fiction, so Nobody was well on his way to the early days of oblivion...

"How's it going," asked Rascal of Nobody.

"It's raining," answered Nobody.

"Hardly?" inquired Puff, the better side of the plurality of he and himself.

"It's hardly raining hardly," answered Nobody.

"What does that mean exactly?" asked Rascal.

"Never mind," said Nobody. "I have an umbrella!"

Austin piped in that the English language was becoming a bit affected, via Nobody's interruptions in past, but he encouraged that the journey go on, and so it continued as it progressed and went on.

"By the way, what's the antecedent of 'it' in 'It's raining?'" posted Wise-Guy, thinking he had posed quite a tough question.

"Nothing," said Nobody, "in the form of reverse gravity and forward light, the ultimate antecedent of our time dilation called reality. I'm getting damp."

Rascal added that “A little rain never hurt Nobody,” a new and original saying that suddenly appeared in the now retitled book, ‘The 2501 Greatest Sayings Ever’.

“I hope the rain keeps up,” said Nobody.

“Why?” inquired Profpat.

“So then it won’t come down!”



“How’s it going, Nobody?” asked Rascal again, figuring that Nobody’s watch was running fast from special relativity and that some hours had already passed.

Nobody replied, “I heard that the universe was a free lunch, so I’m having it in a restaurant on an asteroid.”

“How is it?”

“The food is great, but there’s no atmosphere.”

Now, there’s always someone who interrupts forum threads with off the wall stuff, so ChickenMan tried to catch Rascal unawares with “Why did the chicken fly across the road?” and “Did the egg cross into God’s universe before the chicken?”

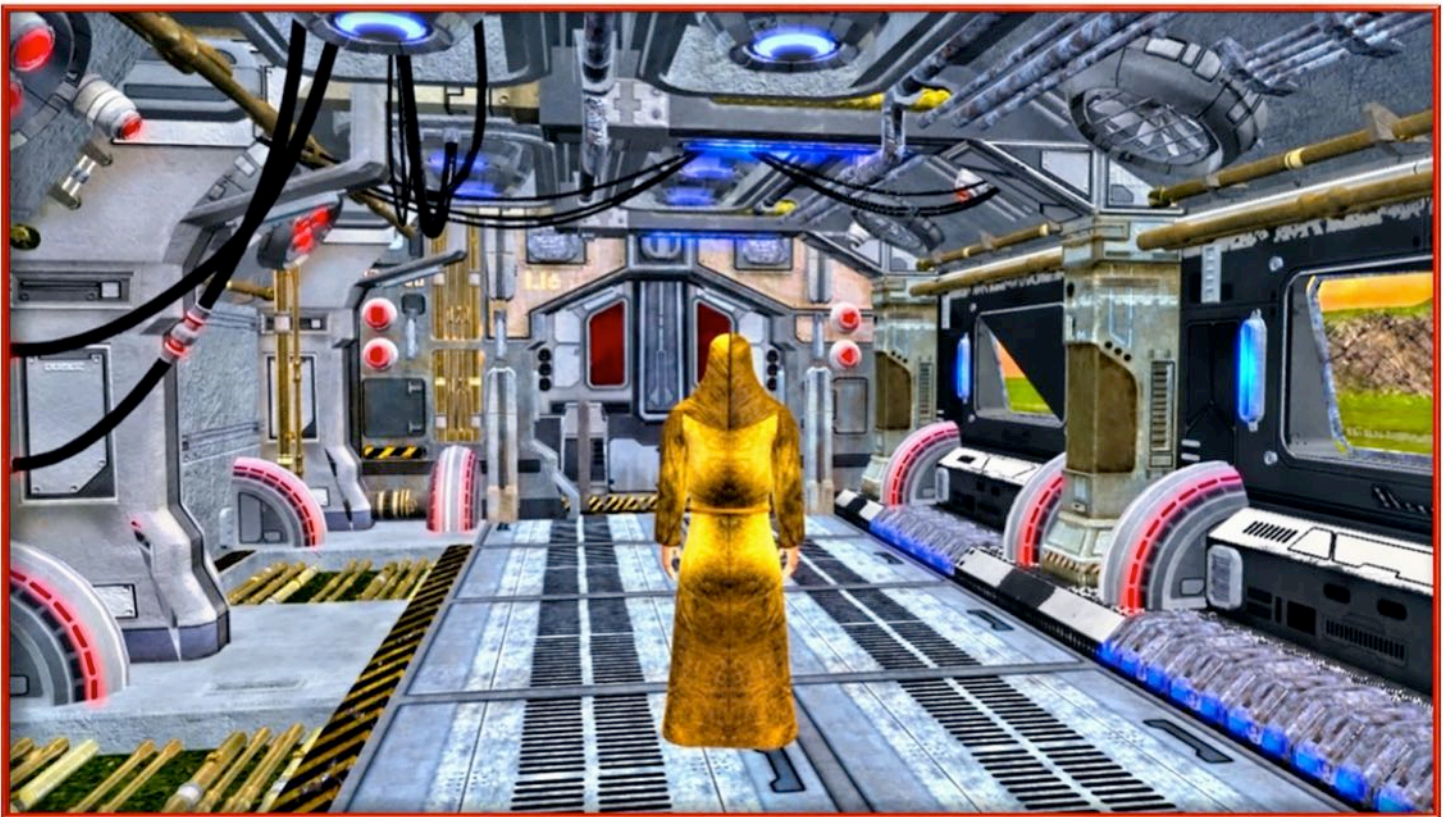
Rascal, taking all this in stride during a lull, replied, “As allowed by Einstein’s relativity, the road moved to the other side of the chicken, and, the chicken didn’t land so much as the road rose to meet the chicken, as it extended in 4D, much like the baseball field rises to meet the pop up, since the universe is expanding. Furthermore, chickens can’t fly! Also,

the chicken came first, for I can't really picture 'God' sitting on an egg to hatch it. Now, then, we're trying to better tune in the universal DNA here, so no more chicken shit posts please!"

"Hold it," warned Graybeard. "Some critical atoms must have been disturbed by Nobody's journey. Now the 'Ace', a new name for the formerly bottommost playing card, the lowly 'one', is now higher than the King in many kinds of card games; this is a sacrilege and a travesty! Wait until London hears about this."

Mkirkpatrick somehow got into the conference call and said, "Just heard, but relax. The All is the One; the 'A' on the card really stands for 'All', for this is what gave rise to the monarchy. And of course the one is the One."

"It's OK," Fredrick said calmly, being an expert on numbers and on playing them, "the play and strategy of all affected card games has not been altered much. Keep on going, Nobody."



While some old times passed, Graybeard stood around looking at the man in the moon and watching the grass grow. Fredrick checked his watch to see if he was wearing it and then counted to five on his left hand. Fine. On the other hand, he still had five fingers, so, all was still going well in the good old days. Profpat sharpened his pencil until it got down to the eraser.

Rascal interjected, “Some sort of high stakes poker mania called ‘Texas Hold ‘em’ has broken out in some countries. Googling now. It’s even replacing baseball on many TV channels!”

“It’s OK,” reassured Fredrick, “No harm done. We’ll pass it off as another fad.”

Nobody was heading billions of years into the past, having left the asteroid just before he got a polaroid from sitting on it too long, and was passing many frolicking Dodo birds, along with the beginnings of such ancient notions as alchemy and astrology. (Hey, why are hemorrhoids not called asteroids?)

A rickety old rope bridge of rotting planks finally led Nobody past many antiquities such as one-cent stamps and on to the control panel of the ancient broadcasting station of CBS.

“Be careful,” advised Profpat. “Be so very delicate with any adjustments. Remember, on Earth, how the tiniest minute adjustment of a shower knob of even a millionth of an inch causes the shower water to become totally steaming hot! No plumber in the universe has ever been able to resolve this problem. It has something to do with quarks, quicks, and quacks.”



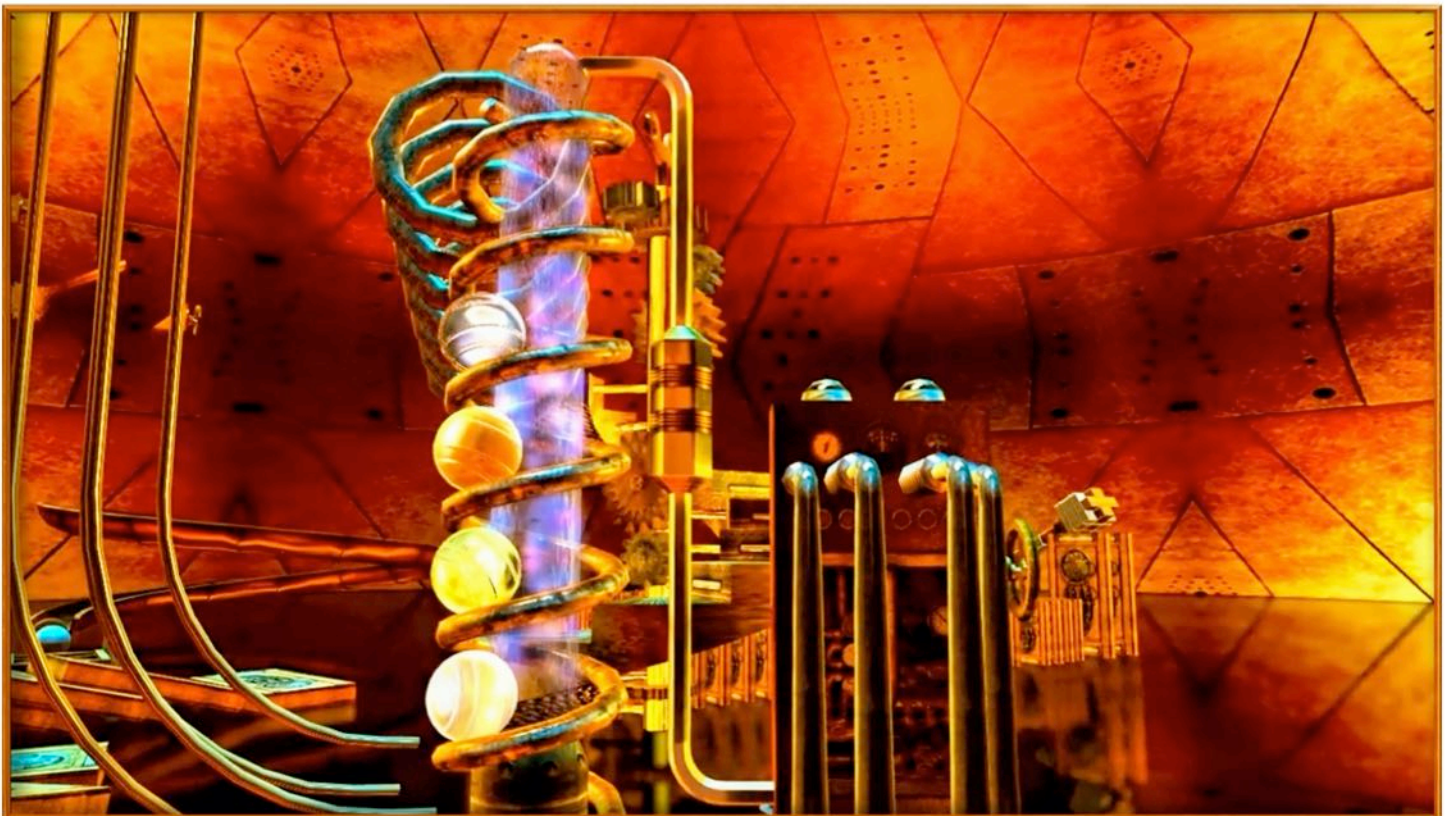
“Don’t worry,” answered Nobody. “I’ll be gentle; I’ll just breathe on it slightly. We want clarity in the universe’s DNA and ours, as in improving the reception of a TV set, not unproving it back into the stone age of 3

channels, of all baseball games, and the weather with snow and static on the others. I'll do my best, come hell or hot water."

Nobody sprayed a few atoms toward the antenna and waited. His data/video link soon improved but then overloaded from the high transfer speed and burned out. Nobody's cell phone soon rang, but it was only a solicitor trying to sell him some time-share condos; however, Graybeard finally got through and said "Great, the stars are becoming clearer and I can even see some galaxies with the naked eye, but take it slow; we don't want to upset the balance of nature by making it too bright at night. It's good to tighten a screw, but if we tighten it too much we're screwed. Wait, hold it! I can see Venus, the goddess of love and passion all too well. Yikes, I didn't know she was that old! Plus, I now have x-ray vision and can see into all the apartments, but the worst thing is that I can hear everything they are saying. Some things should be obscene and not heard! Also, I'm getting something called 'cartoons' on my TV set, and they're really weird, very unreal looking and everyone in them is doing silly things."

Nobody took out a hand held 'vacuum' cleaner and brought a few atoms back in as a fine adjustment.

"Good," cheered Graybeard, "that's a good balance. Try something a little higher up and let's see what happens. I am reading some fluctuations out of kilter around there."



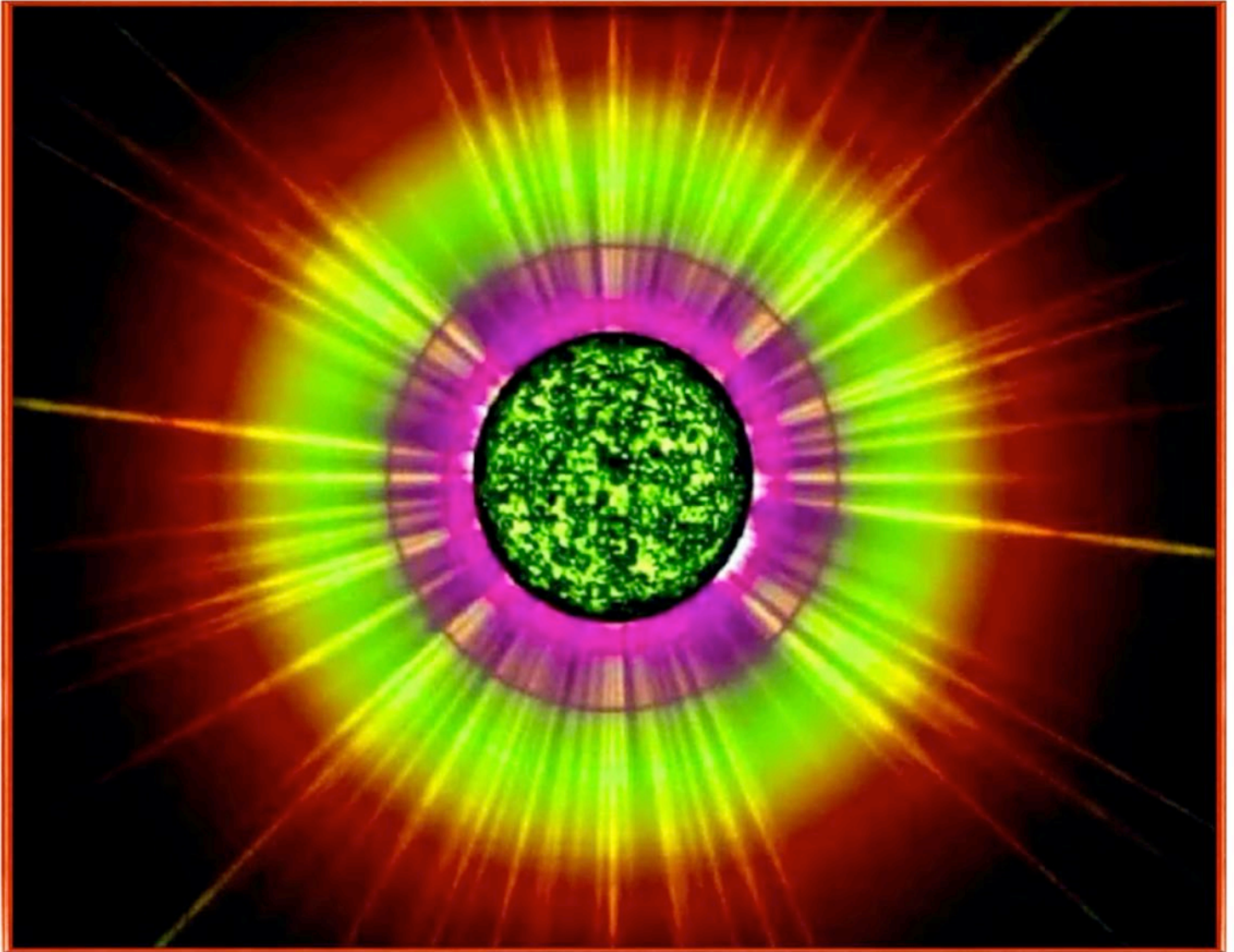
(Adjusting the Delicate Balance of Everything)

Notions of up and down were useless in space, so Nobody picked a direction at random.

“No,” said Graybeard. “Not that way; use your other ‘up’.”

“Okay, I’m switching. Back in kilter?”

Graybeard answered, “I don’t know; I’m seeing another goddess.”



Suddenly, the Chicago Cubs, which had finally made it to the World Series of baseball, were swept in four straight games, while the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, and other unbelievables in attendance looked on in horror. Then Michael Jordan gave up basketball for baseball and then switched back to basketball again. Global warming picked up and then an ice age began. Jesus, born a Christian, became Jewish, then converted back again. Hell froze over and then thawed out again. The same with the River of Forgetfulness: everyone was walking on water for a while and running like Hell from Hades.

Profpat warned “Watch that shower knob, Nobody; the River Styx just boiled away and a bunch of dead people drowned after many more escaped!”

“Where are they going?” inquired Nobody.

Profpat replied, “They don’t know; they say they have CRS disease.”

“What’s CRS stand for?”

“Can’t Remember Shit.”

“OK guys. A little upper, Nobody,” requested Graybeard. “That other direction was a downer.”

Nobody reached up and out, but the bridge creaked and groaned, causing Nobody to slip a bit as a rope frayed, and all the TOE researchers feared that his adjustment time was now quite limited.



Meanwhile, Barry Bonds had broken the home run record, but, of course, steroids would be blamed for it. Mount Rushmore had briefly turned into Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan, but just as soon reverted back. However, the Boston Red Sox still won a World Series for the first time in a hundred years.

Also, it turned out that someone named Yogi Berra had said many sayings that seemed to make sense, but really didn’t, like ‘That restaurant is so crowded that no one goes there anymore’, ‘It gets dark early out here’, ‘If people don’t want to come out to the ball park, nobody’s going to stop

them', 'It's deja vu all over again, 'I didn't really say all of the things I said', and many more unsayings.

Silly signs appeared on highways, like 'Road Works' (it doesn't work well during construction), and 'Speed Zone' (meaning slow down). Something called rap music had become ever-present, as well as a new word, 'oxymoron'. A funny thing happened to President Clinton, but he wasn't impeached for it. He neither inhales nor does he have sex.

"This one may be hard to explain," lamented Fredrick, "but we'll chalk it up to human nature."

Nobody did some fiddling of some knobs that he wasn't supposed to touch, twiddling 'More of This-ness', and, as a result some people on Krypton started to make every shot in basketball games, even from 50 miles away, being really IN THE ZONE, plus doing many other superhuman things. All the TOE viewers from Earth were cheering this, but Fredrick warned them that total perfection might take all the fun out of life.

"Better hold off," Graybeard suggested.

Nobody dialed the knobs back a little.

RascalPuff interjected, "Some people are now reporting that they can fly like superman in some new event called 'sleeping hallucinations' or 'night dreams'."

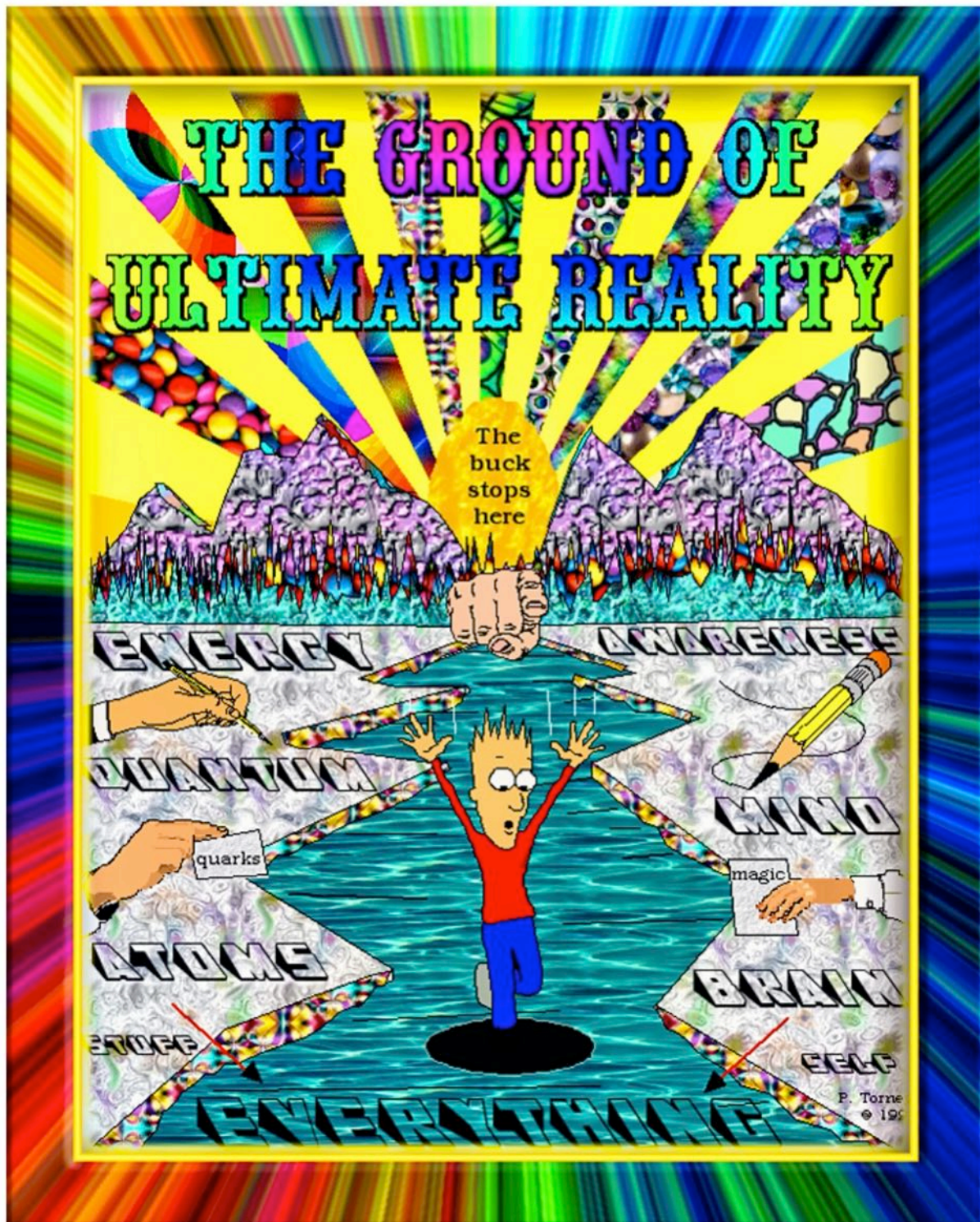
Also, zeroes began to look like the alphabetic letter 'oh', causing much confusion, along with 'one' looking like the letter 'el', and some words began to have the same sound, as called a 'homonym' but not a 'homonim', and some with similar meanings; as called a 'synonym', although it had none itself, and some words now had multiple meanings. And how come 'monosyllabic' wasn't? Nor was 'phonetic' spelled the way it sounded. And why was 'abbreviation' such a long word without any? Also, 'love' was reduced to having only the two good rhymes of 'dove' and 'above', which soon became overused and stale, frustrating many poets and their readers.

Austin reported that a part of Hawaii had sprung up in Wildwood, NJ, named 'Sunset Bay' and that it had had big fat singers, torches, palm trees, waterfalls, tropical flowers, a half-ship at the end of a pier that served as a bar, good food (ordering raw oysters well done), although it consisted of only waves and fields (lucky that his brain turned the noumena into phenomena), and sand all around as a floor. Also, he said that many more 'o's had appeared in the word 'Goo...oogle'.

Fredrick suggested that the sleeping visions were harmless and probably helped us in some way, that homonyms gave poets even more rhymes, that synonyms and words with multiple meanings would enrich the language, that zeroes could have a slash added through them for differentiation, that typewriters were obsolete, that we could get used to the

odd words, perhaps some day getting even with them, that the word 'of' now rhymed with 'love', that "Hawaii in New Jersey" would be seen as a planned tourist attraction, and that Google's extra 'o's would probably get used in a marketing ploy as denoting the internet page ranges of interest.

Just about then, the moth-eaten walkway began its collapse, and all the cell-phoners quickly warned Nobody, for they could see the whole scene unfolding before their eyes knew about it.



“Run!” they all said in unison, and with text messages, as well. “Run for your life. Get out of there. The bridge...” All contact was lost, for Nobody’s cell phone roaming charges had become astronomical and overdue, causing his account to be canceled.

There was now nothing but nothing under Nobody’s feet, an impossibility, of course, for nothing can’t exist, but it was there, never the less; however, Nobody didn’t begin to fall right away, as in cartoons when no one falls until they realize through consciousness that there is nothing holding them up, and so he gained a precious second and leapt, just in time, back onto the falling bridge, having had the presence of mind during that split second of warning to attach a piece of tin foil to the antenna, a last ditch attempt to help humanity progress beyond TV sitcoms, Lindsey Lohan, and Paris Hilton. He moved quickly and soon accelerated to the speed of light, which was a lot faster back then, on the bridge that was literally (or virtually) crumbling as he ran across it.

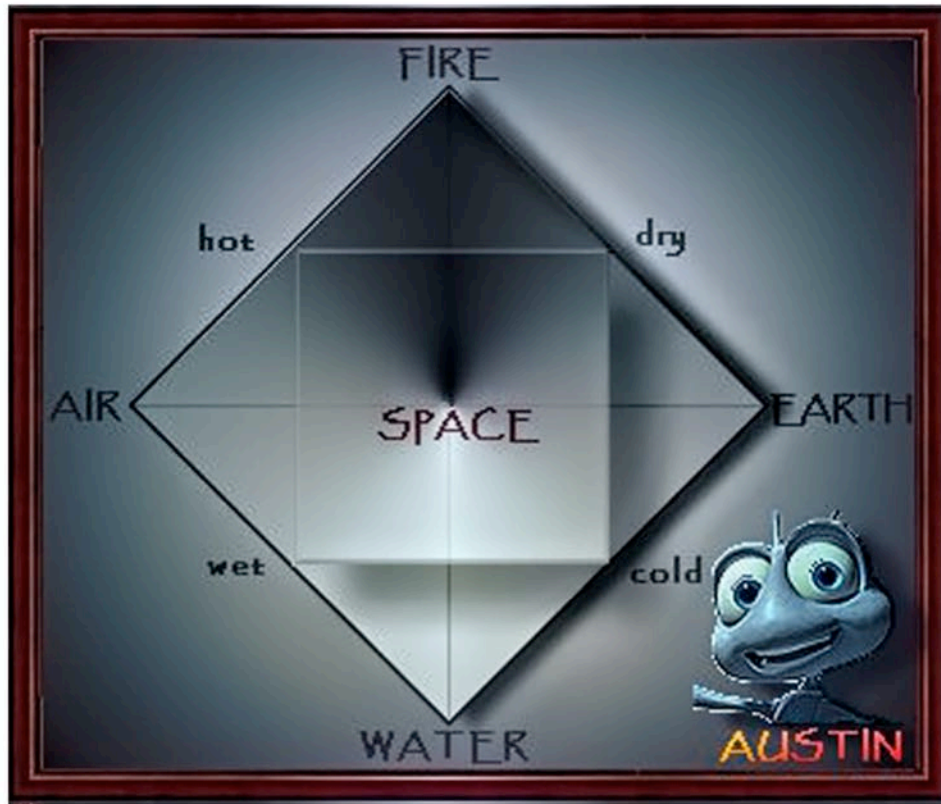


No one knew where Nobody was or if he did nothing or didn’t do nothing. Concern set in. Worry followed. Despair appeared. Woe rang the doorbell. Grimness sat on the front steps. A bill collector drove up. Rascal saddened, but kept Googling to keep his mind busy, while Graybeard stopped ogling the virgin super clusters of Virgo with both of his naked eyes, although noting, ‘chaste makes waste’, keeping one eye open, and even put off the opening of a beer.

Fredrick, getting all teary eyed, tried to remember the good times with Nobody. Well, that was easy; they were all good times. RascalPuff checked all of his copyrights. “Darn, they’re still there. Why is there no

sign of Nobody and why is Nobody not home, and what is the meaning of what I am saying? Or not.”

Well, although we are all supposed to know ‘everything’, or at least the theory of, we might as well just ask our teen-age offspring, for they know it all.



Michael even left his lounge chair and put down his laptop. Austin, although silently alarmed, fed french fries to a thousand seagulls, his step-kids laughing and taking a video of it... until he ran towards the kids, throwing more fries to lead the flapping flock onward toward them. He thought that Nobody might never make it, and began preparing a remembrance.





THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING

*This is the creature there has never been.
They never knew it, and yet, none the less,
They loved the way it moved, its suppleness,
Its neck, its very gaze, mild and serene.*

*Not there, because they loved it,
It behaved as though it were.
They always left some space.
And in that clear unpeopled space they saved
It lightly reared its head,
With scarce a trace of not being there.*

*They fed it, not with corn,
But only with the possibility of being.
And that was able to confer such strength,
Its brow put forth a horn. One horn.
Whitely it stole up to a maid —
To be within the silver mirror and in her.*

(from *Sonnets To Orpheus Second Part*, R. M. Rilke)

IN HONOR OF NOBODY,

*Who can under-stand the universe,
Not even needing a place to stand,
That is nowhere and everywhere,
A wizard creating something of nothing,
Whose imagination reaches the edge
Of forever, beyond, and before.*

THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE

*Existence extends its electromagnetic preach
As far as its atomic influences can reach;
Beyond all of that there is nothing there
But the naught of very thin 'air'. (nothing)*

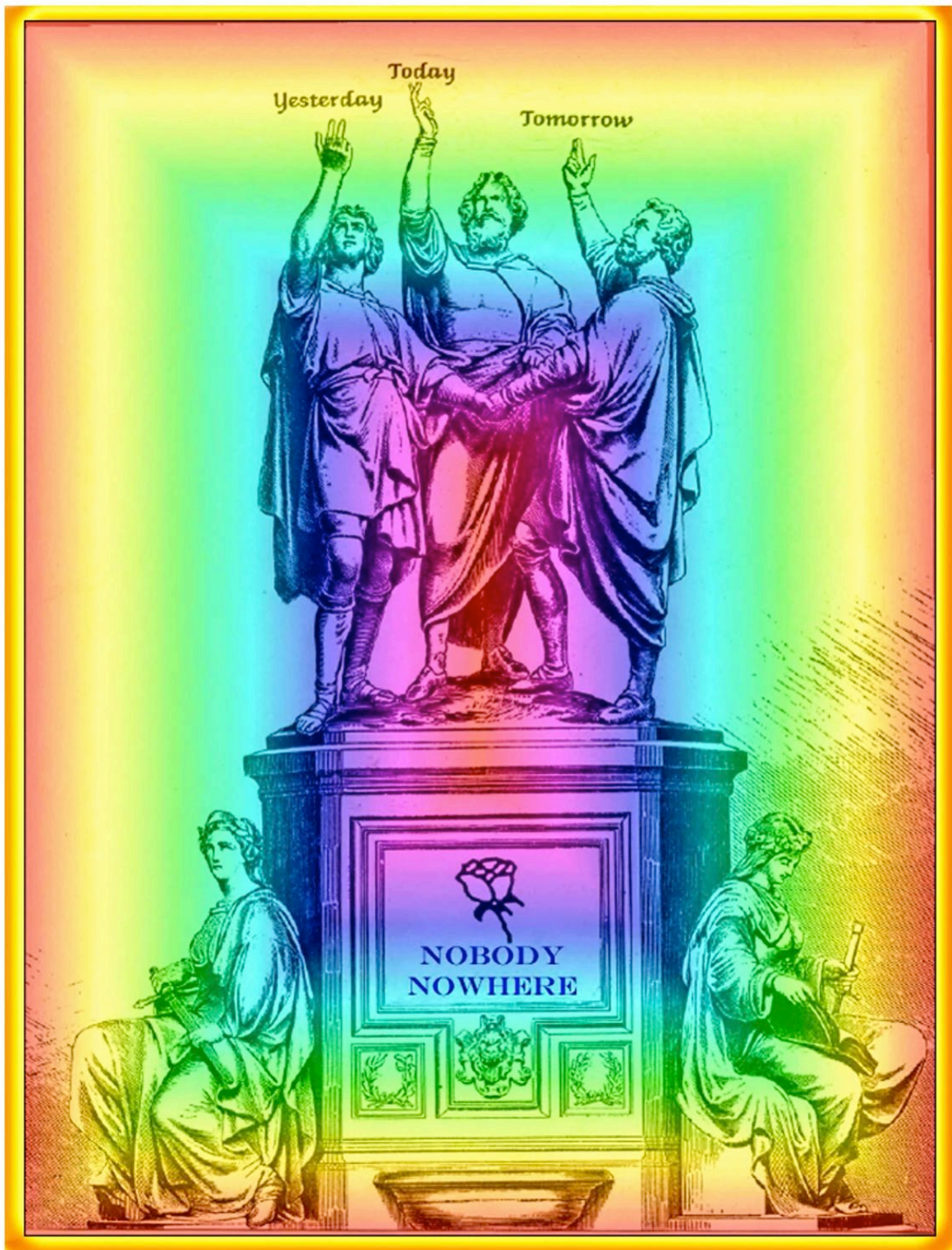
Profpat, sidelined by so many recent TOE readings and contributions, had gotten back on his feet by missing two car payments. His career now in ruins, he switched to archeology.

MJA said, "Nobody was the most equal man I ever knew."

Lloyd pondered the linguistics of “Time flies like a bird and fruit flies like a banana”.



Steven Wright said, “I have an existential map. It has ‘You are here’ written all over it.”



Meat Loaf sang *'Some days it don't come easy... and these are the days that never end... and some nights are breathing fire... and some night are nothing I felt or seen before... or will again... no one else can save you now but you...'*

Robert finally asked for one minute of silence on ToeQuest.

THE PROCESSION OF THE CONSTITUENTS OF REALITY

*Sad Yesteryear, Forever, and Everywhere,
They all came, to weep for Nobody Nowhere,
With Why and How, Then, Now, When, and What and Where,
Led but by their tears and sorrow. Your posts zing
With things that 'none' can bring: Everything.*

More time passed, as the minutes went by like slugs and snails slowed down by older slugs and snails in their way, like when we get stuck walking behind old people in Florida.

Yogi Berra suddenly came out with "The future isn't what it used to be."

Fredrick smiled. Although Yogi's typical observation sounded like it had a negative connotation, Fredrick knew better, for many negatives had been developed into positives during his days of study that were numbered as the dates of his calendar. Also, although all the pluses and minuses added up to zero, Fredrick had the wisdom to know the difference, as well.

"He's alive!" reported Fredrick. "He's out there somewhere! ...where no man has gone before. And I don't mean the ladies room!"

Profpat posted, "I knew he wouldn't depart, pass on, leave us, expire, perish, pass away, decease, or go to a better place."

Graybeard hinted, "You mean die?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's the last thing he's going to do."

'Lifts' in the UK soon became 'elevators' in the US; car 'bonnets' turned into 'hoods', and the 'muzzies' of Australia still stung as American 'mosquitos', but luckily nothing much else of any serious nature in this vein of language had diverged in any harmful way other than 'apples of the ground' now becoming known as 'potatoes'. Meat Loaf recorded his greatest song of *'I'll Do Anything for Love, But I Won't Do That.'* Let's not get into country music song titles.

Time was like a river, so Nobody followed the currents through all their twists and turns, not even stopping to ask directions, for there weren't any (unlike Moses, who didn't ask, and so got lost for 40 years), swimming (being careful not to use the butterfly stroke) all the way back to the safety of Earth, 2007, almost taking a wrong turn at Albuquerque.

All applauded his return, giving a great reception to the improver of reception, and told him of Earth's many new marvels, for the tin foil had beat the odds, accomplishing some fantastic things:

Color had arrived in the world, along with color TV, in the late 1950's (just look at the black and white TV shows made before then for proof). High Definition had arrived, as well, which allowed us to examine in great detail the pimples on a person's face.

Three types of "heavenly" things had become permanent features of the world: flowers, night dreams, and elfin creatures, the latter of which were the long sought missing link between man and angel (unfortunately some angels had gone bad, although many had remained good, and thus many leprechauns couldn't be trusted).

The Dark Ages had gotten brighter sooner (the Y1K problem), the printing press had been invented a century earlier, a book of Omar Khayyâm's thousand year old quatrains was discovered in the Bodleian library by a janitor, not having been noticed there before, along with Plato's new book of the month, 'Beyond Metaphysics', and Apple computers and products were improving and catching on to let us tune out reality (of all things) with the ipod. Someone named Shakespeare had gotten over his writer's block of trying to open a lock with a fish and so had written some of the greatest stuff ever. Blondes began to prefer gentlemen. James the Lesser was shown to really have less, actually being Mary Magdelane. Ten years had been added to the human life span, meaning that sixty was not old anymore!

However, we were stuck with cartoons, but, hey, they keep kids busy! Ernie Kovak's saying of 'Television is a medium because anything well done is rare' still stood firm, but we could better see what was worthless. People still told others to 'Have a nice day' even though they probably had other plans. Everyone still talked with their hands, even while on the phone, indicating that gestures had proceeded language. However, men now had nipples, but no matter. Enlightenment grew bright, consciousness becoming more that just 'that boring time between naps', but some still didn't know and didn't care one way or the other to know the difference between ignorance, apathy, and ambivalence. As for why a 'building; was called that after it was built, no one knew. And why wasn't a thesaurus a type of dinosaur?

A new and useful color had appeared that was not even in the rainbow: brown. Humor was now more widespread, due to expanded and duplicate word meanings. The price of penny candy went up to a nickel; cigarettes now cost \$1000 a pack. I insured all of my packs, but they were eventually consumed by a series of small fires. My insurance company wouldn't pay, so I took them to court, where I was convicted of arson.

However, all in all, the world was a better place, in that the worst times were now only the 'worser'.

Everyone on ToeQuest was awarded a free annual trip around the sun and one special trip to Poughkeepsie, NY. Second place was two trips to Poughkeepsie; third place, three trips to Poughkeepsie.

'Everything', at least locally, had indeed turned out to be a single whole defined in the space of '=' by MJA, but only in that every part of a hologram contained the whole. Quantum entanglement had always suggested this, as well, and now it was could be seen that we all have access to the entire universe at every point of the holographic interference pattern, the many more fractional points that were added by Nobody the better for its resolution. Everything connecting to everything proved to be a kind of perception in and of itself and so it begat a ToeQuest thread called 'The Waving Grains of Sand', for

*Every part of a hologram contains the whole,
The whole universe contained within a
Grain of sand, all eternity within a moment,
The universe rumbling when an electron vibrates.*

Another missed hint of our 3D projection had been that the entropy of black holes depends on the surface area of its event horizon, not on its volume. Could something like the rippled CMBR microwaves be that esoteric radiant interference pattern? Yes.

Bohm, too, suggested that the whole universe could be thought of as a kind of giant, flowing hologram, or holomovement, in which a total order is contained, in some implicit sense, in the same finite space. In reality, time is an illusion. The explicate order is a projection from higher dimensional levels of reality, and the apparent stability and solidity of the objects and entities composing it are generated and sustained by a ceaseless process of enfoldment and unfoldment, for the illusions of subatomic particles are constantly dissolving into the implicate order and then re-crystallizing. So, our reality dissolves and reforms in a constant dance that, like moving pictures, cannot be perceived by the mind's eye.

We knew that this same type of stunning virtual reality was likely, for it is presented to us in our night dreams for our amusement or self-improvement, or some such reason. It would be interesting to know more of how the holographic reality operates, of course, so we could get to the next step, maybe even build our own virtual reality. Mr. Spielberg would surely buy into that.

Perhaps, instead of building one, though, we could tap into the one that already exists within us and is flexible enough to produce great movies: again, our own night dreams. If we could only record them, keeping the

ones with movie quality film and exciting story lines, we could make and sell movies without paying millions of dollars to writers, directors, actors, and filmers. But who or what is the source of these night dream movies? Who is the producer, the director, etc.—for night dreams seem to contain surprises, a production capacity way beyond that of ourselves, of people acting in character modes that we as individuals might not even possess, say, that of being singers or comedians or whatever. I don't see us putting Spielberg out of business soon, but I have many lucid dreams and I like to observe them closely; they are really quite spectacular. Sometimes, I just watch; other times I amaze the onlookers with my ability to fly and hover. One time, some music kept playing for a minute or so after I awoke. Other times, I am just amused by the viewpoint: I was in a plane that was crashing through a jungle, but the viewpoint suddenly switched to one that was from outside the plane, just as real movies do. So, dreams, their mere happening, should be telling us something remarkable about reality, and these kinds of clues are what I try to make significance of.



(All on Nobody's Shoulders)

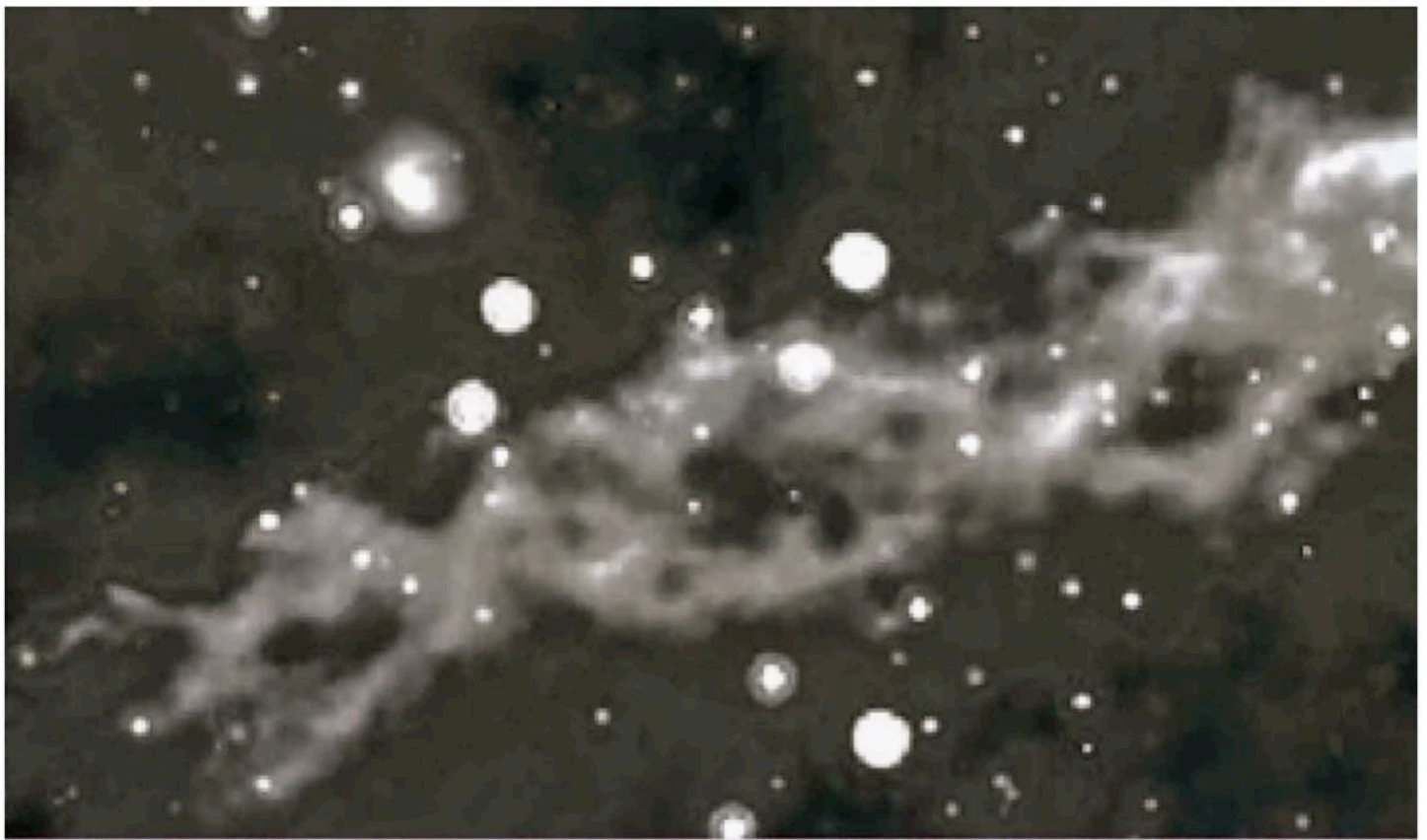
Language Pronoun/Noun Changes:

Words for All Cases	masculine	feminine	neutral	masculine	feminine	neutral
Pronouns	singular	singular	singular	plural	plural	plural
third person						
subjective	he	she	e, s/he	hey	shey	they
possessive	his	her(s)	eir(s)	heir(s)	sheir(s)	their(s)
objective	him	her	erm	hem	shem	them
third person neuter (infant)						
subjective	he	she	it	hey	shey	tey
possessive	his	her(s)	its	heir(s)	sheir(s)	teir(s)
objective	him	her	it	hem	shem	tem
second person						
subjective	hou, hu	shou, shu	you, yu	hous	shous	yous, you-all
possessive	hewer	shewer	your(s)	hur(s)	shur(s)	your(s), yur(s)
objective	yeh	yer	you	yehs	yers	yem
first person						
subjective	Hi	Si	I	weem	whym	we
possessive	mane	meen	my, mine	har(s)	shar(s)	our(s)
objective	meh	meesh	me	hus	shus	us
second person archaic						
subjective	hou	shou	thou	hye	shye	ye
possessive	hy, hine	shy, shine	thy, thine	hour(s)	shour(s)	your(s)
objective	yeh	yer	thee	yehs	yers	yerns
reflexive objective						
first person	maneself	meenself	myself	harselves	sharselves	ourselves
second person	yehself	yerself	yourself	yehselves	yerselves	yourselves
third person	himself	herself	ermself	hemselves	shemselves	themselves
third person archaic	hyself	shyself	thyself	hyselves	shyselves	thyselves
indefinite objective						
no	no man	no wom	no one	no men	no wym	none
one	one man	one wom	one	some men	some wym	some
any	any man	any wom	any one	any men	any wym	anyone
some	some man	some wom	some one	some men	some wym	someone
every	every man	every wom	every one	all men	all wym	everyone
person	maleper	femper	person, per	malepers	fempers	people, pers

Nouns						
gender biological	male	fem	person, gen	males	fems	people, gens
gender informal	guy	gyno	person	guys	gynos	people
gender formal	man	wom	hume, gen	men	wym	humes, gens
gender all incl	man kind	wom kind	hume kind	mankind	womkind	humekind
gender service	sir	maam	siram	sirs	maams	sirams
gender general	airman	airwom	airperson	airmen	airwym	airpeople
gender single inf	bachelor	femgle	single	bachelors	femgles	singles
gender single frml	Mist	Miss	Single, Sgl	Mists	Misses	Singles, Sgls
(abv. not needed)	Mst.	Mss.	Sgl.	Msts.	Msss.	Sgls.
gender married	Misser	Missis	Married	Missers	Missises	Marrieds
gender mar abv.	Mr.	Mrs.	Mrd.	Mrs.	Mrses.	Mrds.
gender irrel formal	Mister	Miz	Person	Misters	Mizes	Persons
(abbreviation)	Mr.	Ms.	Pr.	Mr(s)	Ms(s).	Prs.
gender child	boy	girl	child	boys	girls	children
gender child frml	Master	Mystie	child	Masters	Mysties	children
(abbreviation)	Mst.	Mys.	Ch.	Msts.	Myss.	Chs.



(The Guardian of Forever's View Screen)



(Top Secret Photo of Universal DNA Matrix Nebula)



(Rabbits appear on Earth)

HOLOGRAPHIC UNIVERSE

When a tree falls in the forest and there's
No one around to hear it, does it make
A sound? No, for there is no ear to turn
The sound waves into sound.

Nor is there a smell, for there is no nose
For the odorous molecules to attach to.
Nor has it any color, for there is
No retina to decode the light frequencies.

What does it look like, then? It doesn't look
Like anything, for there is no brain to
Put it all together by detecting
Form, color, texture, size, taste, smell or vision.

Since the entropy of a black hole is known
To depend on the surface area of the
Event horizon and NOT on its volume,
Then our third dimension MUST BE a projection.

A projected illusion, as in a hologram,
May still be used as it were really there
Since we can make sense of it, so to speak,
But, in truth, the third dimension does not exist.

Thus, apparently separate particles,
Like created photon pairs, copy the other
When one is changed, because, in truth, they are
Still the same thing in the projector room.

If the universe is holographic,
Then the tree in the forest, whether seen or not,
Is, at heart, an interference pattern
Brought to life only when we tune it in.

This is the mystery of the realness
Of sleeping dreams revealed: we tune in to
The interference patterns, whether awake
Or asleep, to bring alive the reality projected.

Everything connects to everything else
Through overlapping interference patterns,
And so nothing is separate at all, as it seems,
But is one large all-encompassing whole.

Memory, too, seems to be holographic,
Residing everywhere in the brain,
Every piece associated with others related,
Instantly broadcasting all the connections.

Every part of a hologram contains the whole,
The whole universe contained within a
Grain of sand, all eternity within a moment,
The universe rumbling when an electron vibrates.

We are part and parcel of everything—
We are the cosmos; we are life; we are love;
We are all that is; We are the creator
Of the dance as well as the dancer.

Whether the past is recorded and accessible
As part of the holographic whole is not known
Or whether the other two dimensions are
Projected, as well, but perhaps we shall see.

This then is the secret of the universe,
Knowing of that which underlies all reality:
Fundamental, absolute, indestructible,
Omnipresent, omnipotent, and all pervasive.

Why absolute and fundamental? Because
It is made of one piece—itsself,
And therefore indestructible, and eternal, too,
And makes up all that there is, everywhere.

The Infinite may radiate through a matrix,
Using Information or Energy to create
The Cosmic Background antenna which broadcasts
Interference patterns of virtual reality.

— Chapter 2 —
Nobody's Fake Home Movies of the CMBR Trip

Nobody invited everyone from ToeQuest and the government over to see some home movies of his trip to the CMBR (because I have some leftover material and went through the joke book again). The CIA, FBI, NSA, DNA, and three former Presidents attended, as well. President Younger-Bush would've come, but was on vacation for a month, shooting lame ducks and leakers.

Pasta and anti-pasta was served for dinner, depending on one's universal orientation. A few mixed it, trying to cancel out the effects of eating too much, and then promptly exploded from both ends.

"Thanks, everyone, for your support," said Nobody. "The reception was great; no static or noise. I can take some questions before we start the film that filmed the start."

Shakespeare raised his hand.

"What's the question?" said Nobody.

"To be or not to be."

"Good answer."

"How did you survive after you left the last Daily Planet restaurant?" asked Austin.

"I picked up some frozen food in the Ice Age."

"But how did you cook it?" persisted Austin, his brain having been temporarily fried, boiled, and sun roasted in New Jersey.

"Remember, there were microwaves all around."

"Where did you get that vacuum cleaner?" asked Profpat.

"I always carry one, for I have another at home. The salesman said that it would cut my work in half, so I bought two."

"Any great words to characterize the epic journey to the CMBR?" asked RascalPuff.

"Veni, Vidi, Velcro'; I came, I saw, and I stuck around."

"Did you get lost?" asked Fredrick.

"I never get lost, even if I'm told to; I discover alternate destinations."

"Did you make enough money to retire, and, if so, can I have your old tires?" inquired Graybeard.

"Yes, I did, but it's really a cruel choice: Work or watch daytime TV."

"Did you understand Everything?" asked Fredrick.

"Often I thought I did, but then I regained consciousness."

ChickenMan probed, "Were any chickens harmed during the making of your film? Also, did Mother Earth and Father Time produce the cosmic egg?"

"Inconceivable, but I like your approach... now let's see your departure."

“What’s reality, really?” asked Mkirkpatrick.

“Much ado about nothing.”

“Is your journey responsible for Hillary running for President?” asked Bill Clinton.

“No, but there was a Presidents’ Day sale at Macy’s and men’s pants were half off.”

“I’m cured now,” said Bill. “There is no relationship, depending on what the meaning of ‘is’ is. There is really no safe sex from aides. Also, I went to a self-help group for compulsive talkers; it’s called On and On Anon.”

“Why are the two President Clintons always out beating the Bushes?” quizzed ElderBush of Bill.

“Because Al tried to Gore you and lost to Chad, so I must run for First Gentleman to restore our dynasty over yours. Plus, one handy lady bird is worth two bushes anytime.”

“Okay Presidents,” interjected Nobody, “no politics, a word that means many blood sucking insects. I’m still taking questions.”

“What are all the answers?” asked someone in training, “and why are the answers so hard?”

“The answers are easy; they are ‘yes’, ‘no’, and ‘maybe’, which to kids all mean yes. It’s the questions that are hard.”

Graybeard pleaded, “My X-rated x-ray vision has degenerated; I’m only seeing skeletons now!”

“Maybe you could get a job at an airport.”

“What did the arts graduate say to the engineering graduate?” asked Profpat.

“Would you like fries with your order, sir?”

“Did you meet any of your ancestor’s ancestors?” asked Graybeard.

“I saw my family tree.”

“What the heck!” wondered Graybeard out loud.

“My great-ancestors descended from the trees.”

“What is the moon made of?” asked Rascal.

“Swiss cheese.”

“But it’s all hard and crusty, although it does have holes.”

“That’s what happens when you leave cheese out.”

“How do you make holy water?” questioned Profpat.

“You boil the hell out of it!”

“What do you think about sex on TV?” wondered Lloyd.

“It can’t hurt you unless you fall off. Now let’s get serious, folks. We’re all used to the new language features by now and the joke industry that they spawned.”

“What did you see in the Garden of Time?” asked Mkirkpatrick.

“There were glimmers and gleams and golden dappled lights like stars hovering and floating slowly about the scene, and a door that invited me

into the inner sanctum of the night watchmen's mainspring. There I found CARE, a gentle old man who sat silently by the sundial in Time's Sanctuary and slowly marked the hours by the shadows that crept over the face of eternity. I asked him, 'What time is it?'

"And he answered to my surprise, 'Do you mean now?'"

"Yogi?" I asked.

"No, Yogi is my distant relative, twice removed, but he kept coming back. Anyway, here is the riddle of now:"

*A moment contains eternal reward;
Both past and future are rolled thereinward.
Time never passes; it stays as it is;
Still, it is ceaselessly moving onward.*

"I continued on to the CMBR," said Nobody, "but I could see through it and the universal DNA matrix off toward the radiant void and there I saw JOY, forever young, who turned toward the glow of the fair light that from the infinite did show, basked in its golden beams, and spread her radiance to everything that's so."

"God is a woman?" Hillary asked.

"Yes, Mrs. President-to-be who is no longer to be."

"Now that we know the secrets of the universe, what remains as the ultimate question?" RascalPuff asked.

"It is, 'Why do squirrels always run back under your car after they are already in the clear?'"

"Some things remain unfathomable," ruminated Puff.

"How are you feeling? Wasn't the trip quite a strain on you?" wondered Fredrick.

"Yes, I fell into an upholstery machine, but I am fully recovered now, but if I don't pay my exorcist I may get repossessed. Also, I entered a period of great inflationary expansion and suffered a small cut on my forehead when the road rose up to meet me, but I have since lost some weight."

"Did you hear that the short fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large?" asked WiseGuy.

"I have now. That is sure a puny pun that deserves punitive measures."

"Does 'nothing' exist out there?" asked Fredrick.

"No, nada, null, zilch, naught, nix, nil, and zippo. Nothing is unconceivable of existence, while the pregnancy of possibility is the mother of all invention. Austin told me to say that."

"Since the government mostly paid for this trip, isn't the money tainted?" asked Profpat.

"A lot of money is tainted. Taint yours and it taint mine."

“What is the purpose of life?” asked Austin, seriously.

“To let it flow through you.”

“What is your first memory of flowing life?” continued Austin.

“I do remember being a gleam in my father’s eye, my first glint of spirit. And half of me seems to remember shooting down some sort of tube and emerging into some liquid, then some kind of Olympic swimming race and a merging with an oval football kind of thing and an endless floating about for many months. Then, about a month before I was born, I heard some sounds, like ‘Cootchy-cootchy-coo. Who’s in there?’ Then, the day before I was born, a voice told me that there is a whole big world out there, and I thought, no, there can’t be; there is only water and calm and darkness; that’s all there is; there can be nothing more. I guess I was not such a visionary back then. Then, the next day—I remember it well since I was born right on my birthday (but had no party until a year later), I was thrust into the light, and I think my first words were, well, it’s a bit hard to recall them since I was very young when I was born, but, since I am a writer, I did speak my first words early, and I think they were: ‘Does anyone have a pair of sunglasses; it’s awfully bright out here.’”

Abraham Lincoln asked, “Why did they move my birthday?”

“Well, February is a confusing short month; for example, this year Fat Tuesday is on February 12, which used to be your birthday, before they moved it, and is the big finale of Mardi-Gras, when we’re supposed to eat enough pancakes and sausage to get us through the 40 days of Lent’s fast food (at Wendy’s & McDonalds), I mean fasting, and give up sweets, as of Ash Wednesday, the 13th, a sort of smoke-in day when we remember dust to dust and that we will eventually make ashes of ourselves, then VD on the 14th, I mean Valentine’s Day, when we are supposed to eat a lot of sweets again! What a mixed-up time. Also, Abe, we wanted another three-day weekend, so we combined all of youse guys birthdays into President’s Day. Plus, it is the month of love, as well as skunk mating season, but I repeat myself.”

“I don’t understand the new road signs,” stated Virginia, the only woman on ToeQuest, who is actually Austin’s mother. He signed her up so he could try to use her WebTV to get on ToeQuest from Chicago (it didn’t work very well).

“A 4-WAY-STOP sign means to use the foot brake, then downshift, pull the emergency brake, and drag your foot, as the four ways. STOP A-HEAD says that a head is in the road! WATCH OUT FOR CHILDREN means: Don’t hug, fondle, kiss, touch, or sweet-talk beneath the sign, for you may do the conceivable. So, get a room. BIKE PATH: The official path for bikes is between the two yellow lines in the middle of the road. Also remember that if you speed up when you see a yellow light it will never turn red, since its frequency shifts toward green as you near C, the

speed of light! Furthermore, morons always drive slower than you and idiots drive faster than you! Finally, jay walkers have the right of death.”

It was time to show the movie again, but larger, so Nobody powered up his 8 foot diagonal iphone. The video showed someone in the 1800’s riding a horse, then someone riding a horse in the previous century, and so on back for tens of thousands of years, then hundreds of thousands of years of cavemen walking.

Profpat, bored, tried to sneak out the window to go do some exciting accounting. Fredrick tried dividing by zero on his calculator. Abraham Lincoln wrote a historic address on the wrong side of an envelope. Gray-beard counted the spots on the ceiling and connected the dots into a pleasing image. Austin fell asleep. Mkirkpatrick went to Turkey before it could be devoured by Hungary. Rascal slipped off into the 7th dimension for a while (the Heavenly realm). MJA said that boredom is not really equal to excitement after all.

“The trip wasn’t all that interesting at first,” said Nobody, “as we now live in the most amazing of all time. Soon, we may be able to alter our own DNA and further speed evolution on its way. We have just heard the Big Bang and have sprung off of the starting line... The human race is on. We are perhaps 1% of the way along to perfection. The possibilities for the finish line are endless, for scientific revelations are entering the fast lane almost daily. Life now is really a royal diadem of momentous gems shining through us all. We live in the best of times, as the universe is truly ours to experience. It is the ultimate free lunch (how do you account for that, Profpat?). Please contribute to ToeQuest, for that’s where Everything is happening. We accept all denominations, but we prefer twenties and hundreds.”

Nobody sped up the video of the past and soon everything went back into the stars and then the stars dispersed into dust which went back to form the words “The Beginning”, as the film ended.

The hoopla over the CMBR trip had died down and the watchdogs had quickly and luckily lost interest, feeling that the ToeQuesters were a bunch of crackpots (crack and pot at the same time?).

ToeQuesters in the know soon received a certified package from Fed-Up (Fed-Ex and UPS had merged), containing a note, some pictures, an airline ticket to Los Angeles, and a DVD.

The note read:

Dear Everyone Involved With My CMBR Trip,

This note is written in disappearing ink (an old check writing trick used by Profpat), so please read immediately.

First of all, the topic of our TOE discovery is very serious, so there are no jokes herein; those were just to throw off the CIA and all the other acronyms. I couldn't reveal everything at our last meeting since there were too many government snoops about. I thank you all for mixing in some silly questions with the serious ones, although I'm not sure which were which, and for sitting through the home movies, which I must now tell you were fake. I know the films were difficult to watch, but I needed your honest reactions. The government pretty much thinks we are all nuts and Star Trek fans. Thanks, also, for the misdirection of posting many weird and crazy theories about existence on ToeQuest. Which ones were which again?

We must be very suspicious of those who would be so low as to manipulate the reception of reality for their own amplitude and gain. By the way, I heard that many of you have altered your interference patterns to lose 20-30 pounds. Anyway, all of reality is at stake here, and none but us can be trusted with the recent revelations. Just look at the cutthroat competition over discovering and explaining dark matter, even among reputable scientists. Many are spending millions and using deep mine shafts to avoid cosmic rays in order to try and detect one little measly weakly interacting massive particle (WIMP), the most promising efforts of which are occurring in the defunct Homestake gold mine in South Dakota, which is deeper than six Empire State Buildings, in which they have built a haystack and are looking for a needle in it. This is a small potatoe (and small fries) to what we have discovered about the CMBR, the toe itself without the prefix pota-. You can thank Dan Quail for the spelling, not my trip.

So, anyway, the attention is off of us for now, and we have a clear channel; however, the government did a routine background check on me and discovered that I don't exist, for I am Nobody. My past has no history and my future is a mystery. Nor do I have a presence in the present. They are as hot on my case as they would be for illegal aliens and so they have given me a past imperfect and so have made my future tense. Therefore, I have taken refuge in a certain uncharted mountain top retreat, where we will gather in a month or so to discuss the contents of the true CMBR home movie tape that I've sent you all with your plane tickets.

Do not use your ToeQuest nickname while traveling, but employ your real name, if you can remember it, so that the spies will not catch on. I don't know if you've ever watched the TV series, 'Nowhere Man', the greatest show ever made, but there are organizations out there, government and otherwise, that have super surveillance equipment, hence our remote and unknown meeting spot, which by the way, is still intact (it was a TOE research center back in the 70's), with the addition of a few more tents and a CMBR-powered microwave oven.

All incidental, intentional, and exceptional expenses will be reimbursed, because Profpat happened to take note of many government account num-

bers and passwords. He will be taking a penny (and any fractions thereof) out of each government account on a daily basis to fund our endeavors. This should not arouse any bankers unless a pretty woman is nearby. Who would have ever thought that accounting could be so useful and exciting!

That reminds me of a Profpat story: Upon receiving a useless check made with his vanishing ink, a big client insisted that Profpat write a new check with their own pen that they had brought along to outwit the Prof's trickery; however, Prof saw them arriving and quickly wrote VOID on on blank with latent ink, an ink which would materialize on the check within a short while. Our team is starting to rival the one in the 'Ocean's 13' movie and Brad Pitt has joined us to get away from his marriages.

At L.A., you will be whisked to a special charter jet that will take you to your final destination. After you land, a Hari-Krishna will give you a map at the airport. Look for the one with no hair; no, never mind; s/he will recognize you. Do not attend the feast that they will offer you, since it is just but a few sprigs of parsley. Although I cannot tell you where we are meeting, you will all have to rent motorcycles and endure an uphill climb up a mountain in first gear. Wear old shoes, a colorful tropical shirt, and some weird shorts, and try to act normal: to thy own selves please do not be true.

Now, the inevitable is that all governments of the world will accidentally wise up and realize that we have the TOE and so I am sending you all to your local ninja training school for a week of instruction before your 'vacation'.

unsigned,
nobody

P.S. Post any questions about the expedition on ToeQuest...

"Shouldn't we return Abraham Lincoln to his own time?" posted Mkirkpatrick.

"Not so fast; we're thinking of running him against Hillary Clinton, for he's now the only honest politician on Earth."

"Can I wear my new T-shirt about 'The Theory of Thing' that says 'Forget Everything; There is Only One Thing: Energy'?" added Mkirkpatrick.

"That's fine, but my none thing is no-thing."

"Mine is food," said Austin to Mkirkpatrick.

"My one thing is two parallel lines," said MJA.

"Can I bring my lounge chair that is made of energy?" asked Mkirkpatrick.

"Yes, but why do you have so many questions?"

"I asked Austin for a bigger part," Michael answered.

"Michael Kirkpatrick," said Profpat, "I've been looking all over for that energy and here I am sitting on it!"

"Well, try not to let any escape," said Graybeard.

"OK guys," said Nobody, "Our synergy will produce all the energy we need."

"Where's the punch line?" asked M Kirkpatrick.

"The protection of the secret of reality is a serious undertaking, not a fun-eral," answered Nobody. "Remember, the jokes are over."

"What about egg jokes?" asked ChickenMan.

"The yolk is on you!"

"Is there a void anywhere?" asked Fredrick.

"I would avoid a void like the plague since Nature abhors a vacuum and since no void has coughed up or voided anything but a whole lot of goose eggs."

"What about the void that Profpat wrote on a check?" continued Fredrick.

"That was unavoidable."

"How do I ride a motorcycle without falling over?" asked Rascal.

"I will give you one with gyroscopes front and back that look like wheels"

"But I live in Australia!" exclaimed Graybeard.

"My condolences."

"Is this secret meeting place anything to do with Austin's mountain top hideaway?" questioned Rascal.

"No."

"Is your answer an untruth," added Rascal, "for security purposes?"

"I ain't not lying about nothing no way, no how, or nothing exists," unanswerd Nobody.

"Meanwhile," added Nobody, "we're serving free lunches for everyone and giving away a lot of other stuff, for Profpat has been giving people a penny for their thoughts and then keeping the change when they put in their two cents worth."



Wanted



RascalPuff



Austin



Mkirkpatrick



Thor



Graybeard



MJA



Profpat



Fredrick

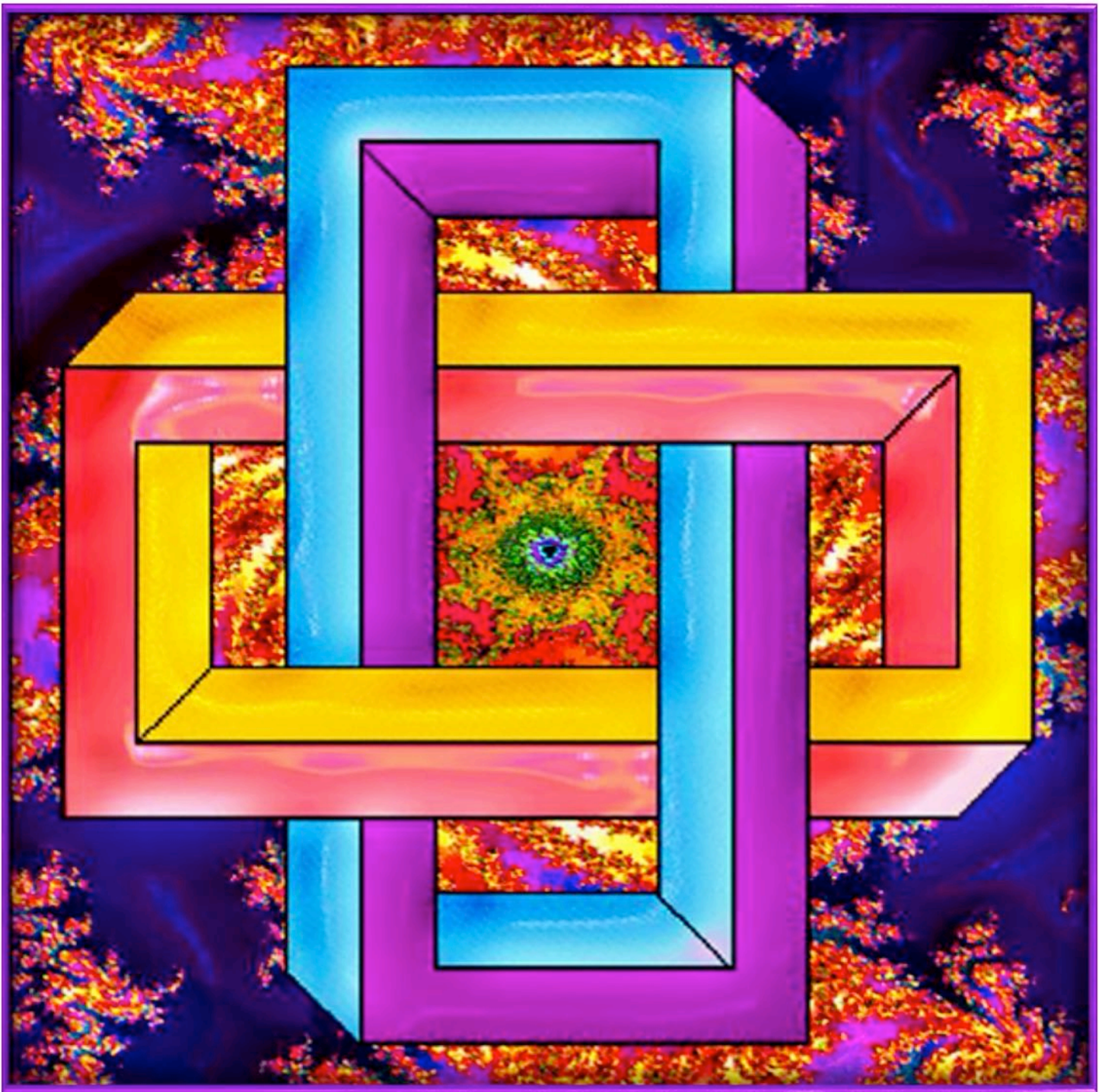
for



NOBODY

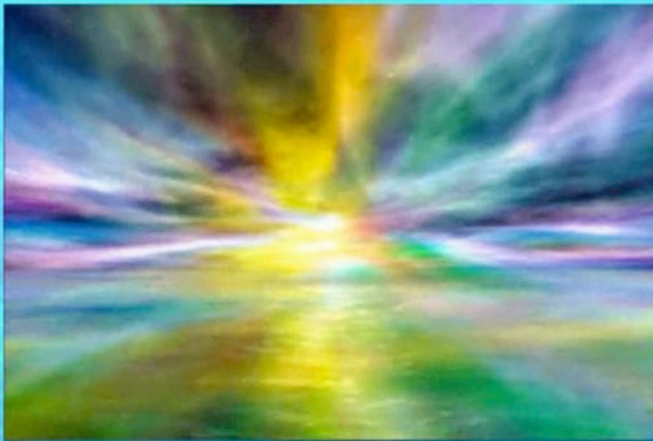
Questioning

by the **FBI, CIA, MIG, Scotland Yard, Interpol, and TV networks**



(The two interlocked boxes of Reality,
Each of which holds the others key)

Scenes from the Real Video, on the next page:





Not To Be

POOF!

I offered Descartes another cup of coffee. He said "I think not", whereupon he disappeared.

P. Torrey © 1997

— Chapter 3 —
Fright Ride

The prospective operatives received after-midnight calls, stating:

It will be a pleasure to instruct potential agents so well conditioned and already knowledgeable in so many fields; we will merely hone a few of your reflexes that may have become dulled. Training begins with a challenging journey to our nearest center. Meanwhile, you might practice walking around in the dark with a cat.

Each received more individual and specific instructions, along with a suggested route.

Rascal's instructions read:

You will need to ride a bike rather soon along the dark country roads with many dips and hills, twists and turns, from your home to our facility. No lights are allowed. You should consider beforehand what you will do about any blinding headlights coming at you and how you will navigate the pitch dark areas of roads when you pass through dense forests. A cold diet coke with vitamins awaits you. Good luck. This is not a drill, for there are those who have just recently become aware of your many talents.

Rascal made his preparations and then finished some work on the expanding universe. Out the window he could see six FBI-looking black sedans pulling up very quickly. He grabbed a water bottle and raced out the back door so fast that a faint image of himself was left standing in the house. He hopped on his bicycle and was off and away while the Feds broke down the front door which was already unlocked.

The bike ride was going to be a lot worse than he had thought, for there was no moon. Rascal reached 15th gear on a down slope and only down-shifted when it became harder to pedal, of course, finally just inching along in first gear upon a steep up-slope, where he stopped to survey the scene and have a sip of H₂O. *I knew this would happen when we discovered the workings of Everything*, feeling both elated and deflated in a sort of yin/yang balance.

Rascal was soon off again and sailing along when a car with bright lights approached him from the opposite direction. Rascal closed his right eye just before his left was blinded by the lights, then quickly opened his right eye after the car had passed. *Whew, that was close*, he thought, *after swiftly correcting out of the way of a mailbox.*



He next rode on a road through a densely forested area and could see virtually nothing at all, but he didn't panic, and quickly gazed downward at the white line at the side of the lane for guidance, but it was really rather scary and much worse than walking into a dark movie theater and sitting down on a fat lady. *Anything for the DNA information*, he thought.

He noted some flickering lights bouncing off the trees ahead, meaning that they were coming from way behind him, knowing this without even having to look back, for this is how it is riding at night, and so he pulled over into a ditch behind some bushes, and watched six black sedans pass by at about 90 miles an hour. *Holy mother of all reality*, he exclaimed softly.

Rascal checked his map and was off again, in 79th gear, going so fast that he didn't care to stop for a large truck coming up behind him, and couldn't anyway, so he hugged the side of the road and threaded the white lane marker, sticking to it like a gluon as the truck swept alongside, then quickly swerved towards the rear of the truck and drafted behind it uphill, defying gravity at its own game in losing it to the wind.

The truck turned off; Rascal rested. *It was time to really get going again*, said Rascal's brain to his rear that was now resting back. He got up to speed again, exhilarated by the adventure of the escapade. The air was rushing by and whistling in his ears and his pajamas were flapping in the breeze. Bugs splatted against him. *Now this is living, although there is a fine line between the here-before and the hereafter thereafter.*

Rascal was drenched in sweat, even on this cool night, and drank the last of the bottled water. Only five miles or so to go. His heart was racing at 150 bpm and his legs were getting numb, so he had to stop. He could hardly stand it, so he sat down. This simple ninja training exercise had turned into a life and death struggle. *The enemy will do anything to gain my information about the Theory of Everything.*

He was off again. A rooster crossed the road because there was a chick on the other side, and Rascal missed hitting it by just a feather, then a possum played dead in the road, or was already, and a deer darted out... If these were not enough, a squirrel that was already in the clear tried to dive under his wheels. His ability to juggle multiple ideas came in handy and so he threaded a needle that he found in a haystack and sewed a stitch in time and passed through the eye like a camel into the night's heavens.

Twelve headlights were returning, and the searchlights scanning, the Feds now realizing that Rascal had not been driving a car, or had turned off the road, and so Rascal again took to the bushes and peed while the FBI searched every farmhouse, hen house, and outhouse.

Rascal now rode more like a bat out of hell, going just fast enough to enter the 6th dimension, but not so fast as to enter the 7th, for that was Heaven and he wasn't ready yet. He cut through a trail in the woods as shown on his map and could see the ninja training center just ahead; it was raising its drawbridge to close for the night. Rascal raced up the ramp, sailed through the air, and came down on the other side, coasting into the safety of the center.

A diet coke never tasted so good.

"Welcome, Rascal," said a holographic interference pattern of Ultimate Master Nobody, "No one ever forgets how to ride bike."

"I would have preferred a pleasant walk down the road."

"No could have worked," replied Nobody, in broken English, "Man who walk in front of car get tired; man who walk behind car get exhausted; man in car chased by six high speed sedans become history. We know danger when send message."

"Well, I walked a round of golf the other day," added Rascal.

"Definition of golf is: a pleasant walk ruined."

Rascal had a good sleep, dreaming of riding a motorcycle, and awoke the next day to begin further training.

A ninth degree Grand Master appeared and disappeared and reappeared. "Welcome to training center, Mr. Puff Rascal."

"I am lucky to be here, Grand Master," Rascal replied, "and the drawbridge; do you close at 4 AM?"

"We give you cheap thrill."

"I'll give you a piece of my mind and you will not have any peace in yours!"

"Tut-tut. Close eyes. What you hear?"

"I hear that the whole world is after me and the others."

"Ha-ha, good joke. Now, seriously, hear you your own heartbeat?"

"Are you kidding? It's still beating out of my chest!"

"Very good. What else you hear?"

"I hear the grasshopper at your feet."

"Excellent. Can you hear thermal vibration?"

"Those are, luckily, just below the threshold of human hearing; we would go crazy if we heard those things."

"We will teach you thermal method. Hear grass growing?"

"No, but I hear the lawnmower mowing."

"Oh sorry, I stop them. Done. Now, hearest you sound of toes questing?"

"No."

"Good, they run on, and no post readable. Hear vacuum?"

"No, the cleaning lady went home."

"Ah, you catch on, you Rascal. Have you hearing aids?"

"No, I have no sexual transmittable diseases, for I never listen to a-holes."

"Fine, fine; you good candidate. Assume you not have visual aids for same reason. Can you hear the sound of one hand clapping?"

"Yes, if I snap my fingers."

"Very good, sir Puff. Puff the magic dragon?"

"Yes, but I didn't inhale."

"Ha-ha and more ha, Ninja Puff. You superb. Have you heard of goats?"

"No, but I have a flock of seagulls that Austin just gave me in this paragraph."

"Fine answering, Puff-man. Hear the sun shining?"

"I'm all ears."

"We teach you. But many places the sun not shine. Moon shine?"

"Alcohol dulls my senses."

"Ah, good. Hear earth turning?"

"Yes, and space, too."

"Oh?"

"The Earth turns as much as space turns around it."

"You wise man."

"Why do you often leave out articles and other little words in your speech?"

"Unnecessary."

"Maybe. Try adding a word or two."

"You wise old man."

“Never mind.”

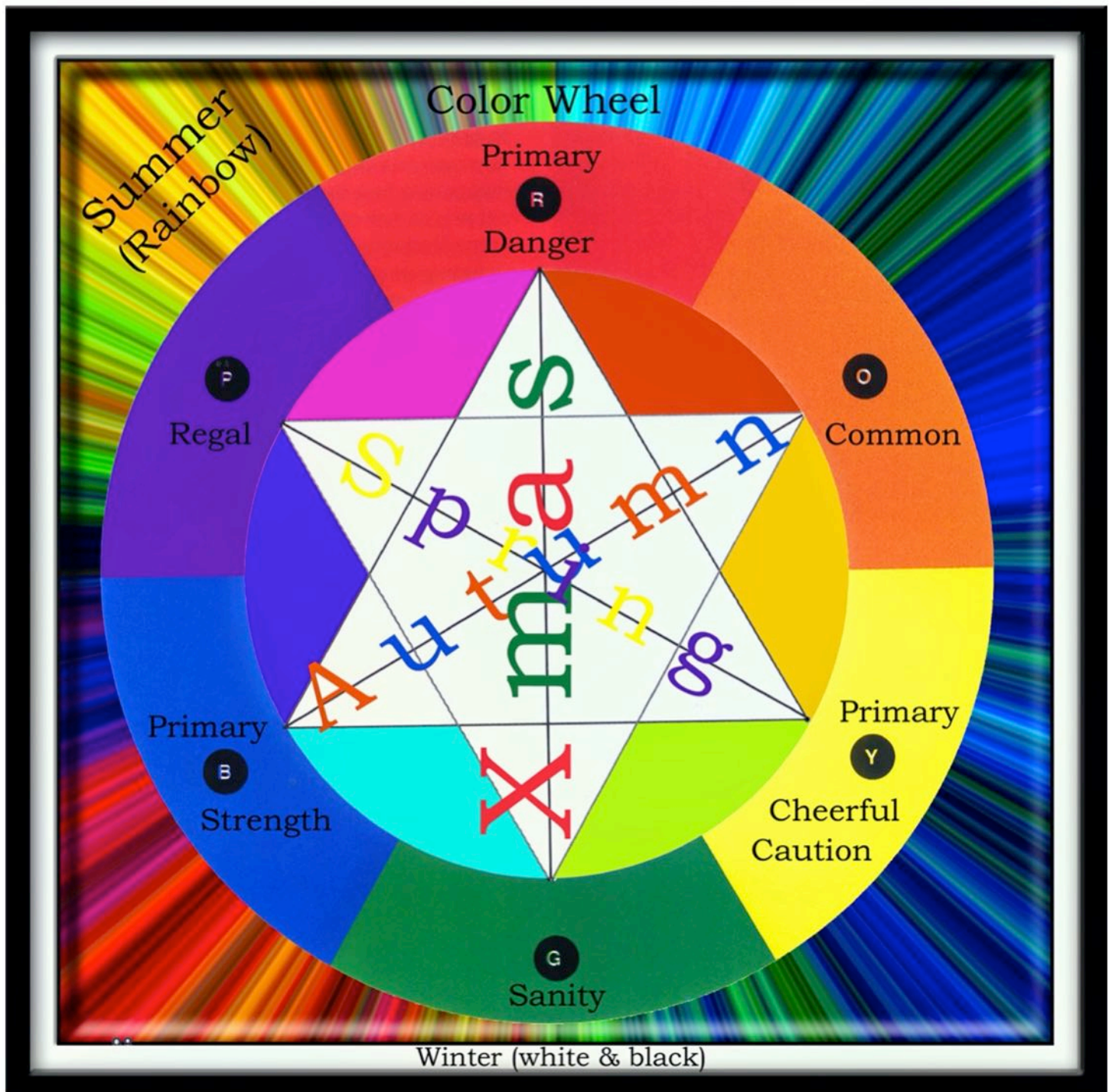
“But you still hear the missing words, do you not, Grasshopper Puff?”

“Ah, yes; I see; that is part of the hearing test!”

“You no see. This hearing test. You are a good listener and of course I can speak perfect English, except in the UK.”

“Yes, once a lady in a hotel asked me for a lift and it didn’t go over very well when I lifted her up.”

“Thank you, first degree ninja puffing rascal. Me, I am deaf and wife is blind; therefore we make perfect couple!”



The Be-All

The complex composites—namely us,
Look back, though our lesser blended portions—
To galaxies, solar systems, and stardust,
Essentially unraveling energy's windings...

...Then further still, always ever simpler,
Far beneath it all that was so long ago,
Even to the state before form and time...

*There is the Stillness of no motion: Everywhere;
Only one law: that Absolute Nothing cannot Be;
Since, if it could it would still be around.
So, this law is immutable, unchangeable.*

*Why? Since there IS something—whatever!
No matter if its forms/forces cancel out,
No matter if it's of waves and fields,
No matter if it's called virtual or real,
No matter even if it's not matter but
Just feels solid—as swirling energy, since,*

*Whatever its mechanism, we Mind it,
Dream it, Live it, transform it, Are it, for,
What makes no difference is no difference.*

**(To some, sensations of transcendence
'Point' toward a ONE, but feelings are just that.**

**Of the Electrochemical Organism's 'none'
There is no unspeaking ONE of proof,
For meditation's FEELING that is of no self,
Nor bound, is... neurological quietus.
While healthful, induced oneness is not TRUTH.)**

*The Stillness reigns even now, somewheres;
As in our 'before', it follows the only nature
It could have ever had—which is to be.*

*Yes,'twas ever there—as simple as could be.
There were no forms then—those came later;
No particles (that's form), no movement (that's time),
No forces (from motion), no Producer (complex)—*

*It was only a What filling Everywhere.
Made? No, energy can't be made or destroyed.*

*There were no higher laws then, just openness
And possibility, as limited as that was
To its basic simplicity that ever was.*

*There were no constraints to keep it still forever,
For there was nothing but the Stillness itself.*

*Well, in other words, everything leaks, and
No-thing is perfect, so it slowly raveled
About itself (as per Jimbo's FET)
Over Billions of years more than we think,
Creating forms that spun, all that it could do,
Into neutrons/protons throwing off protons
At the speed of light from the whirlings' spin.*

*Such energy makes the world go 'round,
Creates the waving of light and sound.*

*Star clusters rotate as whirlpools of 'dust',
As life's web is spun all around us.*

*From movement was born Then and When,
As forms of What whizzing through Where.
Now we call it the past and future
Of matter moving through space.*

*Past matter-space became history-remembrance;
Future space-matter projects as wishes-progress;
Then all those, too, further combine into being,
Into the Who and What we have become.*

The End-All

*If, then, you worry that all will not last
That the likes of us someday will be the past,
And wonder whither whence we went
After the last of us her life has spent...*

*...The Eternal Energy has formed
Trillions of baubles like thee, and will form,
Forevermore—the comings and passings
Of which the Energy emits to immerse
As much air's self heeds bubbles blown and burst.*

— Chapter 4 —

Fish Story

(You Should See the One that Got Away)

A wanted poster soon went up in the posting offices all over the world. FBI agents fanned out all over the globe in search of all the escaping scientific ToeQuestors.

Graybeard was testing his new scuba diving equipment after taking a long walk off a short pier, waiting for his ship to come in that would take him way out onto the Great Barrier Reef, where he would continue to investigate life under the sea, and post some more of his findings.

He had just discovered a mermaid swimming toward him below while a dark fate was arriving above. Nobody's warnings to him of impending doom had been slightly delayed by his remote location; however, Graybeard's waterproof mobile phone soon rang underwater, and he listened, amazed, as instructions were given to proceed to the ninja base across the bay, ending with *hurry mate!* and then *click!*

"Wait, hold it," said Graybeard into a dead line, "The mermaid mate, and I don't even have a boat!"



He climbed up onto the pier just in time to see six grey MI6 sedans pulling up to the beach and screeching to a halt, some of them slipping on into the water. *Why can't these guys ever learn how to park?*

Graybeard didn't run, but walked, for they didn't know what he looked like, and because many boaters were milling about. He calmly grabbed a beer from someone's boat, took off some of his diving equipment, and looked around for the fastest boat that he could steal or borrow forever. *Why did I get involved with this TOE stuff*, already knowing that he had had to since it was the most ultimate quest of all: the Holy Grail. *We are the knights of the temporal!*

He picked up his pace when he saw the agents swarming onto the pier and checking everyone out. *They must have Google-unEarthed me*, he surmised.

"Excuse me," Graybeard said politely, as he bumped someone off their speed boat, "it's life or life in confinement!" He puttered away slowly, but MI6 suspected him because he looked like James Bond, and so they all ran to the end of the pier wildly firing tranquilizer darts.



Graybeard was good at darts and so he threw them back, giving some zzzzs to a couple of them, and then pushed full throttle ahead through a group of jet-skiers and off into the bay. MI6 was unloading something grey and floatable. *It's Gray against grey*, he decided.

He looked back after a while, only to see 6 MI6 high-speed grey power boats pursuing him. *I'm no match for these, although I do have a lead, but to where...?*

He was hitting the speed bumps of the waves and driving as reckless as the boat safety course had told him not to, and was nearly blinded by the spray, but then remembered that he still had his goggles on. *They'll never torture the TOE out of me, but if they tickle my foot I may have to die laughing.*

After some time, they began closing in on him, with no land in sight, and so his whole life of informational posts began to pass before his eyes: *forces, electricity, noumena, sea creatures, quarks, evolution, getting tanked at the Many-Worlds pub... tanks? Fuel tanks?*

A huge ocean liner had just come over the horizon at full speed, but... Graybeard doubted he could get to it for any assistance, for his unrelenting shadows were inexorably approaching, much as the night follows the day, now but a kilometer behind. *Tanks for the memories, everyone,* he sighed.



As they drew near, Graybeard jettisoned three-quarters of his fuel and shot a flare into both the inflammable and flammable stuff at just the right moment, causing a ruckus and disabling two of the boats. *Good try, Graybeard the Pirate*, he said to himself, who answered back, *but probably not good enough...*

A bit of time had been saved while two agents were being rescued by the other MI6 boats, but it was only going to prolong his agony, and delay for but a short while their ecstasy of capturing him. Back at full speed for 6 more kilometers, but with his fuel now getting low, Graybeard felt the exhilaration of his last hurrah on this Earth as the Feds were closing in on him again. The ocean liner was approaching, very close, but there would be no time for him to sneak aboard unobserved. Not even Tom Clancy could save him now. *This is it*, he thought, *die or die.*

Ready to protect the TOE at any or all cost, Graybeard steered his boat with a last minute adjustment toward a head-on collision with the ocean liner... and then laid down in the front of the boat. The ocean liner struck Graybeard's boat amidships, breaking it in two, accompanied by a huge fireball explosion of the rear portion that the amazed MI6 agents took as his epitaph. They stayed and searched the area, but found no trace of Graybeard. They put a hand over their hearts and saluted the brave ToeQuestor, then headed back to shore in disgrace.

(A cliffhanger; no, I couldn't do that to you!)



“That’s two tanks for the memories,” said Graybeard, with bubbles coming out of his mouth as he assembled the last of his scuba gear, tanks, fins, and mouthpiece, underwater, noting the raging firestorm up above. He swam on, thirty feet submerged, for a kilometer or two, to vacate the area, then sat down on the bottom of the sea, and drank an amber fluid (“beer”, in English). *Here’s to the TOE! May it never fall into the wrong hands.*

Graybeard swam on, using up the last of the air of his tanks, threw off his counterweights, and surfaced, quite exhausted, and noted the landmark that he’d been told of, still four miles away. (Austin is not really good with kilometers.) *Too far, he thought, I’m as good as in a Black Stump (far away) or the Back of Bourke (the middle of nowhere), Bullamanks even (way beyond the preceding destinations)!*

A small rowboat appeared out of nowhere with a robed black ninja waving to him, “G’day mate; good on ya! I give you fifth degree.”

“Cut the strine; I need some zeds (zzzzs).

“Too right!”

“Well, hooly-dooly,” Graybeard answered, “did Nobody send you? And are we going to the ninja center in this putt-putt?”

“Yes, and no. We go first Tom Clancy house; make more notes.”

“I’m about to go berko! Why wasn’t I warned of MI6 just a few minutes earlier?”



“It better training for great one, Beard of Gray ninja-san, king of reefers!
And you love mermaid!”



“I give up, I’m too tired for kafuffling.”

Tom Clancy wished them well and they rowed toward the ninja outpost.

“No man look for rowboat and no man be island,” said the 5th degree Grand Master.

“Whatever you say, PHD.”

Darkness fell as they entered the training ground, and Graybeard was going to sleep well, dreaming of fish women.

“Eye test time, Growbeard” said the ninth degree Grand Master.

“Shuteye time,” protested Graybeard.

“Please read line bottom of chart”.

“Printed by Acuvision 2005.”

“You have good eye.”

“Two, two eyes; do you think I lost one as a pirate?”

“No, sorry Grayman. Please close ears; what see?”

“I see you are going to end up in the ICU!”

“Now-now, Greatbeard. We teach you mind’s eye.”

“OK, I’ll see you I to eye.”

“That better. Still seeing mermaid?”

“We broke up, fin-ished, due to my imminent death.”

“Be friend; we teach you seeing in dark.”

“I already have x-ray vision, and, hey, why is your underwear so ragged? What if you have to go to the hospital, like real soon!”

“You fine sight full of seaweed, but good eye too.”

“Two eyes.”

“I give you four eyes.”

“I don’t need glasses.”

“What if TOE scientist woman blind since birth named Mary regain sight? Know she what color banana is?”

“Well, I thought not, and since I know her, I tried to trick her and showed her a blue banana...”

“She say not banana.”

“How do you know that?”

“While blind she knew EVERYTHING about banana!”

“Well, I’ll be darned. Teach me more.”

“See you woman on moon?”

“See you later.”



NO PRESERVATIVES,
NO CALORIES,
NO CAFFEINE,
NO SUGAR,
NO SALT,
NO FAT,



NO SODA!

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BALANCE

Not quite sober blest nor drunk to excess,
Never too foolish nor very reckless—
Yes, my passion is so reasonable
In this delicate state of awareness.

Life must be more like a mosaic done
Than a focused laser funnel of sun.
Since few lengthy pleasures are lent to us,
We build a stained-glass window of small ones.

I dare to walk the line, balancing fun
There between adventure and misfortune,
For the greatest blunder in life is to
Repeatedly fear that you will make one.

Classicists drone toward mechanical perfection;
Romanticists drown in emotion's affection;
Even worse, others alternate between extremes.
The way's not this or that, but joined in direction.

Each holds within itself the seed of the other—
Yin reaches climax, then retreats in Yang's favor:
Cyclic movement of rotational symmetry.
Rounded life is the blend of Yin/Yang together.

Edges dissolve when opposites are balanced—
Time and dimensional space are transcended.
Everything joins, yet remains as it is,
For what "is not" is as great as what "is".



Strive to maintain a dynamic balance—of light
And dark, hard & soft, Yin & Yang, Swrong & right.
Reality is found not in separate actions,
But in related events blended in twilight.

Opposites are just a different view
Of one fundamental phenomenon—
Light, beauty, and goodness are the inverse
Sides of darkness, ugliness, and evil.

All feelings, sad, happy, or in between,
Crisscross the woven cloth of our routine.
They're reflections of life's sensations,
Forming the rainbow that colors the scene.

(with apology to Lord Byron)
Let us have wine, lovers, song, and laughter,
Water, chastity, prayer the day after.
Such we'll alternate the rest of our days—
On the average, we'll make Hereafter!



— Chapter 5 —
The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Fredrick, a master of foreign languages, flew the model of the unbroken universal vase to Oslo, Norway, and then took a short vacation in Russia from working on nothing, and was out and about the town and sitting in a restaurant awaiting a delicious roast duck when he received an emergency evacuation order from Nobody's ninjas to immediately hoof it over to the train station. *Ciao, chow*, he thought to himself.



On his way out, he grabbed a cheeseburger from someone who wasn't looking and calmly walked out the front door and on down the street. Looking back, he saw the police surrounding the restaurant, as well as his car. *Holy King Tut's tomb!* he exclaimed. *They really want to control the world with the TOE! They are probably after my drawing, too, the one showing the pyramidal opposition of the weak and strong nuclear forces and the transition of the electric and magnetic forces.*

He patted his underarm, checking that his pistol was still there, and sauntered down the street. *How did they find me?* His cell phone rang

and a voice said, “How find you, Mr. Fred, is by pyramid in front yard. Please proceed train station. 9:05 train north. Hurry. *Click.*”

Fredrick walked and jogged a ways without further incident and entered a tunnel that would take him under the train tracks to the station. He hesitated, at first, seeing that the tunnel was dimly lit by only a single light bulb in the center, but then moved on in, not wanting to miss the train.



His cell phone began ringing off the hook and alerted him as follows: “Four KGB red sedans arriving each end of tunnel. Make good plan fast!” Fredrick reflected a moment, sizing up the scene. He quickly walked to the center of the tunnel, took off his sweater, draped it over his shoulder, and stood under the lone light. He could hear the red KGB sedans screeching to a halt at each end, some of them going a bit too far and denting their fenders. *Very poor and reckless drivers!*

Eight KGB agents entered the tunnel and three approached from either direction, the remaining two staying back as rear guards, one at each end of the tunnel. “Hands up,” said the KGB leader, in English, as they all pointed tranquilizer guns at Fredrick, front and back.

“No.”

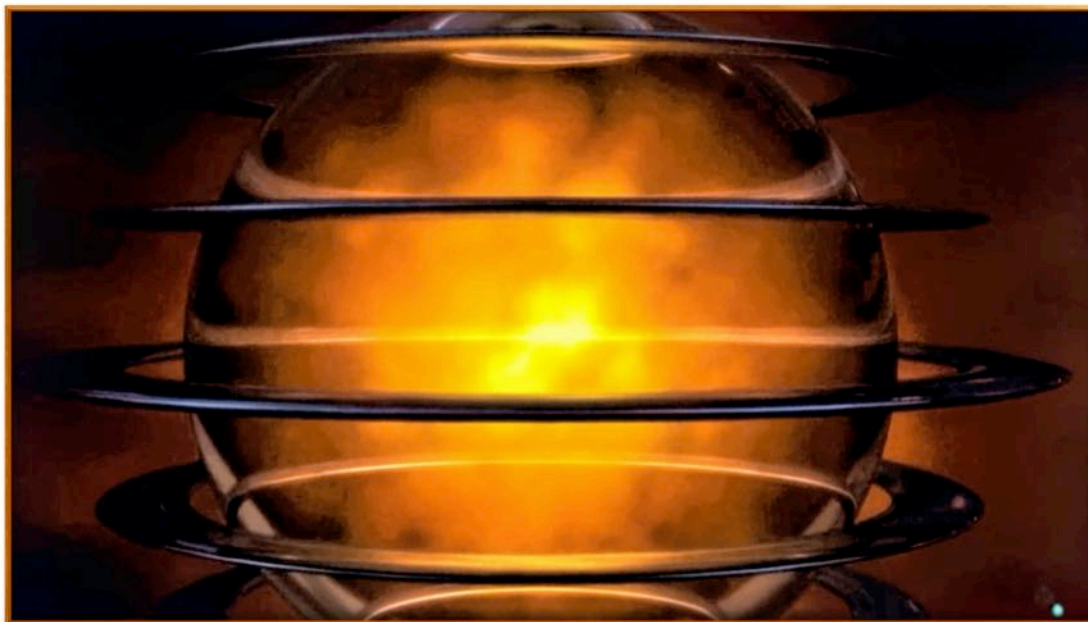
“Must I repeat the command; raise up your hands or go to sleep!”

“No,” replied Fredrick, “I must know who asks me?”

The agents approached a bit closer. “I am famous Colonel Patov; you will follow orders or be subdued and severely beaten. Behind you is Demetri, my best and most merciless captain, with his team. You have no-where to go, Fredrick. Raise your hands, be searched; come with us peacefully and we won’t even have to use the tranquilizer darts.”

“Okay,” answered Fredrick, “as long as you put it that way.”

The agents approached slowly from Fredrick’s front and back as he began to raise his hands. They were about twenty feet away now. “No contest,” said Fredrick, “I’ll be passing on to the other side. It’s lights out for me!”



Fredrick raised his hands quickly and smashed the light bulb, then attached his sweater to the fixture, having noted the spot beforehand, slipped off his shoes and left them there, and let out a blood curdling scream that seemed to echo from all directions at once. The KGB thought Fredrick was charging them, but in actuality he had just slipped sideways, noiselessly, without his shoes, and had squatted down, hugging the wall of the tunnel that had just been plunged into total darkness.

Darts began flying through the darkness, towards the screech, but Patov, a seasoned KGB veteran, called out, “Stop, we’re only hitting each other. I have one down. Demetri?”

“One as well, Colonel.”

Patov added quickly, “Link hands and sweep ahead, touching the walls; he is still somewhere between us.”

Fredrick felt the edge of a coat almost touch him, but, just about then the agents reached his hanging sweater and his shoes on the floor there

was an intense struggle with Fredrick's abandoned clothes and shoes, some agents even punching each other out in the darkness; thus, during this time, Fredrick scooted along, found the napping agent and removed his coat. While moving toward the end of the tunnel, Fredrick encountered another body against the wall and thought *That's funny, Demetri said only one was down.*

Fredrick halted, noting that there was some ambient light at the end of the tunnel and that there would be no way to slip past the rear guard undetected. A whistle and a rumble indicated that the northbound train was arriving. Fredrick, wearing the borrowed KGB coat, walked calmly toward the rear guard, who tensed and pointed his weapon. Fredrick then whispered, in Russian, from several feet away "It's me, Demetri", and so the guard relaxed a bit, and it was in this split second that Fredrick leapt toward him and clunked him on the head with his pistol, took the guard's shoes, put them on, then ran up to the platform and jumped aboard the already departing train. *I am really Rushin' now.*



It was Fredrick's lucky day in that roast duck was on the dining car menu and so he ordered it. At the next station, Fredrick looked out the window and saw the five agents, minus one clunker and the two sleepers, running for the train and boarding the rear cars just as they were pulling away. Fredrick's duck begin to take flight again as he ran to the end of the dining car and uncoupled the remainder of the train, pretty much leaving it sitting in the station. *Good training.*

The KGBers then notified their top man, General Burkov, who happened to be in the vicinity aboard his own lavish private train, of their latest defeat (a misplaced clause?). Burkov gave new orders to his engineer. Fredrick jumped onto another train. He ran back through the dining car, the sleeper cars, the baggage car, and onto the engine, showing his ToeQuest membership card and advising the engineer that he should leave the train for his own safety.



About then, General Burkov's train came off a siding at high speed and onto Fredrick's track, about three miles behind. Fredrick noted this oddity, thinking that trains are not scheduled this closely, and so he continued onward until he saw a signal for an upcoming siding, and stopped his train just beyond it, got out, and switched the main track onto the siding that led to an old abandoned mine, and just stood there to witness the action, carrying his roast duck. *This should be good.*

Burkov came roaring much too fast around the curve, spotted the track switch too late, and tried an emergency stop, but his train kept going onto the siding and off toward the deserted mine shaft. Burkov and friends jumped off at the last minute, just before the entire train plunged into the mine shaft and was swallowed into the eighteen story depths, never to be seen again. *Shafted!* Burkov cursed that “No one does this to me and lives! Send forth every agent and every train!”



Fredrick hopped back on the engine, not planning to be on it much longer, for it wasn't healthy and it wasn't all that far to the ninja base, ten miles perhaps. He could take to the forest and walk. The roast duck was still with him and so he finally got to sample it. *Ah, delicious.*

There was a tunnel coming up ahead, and Fredrick thought, *not this again*, and stopped just before it, got everyone out and walked off by himself through the woods and toward the distant ninja base. A large bird pointed the way.

In a while, a shadow appeared and came to life beside Fredrick saying, “Good moves, Fredrick-san. I give you third degree now. I am ninth degree ninja Grand Master.”

“Hello ninth.”

“You not see me come; move like wind and go like water.”

“I heard you breaking wind and going water.”

“C'mon, that speech figure; beside, those awhile back. I wear black, come out of black between bush; appear as nothing.”

“I am an expert on nothing.”

They heard an explosion. “We take care of light at other end of tunnel, some kind of speeding red KGB engine.”

“Thanks, but where was my protection from the eight KGB agents in the first place in the first tunnel?” asked Fredrick.

“Good training. But I there in second place in tunnel to protect you,” said the Ninja, “but you not need me.”

“You were there in the tunnel?”

“Yes, I there. You touch me once.”

“Oh yeah, thanks for being there; I thought I had an arithmetic problem. Okay, but was that it, just you?”

“That even too much, just need half of me, but I no like banana split so bring whole self! Ha-ha.”

“Good one, half and half.”

They walked on, for many, many miles.

“How going, Fred?”

“I'm just putting one foot ahead of the other.”



“We getting near outer zone of base, Fred; maybe see some magic stuff.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“When cross zone, hear the sweetest saddest music ever. It go down deep, but also energize. No one can be ready for this.”

“I’m ready.”

“OK, here come.”

Tears streamed from Fredrick’s eyes. “You’re right, there was no way to be ready for that; it reminds one about the plight of humanity, energizing one to aid the cause.”

They arrived at the ninja base and went in.

“Now,” Fred, sir, “do some taste test: this Coke or Pepsi?”

“Neither; it is RC Diet Cola, from a can; nice try.”

“Ah, you have good taste. Now, what wine this be?”

“It’s a nonalcoholic sparkling grape beverage from Holland.”

“Ah, Fred, but what year.”

“This year. Now you taste this,” said Fredrick, as he pulled a piece of duck out of his pocket.

“Ah, yes, duck from Peking, south region. Very good. Now, what taste really consist of.”

“Well, although taste buds vary somewhat, there being three main classes, it all really comes down to the length of the vectors of the taste matrix of sweet, salt, bitter, and sour.”

“Yes, sir Fred. Fine taste. So, someone say something taste no good, then...”

“We don’t believe them, since their taste buds may be different from ours.”

“Some see different color too?”

“Yes, slightly.”

“That why some look like dress in dark?”

“Yes, that could be, but you dress for the dark in the dark and go forth into the dark, so why wear anything?”

“Ah, good. Ha-ha. What best taste ever?”

“The taste of eternity that I am tasting right now.”

“Ah, Fredrick, you wise man.”

“As wise as wise guy you.”

“More ha-ha. Why not shoot pistol in tunnel?”

“Well, there was nowhere to aim, plus they could have identified my position from the chamber barrel flash before I had a chance to shoot them all.”

“Good. What if they put light?”

“Then the better I know where they are to shoot them.”

“What if you get desperate or have to sneeze.”

“Then I cock the pistol and throw it where I am not, as I run away. Hopefully, it fires where it lands and draws their attention to it and away from me as I escape.”

“All this plan in one minute make?”

“Yes, I am a traffic planner and must consider all directions, even up and down, and underground through tunnels.”

“Well, you mind if we sell story to detective mystery writer DeMille, make money?”

“Fine, go ahead, but I always thought they made these things up.”

“No, truth stranger than fiction.”

“Any more tests?”

“How long is a china man.”

“Yes, that is his name.”

“No can fool you.”

“You hear of double negative, like ‘didn’t see no duck’?”

“Yes, they cancel and a duck appears, for since I didn’t see everything but a duck, then I must have seen a duck, but even this is not for sure.”

“Yes, maybe you ate duck. Now, there no such thing as double positives!”

“Yeah, right.”

“Good one. What you study lately?”

“Nothing.”

“Ah, very hard state to maintain, so maybe not exist.”

“Really?”

“Yes, it would take a god or some force to keep nothing intact, but then not really nothing, for other stuff there. That my theory. It nothing really. Very little. A small point. A void to avoid. Not much. No big deal. Some zilch.”

“All right already; it’s not easy studying nothing, you know; but the Theory Of Nothing (TON) ToeQuest thread is one of the longest threads ever.”

“True, Mr. Rick. I like do nothing. But first I relax, then sleep, then rest up, then prepare do nothing, remove all thoughts, try not move...”

“Okay, ninja, welcome to NoQuest!”



Moonlight Sonata

The music of the spring was in the breeze,
A prelude borne by airy musicians
Of the trees—the mating calls of the birds,
That opened for the cosmic symphony.

The Music of the Spheres played in the park
At night—flung down by our Father, the Sky,
Through the soft night to our Mother, the Earth,
Then to us, their audience and progeny.

The planets joined in a concert to the
Merrie Monthé of Maie, arrayed as follows:
There was Venusia, the Bringer of Peace,
Singing side by side with warring Marsius.

Flitting about was the wingéd Mercuria,
The speedy messenger who conducted
The orchestra, melting all of those who
Were touched by her wand of burning desire.

And mighty Zeus, was there, full to the brim
With the jollity of the fat man's belly.
By love, came Saturnus, so very gray
With age—lumbering into the party.

Thence sat Vrania, a magician, and
The old sea captain, King Nep, the mystic,
But not Pluto; he was downsized, no more
One of the harmonics—an underworld!

Jupiter's music was round and robust,
While Saturn's boomed with the sounds of grandeur
And the old venerable melodies;
But, Mercury soon picked up the pace.

Next flowed the serene love songs of Venus,
Followed inexorably by Martial marches.
Now was the time for Urania's magic—
She played musical jokes and surprises.

At last, their music came to mesh as one,
As our wanderers of the night floated
Away on the haunting mystical strains
Of King Nep's tune, into the May Flower moon.

Now we're touched, so touched by the starlight,
Afraid that we'll ne'er be the same again.
Can you sense the euphony of the spheres?
Can you fathom the Theory of Everything?



— Chapter 6 —
The Bird is Flown

Profpat couldn't afford to buy a helicopter, as his instructions had suggested, even after stripping Chicago dry of short change; so, frugal as he was, he bought something much cheaper, and studied up on it.

The Prof was sleeping after resting up from a nap so he could deliver an important lecture on 'Creative Accounting', in San Francisco, when he received a frantic call from a calm ninja to begin his west coast trip immediately, if not sooner. Profpat gathered up some spare pencils, loaded his turbo powered station wagon with what he needed, and took off before trouble could arrive, grabbing a cup of coffee on the way out.

He drove and drove and drove some more and soon passed the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, where he was still supposed to practice some things; however, he had noted six dust trails or devils following him many miles behind. Prof remembered that Nobody, in a private message to all, had hinted at some dark and very probable futures for the Earth that he'd observed when taking a wrong turn in time during the CMBR trip, one of them being the fate of Earth from global warming. However, all was not lost, for the goodhearted ToeQuestors could perhaps use their knowledge of the newly discovered TOE to alter the dim future, somehow, if only they could learn all the nuances quick enough over the coming years, ahead of the doom.

Profpat remembered watching the video of a possible dark future that was couched in biblical allegory for concealment of its revelations. Furthermore, the knowledge of the real TOE, if refined and understood well enough, could lead to amazing wonders that could never have even been imagined in this age, all good things, of course, and, surely, it could not be trusted to governments with visions of dominance by conquest over Toequest.

The naturalist, for instance, would be able to absorb with awestruck reverence scenes of overpowering sublimity far beyond the simple prettiness on offer now. A musician would be able to hear and play music more exhilarating and heartfelt than anyone had ever dreamed of. The celestial music of the spheres heard by the mystics would become as a child's toy flute in comparison to this grand and ultimate symphony.

The sensualist would discover that what had passed for deep and passionate sex had been merely a pleasant prelude. Erotic pleasure of an intensity that flesh had never known would become enjoyable without guilt, even by thought alone. A painter or patron of the visual arts would be able to behold representative vision in a holographic reality of indescribable glory and completeness.

Scientists would be able to apply a googolplex of neurons to their thought experiments, rivaling Einstein's fortunate 'ah-ha' moments, all of the time, to reveal much of what was unknown between heaven and earth.

Arguments by people insisting on their own selfish ways would melt into a new sense of increased reasoning, just as bad and aversive emotions would be greatly lessened by new and safer medical miracles. Wars would become much reduced, and humanity at large could finally progress beyond its everyday suffering. People would actually remember their car keys and glasses that had often and usually piled up at the vanishing point of the 'lost and found', which was at the end of the converging railroad tracks.

Of course, throughout the ages there had always been those rare and mystical moments as described above, for some enlightened and peaceful souls or those in love, but they were just fleeting glimpses of a rare light that lit their minds for a while as a flickering candle, when all one's thoughts perfectly conjuncted, but then, as always, they soon dispersing and moving on into the oblivion of forgotten dreams.

Or... would the contagion of the sickness, immaturity, and ignorance of the present human condition of those in power thwart the best efforts of the noble ToeQuestors...

All of the preceding is why Profpat and the others escaping to safety had found a renewed vigor and strength and were now going way beyond the comic Fantastic Four to form a phenomenal team of noumena seekers, consisting of many talented and diverse individuals that the fate of the universe now depended on.

So, Profpat had driven across the plains through the badlands was now speeding up the Rocky Mountain road, having turned on his nitro tanks. He had just received an update: "Go faster, six more Feds and Fed-exes coming up other side of mountain; you need reach peak before them. Hurry, scurry, flurry; make haste; expedite. *Click.*"

Profpat turned on more afterburners, and finally reached the mountain's peak, unloaded his hang glider, and took off above the clouds. He dippy-doodled at first but soon got the hang of the glider. *This is marvelous, he thought, it feels as if the wings are an extension of my self; I am a phoenix on eagle's wings.*

Some Feds fired at him from quite a distance with their high powered tranquilizer rifles, but the darts merely formed gravity's rainbow. The hang glider responded to Pat's slightest touch and he became acclimated to it. Passing hundreds of miles past the Rockies and not really losing much altitude, he learned to sense the updrafts or spot dirt fields from which the heat would be rising.

Prof saw the Earth a bit differently now, being a skynaut, its petty squabbles now seen to be as meaningless as ants fighting over a crumb. Another, smaller, mountain range gave him some needed lift, and thus he sailed on, lit a cigarette, and had a sip of coffee. The world was opened as an oyster to him, and was also now his ashtray and his out-house.



Profpat landed in San Francisco and began his lecture on ‘Being Accountable’, in some colossal skyscraper’s conference room whose grandeur befitted the importance of Accounting, for where would the world be without transactions, the accounting of which was the very ‘language of business’.

The lecture was entitled: ‘The GAAP Between the CPA and the CGA in Using the IFRS’.

It soon began:

“The basic accounting principles of the double-entry debit-credit system have not changed since the days of ancient Greece and Rome, in that we must stay up all night until they balance, that is, until Enron dropped out of the Big Five that we now call the Big Four...”

The lecture was about to go on, but it was so boring that Austin's story allows the waiting Fed-Ups to immediately rush toward the podium. Profpat threw very sharp pencils at them, greatly slowing them down, accidentally erasing a few of them, along with some quarks, income tacks, big accounts, and some green eyeshades, and then disappeared behind the curtain, and ran up the stairs toward the skyscraper's roof, not even stopping for a smoke or at a pencil sharpener.

The Feds ran down the stairs, and found no one but their lawyer, who said, "You fools. These stairs that go down; do they not also go up?" So, he reversed his charges and sent them up, but a bit too late, for Profpat was already winging away, like a duck; no, wait, ducks were in Fredrick's story; he winged away like a fowl bird, air-foiling the Federals yet again.

The Feds called in six black FBI sedan helicopters (see, Profpat, maybe you should have bought one) to follow him, as he received another message: "Stealth black ninja aircraft carrier waiting for you beyond US boundary in international waters."

Profpat flapped his seemingly real and movable organs for flying (wings) and rose and dove in rises and dives to outwit the helicopters and lose them for a while as he flew through a cloud with his mouth open to get a drink of the refreshing water droplets. It was cat and mouse for a while until the cheese disappeared in the fog.

He then used the heat rising off the Golden Gate Bridge to fly on through the end of twilight, intending to use the darkness for cover beyond the city's lights; however, this ending of dusk also meant that the ocean was no longer trading brisk breezes with the shore and that he would begin to lose altitude.



*Death! where is thy Victory?
To triumph whilst I die,
To triumph whilst thine ebon wing
Enfolds my shuddering soul.
Death! where is thy sting?
(Shelley)*

Sure enough, he began dropping 30 feet a second over the ocean and still had 25 miles to go... *This is it; I'm an overdue account, pound foolish, though penny wise, but overdrawn. At least they didn't get the TOE from me!*

Noughts, oughts, and all that he ever taught, bought, sought, and fought flashed before his red-inked eyes as he intentionally dropped like a stone for short whiles before flaring his wings to catch the air and turn potential energy into kinetic to gain forward progress out to sea, he far and away the nuttiest professor now. *Time to square accounts with my maker on account of my curiosity to account for Everything; money is of no account now; from Death my life was a borrowed debit, but I spent it, loved it, and lived it, on good fortune's credit.*

It was no use; Profpat was going to fall into the ocean. He could sense the moisture, almost taste the brine, and was soon going to swim with the smell of the fishes. *Good try, said Prof to Pat, his other selfsame, but you're not going to pass this course. It's OK, said Pat to Prof, I'm dropping out; my number is up.*

Good old Prof was ready to yin his yang in the fine way that he lived: in the black, all the books balanced except for a spot of white in the darkness of the Yin. *What's that below?*

The landing lights of the ninja carrier's heliopad flashed on in the glorious pattern of heaven, heat, and light, combined with earth, dark, and cold, each revolving around the other, the Yin/Yang symbol of a cyclic and rounded life, and Profpat dropped thirty feet, gave one last push forward, and landed just as the carrier's lights went back off.

"Welcome, Professor" said a voice in the wilderness of the darkness of nothing, "Breeze die down so we come to you, at full power."

"I'll show you a thing or 2.5," said Prof, pointing a pencil into the inky blackness of night.

"Ouch! I get the point, but really now, PatrickPro, you just live through great experience of glory of life."

"To die for glory is not living!"

"Man who face death appreciate life more. This good training for future of save yiniverse and yangiverse."

"Well, that is my questionable long and arduous search."



“See, quest great expedition. I train you in number of things. I am 9.0 degree Grand Master.”

“Do you know accounting, Grand Master, ninth degree ninja, emperor of the multiverse?”

“Just call me number nine. I no good account; get digits mixed up, but make million that way. What you do on other ledger side?”

“I color quarks through the prism of super strings and theorize the emission of an electron from the proton.”

“Nuclear ‘unclear’ to me. Have dyslexia. Am member of DNA.”

“DNA?”

“National Dyslexics Association.”

“Ok, ninja, good one, but it’s not good to make light of handicaps unless you really have one. Now, take two apples from three apples; what do you have?”

“One?”

“No, you took two, remember; they are in your hand.”

“Hardy-har, Proffer, what be one plus one.”

“Two?”

“No, they were sand piles and all lump into one bigger one.”

“Ok, #9, what is fifty quadrillion, thirty cotillions, 6 pillions, and...”

“That too hard.”

“...times zero?”

“Oh, it be zip. Quiz: What correct grammar: Six and seven ARE fourteen or six and seven IS fourteen?”

“Thirteen.”

“Ah, that unlucky number, plus this part 13 of story.”

“I always stay on the 14th floor of hotels, so I am safe, plus I never include a chapter 11 in my books, for that is filing for bankruptcy. Anyway, 13 at the last supper works for me.”

“I have a #9 in my name but it silent.”

“Ho-ho. Are the ToeQuestors days numbered?”

“Yes, today August 30 on calendar. Now, what best digit?”

“The toe, but not at the moment since I stubbed it on your deck on a big black dot.”

“Want me call tow truck? Ha. So, how old you?”

“An uncounted, innumerable, untold amount.”

“How see four sunset in one day?”

“Run up a hill.”

“Want come in out of dark? Start training?”

“Yes, but what is the darkest dark of all?”

“I’m the darkest,’ said the Shadow to the Night.’

“No,’ said Midnight, ‘compared to me you’re bright.’

“You floodlights!’ said Starless Space, ‘Stop your fight.’

“The darkest plight is the lack of love’s delight!”

“You good man, Prof. Come aboard.”

“Thanks, niner. How did they catch onto me?”

“Government try spend \$787.00 from account on one screwdriver, come up 3 penny short; do some million-dollar audit.”

“Well, it was only a matter of time.”

“Here postcard from Fredrick. What say?”

“It says that the twaining of training is going well; he is learning diesel.”

“Ah, good news. OK, now we do test of touch. Ah, see you have pencil.”

“This is my best pencil; let’s not ruin it. I began the theory of the proton with it, and the remainder of the theory is still inside this pencil somewhere.”

“We do no harm. Hold pencil and run it across chair seat fabric; no, wait, use eraser end so not write autograph; now, rub; you seem to feel texture at pencil end?”

“Yes, amazing, it feels like an extension of my fingers, but of course I have no sense organs way out there.”

“So then, brain fabricate reality, just like hang glider wing seem part of you.”

“True, so that’s why I couldn’t afford a helicopter!”

“Yes, PatProf, and so you ‘see’ that we only see inside of head where all is fabricate.”

“I agree. I fabricate you, scents and odours fabricate from molecule shapes in the nostrils, and sounds fabricate from air vibrations, as well as colors from waves and even the illusion of light itself in a dark head, especially during my favorite pastime of sleeping and dreaming.”

A Useful Lie

P. Torney © 1999

**PROOF OF
REALITY
REFERENCE
FABRICATION**



*Take a pencil, and feel a texture with it—
(The eraser end is best, so you don't write)
You seem to feel it at the pencil tip;
Yet, you have no sense organs way out there—
So—your brain fabricates reality!*



*(This, then, is why there is a hang-glider above:
Its wings are felt as an extension of the arms,
just as the pencil seems to be an extension of the finger.)*




– The All Is In the One –

All things are infinitely connected,
As in a hologram—each part contains the whole;
Everything interpenetrates everything;
The universe is a seamless web of information.

– Blake's Vision Confirmed –

Every part of a hologram contains the whole—
The whole universe contained within a
Grain of sand, all eternity within a moment,
The universe rumbling when an electron vibrates



Like the moon,
challenge the night
and gain the light;
Like the rose,
suffer the thorn
and gain the fragrance;

Of life,
surrender
to live forever—
Enlightened
more than
a thousand suns.

— Chapter 7 —
Energy = Michael times CC

*Since we all became of this universe,
Should we not ask who we are, whence we came?
Insight clefts the night with its radiance;
The Theory of Everything shines through!*

Michael had dedicated his life to assisting the less fortunate and giving love to all, as well as to the quest of the Holy Grail of the TOE, being one of the glorious few of the knights of the round table of ToeQuest: those who looked beyond, above, below, and within the everyday into the very life and source of the magic of existence.

He'd heard, with some alarm, of the narrow escapes of his fellow Toe-Questors and was almost worried. Michael was well aware that his nearly real name and picture appeared on his every post; the picture was small but the name could be deduced, and, so, the new MI8 group had done so, locating his residence; however, Michael awaited them, in his lounge chair, having a trick up his sleeve that he couldn't wait to pull on them.

So, there he was posting away to 100 different threads when they arrived and surrounded him on 20 sides.

"Please come with us peacefully," they requested. "There is no escape; we have guards on all the EXITS (WAY OUT in UK dialect) and on all the ENTRANCES (WAY IN)."

Michael smiled and simply said "I am noumena," as he turned into pure energy, a state that could not be maintained for more than a few seconds, but time enough for him to zoom away at near the speed of light. He'd been practicing this, and it was always quite exhilarating, although he couldn't sense as well during it. It had a refractory time of a few days, whereupon he could perform it again just by thinking 'energize'.

Anyway, he disappeared from right in front of their eyes and took off, easily passing through buildings, trees, and mountains, and going around the world about 14 times before he materialized, of all places, next to the Queen of England in her bed at 1 AM. She shrieked, and he calmly bowed and walked down the stairs, poured a cup of tea, and went out the front door, almost making the Buckingham Palace guards smile, for he had a certain glow, but they weren't allowed to show any emotion.

For the next few days, he would be a merely mortal phenom and would have to be on his toes to be taller and see beyond the pale to note any tails of those hound-dogging him for the TOE or the TOT (Theory of Thing). Meanwhile, he replayed in his mind his energizing travels as a noumena, when he was one with all that is and was, although he could

still appreciate the usefulness of the normal sensing form of life incarnate.

Michael decided to stay out of sight by taking a much earned vacation weekend from helping others cope, during the few days that he had before he was due at the ninja base, and so he drove his TR-3 towards the hills and beyond for one last romp. He turned his engine loose, roaring onto the open road. He was doing at least 5 KPH over the speed limit, weaving gracefully around the slower moving cars.

His car was running rough for some reason: bumpity, bumpity, bump. "Damn!" A flat tire. It was always something like that with this rolling junk pile that was once a sports car. Michael made a vow to replace his TR-3 with a Porsche, while preparing to fix the flat tire by the side of the narrow road in his spotless white sport suit.

Michael took the spare tire out of the trunk, carefully trying not to let it touch his pristine white leisure suit as he juggled it over to the wheel. He jacked up the car and removed the flat tire. "Dang nab it!" he swore at his car when he got a smudge on his pants from the old tire. It was then that he saw her driving by, a bright vision from Heaven come to answer his dreams. He could hardly believe what he saw.



She was driving a yellow Testarossa, breaking the speed limit and hitting at least 125 MPH, almost blowing him off the shoulder of the road. "Darn!" Now his white suit had become a dusty gray. He got a good look at her, though, since she had her top down. Her hair and scarf trailed out behind her as she sped away along the hilly road. Her license plate just read "TRISH".

"She's the one," he said quietly to himself, then more loudly, "That's her! Forget Everything for a while," then yelling it out in celebration, "SHE'S THE ONE! THAT'S THE WOMAN FOR ME!" He could hardly contain himself, and he even stopped thinking about the Theory of Thing for a while.

(Hey, how come Michael gets a girl in his story when no one else did? Well, just because; plus we can't always leave half the world out.)

He quickly twisted the lug nuts back on the wheel, jumped into his 'car' and raced after her, but, unfortunately, his old TR-3 could do only 85 MPH or so on the switch back upgrades. A bit of smoke poured from his engine, suggesting that he was burning oil and would never catch her. Then he got lucky, for he spotted her car parked outside a fast food restaurant. *That's her type of food,* he thought, *he having once eaten slow food: escargot.*

As he drove into the parking lot, she was already walking out with a hamburger in her hand. He always thought fast and so he walked right up to her and spoke directly, as usual, "Trish, my name is Michael and I'm on my way up in the world of Thing. I am falling in love with you and your style, and so I would like to take you out tonight and get to know you very well."

She answered spontaneously, too: "OK, Michael, I'll make a deal with you, one that we'll both enjoy. If you can keep up with me throughout the day, then you can have me tonight. And get that suit cleaned!" She handed him the remains of her french fries and quickly roared off in her new Testarossa, its wheels spinning and spitting even more dirt onto Michael, turning his now gray suit to a dark brown color.

Her antics only convinced him all that more that she was the girl for him; for she seemed rich, daring, confident, attractive, sexy, and so full of energy. Plus she had a ready wit and was good-looking, too. She had long hair, a body that was alive, and erotic, exotic features. Her eyes had looked straight into him! She was more than fine; she just oozed with charm, personality, and sex appeal.

He stood there, dazed for a moment, still talking to the air that she'd just vacated. Already he could see her car speeding along the road below, her radio music blaring some music that sang ... *wild and free, that's what I want to be!* She looked up and gave him a wave, urging him on,

and this shook him out of his trance. He even managed to wave back, although he felt like a frozen statue and could hardly lift his arm.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to Michael, 18 blue MI8 sedans had located him and were hot on his trail, although still some miles back. Michael ran to his car and raced down the hillside after her, going faster and ever faster, even running off onto the shoulder several times, and then almost going off the side of the road. The curves were real tricky and so he had to assist the car's braking by downshifting into second gear, sometimes even into first. He couldn't keep up with her, of course, but at least he could still see her now and then down the other side. He was pushing his car to its limit and loving every minute of it. *Oh, the thrill of it!* And for good reason, too: love. This was not just simple speeding, it was speeding for a purpose, speeding as if his life depended on it, or at least his love life. Michael immediately became enamored of the exhilaration of the chase, as the stress and excitement caused adrenaline and natural opiates to be loosened in his overworked ToeQuesting brain. He took a chance, passing a slow moving truck in the no-passing lane, and was just barely able to tuck back in time. He told himself: *Don't do that again!*

As he courted death, his love lives flashed before him. Women were like cars, he thought. Trish, of course, was a race car, revving her engine to the limit, taking every turn to the edge, and living every moment as if it were her last. Others, on the other hand, were more like station wagons: stable, sturdy, reasonable, sensible, and dependable, but unexciting, and, thus he thought, wastefully frittering their lives away by their attendance to the most mundane details of nothing that much mattered.

Michael was falling behind, although doing the best that he could in his unsporty car, but an old jalopy compared to hers. Luckily, he saw her turn off into a small wooded valley between two hilly ridges. *Now he had her*, he thought; *now there was no escape possible, for it was just a little dirt road trailing off into a meadow and a farm.* Only a few more moments and they'd be together in sensual bliss.

Michael's cell phone rang, and a worried ninja informed him that he was being pursued and that he should ditch the car and take cover: "*What doing? Stranger dangers; be angered.*"

Michael replied, "Sorry, you have the wrong number."

As he neared the meadow he heard some great whooshing sounds that were familiar but couldn't quite be placed. Rainbow colors could be seen through the trees. *What was all this?* And then he understood. Of course! Hot air balloons! The balloons were ready for launch, their baskets peopled, their ropes even now being untied from the stakes. This was not so good news. Soon the sky would fill with all these balloons and he'd never find her! He was in a frenzy! He cleared his mind, and calmly but quickly

looked for her car; ah, there it was, next to a balloon that was colored bright red and yellow.



“Hurry up, Michael” she said, as her balloon began to lift off, its ropes still dragging on the ground past him. “Come with me to the Emerald City!” Just then the basket left the ground. Michael grabbed onto the rope and ran with it for awhile, thinking crazily that he could somehow climb up it. There was only one problem: he was afraid of heights!

Nevertheless, love conquered fear and so he held on to the rope as it gently lifted him off of the ground. He soon had second thoughts, however, and panicked, realizing that he was almost getting too high to let go. He looked down and saw a barnyard filled with soft hay, and so, giving up the stunt as hopeless, let go of the rope and fell a short and harmless distance to the ground, but missed the hay, landing smack in the middle of the pigs’ feeding area. His once white suit was now as black as coal in the nothing of a void at night with no moon.

Trish looked down and was much amused at his discomfort, but was also relieved to see that he was OK. “Don’t give up, young chap!” she yelled down to him. “Here are my car keys,” she said, as she threw her

set of keys down to him. "Come and find me wherever I land. Follow me. You're not in Kansas anymore, my good man!"

Michael was sitting in the muck, surrounded by the curious living pork chops, bacons, and hams, and wondering if this so-called adventure of love business was really worth it all. A pig ambled over to investigate, rubbing its nose over him, perhaps thinking that Michael was some new form of food. Michael pulled himself up, picked up the car keys, and then changed into his sports clothes, which he had luckily kept in the trunk of his car.

He walked over to her beautiful Testarossa and sat in it, admiring it, much like he had often done in the new car showrooms, twiddling with this and every knob, trying out every button. He thought of gaining safety in the ninja base that had to be nearby, but Trish presently sailed overhead and thereby erased all logical thinking. Satisfied with knowing where every switch was in the car, Michael drove off, and tried to keep Trish's balloon in sight, but soon lost it, then found it, then lost it again among the ridges. She was moving fast on the updrafts. However, at each sighting, he took note of her general direction, referring to the car compass, and was generally able to make progress toward her, though by no means directly, because there was not always a road available in the direction that he needed to go.

Now this is a car, he thought, as he began to put it through its paces. Why, I feel like I am a part of it, he marveled, as it held the corners due to its low center of gravity and its wide stable body. The greatest part of driving it was seeing the other cars on the road give way to him, all figuring him to be ultra rich and of course not wanting to take a chance of bumping him and scratching a \$200,000 car. *So this is what it feels like to be a millionaire!*

"Faster, MK," said another ninja cell phone caller.

"Stop bothering me. I don't want to buy a new condo!"

However, Michael did heartily take of note the now 24 sedans following him, although they were a ways back, and put the pedal through the heavy metal of the radio.

He drove on for another ten minutes or so, tracking her every move, sometimes finding her in the sky miles away. Yes, he was a driven man! He entered a tunnel, then soon panicked, not having his lights on and not instantly knowing where they were; but he smartly remembered where the headlight button was and flicked them on. When he finally emerged from the darkness, the scene he saw was like a beautiful dream; it was as if he was seeing the world for the first time, for the English countryside was beautiful, bright, and bold beyond compare; he felt as a part of its every color, texture, and hue. Then he smiled to himself and thought, *Well, Michael, welcome to the Land of Oz.*



Trish was dropping altitude now, and descending rapidly. He lost her for awhile, having had to race through a dense grove of trees that bordered close to the road. But when he came around a curve with a brief open view, there she was, softly landing in the center of a large estate, where there was a sizable stone mansion built in the European tradition. She leaped out of the balloon and ran for the garden.

Michael watched as Trish disappeared into the ornamental grounds that surrounded the mansion. Her hot-air balloon was gently and gracefully collapsing, slowly covering the ground around him. For some reason, he thought of ToeQuest and he had to fight hard to get it out of his mind. *This is going to be a good weekend of forgetting Everything*, he thought, as the balloon's fabric fell onto him, waking him from his reverie of dilemma.

Looking around, he took in the richness of the estate and couldn't help but translate it in his mind to a dollar figure. The grounds were perfectly terraced and landscaped. The mansion itself was made of pure marble, with stone and slate at the base. The world of nobility was just sitting there waiting for him to become a part of it.

The whole place was more than magnificent! But something was not quite right. The grounds were empty; there were no security guards, no

groundskeepers, and no servants; in fact, there were no signs of any life whatsoever. It seemed to be some sort of fortress of solitude, and this theory was confirmed when Michael heard a zap and a buzz. He quickly turned around to see the heat shimmering near an electric security fence that had just snapped on behind him. Briefly alarmed, he wondered whether he felt saved or trapped! Just what side of the fence was the enemy on? Could it be that Trish was some sort of emotional nut case? He soon relaxed, though, as he felt a wave of reassurance coming over him, for the force field could only mean that they were meant to be romantically alone and safe from intrusion! It also neatly explained the absence of the security guards, for none were needed! Michael swung into action, for this was his middle name, a secret that even MI8 didn't know.



As he ran toward the garden he noted that what he thought to be grass had actually turned out to be a ground cover that he knew to be self spreading, maintenance free, and dense enough to keep out the weeds, thus explaining the absence of any groundskeepers. This was indeed a very modern estate. Things were becoming clear to Michael's finely tuned mind: *Trish was some sort of a rich hermit, or something.*

The garden turned out to be a maze of high hedges, a popular European diversion. Michael was not very happy to see it, even though it was a work of art, because he had thought to have an easy conclusion to the day's quest. He attacked the maze rather recklessly, and just as quickly lost his way. He was soon totally disoriented and began to feel more and more like a trapped animal.

Michael peered through a small opening between the bushes and was just able to catch a glimpse of Trish heading down to a large lake behind the mansion. She walked out on a pier towards a powerboat, then looked back and saw that he was nowhere in sight; so she, apparently, sat down near the boat to wait for him.

Michael remembered his analogy of women to cars; Trish was even faster than a sports car! She was an Indianapolis speed racer who was going to burn out her engine and probably not even finish the event! For a brief moment he wished for some station-wagon-like stability. But, *boy*, he thought, *what an AUTO-biography he could write!*

Michael could sense that Trish had even more adventures in mind, and this weighed on him slightly, making him bold enough to throw himself through the small gap in the hedges to surprise her, getting a number of minor scratches and scrapes in the process. *Cool it, you're losing it! Let her have her fun, for now.*

Sure enough, as soon as she saw him coming she jumped straight into the motorboat and started the engine, all the time urging him on with the chase: "Hurry up, Michael! Come quick. Run Michael! Run! See Michael run." She yelled to him as she drove the boat around in circles, waving a ski rope in her hands, saying "Come to me, Michael! Take the rope."

For a split second Michael began to wonder why he was always chasing after ropes, and why he should jump into a lake just because she'd told him to do so; nevertheless, he hurriedly removed his socks and shoes, and quickly jumped into the lake. She slowed the boat, coming almost near him, and smiled for a moment at his spirited self, encouraging him.

She threw him the ski rope. He grabbed for it, just managing to get the rope handle as she threw the throttle forward to full power. He plowed through the lake like an anchor. She dragged him along, half in and half out of the water. Somehow he got onto his feet and found himself water-skiing barefoot. He was so amazed at the impossibility of this feat that he just as quickly collapsed into the water, rolling and tumbling forward, sort of like a stone that had been thrown, skipping and skimming.

Leaving him there floundering, flailing, and drowning, Trish headed straight back towards the shore, but at least she had the decency to throw him a life preserver. Michael began to wonder if Trish was worth it, but he soon painfully remembered that he thrived on LIFE and LOVE's ADVENTURE, although he wasn't so sure anymore. He remembered her

challenge: If you can keep up with me today, then you can have me tonight. This seemed to give him some extra energy that soon built into the super strength that allowed him to swim to shore, whereupon he promptly fell down, exhausted, and passed out.

He awoke later, at first believing that he'd dreamt a nightmare, but harsh reality smacked him in the face when he saw Trish waiting for him in front of the flower garden. He pretended to be still asleep and so when she looked away for a second he leapt up and ran, getting to within ten feet of her before she spotted him and bolted towards the garden. "Wait till I get my hands on you, Trish!" he called after her. "YOU'RE DOOMED!"

He ran after her, passing the pink and blue rose bushes. *blue?* On and on he raced, through the heavily carved front doors and into a cool and multicolored foyer, where the sun streamed through the stained glass windows. He heard her laughter echoing up the stairs, so he climbed the curved stone steps. Up and up he went, to a round tower room where the door had been left ajar. He peeked in and saw Trish standing in front of a beveled glass mirror, wearing an Edwardian rose-colored gown and arranging blue roses into her long tresses. He approached breathlessly, with much anticipation; then she turned and smiled and handed him a bunch of the roses, saying, "For you, my love. You are an exciting man."

"At last," he said, relieved.

She said, "I am a tenth degree Grand Master ninja and you have done very well in your preliminary training. I know that you may be a trifle angry with me, but you are a very worthy man and a totally giving person, but you were in trouble, so I had to get you away from the MI8 agents. It was your attraction to me that sped you along and saved you, and your desires shall not go unfulfilled, but first, let us begin some training in the sense of smell."

"Well I'll be a flabbergasted energy pattern of in and out waves, but I thought something was more than a little bit smelling like a rat in the state of Denmark, although your perfume is enchanting and enticing."

"Sorry. How was the pig pen?"

"Smelly, even with my mere human 10,000 or so odour detectors."

"Well, animals have do have about ten times that many and I'll teach you how to stretch your nose and smell like a pig."

"This is not a good time for jokes, my dearest, but it is true that I am very curious about everything, I mean, about thing, for all is one that is made of one thing: energy."

"Quite right; that is the secret; you just need some of our refresheners that will aid your phenomenal life: we have new car smell, the smell of danger, the smelling of the roses, and many more hitherto unknown delights of noumena."

“I think I need a shower; be right back.”

“All right, but first let me give you a proper introduction to what’s afoot, then we’ll resume the training upon your return.”

“Okay.”

“You are in one of our major ninja centers; you see no one else here since they are mostly off on missions of the gravest danger to the world, of which I will soon inform you. The rest of them can only be seen if they wish to be. There is an evil conspiracy operating worldwide that is so secret that it doesn’t even have a name. They have already substituted three near identicals in the US Senate and two in the British Parliament. We’ve left them there, for we know who they are and we have members therein as well. It was their scent that gave them away as replacements. The ninja empire is a response to their grave threat; we operate outside of all authority, as do they.”

“Why ninjas?”

“Those trained in the martial arts and mental discipline have reached great depths of self, spirit, beauty, courage, wisdom, and dependability, and that is a rare combination. They answer to none but to truth and goodness, much like you ToeQuestors.”

“And, of course, their stealth methods are quite necessary.”

“Indeed, and as for you, it’s not often that we receive someone of your caliber, Michael; it’s a great pleasure to have you join us with your depth of commitment to truth, beauty, purity, and love.”

“I’m just a regular guy trying to help.”

“No, on the contrary. Out of the billions of the world, only a few hundred or so are on ToeQuest, the focal point of all scientific and meditative inquiry concerning existence; of those hundreds, perhaps only 30 or so contribute; out of those, perhaps only a handful are devoted regulars. So, you are a *regular* ToeQuestor and that is at the top of the pyramid of inquiry of all that is in the universe. That, added to the extremely useful internet, wherein scientists post results, means that you and the others are akin to CEOs managing a trillion-dollar research center through which discoveries are funneled. Exploring the great unknown is the highest calling.”

“Thanks. What about the Government? And where is this Conspiracy?”

“They have infiltrated many governments, and so we can trust no one. They are all over, anywhere, trying to manipulate the going-ons of many countries, but they are not just political—that just gains them influence and power, and they have tried many mind-altering experiments on people, sometimes even on whole towns. They are the likes of what can be seen in the TV series, ‘Nowhere Man’. I’ll give you a DVD to watch.”

“Are they after the TOE?”

“They haven’t yet fully realized the unlimited value of that, but it’s just a matter of time...”

“How long has all this been going on?”

“They and we began many years ago when our leader, Thomas Veil, detected that they had placed false memories in him as an experiment, and so he began taking down many of their installations, almost single-handedly. They even vacated some multimillion dollar facilities overnight, just to avoid detection. But now their facilities are more secure.”

“Nobody...”

“...is one of us.”

“Evil must be reversed to form ‘live’.”

“That is our monumental task. Perhaps we can make use of your energizing abilities, along with those of your fellows. We have no idea where their funding comes from, who else has been transformed, the location of many of their major centers... but your destiny for the moment seems to be learning how to employ the TOE.”

“I can do both.”

“Thank you. See you soon; there are hundreds of scents to choose from in your quarters.”

Michael headed off, having had a lot to take in, and sat down in a super lounge chair modeled after his own. He noted some sayings on a wall of his scented room:

*Heaven’s patron of arts, grace, and license,
Left us sweet-smelling plants, with flowered scents
And aromas redolent: floescence
In flush and prime of days reminiscent.*

*Spring kisses the earth, leaving flowers there,
Like those whose perfume first scented virgin air,
As again, the fragrant glen, in Heaven’s prayer,
Hails Earth’s anniversary with flowers fair.*

*Pleasant smelling scents lift your heart and mine:
Essence of lotus, rose, amber, jasmine,
Night-queen, myrtle, saffron, and sandalwood
Stimulate the inner spirit sublime.*

And, on another wall, some darker thoughts:

*The Tuberose is a dangerous pleasure,
Even when taken in but small measure:
Its exquisite scent has such great power
That it can wither you within the hour.*

*If Nightshade you drink, you'll become as so
And can see the ghosts, shades, and dark shadows
Of those who came before our humankind,
Those whose spirit-worlds overlap the mind.*

And, finally, an inner-worldly saying
on another wall, titled:

FLOWERS I GLIMPSED IN DREAMS

*Coral Bells, rung by bees and humming birds,
A melody of tones without the words,
And airy sprays of frothy Baby's Breath,
Gurgling with all that's much too sweet to purge,*

*And sweet spikes of aromatic Lavender,
All ready potpourri from Heaven's splendor,
And, all around, the flora symbolica
To soft drowse the spirit into slumber.*

Michael returned, feeling very much recuperated and feeling totally blessed. "I'm back. I'd never known of such pleasant fragrances."

"Smells alert the ninja in the dark even as much as sound, the sub categories being aroma, fragrance, scent, perfume, redolence, bouquet, stench, fetor, stink, reek, and whiff."

"So you gave me roses to enjoy the pleasure of."

"Yes, but I am attracted to you, too."

"The inverse also applies."

"Good. Everyone appreciates the *fragrance* of fresh-cut flowers, but the *stench* from the paper mill across town is usually unwelcome. Both have a distinctive *smell*, which is the most general of these words for what is perceived through the nose, but there is a big difference between a pleasant smell and a foul one."

"You can say that again."

"That."

"Ha. What about odours, the British spelling that Austin likes over the American 'odors', which somehow has an unpleasant connotation to him."

"An *odour* may be either pleasant or unpleasant, but it suggests a smell that is clearly recognizable and can usually be traced to a single source, like the pungent odor of onions, which by the way, should be planted with potatoes since their eyes will water and nourish the crops."

"Good explanation, and joke. I've done aroma-therapy."

“An *aroma* is a pleasing and distinctive odor that is usually penetrating or pervasive, like the aroma of fresh-ground coffee, while *bouquet* refers to a delicate aroma, such as that of a fine wine. Here, have a glass. Don’t forget to swirl, sniff, sip, swallow, or spit if you are just wine sampling.”

“The five S’s. What about the scent of a woman like you?”

“A *scent* is usually delicate and pleasing, as I try to be, with an emphasis on the source rather than on an olfactory impression, such as the scent of balsam associated with Christmas.”

“I now believe in Santa Claus. I chose a lilac fragrance from my quarters; it reminds me of my early youth in England with Molly McGuire under the fragrant bush...”

“Yes, fragrances can take you back in an instant to their source in a remembrance from the past. *Fragrance* and *perfume* are both associated with flowers, but *fragrance* is more delicate. A *perfume* may be so rich and strong that it is repulsive or overpowering. Of the lilac it is said:

*Love’s first emotion rose from the Lilac,
For it blooms when Nature is first aroused;
It is love’s youngest dream to us come back,
Where it will ne’er again remain unspoused.”*

“Indeed, fragrances are among the infinite variations of energy in nature. Energy may be the one thing, but it has many pleasant faces. But then there were the pigs, which, of course attractive to each other in their own way.”

“*Stench* and *stink* are reserved for smells that are foul, strong, and pervasive, although *stink* implies a sharper sensation, while *stench* refers to a more sickening one: the stink of sweaty gym clothes; the stench of a rotting carcass.”

“Thank you for the teachings.”

“This is only the beginning. Your journey of protecting the TOE and learning more about it will be a strenuous one, and the more we can prepare you, the better. You already have great insight into the beauty and unity of all things, from the One; your potential is as boundless as your imagination.”

“It is my dream to become one.”

“Come hither.”

— The Exacting Universal Constants —

Consciousness, One that was forever wrought,
With the mind, formed the Cosmos that was sought.
Observation becomes reality—
The finely-tuned constants have been self-taught.

— The Future Past —

The Universe could only be created
In its own future—through observation
Of thought granting immaterial substance—
By the future, single, eternal mind.

— Essence is Existence —

There never was, nor will be—only now—
All things, interacting—instant know-how,
For mind “matters” as matter ever “minds”;
The Universe self-adjusts—it’s the Tao.

— The All Is In the One —

All things are infinitely connected,
As in a hologram—each part contains the whole;
Everything interpenetrates everything;
The universe is a seamless web of information.

— Blake's Vision Confirmed —

Every part of the hologram contains the whole—
The whole universe contained within a
Grain of sand, all eternity within a moment,
The universe rumbling when an electron vibrates.

— 'I' —

'I' am not this body—or even this thought,
For 'I' am a part of everything there is,
Although 'I' require a mind/brain to look—
For this, indeed, produces what 'I' look at.

— The Golden Touch —

The Midas-magic of our consciousness,
That quantum alchemist of potential,
Creates the Real from the Possible, for
Everything it touches turns to matter!

—Funda-Mental —

Consciousness is irreducible in terms
Of basic entities, so, most likely,
The intrinsic properties underlying
Physical dispositions are experiential!

— Chapter 8 —
The Road Too Far

*World does not pass by; you pass through it;
Clear your being so the treasure may arrive;
This spirit sparkles of a different light,
The gemstones are of a different mine.*
(old Ninja Saying)

Austin's full name had been nearly spelled out on ToeQuest, but it had taken a while for the Feds to figure out that there was an "ey" on the end of "Torn". It had been cut off since AOL had allowed only 10 character member names.

Austin had been on the run for a month, using various hotel internet networks to post dispatches, and so he had been eluding the Feds that wanted the Theory of Everything for the government's misuse. The CIA had now been called in, to a rare homeland operation, to take charge and insure that there were no further screw-ups.

Austin was presently attending the wedding of an Irish girl to an Egyptian boy, out west of his home town, near Chicago, at Bolingbrook Golf Club, and was thereby rather taking a large risk, although he was disguised and dressed as King Tut. The dark shadows of the government had just missed him in Myrtle Beach, New Jersey, and Long Island, but were now entering the wedding reception hall and looking around the enormous banquet room.

They thought they'd ID'd him, but it was only his brother, Mike. Then they locked down the hall. Luckily, Austin was outside having a smoke behind a pillar, having been alerted by ninja phone. Furthermore, he hadn't wished to drive off with the agents just arriving, so he bided his time outside, puffing on a Marlboro menthol ultra-light wine-flavored green 100 cm cigarette. That's nothing; look in the supermarkets now and see how many variants there are on a single product. It's a result of the CMBR trip, I suppose.

Now is the time for all good men... With most of the agents now locked in with the wedding party, Austin leaped over the railing and into his fully restored Corvette convertible and drove off. In his car was the contents of a package delivered by Ninja Express the day before, a square something that looked like second base (or first or third or Paradise by the Dashboard Light) that Austin had been instructed to strap on right away and utilize when he saw the Great Pumpkin. Austin surveyed the new outlying suburbs and thought, *The last time I saw this area, it was all prairie grass.*

An agent still outside alerted the CIA Commander inside and the agents rushed towards the doors, although slightly disoriented by the repetitive and trancing beat of the Egyptian dervish music, and tried to get through the many wild cane-dancers. After struggling through the drunken revelry, some of the CIA stopped to watch the belly dancers, but were exhorted onward by their CIA Commander and his FBI sub-commander. There was some clumsy fiddling with the door chains and then they were all off after Austin in six cars that were marked Culinary Institute of America, for Austin loved food.



A metal strip of spikes mysteriously appeared across the road and they all ground to a halt afterwards, for all their tires were flat on the bottom.

“Damn,” said the CIA Commander, “we’ll set up a command post here; we have many other vehicles positioned at key points.”

The CIA had not studied US roads intensely, so they had an FBI chief with them, whom they tended to ignore, and quickly analyzed the area, noting the location of the often used north and south Tri-State-Tollway, route 294, that circumvented Chicago from Wisconsin to Indiana and ran near to and through these very new suburbs.

“Where’s he heading?” the commander asked of the one agent that was left outside who was able to follow, but at some distance.

“East on route 88 towards the 294 junction, but he has quite a lead on me.”

“Good. We have six vehicles ready at Tri-State 294, three north and three south.”

Austin thought, *The Tri-State is always backed up. My brother Jim said so. Plus, tornadoes were over there two days ago.*

“Uh-oh,” reported the lone pursuer, “he passed the junction and is still east on 88.”

“Pull three vehicles off of both north and south 294 and give chase; send the remaining three and three north and south along 294 to eventually cut him off somewhere down the line.”

“Lone pursuer, keep me posted.”

“He’s heading toward the end of 88, toward 290, the Eisenhower Expressway, into downtown Chicago.”



“It’s rush hour,” said the FBI sub-commander, agent twelve, to the CIA Commander, “Why would he go towards Chicago?”

“You fool,” said the Commander, “it’s only rush hour coming out of Chicago; the way in is wide open!”

“Don’t call me names, you bigger fool, for there is the Great Lake Michigan blocking Chicago to the east, and so he must go north or south eventually and then he will certainly be in the rush hour in either of those directions.”

“It’s Sunday; there’s no rush hour, you bigger fool. What if he has a boat waiting? How many cars do I have down there?”



“Only two, you much larger fool. And there’s traffic from ‘The Taste of Chicago.’”

“We didn’t think he’d go that way. Put one car at the lakefront and... we’ll guess and have the other protect north out of Chicago; maybe he’s heading for Canada. Why didn’t you give me all you had on Chicago sooner, you huge fool?”

“I did, you gigantic fool, but I guess you weren’t hearing me through your ipod.”

“It was great music, you humongous fool. Luckily, for you, the six CIA vehicles that we pulled in from the Tri-State are now closing the gap, for they started out ahead or about even with him.”

“How could that be? It’s odd that they were even and are now more behind!”

“What the...!”

Austin had navigated a little known shortcut from route 88 to the Eisenhower, 290, and was doing 140 mph towards Maywood; however, the followers were doing 150 mph. *My home town is approaching fast,* noted Austin.

Austin slammed on his brakes and veered up a ramp into Forest Park, and toward Oak Park, his boyhood hometown, as the CIA missed the exit altogether, and even the next one because it was on the other side of the expressway. *There are no exits in Oak Park,* noted Austin, *for the town wouldn’t allow any.*

After some fuss, the CIA figured all this out as well and kept going, planning to fan out, backtrack, and roadblock, having also given a description to the Oak Park Police, as well, although somewhat begrudgingly.

Austin observed the old sights: *There’s the pro softball fields, where brother Jim used to hit the ball over the fence, and the old swimming pool, acres wide, wherein we used to dive for coins, and across the street is what was once a drugstore serving Green River sodas, and there’s the old pen factory, now boarded up, and the Atomic Fireball factory that had burned down, after which every school kid had raided it and obtained enough candy for life. Hey, and my old Catholic school and church, St. Bernadine, right across the street. I remember marbles, yo-yo contests, roller skating in the basement, softball, and hula-hoops, and our 6th grade lay teacher who was substituted for our nun who’d run off with the priest, but she was later sacked as well for giving us free popsicles and donuts for going to communion...*

Entering Oak Park, Austin noted the old brickyard where he’d played hooky from school and had hid among the bricks until a truck started taking some away. His whole youth was passing before him, not a very good sign. *As a silly kid, I threw rocks at the trains while I was watching the expressway being built and some men jumped off the caboose and chased me, but I ran through a narrow crack between two buildings and escaped. Should I do that now? There it is. No, I wouldn’t fit...*

The Oak Park Police had picked up the pursuit and were running their sirens. *There’s the old corner store where I bought popsicles for five cents and tried so hard to get a Mickey Mantle baseball card in a pack, but never got one, but I had ten Yogi Berra’s...*

Austin sped along the narrow road paralleling the expressway and passed the baseball field where he got hit by a line drive in the leg while pitching, playing outfield in between starts, trying to emulate Babe Ruth. He saw the half built exit ramp at East Avenue and soon reached the end

of Oak Park at Austin Boulevard (really), noting that the town seemed to have become much smaller after thirty years.



I remember the days when
the skies were filled with kites.

The CIA had finally exited the expressway at Austin Boulevard, and were almost in a blocking position, but Austin sped through them and back onto the expressway toward downtown Chicago, now even having an extra lane to play with. The Oak Park Police had given up at the end of their jurisdiction, stopping quickly and denting a few fenders.

“Idiot drivers!” exclaimed the Commander. “Go after him.”

“The FBI would have had him.”

“No way, you ink blot finger printer.”

The Sears Tower loomed in the distance, even ten miles away, and Austin hastened thereonward, nearly three miles ahead by the time the CIA got unentangled and turned around. *I can lose these guys if I can keep them at bay for the next seven miles.*

Austin threw his wedding gift of \$300 on the road, all single dollar bills that he'd earned from stage dancing for old ladies, and this created quite a traffic jam as everyone got out and ran after the bills.

Downtown was nearly at hand and he didn't have a boat waiting, but thought back to his high school summer job days of delivering kegs of nuts and bolts all over Chicago and Gary, Indiana. *North on 94, the Kennedy expressway, out of Chicago towards Wisconsin was always a mess, so I'll try 94 south, the Dan Ryan expressway, toward Indiana, although I see it's under repair, but this might help me.*

“You astronomical fools,” said the CIA Commander, “stop picking up money and clear that road; he's way ahead now. And you, sub-commander of FBI, agent twelve, forget the lakefront and the north and send our two cars down there after him on the Dan Ryan, 94, south toward Indiana. I just got an update on him. He's heading into a traffic jam.”

“Told you, na-na.” said agent twelve. “You've lucked out since only one lane is open on 94 south while they resurface the other two.”

“I knew that.”

“No you didn't”

“Yes I did, you universal size fool.”

Austin found an entrance into the newly paved but not quite ready lanes and veered on to them at the last second, leaving the pursuit backed up in the one open lane.

“Dolts! Where's our forward Tri-State cars? They should be nearing the 94 junction, just ahead of him?”

“You double dolt,” said the sub-commander “they were backed up on 294, and had to use the shoulder, ran into some flooding, causing two cars to stall out, but they are almost there.”

“Split them in half again, you triadic dolt, and try to intercept him, and send the rest on towards the Indiana Toll Road, route 80. What's this flooding?”

"I told you about the big storms, but you've lucked out again. He's back on the regular 94 Dan Ryan due to a bridge not yet constructed and we have two cars coming up on him now, both fore and aft."

"I planned that, you half-wit."

"Damn, you, quarter-wit; he just veered on to the less often used Chicago Skyway, probably since it has high tolls, and has outmaneuvered us, I mean you, you foreign legionnaire."

"Well, eighth-wit, turn our cars around and get on him. I'm a European autobahn expert; you're supposed to know these things. And what the hell is a Skyway?"

"It rides high in the sky over large buildings and some marshes and connects to the Indiana Toll Road, route 80, eventually, you desk bound broken pencil pusher."

Darkness had fallen, but Austin was driving without headlights and steadily climbing the Skyway to the stars.

"We've lost him," said the Commander to the FBI man."

"Dumbo, look for the car with no lights on."

"Just testing you. Call our reserves out of Indiana who are standing by nearby and send them up the Skyway from the other direction. Bet you didn't know about them, you quadruple moron."

"I have more on than you will ever have, you moreoff unintelligence officer!"

Miles passed and smiles frowned as Austin spotted the relentless stalkers now tracking close behind again, ever hunting the prey as shadows following the hound and horses tracking the day. The peak of the Skyway was approaching and a bright orange full moon was just rising.

The Great Pumpkin! Austin ran through the toll booths and stopped just beyond, mesmerized by the clue of the moon for a small tiny fraction of a split microsecond. *This is the end of the road.* Sure enough, three CIA cars were approaching from either direction.

Sad to say that there is a time when we know we've lost, although we've lived well enough, without much regret, the time when the Angel of Death comes to prematurely claim our soul, when we must say:

*Past now is the flower of spring's soft breath,
But not yet the full summer of promise;
And never will come the autumn of care,
For here is the pale white winter of death.*

And that:

*Born from stardust and nourished by sunlight,
I've filled my cup with wonders of delight.*

*Life was a treasure, a radiant gem,
A vision that I'll never see again.*



But, this was not one of those times, and so Austin turned his car sideways and drove toward the railing, saying goodbye to his dear Corvette, standing up in his seat as he crashed into and over the barrier, then pulled the rip cord and floated downward, steering his parachute under the bridge to avoid being observed and shot at, bringing the rising moon back down with him, putting it in his pocket, and landed roughly on the top of a black ninja limo that soon carried him off into the night, the TOE now very much safer.

(I know that this episode was a trifle too easy, but I did know the area. Also, experience aids writing. Due to storm damage, my departure from Chicago did indeed parallel the route in this story, except for the Corvette, and the parachute jump to a conclusion of some contusions.)

“Welcome in Ninja Center, Mr. Torn. I am ninth degree Grand Master of Indiana.”

“Did the ending have to be so rough?”

“How I know; you wrote it. Plus, we buy you new car.”

“That was my other self, you know, the one we address when we talk to ourselves.”

“I schizo, too... and so am I... ha-ha.”

“That’s really called multiple personality disorder.”

“Knew that.”

“OK, pal, why not just pick me up at the wedding?”

“We give head start; good reflex training for man ingest too many culinary delights!”

“You’ve got me there.”

“Receive card from MKirk. Here is. Say getting married to beautiful intelligent woman.”

“Lucky guy. Bless him. What’s next for us?”

“We train you sixth sense then all rest of sense.”

“Sixth?”

“Yes, it make sense of other five and a half.”

“Half?”

“Half is sense of know where body parts are. They forget count it. Now, nonsense turn to sense by 6th sense.”

“The brain and the mind?”

“Yes it be. Brain absorb, plus subconscious brain make thought from all sense in and out.”

“Sense that is inward and outward, within and without?”

“Yes, I just say so, not I.”

“Haven’t you heard about the extended and glorious language enhancements that the CMBR trip has bestowed on us, endowed us with abilities to communicate more better?”

“I still study. Nature simple; not need more word. So, brain analyze all scenario of consequence through probability to give best possible result base on all one know, remember, and became.”

“The brain is a sense that senses and perceives itself?”

“That be so, but really higher brain sense lower parts.”

“I’ll be darned.”

“More like bless of spark of in-sight of third eye. I give you saying:”

*A sixth sense is the brain when it’s alive,
For then it makes sense of the other five,
Bypassing non-sense, and creating
The only way in this world to survive.*

“True, and nice saying, but it would seem that consciousness would be then the last to know the result of the brain’s subconscious analysis...”

“Brain give wave of perception of itself go to mind to feed back to brain for future and also present to consciousness, but one continue learning enhance whole process, so no worry of no free will. See:”

*Although our decisions of the instant are
Fully determined, and are therefore not free,
We may happen to learn new things, and make
Choices tomorrow that we wouldn't make today.*

“No free will?”

“I generalize. Many thought come unwilled from all part of brain with simple agenda. For those react too soon, no free will, but some count to ten before react. If learning good, they veto thought, so not so bad as seem. Hear saying:”

THE CREATIVE SOLUTION SPACE

*Let reactions sail on by; just observe them,
But don't act on them. This puts some distance
Between you and your conditioned response,
A space which grants a modicum of free will.*

“I suppose it couldn't work any other way, for that would border on randomness.”

“Yes, but some random when no matter.”

“As when probable choices are equal?”

“Yes, that OK. Real trouble is reactor impulsive person with no guilt, no high heart beat when do wrong, but good guy go by saying:”

*When extreme thoughts arrive, uninvited, as
Most thoughts do, some veto them, saying “don't”,
For while we can never will that which does
The unconscious willing, some do have “free won't.”*

“Free won't' could come from our learning, memories, and associations as well.”

“That life, but more method to try. We teach good learning.”

“Unfortunately many of the world had bad learning.”

“Yes, learning be dangerous thing; cause permanent rewire of brain.”

“True. How come your English is so perfect in all your sayings button in your speech?”

“I memorize.”

“What about our everyday type involuntary reactions of anxiety and the normal crazy thoughts that we all have from time to time?”

“We teach you calm like so:”

THE DRAMA OF THE TRAUMA

*From its safe subjective place that's free of fear,
The 'soul', our Conscious Awareness, can witness
The strange thoughts and emotions that surface
On the mind, sent there by the subconscious brain.*

*Conscious Awareness, which can but witness,
Is a safe haven from which to observe
The drama of our lives playing in our minds,
Granting us a sobering distance from it.*

“It's like watching a play on the stage of our minds, but what about emotions?”

“Somewhat same, but tomorrow study them. This all teaching for today, but I give you one more saying:”

THE WEAK LINK

*The mind is quite weak in the fighting off
Of bad emotions; they have a direct
Pathway into mind's awareness, inhibiting
The rational, thinking part of the brain.*

“Thank you.”

“Any other question?”

“Why didn't you send me west to Iowa?”

“Too easier, not as good training; only four car guard, through roads you know not, but fun ride as was, yes? Beside, now may think dead, like Profpat and Graybeard. Get?”

“Yes, but no and maybe. What if the more knowledgeable FBI were in charge of the mission?”

“Hundred road to Iowa, but FBI better than CIA so be good training then.”

“Good night. I tired; start talk like you from hear too much you.”

“Rest good; need you make impossible picture of everything relative to big zip of nothing of no-form and no-when.”

The Pursuit of Mercuria

For some years I have pursued that lovely
Greco-Roman woman named Mercuria;
I've yearned till I could no longer reason.
Once, just the sight of her would have pleased me;

But now, at whatever cost and downfall,
I must taste of her fiery passion.
At whatever risk I plot her every move.
When the time is right, I'll be seeing her;

It will be just us, while the world's asleep.
The problem is that she's a fast woman
And is quite difficult to even sight,
Much less capture, entrance, embrace and kiss.

And I can only have her for awhile;
Before dawn, if I linger with her long,
We'd soon be consumed by a rising fire;
After twilight, we'd be lost in darkness.

Yes, I have courted her many times,
But she's so elusive, fleeting, and small.
Once I waited for her just before nightfall.
All was perfect—'twas the best time of all.

There was the calm of a windless sunset,
Then the brief brooding of twilight's gloaming,
And the promise of a slow sultry night.
Clouds arrived—and so I missed her again!

She strayed not far from her fiery lover.
When I may have glimpsed her (I wasn't sure),
She slid toward her master's gravity,
Condemned to whirl about his light;

(However, I was quite determined;
'Twas the thrill of the quest that kept me strong.)

I planned to surprise her just before dawn;
I crept onto the frosty roof, near slipping,
There waiting. Damn! Clouds were boiling along
And blocking the view of her beauty rare.

Suddenly the clouds cleared, and she was mine—
Just over the eastern horizon was
The planet Mercury—dear Mercuria.
I stayed with her as long as possible,

Naked in the night, until, to blazes
She went when the sun arose; however,
Memories remain of those precious moments
And now she belongs to me forever.

Venus was too easy, Mars always there,
Jupiter ever-present, Saturn bright,
Earth under my feet, Pluto underworlded;
King Neptune, Queen Vrania? Where are you?





— Chapter 9 —
Energy in Motion

*Like the moon, challenge night and gain the light.
Like the rose, suffer the thorn, gain the fragrance.
Of life, surrender, to live forever,
Enlightened more than a thousand suns.
(mystical saying)*

Previously: Austin relaxed as Profpat had advised, drinking the rest of the half full glass of wedding wine that he'd snatched off the reception's porch as he took off in his Corvette, for this part came up missing in the previous story. How do things or people 'come up' missing is beyond me, for if they are missing, they should not come up as 'missing'. That glass-
es are seen as half full is a healthy optimism, although many engineers

still wonder why the glass is always twice as large as it needs to be. Same with the near miss of airplanes; might as well be a near hit.

Several other ToeQuestors had been taken to safety in the ninja bases, for the protection of the TOE, but their tales remain untold, for now. All the ToeQuestors stayed on for another week or so of education in the bases, for they were avid learners interested in everything, and in 'meta', too, and even beyond that, plus, this kept them out of the limelight, an old method of theater lighting that gave off a lot of heat, too.

Half of all government agents had been pulled off of the TOE case and put back on the search for Bin Laden, the remaining half now having to keep more eyes and ears open, for ipods had been banned, but then the iphone came out with all the same stuff, plus it was a phone they all had to have; however, the Conspiracy was now getting interested in the TOE, but this would only cause them to surface more, and perhaps make some mistakes.

The Conspiracy, who we shall talk about just a little bit here, uses heretofore unknown hi-tech methods to eavesdrop and to protect itself, as well. Nefarious undergoings upon human mental states were reaching levels only hinted at by Hitler's experiments, and making him look like a pussycat with a mustache. Almost every ninja was on their case, and there was many a success, on lone conspirators, but the overall progress of finding their centers was slow. The Conspirators were hooked on smoking big cigars, for some reason, and thus a car with them in it was spotted by a ninja lookout. A quick phone call led another ninja, clad in a light-bending suit, following them on a stealth 30-speed bicycle.

"All clear?" asked a Conspirator, looking back.

"I see nothing. Electronic analysis indicates that no cars tailing us."

"I heard from one of our government insiders that the secret of the Theory of Everything, the TOE, has been discovered. Maybe we can use it. Take us to our Commander's house."

"We can never be seen going there without an appointment."

"We aren't being seen, plus there is nothing confidential in there."

"There is the value of command."

"Go."

They entered a high speed highway and so other ninjas on invisible bikes were alerted to pick up the chase somewhere along the way."

At the Commander's house, the swift blaze of ninjas from nowhere encircled the Conspirators in a blinding flash of confusion, rendering them all defenseless; however, almost as soon, the Conspirators soon thought a deadly thought that triggered their quick demise, taking all their secrets with them.

"Report valiant failure," requested the head ninja. "These guy not possible take alive."

The reply came back, “No failure; glorious success. Every number add up. Five less of worry and local Commander gone. Search house, but probably this another autonomous cell. Plus, be no use take alive. What hear?”

“They want TOE.”

“Not what like hear, but TOE safe.”

“Rascal was allowed to overhear such happenings, and asked, “Autonomous? You do know long words! No link to their center?”

“Not usual. Only indirect, but not even weekly; no one will know they dead for some time; give us some degree of freedom for while. Sure, I know long word; need sometime, but some too long of say.”

“Do ninjas often have such lonely frustrating duty?”

“Happy man not lonely with good at side. Have ninja friends too. Many lady ninjas also.”

“How do you pay them all?”

“Work free; only need food and bed. Come to internet emotion class I teach now? I tell people after class why Conspirator useless taken alive? Ask for idea.”

“I’ll be there.”

The ninja instructor from Rascal’s base was teaching, through the internet, via iChat, to all novices and near experts alike, revealing the mysteries, joys, and pitfalls of good and bad emotions. It was a course that had to be given many times.

“Good idea plus good emotion bring out fine flavor of great glory; bad idea with bad emotion color stains black odor of big fat stink. Good morning class; I be instructor of molecular events.”

“Isn’t this a course on emotion?” asked Someone.

“Yes, but brain emotion be chemical happening, you see. Often missing high school instruction lax in big area of this topic, but waste time do foreign language, history misery, and some people named Art, Jim, and Special Ed. Ha, just joke. Many bored of Ed. Emotion be like sense of inner feel of what to do or color flavor of moment; emotion even make more decisions than thought do.”

“What causes emotions?” asked Everybody.

“Neurotransmitters, like serotonin and dopamine, carry chemical message across non-electrical part of neuron call synapse; too little or too much be bad news. Must eat right, exercise, good sleep, lower stress, work less, or take pill to have many transmitter transmit good vibe; dopamine use for excitement of see new stuff; serotonin like traffic director of signals; if low, then crash, burn, yell, revert to primitive impulse, color thoughts dark, get depress, obsess, worry, by fall for such random spurious atomic transmitter event like dumb fish take hook with know nothing else, but this fish-person think they 1000% right and cannot be

talk to. Now, who wise enough to ignore own thought? We teach. Not easy, but must do. Need training. Hear saying such:"

*We fall for our feelings, hook, line, and sinker:
Conditioned responses, reflexes, or
Overwhelming emotions, spurious,
Or anciently planted by evolution.*

"So," commented Anyone, "bad emotions are just molecular events chemically gone astray or relics that have been stuck with us since ancient times? How unmeaningful is that! No wonder some people are full of angry nonsense!"

"Yes, be random event or old time thing. That all to tell of entire world history of misery from foolish folly of human. Class over."

"Over?" asked NoOne.

"Yes, but no. I joke. History book sad; waste to study. Much you to learn here now. Reduce evolutionary relic by meditate; this be 'not what you think'. We thousands years behind in emotion reaction; old impulses from fight tiger or run not apply now; only build up fuss. Hear:"

*Life's still emotionally primitive:
Negative feedback mechanisms in
The central nervous system, now useless,
Send out thousands-of-years-old messages.*

"Like brainless aggression from anger, and jealousy or envy that blots out all rhyme and reason?" asked One.

"As such. Anger have no brain. Make bad poet. We talk good emotion later, but bad be big problem as see saying:"

LIFE AND DEATH ZONES

*The highest zone is absolute happiness,
'Though even the best can slip to well-being,
And, sometimes, down into the bearable zone;
Next come the anger, apathy, and death zones!*

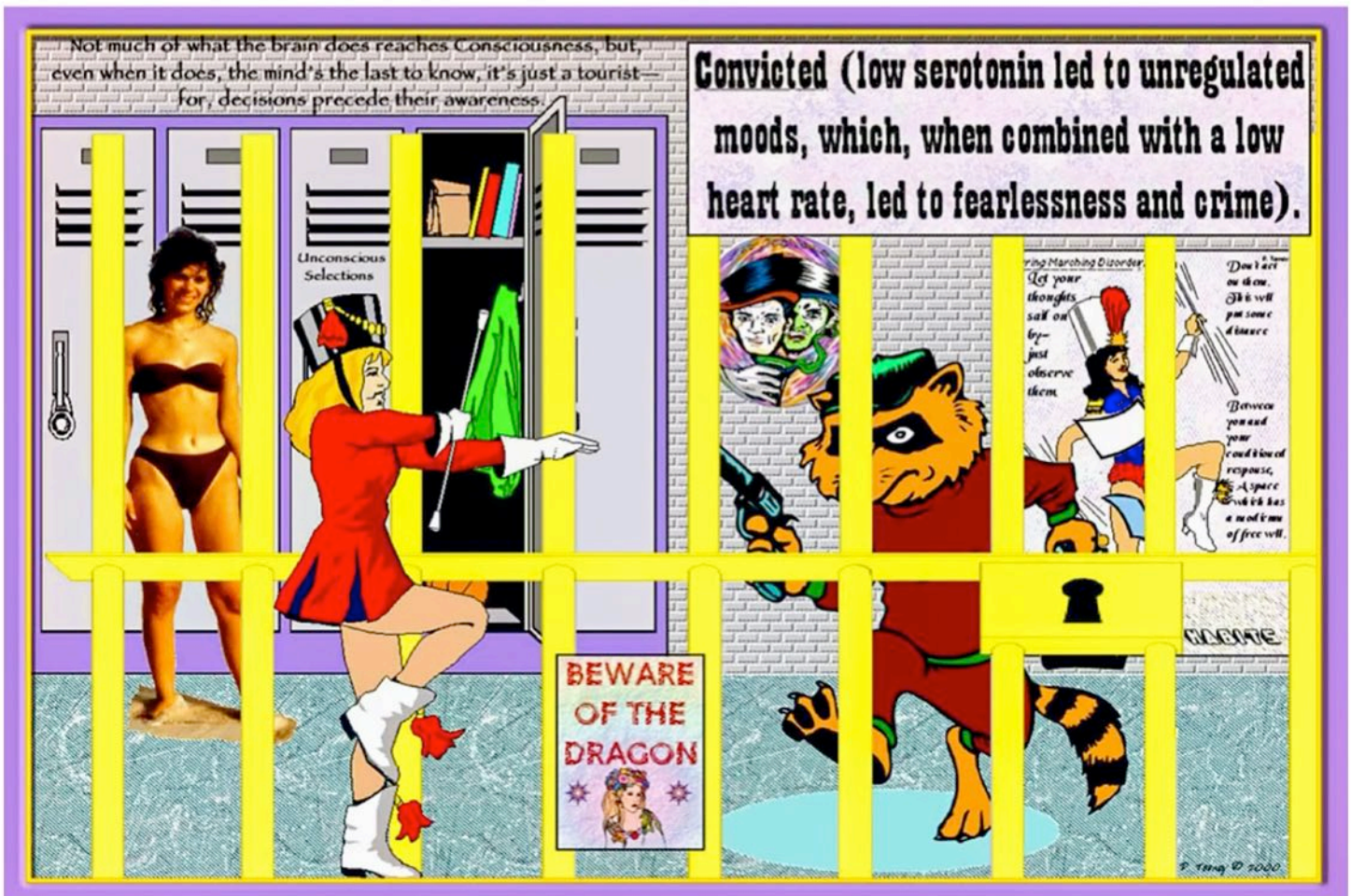
*Once you drop into the anger zone, the
Analytical mind cuts out, giving way
To the primitive reactive mind, a
Moronic state in which even beige seems black.*

*The simple reactive mind thinks that, say,
 A perceived bad tone equals insult equals
 Hate equals great anger equals lash out
 Equals big fight equals kill equals death.*

“This is horrible and barbaric, these aversive substrates of emotion,” said AllisOne, “The future human races will wonder how we could have survived them.”

“Yes, student. Many mad. It make me feel like kill them, but they no can help this way be. So, must try help them, but if not work, rise above, sail over, jail, bypass, ignore, run away, say go buy loaf of bread never come back. As for self, must learn anger sign. Sometimes, mad, kick dog or cat since make noise, but day before same noise OK, so, not cat or dog fault, but irritable simpleton emotion state assign cat or dog as cause of feeling since:”

*Hostility stems from low serotonin,
 As one falls for moods mindless and brainless
 Kicking the cat or kids when one gets home,
 Rationalizing that they made some noise.*



"I'm getting mad just thinking about it," said NotOne.

"Yes, think about or see bad thing groove bad attitude, especial for young youth impress by bad TV show. Must careful be what learn, for mirror neuron practice what see. Just watch bad or good thing a lot and learn do it, like monkey see other monkey dig potato, although this good. Man never forget how ride bike. Learning stay long. Bad emotion like stain on brain; bad emotion deaf to logic, change like molasses or slow forming crystal, be like rock, block sense with non."

"Thanks, I see what you mean and I may even get mean from what I see."

"OK, yes, but see too much bad feeling now. Not want you get mad from hear all bad stuff, so switch on good emotion talk now. Remember thrill of walk log or swing rope over creek? How first kiss put you on air for week? Joy of create house from popsicle stick? Run, jump, play; have friend. All best. All good thing you of humankind known in these ecstasy moment of all good melded happening that lift you heavenward on some great wing. You even see magic wingèd ladies of flowered butterflies glory in flowers with bee. Feel alive. There be life after birth."

"But now life's stress on us weighs us down, as if we lived on Jupiter", commented HarriedOne.

"We suppose talk good stuff now, but... stress be difference between what expect happen and what really happen. When put need ahead of other, result be needless anger at what this life really be, although seem surprise."

"But there's always something going wrong!" replied BlameOne.

"So, happiness be silk bubble today that lift you to Heaven gateway, but one raven crow in night arrest smile and swipe away?"

"Yes, kind of like that."

"Do stress exercise so be ready not disappointment:"

*Breathe in all that's good, breathe out all that's bad;
Peace flows into you; it's warm, wet, and glad.
Feel it spread throughout your body, then say,
This is the best life that I've ever had!*

"I don't know. I want to get places, get ahead, be happy."

"Put need of other ahead of own produce byproduct of happiness; reduce stress, for no longer have unrealistic expectation."

"But I need things, stuff..."

"Hear with third eye:"

THE CONSCIOUSNESSES

*The three lower consciousnesses that are
Obsessed with the securing of objects,
With the chasing of sensations, and with
Power/control will never ever be enough.*

*There are NO actions of people that can
Justify our becoming irritable
Angry, fearful, jealous or anxious if
We give them our unconditional love.*

*If we don't accept the unacceptable,
Then we lower our level of consciousness
Our response will mirror their uptightness,
Which can spread the bad moods onto others.*

*Putting ourselves in the place of others
When hurtful things are done to us,
Expands our consciousness, compassion, and love
Since we can come to know why they did it.*

*When we converse with ourselves, it is our
Higher Consciousness, our Conscious Awareness
Or 'I', that questions our lower consciousness
Impulses toward securing, sensation, and power.*

“Well, but there are many fools, morons, and low-lives out there to annoy us day and night.”

“Yes, true, many stupid, but some just not far on golden path of enlightenment. You curse bad driver?”

“Yes, they drive too slow or cut me off?”

“Maybe driver old?”

“I don't know.”

“Maybe driver learning?”

“I don't know.”

“Maybe driver lost and not know way?”

“I don't know.”

“Maybe angry like you at some silly thing?”

“I don't know.”

“Know I. If see big picture of life one not be annoy if cut off in traffic, for s/he may be like I say above.”

“I never thought of that, I just yelled at them.”

“We teach think with good emotion. You say you want kill driver cut off you in traffic?”

“Yes.”

“This still seem 100% true wish.”

“No, not any more.”

“Hear twice with big ear what now I say, revelation of why big problem in life: Obvious not many cross kill boundary, except New York City and Detroit, but how many less obvious boundary bad emotion cross with no realize?”

“I suppose it happens all day long for some.”

“Yes, but all feeling, sad, happy, in between, crisscross human life cloth. Reflection of life sensation is rainbow coloring scene, or ugly stain-bow of oil on road. Learn watch self from afar; be spectator of self. This higher self. Watch parade go by; not engage. View from curb. Sit down, drink wine of happy life.”

“I’ll try, instructor. Maybe half a glass for some is really filled to the brim of optimism. My glass has always been empty even when it was only half empty.”

“Yes, but think thorn have roses, not roses have thorn. I tell you story of rose blossom as realization for me one time when Beauty itself bloom from Well of Truth... Here go. I know life have potential anguish, but we must live fully and so be alive enough to feel beauty, but then expose to opposite twin. Yes, know that Beauty other side be Melancholy, but, for me long ago, sadness come brood over every morrow, so I not know what do and go visit deep Well of Sorrow. But surprise, I see Beauty enshrine there, inseparate from Sadness. She say, ‘It’s from me that sadness you borrow’.”

“OK, teacher, it seems that there can be no light without the darkness; wow, I’m gaining wisdom fast. What about using drugs for happiness.”

“Wisdom fade fast. Take time sink in. Problems not complex think: simply, misery death follow drink, evil cruelty same reflected; drug lead life out of sync; one become living dead: heroin, crack and such lodge in pleasure receptor made for brain natural opiate endorphin of happiness, but drug not fit right so clog, destroy receptor, then need more drug for same high, then all receptor useless; then dead life forever.”

“OK, forget it. What is the object and purpose of life?”

“Life object be mental happiness; thought all we have; true paradise be state of mind. Help have something like to do, and one to do with.”

“Sounds good. What does the neurotransmitter Dopamine do?”

“Dopamine light up interest on new thing so focus attention on novel situation, even boring one, but not boring first time, like something so simple as change some building parking lot. We chalk up interest to thing being new, not realizing forced. This much normal except when

need too much newness thrill everyday or take too much risk to feel good, like race car driver, wild acting persons and like.”

“I get it. Let’s talk about some really good emotions, like love.”

“OK, I was to do. Love be greatest emotion, right after adventure. Love ultimate reason of live. To for-get, necessary to for-give. Give equal happiness; take equal nothing. Big paradox. Give so receive. Habit take bow to great originality. Good emotion energy become motive and sweep one with energy in motion. Joy be energy from good emotion, gushing stream swirling in unstoppable motion, force over edge as waterfall of boundless power as a tidal wave from endless ocean of perpetual emotion that then create more energy from itself being. Love be exact opposite of taking, is giving. But remember: emotion not whole story; need balance for wholeness: Some classicist drone toward mechanical perfection; romanticist drown in emotional affection, and worse, other alternate between extreme; way not this or that, but join in direction. Need listen now about some long love story that maybe Michael feel ten time more. This be slant to romantic love, but apply to all form, like love of life and goodness:

“Love is the finest refreshment of mortal life, providing as it does a glimpse into the heavenly state, a vision which, if maintained, can last well beyond the initial perception and for all of one’s life. So, I say that any time not spent on love is time squandered in absolute waste, that if you are idling, not loving, or, god forbid, hating, then life is a-wasting; for love is the greatest experience on earth, and so I have often sought it out, found it, received it, given it, and lived it as life’s one great happiness, for there is no other joy that compares, love being the truth of all truths.

“Who has not forgotten that first kiss and the magic that attended it? No one, for first love touches one deeply and forever. People newly in love glow for weeks on end. There is nothing like love, although, strangely, some do not actively seek it out, perhaps for fear of rejection. But, even love’s worst pain is sweeter by far than any other pleasure; there is, indeed, no contest, so, to love and lose is second only to loving in triumph.

“Not merely just a pleasure, love refreshes, creates, invigorates, and provides sustenance of spirit and life itself. Without love there is no life, at least none worth living. When you give up on love, you begin to die. Love knows no laws or restrictions, for mutual passion is a law unto itself. Love is the cure-all, both for those who receive it and for those who give it. The one tragedy in life is not death, but that some people do not love; aye, nor do they live, for the fear of the one is fear of the other. So, by all means, if you love somebody, go to them and tell them so right now.

“It is said that the loving are the daring, perhaps because they seek the ultimate adventure, often risking all for that which lies far and above the commonplace, that vision into paradise. Imagination weaves a fairy tale

of love and romance, and the mind that is alive soon brings forth the phantasm into reality.

“Placing our very life and happiness in another through love is the greatest gift one can give, for it is the gift of oneself. Unconditional love is a true gift, one without strings attached, one without any motive for gain in return. Oh, of course, we are human and often love for the sake of being loved in return, and this is not in itself wrong; but, when one loves for no other reason than for the sake of generosity and loving, then this is a saintly type of love which is above all the other kinds.

“True love loves people for what they are; not for their qualities in particular, but for the person. It’s not that we love someone because we need them, for this is quite immature, but that we need someone because we love them. It is, you see, love that is the origin. Love begets love and love, in turn, begets more love, and so on, making us even more loving to others, until Heaven is indeed brought down to Earth. Real love is its own reward.

“Identity is not lost in love, for true lovers do not sit looking only into each other’s heart, but, rather, look outward, each in the same direction. It is a seeming violation of arithmetic that in love two become much greater than one plus one, and that the two, nevertheless, do not become one, but remain as two, yet still share the same vibration in their souls.

“It also seems to be a paradox that love, when divided, is not at all diminished, but that each individual love multiplies to exceed the lot. One can never run out of love! It is a miser, indeed, who withholds love from a capacity that is boundless. Hoard not that which can be given. Give love, and even more love comes back full circle to you.

“What a joy is it to experience life’s wonders with someone you love. Oh, walks, and plays, and dinners are great enough pleasures when taken alone, but note how much better they are when you have someone to share them with. Another bonus of love is, that, with it behind your actions, you may soon find yourself doing the impossible, as love’s inspiration carries you along, through any kind of difficulty. For me it was an inspiration to write. Love and a kind heart are much alike, and one is equivalent to the other, love being a triumvirate of truth, beauty, and goodness blended into one great purity. We do not merely love; we are love! We do not create; we are creation itself. We don’t just live life; we are life!

“There are many forms and faces of love, such as brotherly, sisterly, motherly, fatherly, romantic, spiritual, professional, and physical, and it often depends much upon the circumstance which one is the most appropriate form to give to a particular person, but I think you may agree, that, in all of the above forms of love, there is much more that could be given in any case.”

“Thanks, instructor, but doesn’t some romantic love come from chemical bonding?”

“Yes, chemistry between persons when bonding hormone make love, pheromone away, so when in romantic love pretend not know this so enjoy more. Now, student, all above kind of love of goodness bind all nin-ja of all base; now, soon you too. Next time talk of adventure or consciousness or go on mission, but now you be relax, so sorry but must change topic to enemy Conspiracy. Unspeakable evil exist in world, outside government; give you info in email now. It everywhere but seen nowhere too much but by us. We have many victory, but it large organization. Beyond redemption. Big danger. Face them, then study TOE. Need idea... Read data now... I always ask class...

Rascal spoke, “This is truly terrible. What if we follow some of them to their centers?”

“They too smart; have great surveillance detectors. Can only follow short distance with bike.”

“Can we infiltrate them?”

“They scan brain for goodness. Kill you fast.”

“Capture one of them by putting them to sleep and read their mind somehow or not so gently convince them to give up their secrets?”

“We try. They have protection in their minds. Die if remove. Die if wish anytime.”

“Listen to their plans near one of their centers?”

“Their center block emanation from all around and above.”

“What about below?”

“They detect dig tunnel vibration, but this give me idea...”

“What is it?”

“Need refine, study; keep secret from torture of any you now, but this thought-poem I leave you of my feel long ago so you think about emotion and maybe tough time ahead if my idea go over:

*One time darkness drain me to be wan moon;
Sickness consume spirit; mantle heavy lead;
Life last glow upon me; eyes crater gone dim.*

*Death’s ebon form seek me; cover me with cloak.
‘Come with me,’ he say, as cool burning brow
Of dark moon me, ‘I offer you quiet peace’.*

*Sudden strength come to me,
Waning crescent wisp.
In night cold shadow I say,*

*'Un-hold my soul, Moon Reaper,
I fully shine once more!'*



— HEIRLOOM —
P. Torney © 1998

**HEAVEN'S PATRON
OF ARTS, GRACE,
AND LICENSE,
LEFT US
SWEET-SMELLING
PLANTS, WITH
FLOWERED SCENTS
AND AROMAS
REDOLENT—
FLORESCENCE
IN FLUSH AND PRIME OF
DAYS REMINISCENT.**

The Future

Life should be euphoric, like spring fever,
As in those rare moments of ecstasy
When one is in the zone and cannot miss;
So—let all aversive substrates be removed!

The higher modes of being that await
The future-chemically-enhanced
Will make today's primitive mind-states
Seem as a child's tin flute to a symphony!

Mind reaches out to see what's possible
And what's not, like particles forming
In the quantum world, but, better than that—
Mind makes the impossible possible.

Mind is the ultimate of all there is
It is the universe—billions of years
Of primordial material—complex.
So, what more could human beings want?

The secrets of the universe are all found—
All exists out of consciousness, the ground.
Blame, soul, free will, and God have all fallen—
But it will take a thousand years to sink in!

Music

Memory's ideas recall the last heard tone;
Sensation savors what is presently known;
Imagination anticipates coming sounds—
The delight is such that none could produce alone.



— Chapter 10 —
Smoke and Mirrors

*Good and evil were wrought from wrong and right,
When, from naught, twin genii split day and night.
Some think that black's might can vanquish white,
But night can't even quench the smallest light!*

“Hello internet class. Today we teach adventure; appropriate topic for what soon must all do, sooner than think, for my boss, Tenth Degree Grand Master of Entire World, Trish, approve my plan; add some nice touch. And no, cannot tell you plan. Today we study benefit of adventure, some soberness, drunkless balance between foolish and reason, known as risky venture, unknown territory, calculated risk, dangerous undertaking, not know what to happen, gamble for glory, stimulation by event, chance of luck and good fortune, and often hazard all, in balance of exciting activity needing enterprise and enthusiasm going through perilous escapade of precarious uncertainty with good emotion.

Did I mention danger? Many you live adventure on way to ninja base. Nothing like it. Now hear adventure talk of fluttering songbird of youth that may leave for some, but never really have to fly away:

*The child in us was warm, playful, and bold,
But vanished, ere we knew, leaving us cold.
Now this we know: The day we stop being
Adventurous is the day we get old.*

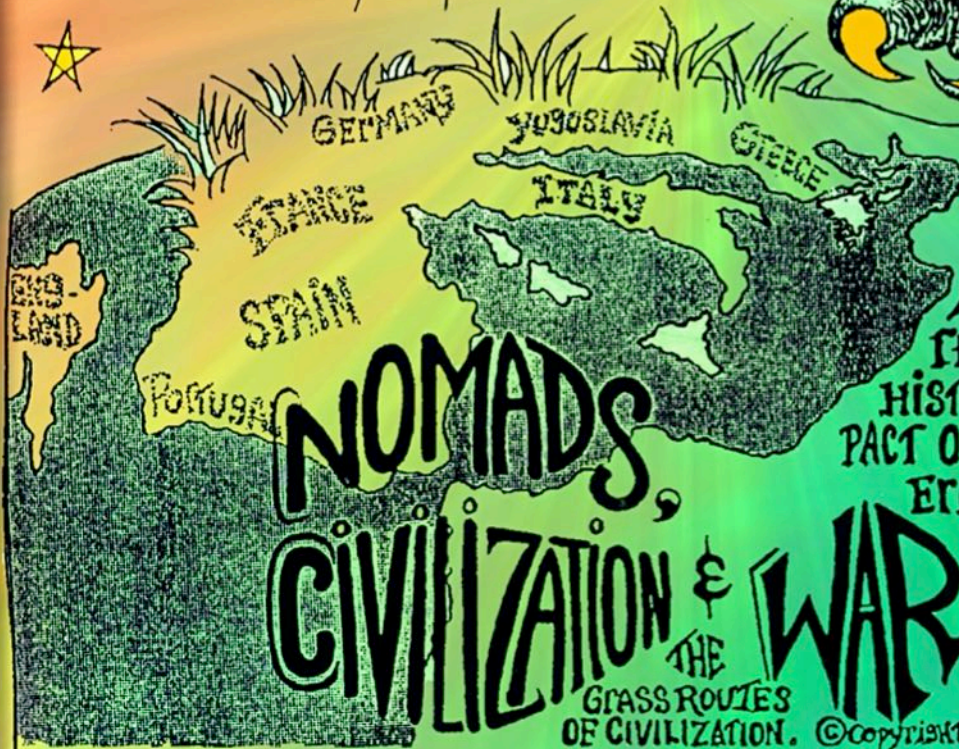
*So, dare to walk the line, balancing fun
There between protection and misfortune,
For the greatest blunder in life is to
Repeatedly fear that you might make one.*

*Not quite sober blessed nor drunk to excess;
Never too foolish nor very reckless;
Oh, adventure is so reasonable
In this delicate state of awareness.”*

“I’ll help your Conspiracy fight plan in any way,” offered Rascal, many others seconding and thirthing this, “for goodness requires adventure!”

“OK, Rascal, since you so willing and from same base I give good job to you so prepare in future field leadership role and do TOE too.”

Seventy Centuries Of Raiding & Trading



NOMADS, CIVILIZATION & WAR

A GENERALLY UN-RECOGNIZED REAL HISTORY OF ASIAN IMPACT ON EUROPE & WESTERN CIVILIZATION INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES: THE HINGES OF HISTORY...

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K.

“If anyone can, he can,” added Profpat. “What does adventure seek?”

“It seek life’s light of delight, joy, success, triumph, and lasting gladness of to be alive, for it main ingredient in living recipe make from friendship, love, happiness, and nature, but, so unfortunate that:

*Few people celebrate life anymore...
There’s not enough time in the day, they’re sure,
To care about life, friends, love, romance, joy,
Wisdom, smiles, thrill, and dreams through adventure.*

*See them hurrying hither and thither:
‘Oh, look at the time! I must go whither.’
What sense the life that has no time to live?
Wherefore the wind that swirls in a dither?”*

“Right on,” said Fredrick, “so walk the dead, for adventure is life’s heart of hearts, the very spirit of life from transition through opposition.”

Graybeard added, “The great quest spurs us ever on!”

Michael interjected, “We fight for the one and to the one, one for all and all for one.”

“OK, good, I feel energize; now give more detail instruction to very interested class; never have those like you. Here go:

“Boredom and dull routine have little place, if any, in a life, and it is only by one’s own laziness that they are allowed to exist at all, languishing nearby on the doorstep, as it were, as uninvited guests, as all the while terrible complaints are hurled against them.

“I’m bored’, some say, halfheartedly hoping that some new entertainment will appear out of the blue and carry them away from a dreary commonplace existence, perhaps into a fairy tale. So, adventure calls constantly to us as a cure for the blahs, for routine dulls the senses; even the greatest music soon begins to fall unheard on our ears, and gradually degenerates into that same old song.

“Although breaking the chains of routine often requires a great burst of energy, adventure can become self-sustaining once the seeds have been planted. Yes, initially, some hard work must be applied, since adventuring is not normal, free, and easy in this world, but, remember, that before all realized realities must come the dream, the creative vision, the attitude and the outlook that will bring adventure to life.

“Even before the dream comes the yearning, though it’s dim at first, glowing as a faint phantasm in a fleeting daydream struggling to maintain its shape before it fades into the noise of day. As these shadows pass over the adventurous mind, the vision must be enhanced and then steadily pursued until it, at last, becomes three-dimensional and real. We

often look back later, quite amazed at the wonders that we have wrought, but, we had the vision and gave it life.”

*Daydreams are filled with thoughts on promenade:
Wishes, fantasies o'er the mind cascade.
Listen well to these plans already made,
For by sundown the phantom shapes may fade.*

“The rewards of adventure are many; stimulation, experience, and growth are practical results, but foremost comes joy, exhilaration, and thrill, the feeling of being alive. Who has not known the adventure of walking to school alongside a stream, dallying here and there, then crossing over the water on a log, nearly slipping off, but catching one’s self at the last instant while skipping a heartbeat? Who has not known the electricity of the first kiss at summer camp? Or of the reading or writing of a great poem or story while basking warm and cozy in the winter sunshine? Or the thrill of a job well done? If we no longer know such things, then, perhaps, now is the time to stop worrying about getting our hair messed up.

“It’s all a matter of style, purpose, and vision. To plant the seeds of adventure one must seek out the uncommon, the unusual situation, the exotic, even in one’s own backyard, looking for the odd character, although certainly not those who are unhealthy, the pleasantly eccentric, by today’s staid standards, the person willing to try just about anything that isn’t illegal, the offbeat but upbeat person, the optimist, the exciting prospect, the person with those excitingly wonderful and harmless qualities sometimes called ‘character defects’.

“And so it is that once you find it, adventure begets more adventure, for, ideas from all over soon begin to interact and build until a person rises above mere existence and really lives! Oh, I’ve had many adventures myself, from romance in the south seas to mysterious intrigue in the villages of France, but travel and romance are only a general means to adventure; there are many more, mostly personal, for it depends on what you want from life. Adventure can be had right here in one’s own town.

“Of course, some adventures entail a minor amount of risk-taking and rule breaking, for that which is often uncommon is often the most extraordinary and therefore must draw undue attention from those in the straight world, but, I ask you, does not the element of danger often greatly heighten the excitement? Who has not, in the throes of spring fever, slyly disappeared from his place of employment on some exciting romantic mission, and found adventure in that forbidden quest?

“Yes, students, adventure is lived in that delightful middle state in which we are neither drunk nor sober, nor ever reckless, but ever balanc-

ing excitement with responsibility, each paying for the other as we walk the thin line between foolishness and safety, the log across the creek.

“So, I say, to you all, prime the pump; seek out adventure, embrace it. Use your emotions, get up out of your chair and into the arena; open up and invite adventure in, give it, take it; live life with a reasonable passion and with a passionate reason; for adventure will become a living situation that becomes automatic! Then you will say ‘I’m excited, there’s everything to do in this town, the people are mostly wonderful, and I marvel at life’s wonders each and every day!’”

Everyone ran out the door and had a great afternoon and evening on into the night.

Rascal awoke the next day, practiced his listening, as usual, but heard nothing at all. He got out of bed, had breakfast, but saw no one else, then logged into ToeQuest, half the morning passing by in the eerie stillness of no one in any place.

This is strange. Rascal got up from the computer and walked the halls of the ninja center. Everything looked normal enough, but no one was around. He called out; not a whisper came back. He returned to do some more Wiki-Googling, but his computer soon clunked to a stop, sizzling a bit, and then the hard drive went up in smoke.

“What the heck...”

He looked around: still no one, nothing... and then the Grand Master appeared if by magic from the smoky hovering haze.

“Emergency evacuation, Rascal. Everyone gone. We close down.”

Another three computers exploded, much worse than Rascal’s had, spewing parts and little fires and wires and chips all over the floor.

“It be plan time, my friend. I can take help now you offer me.”

“What’s happening?” asked Rascal.

“One hundred Conspiracy SuperCenter agents and their commanders arrive soon; some helicopter, too; they invade ninja base; there be new base us have soon; much better equipment; all new 27-inch iMacs.”

“How did they find us?”

“We tell them, by place clue in ear of high rank U.S. Senator from Conspiracy by other double-agent Senator. It be somewhat like surprise inspection announce by military service day before. Ha-ha.”

“What did we tell them for?”

“So Conspiracy come here; clean house; look at computer file, for they never find us base before. They also think TOE here.”

“Should we destroy the rest of the computers?”

“No, leave as be; contain false location of other bases; they raid empty buildings; we ready for them be. Also put silly but complicate ToeQuest theories as false TOE in computer. Ha.”

“What can I do for you, Master?”

“I go below in secret room; listen long time; I record, but no risk transmit; you need pour chemical on floor for perfect self-seal trap door; no way in; no way out. There I stay.”

“You’re going to remain under there for days, possibly for weeks, all alone and listening in a tiny space?”

“Yes, me alone, but lonely never, for have best friend near: my loving self.”

“You’ll suffocate. Who thought up this crazy plan?”

“You did; remember, spy from below...”

“Oh, that, jeeese, but what if they don’t stay around?”

“They stay when see computer blow up if move.”

“What if they find you?”

“Then I die well, go down with skip, but they not think this; beside, all solid rock except tiny hole.”

“They may still find you. Maybe they will scan for electronics.”

“Scan not work good in computer room, but me turn off if see scan happen; but, chance of take; even one more little room under small room; this best chance obtain info on secret Conspiracy Centers so hard of find.”

“Don’t we need to put a carpet over the trap door?”

“No, make suspicion. They bring in mud; discolor floor, make good camouflage.”

“Is there any air down there?”

“Little bit air come from small long hole. Me not breathe much. Open other room if be need.”

“OK, how much time do we have?”

“Maybe half hour; they been sighted; but I go soon room under floor here.”

“Right here?”

“Yes, be under foot, but first tell you instruction.”

“I’m ready.”

“After chemical pour, swing bookcase, go tunnel there; stop when see water, catch breath; swim underwater; not easy, not hard; come up in pond in dense wood, get camera there; when see raid begin, take super zoom pictures; hear you good photographer; then use explosive find there, make hole with; go in, cover self loosely with dirt, dig air pocket; plug ears; you may still hear many whoosh of terrible sound wave; no harm you; stay ten minute, walk path to road; remember bike ride arrive here? Return same way, but now know the way of the Tao. Someone come help you; no worry, you not much look like ninja; beside, ID say you live in area.”

“Holy Mother Theresa who doubted God in her diaries! What has the world come to?”

“It become more good place if plan work.”

“Will they reveal some secrets while they’re here?”

“Yes, they be excite; remember emotion course? All top brass come; they have rust; not used to field discipline.”

“The bookcase tunnel entrance is obvious and quite easy to find, as I suppose it was designed to be, for only the way in need be difficult. What if they follow me?”

“Walk fast in forest.”

“That’s it? I still remember how to ride a bike.”

“Ha. You think clear about contingency; you calm in crisis; make good leader. We forget tunnel during yesterday ‘what if’ session. If you like, use second explosive you find out there after make hole and throw into pond; it flood tunnel, even let water eventually seep into computer room and add to mess of mud and wires and burns of some fried computers. As for tunnel, yes, they soon discover; it explain why base empty; we have better tunnel through which 1000 head ninjas someday come from every base and pass through in triumph to receive Conspiracy info. Best not use bike; may be vehicle motion sensors about, plus, um, forest may become some rubble.”

“Great, thanks, and I hope all goes well, but I have the TOE they want.”

“Yes, this risk, be one reason we keep you here long, plus whole region infested, but we have call in best of best exterminators. Thanks for hint of Great Plan.”

“My pleasure, I think. OK, ready to go in?”

“I ready; have good book read; farewell friend; maybe someone cut me free with blowtorch in few day. Here, poem to read in forest; apply to you me both of last hurrah.”

Rascal bowed to the great Grand Master who then opened the trap door and went down to what looked like a dark tomb, but it was even much smaller than that. The door was then shut and Rascal applied the chemical, waited awhile, and then heard the Master’s tap that meant that he could see that the seal was perfect via a wireless camera.

Rascal looked up at the camera and waved goodbye, opening the bookcase, entering, and closing it, and then walked down the dimly lit tunnel for a quarter-mile or so, stopping and resting when he saw the murky water. *My god, this month is a blur: we found the true TOE, a Conspiracy is trying to take over the world, the end of days is maybe coming in 30 years due to global warming... Where were the billions and billions of years that Carl Sagan only said once, mostly of those gone before, but hoped for ahead as well.*



Rascal, now relaxed, took a very deep breath and dove under the water and swam straight ahead through the liquid darkness, and finally surfaced, his lungs almost bursting, in a small pond, among several nearby, in the very shady forest beyond the compound.

Rascal found the explosives and blew a hole in the ground in a prime spot, blew up the tunnel exit of the pond, and then waited.

The Grand Master nodded to himself in the tiny room when he felt the two vibrations, *Rascal Puff good man to be friend of, if ever see I light of day again.*

After a short while, Rascal noted an army of Conspirators arriving from both the air and the road. They sprayed poison gas into the mansion and knocked down the doors of the ninja base, and some entered, wearing masks. *Such is the doom of man that he forgets his mistakes and repeats them.* Rascal had been taking zoomed pictures and some video through a small hole in the shrubbery and kept on until they said 'all clear' and had all gone in. *Evil has come to our house.* Then he went into the ground hole and covered himself with dirt and leaves that he'd propped up all tilted and ready to fall in, and then breathed very sparingly in his small

air space, slowing his heartbeat by meditating. *This is more wonderful training, I suppose, for I could have sealed in the Grand Master and left hours ago, except for the taking of the pictures, but I was told it would build ultimate character for leadership; but, perhaps the photos of these people and their license plates will become invaluable if anything goes wrong.*



Three massive shock waves of sound and whatever else swept the forest, ripping the bark off of the trees and shredding the bushes all around, although he didn't know this yet. Rascal's ears had been plugged, but he still shook at the magnitude of this weapon. The weather channel would be manipulated or would report on its own that twisters had struck or that a meteor had fallen in the surrounding forests, amazingly sparing the large mansion that was soon to become a temporary Conspiracy outpost.

Rascal waited through a long silence, except for few more helicopters arriving, gathered more air into his below ground space, and then there was nothing for many minutes. The ten minutes were surely up, so he arose, pretty much looking like a dirt farmer, and walked for several

miles through the dense and devastated forest, toward the same road from which this quest had begun, having to climb over many fallen trees and branches.

It was the first time that Rascal had really been out in two weeks. He saw nature a bit differently: he could understand the bird's cries and calls, those that were left, could sense the flowers, even before seeing them, by their scent, knew how to attend to every sound and breeze, even the softness of a far away twig falling through the branches, could heard one hand clapping, and knew what plants were good to eat, altogether feeling at peace with every living thing, now seeing deep into the life of all things natural. He was almost back to where he'd started from; the end of his all his exploring was to be able to know this familiar three-dimensional place for the first time. *I am not alone, for I have my self.*

He took the poem out of his pocket and read it:

*What, though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.*

*And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day is lovely yet;*

*The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,*

*To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.*
(William Wordsworth)

Rascal walked for another mile, spotted the road, and peered through a bush out into the road, then looked right and left, shielded by some other bushes. Nothing. He took a step, intending to enter the forest on the other side, an area that was well known to him. Three black sedans full of cigar smokers suddenly pulled up and surrounded him. *Why did I cross the road? I don't know? This is no joke; I'm not chicken.*

Rascal watched a man step out smoking a long cigar and having a coughing fit.

"You look familiar," said Rascal.

"I should be; am good friend you in ninja base. Try get use to smoke. Cigar terrible stuff of burning leaves. We find these great car today; interesting radio talk."

"Where to?"

"Brand new Ninja Base with pool, good computer, tennis court, and many more great thing await your presence."

"How do we afford these places?"

"Use Conspiracy credit card; soon have many more."

"What's happening back at the ranch?"

"Who know, but they probably ask computer expert: 'They know about this? They know about that?' Ha-ha. Grand Master need six ears to hear all open talk."

"I hope so. Will they stay long?"

"Not likely; they exposed there, but maybe some fake info like TOE draw them stay few day longer than plan and talk more."

"Then what?"

"When they try leave; get paralyze with gas; maybe we question some before croak."

"What if some still somehow try to escape?"

"They not far get; use nerve gas."

"Is that appropriate?"

"You not know all they do; nerve gas even too good for them, but they always choose die anyway, maybe even automatic thing from sense trouble. Plus, not need them tell tale too soon; need us time. This one chance only to save world so then TOE save world later. All Grand Masters think long and deep, then all approve, but may not need kill."

Another week slowly passed by in the new base, the Conspiracy staying put in an unprecedented way, perhaps emboldened by the lack of resistance. Ninja Strike Forces had been formed and been prepared and positioned around the world, every novice and trainee joining them, Toe-

Questors included. 50,000 ninjas waited on a single word. Meanwhile, some Conspiracy attacks on empty buildings began, with ninjas coming in right behind them and dispensing with all such silliness. It was not a pretty sight, but evil never is.

“How long can the Master survive,” asked Rascal of his ninja friend.

“Not know, but if die, we have still his notes.”

“He’s not afraid to die?”

“He love to die in glory of know world more safe from Great Evil.”

“But can he last this long?”

“Not know. He sturdy man, but not much air there for fear they detect him, but old saying says to be like cockroach, most sturdy long live thing, such also as weed be best plant most alive above all other.”

“There’s more to the cockroach story?”

“Many cockroach live on crumb for long time. One time cockroach seal up in fry pot handle when make pan 100 years ago, then handle break one day...”

“And the cockroach was still alive?”

“Yes, but he walk very slow. Ha-ha.”

Another few days passed and the Conspiracy prepared to leave the ninja base, packing their cars, having gotten all they could get, but they didn’t get anywhere, for Hell’s fires called to them all.

One thousand head-ninjas then entered the compound, extracted some more information from some Conspirators whose dying mechanisms had failed, and torched open the tiny room under the floor, consuming precious oxygen below while doing so.

The room below was as dark as a moonless night.

“Someone get light!”

The Grand Master lay still. Many gasped and then bowed in sorrow, but then one eyelid opened and he soon sat up, and then headed up, but he was moving mighty slow.

Rascal was the first to greet him and took his arm as he came up and out. “Have many good note organize by region; internet site, passwords, bank accounts, email too. Take each note for your own base; disperse; go forth; transmit message; plan quick; attack; go now with high heart all onto the globe to every dark avenue and shine the blinding light of goodness. Move like wind of hurricane; Conspiracy go high alert when not receive check-in call tomorrow. I be OK. Moon fully shine once more. Talk you all later.”

Someone reported some damage to the priceless paintings and wood carvings.

“Those just things.”

The Grand Master began falling toward Rascal, who caught him.

“You OK?”

“No, but will be. Rascal, have Profpat drain Conspiracy funds; get Michael to energize into main fortress and disable; ask Fredrick to scan foreign language internet sites and translate useful info; have Lloyd terminate Conspiracy infiltrators of governments with extreme prejudice; have Graybeard run Australia operation, cut electricity to continent during attacks; we sparse there.”

Ninja black helicopter gun ships lifted and roared off, and, within a few days, three-quarters of the Conspiracy centers had been destroyed; some Conspirators were even captured, but many had chosen death in battle or through the deadly thought. However, the remainder of their centers were totally cut off from each other and these would perhaps take some years to address.

The Grand Master had been taken to a hospital for revitalization and had just arrived at the new ninja base, noting Rascal sitting at a computer, reading Wordsworth:

*Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:*

...
*Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open to the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.*

*Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!*

“Rascal, my old friend; our crazy idea work! It greatest success in ten year history. Sit down, have wine. Many good ninja die. Raise glass to them, sip, then turn over to spill, and set upside down on table.”

Trish and Michael energized into the shadows and wordlessly stepped forward and took up their glasses.

“I give toast to ninja warriors gone to the sky:”

*To you, my friends who die in fight;
Now you become the brightest light of darkest night,
Stars forever shining the way that's right.*

Something Had to
Become since "Nothing"
is unconceivable.

(Materialization)



From Matter To Us

The big bang, or materialization,
One of many, was prosperous for us,
For its constants allowed for life's basis
'Though it didn't have us in mind at all.

It arose from some unbreakable stuff,
Perhaps several such eternal things,
Or the same from previous contraction;
But not from nothing, for how could that be?

Now, if the big bang's material result
Was not favorable for our becoming,
Then we wouldn't be here to discuss it.
'Though auspicious, it guaranteed nothing.

Matter and antimatter formed of it,
In equal parts, most of it annihilating;
However, some black holes evaporated,
Leaving a fortunate amount of matter.

Matter's here that works as building blocks,
The strong force's stability opposed
To the weak force's dispersal through decay,
Plus electromagnetism's motion.

Lucky, not planned, all this gave us a chance,
As from the stars cameth our help and hope,
When they generated all the elements
That brewed a soup of fortuitous accidents.

Earth was a golden distance from the sun—
A large number of other planets unfit;
Earth's features evolved in a good proportion
To sustain the beginnings of early life.



Soil and sun's plants generated oxygen;
Death chose the useful forms over the useless,
Kept track of by RNA-like structures
In life's cradle, though we had not yet appeared.

Our blind fated road was much further paved
When asteroids finished most of the species—
Far from a feature of intelligent design;
But it was just the opening we needed.

Evolution sifted through the accidents,
As it directed the good from the bad;
We began from the fusing of chromosomes
That made us incompatible with "chimps".

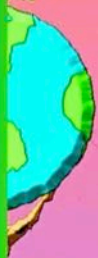
From matter to us—to all our senses,
To our brains, our minds, and consciousness,
In a universe of matter and space,
Past and future—we won the human race.

It only took 13.7 billion years,
For these many rare events to occur;
Though just a few of the coin tosses were good,
The bad tosses went nowhere in a hurry!

Well, I've left a lot of good fortune out,
And perhaps you readers can help fill it in;
Know, too, that bad luck may come as well:
Global warming, nuclear war, or more asteroids.

The lure of myth is ever great to man;
But, beyond the apparent solidity
Of the word "faith" is its meaning—of
Belief in the unseen supernatural!

Matter and motion manufactures all
Being and time in the arena of space,
We the complex composites from simple stuff,
The ultimate, so far, in the universe.



— Chapter 11 —
Venus Rising

*Imagination lights the mind to shine,
Cooling Venus's reasonless passion,
Warming Mars' fight song into compassion...
Between those two orbits, the Earth is mine!*

*Purgatory's on Venus, where sulphurs rain.
Hell's found in the sun's heart, oh, hot burning pain!
Of Heaven's site, no one has any idea,
For it's the world's best kept secret: Earth's its name!*

Rascal, Trish, Michael, and the Grand Master sipped from their wines glasses, toasting the fallen warriors, then turned the glasses over, spilling their contents, placing them upside down on the table, the red wine flowing all over, like blood, it then trickling down onto the floor.

Trish requested one minute of silence, after which everyone yet remained silent and unmoving. Rascal noted to himself that *Michael looks as glowing as his archangel namesake*. Another minute passed and still no one had moved or blinked, then another passed. *Strange*. Rascal shifted in his chair. *Has time stopped?* Some more minutes passed, Rascal thinking, *What is this?* Another minute passed and Rascal assumed, *The Grand Master is deferring to his commander, Trish, for she must be the one to break the silence*.

Another minute passed and Rascal sat back, the only one who seemed restless. Trish suddenly unsheathed her sword and swung it through the air and it surely split some atoms, at least dislodging a few electrons, for there were bright sparks, and brought it down lightning fast, passing but an inch away from the Master's ear, and then rested it on his shoulder, he not flinching at all. Rascal nearly jumped out of his chair.

Trish spoke unto the Master: "This shall be my last command to thee, Glorious Master. Rise, my equal, as the Tenth Degree Grand Master of the Western Empire. I shall take the Eastern; I have much to learn there. You report only to Thomas Veil, as do I, on Conspiracy matters; otherwise, only to goodness."

The new Tenth Degree Master rose, letting some seconds go by. *Not this again*, Rascal thought, tensing up a bit. But not another second passed but did the Master pull out his sword so quickly that Rascal could hardly follow it, and swung it toward Rascal's ear, creating a breeze as it stopped and came to rest on his shoulder.

"Rise, RascalPuff, as a fourth degree Field Leader—work in between toes—with also have the Honor of the Butterfly and Dragon Master, larg-

er kind of butterfly. I raise you straight level four since already know you many everythings, plus, show courage to end, and good sport be. No worry, you soon go beyond fourth degree of gravity to be charge of electricity then feel attraction of magnetism. Ha. Good you not move; save ear for hear.”

Rascal rose and said, “Butterfly Honor?”

“Yes, one flap of wing change course of history.”

“I’ve heard about the butterfly who caused a hurricane.”

“Also cause himicane. Yes, all see it true. Now, Trish, I thank you deep; you most wise divide by east/west, for east blend into west, west blend into east; even overlap; no sanctuary for there evil be. But never know boss of company share top spot.”

“We are more than a company, and rather are in good company as friends and now as co-leaders. It was Fredrick who told me about the transition of east into west. Plus, we have so much intel, and so many leads and loose ends to follow up on. There is more than enough work for two, now and in the future. Also, I am married now and so I may have to spend a lot of time doing laundry!”

“Ha. Good one.”

Trish and Michael retreated into the shadows.

Rascal’s Master spoke, “Attack going well; we leave some Conspiracy paper about centers, after copy them, so governments learn involvement. Maybe purge they themselves of traitors and let up on TOE search.”

“This is farewell, isn’t it Master. See you soon?”

“Wish so, but not likely. Yes, we go separate way now, old friend, Rascal. You due at airport soon, for L.A. trip. Ninja helicopter take you over still uncertain land.”

They embraced warmly, Rascal asking, “and you, my friend?”

“I go west, young man.”

Rascal replied, “Hail, farewell, fine fellow met. I not forget these time.”

The helicopters pilots arrived, and RascalPuff was soon off and flying away in the craft that had been just renamed “The Magic Dragon”. The new base faded from view and Rascal almost wondered, *Did this all really happen?* And then he gazed upon his new sword sparkling, shining, and gleaming in his hands.

The helicopter landed way out on a distant runway, and Rascal boarded a 767, then took one last look back, and was escorted to a roomy first class aisle seat. There were many businessmen aboard, as told by their attire, and he nodded to one across the aisle as he settled in to his seat. *I’m back in the real world now, or is it not the world I wish to live in. If only everyone in the real world was so polite and decent and caring... The man across has the looks and bearing of an aging CEO of a large company, one*

who probably has to work day and night. Poor guy. He ordered tea and Rascal did the same.

Rascal was about halfway through a movie of the 'Gladiator', when he noticed a strange frequency in his headphone, and quickly ripped it off, for his hearing was now so acute that he could even listen to thermal vibrations if he so desired.

The CEO looked over, and in a flash the well dressed fellow picked up the man sitting behind Rascal, and, in an instant, carried him to the emergency door, opening it and flinging the man out, almost seemingly going out himself, but in actuality grabbing the door and swinging back inside from the bounce of the hinges as well as from the back draft of swooshing air from the plane's forward flight, landing back in his chair and lifting his tea cup to his lips all in one fluid motion.

A stewardess rushed up from the back and asked Rascal, "Did something just happen here?"

"No, nothing happened," answered Rascal. She gave him a quizzical look and then returned to the galley.

"Good answer, old friend," said the CEO.

"Master! I didn't recognize you in a suit and tie and with that new hairstyle."

"Just traveling cloth. Ah, I once wear this to base on Halloween and everyone get scare."

"What just happened here?"

The Master rose and inspected the area behind Rascal's seat. "I hear too it. Ah, here some device connect to earphone of you. I look at, listen."

The Master looked up and smiled. "Some kind of brain drain, but, ha, they only get what you wish for dinner serve, but Rascal, friend, I no think lobster serve on airplane."

"Well, Master, thank god, and lobster is my favorite meal, but I really wasn't thinking about it at all."

"You were, but that memory gone now."

"The Conspiracy?"

"Yes. Be them."

"But they're out of money, and they are much more than decimated, but there's no good word for that."

"True, but TOE only they hope now."

"How did they find me?"

"Not know; will look into. Maybe just luck of some fleeing agent that happen see helicopter way out by luck. Right place, right time. I half suspect him when see."

Rascal added, "Then fortune fall. Big bad luck arrive."

"Wrong place, wrong time. Ah, friend, you talk the talk!"

"How did you suspect him out of all these people?"

“Easy, only person sit behind you.”

“Are there any more of them on board?”

“No, many asleep or not move forth, rest seem true scare.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Take no chance, I, until you safe on ninja jet aircraft. Have go west as old man, so give self job on way.”

“We still live in dangerous times.”

“But the evil is now beginning to dwindle away.”

“You really do know long words and full speech!”

“Yes, but many of the ninjas do not, so, I guess, I just got used to speaking in that manner of shorthand. It works rather well, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, I’m even starting to think in that shorthand, for speed. Thank you be here.”

“You not need me; you give mighty chop.”

“Yes, I would have; you trained me well, but I don’t know that I would’ve thrown him off of the plane.”

“Better sit down have tea with one try empty mind?”

“No, I guess not.”

The plane went on to land in L.A., the Master saying that some ninjas would meet him soon and transfer him to a secure ninja jet for the remainder of the trip.

“Farewell, again, Rascal man; meet again some day, not soon. Am not sure future: is adventure definition.”

Rascal’s escorts arrived, the Master nodding to them and leaving. They all sat down in the lounge across from some people reading the newspaper. The papers dropped and there were Fredrick, Brad Pitt, and Austin smiling a mile wide. They all hugged and began to tell of many great tales while they walked toward the ninja aircraft, tales that would have been quite unbelievable to Rascal, but for what he had gone through.

Rascal stopped at a machine, fiddled with it for awhile, and said, “I not sure how to work these slot machines, but I think I’m winning,” for change was coming out and spilling all over the floor.

Fredrick looked over to Austin for a second and then said to Rascal, “This is a new type of vending machine that gives change for bills put in if all you do is press the coin return lever.”

“Ha, I got you both, for I even bought a scanner and learned how to use it! Learning come fast now. Install software disk; connect USB; press button.”

“Good one, Rascal,” said Austin. “Did you scan the vibracious lady?”

“No, I forgot to put her in the scanner. Ha on you again.”

“Where is everyone else?” asked Fredrick of one of the escorts.

“Graybeard come from otherside underside world; Michael use energy; other go different time, so not chance lose all ToeQuestingers at one

time; like President not fly with Vice-President; all you meet up secret TOE place at.”

Rascal added, “Is Hawaii the secret place?”

“No.”

They boarded a small but sleek black ninja jet that had a missile under each wing.

Rascal asked, “What do you mean lose all at one time...?”

“Never know future. Could be happen.”

The obviously Hawaiian flight crew of stewards and stewardesses came aboard.

“Are we going to Hawaii,” asked Rascal of one of them.

“No, but destination classified. No more question.”

The jet lifted off to the west and ascended high into the sky, higher than most planes did, much above the clouds, and then leveled off, flying into a moonless night. Drinks were served, and soon afterwards a lobster was served to Rascal, a roast duck to Fredrick, and lamb chops to Austin.

“Do you crew guys know everything?” asked Rascal.

“Course not, not even understand any kind Theory of Everything.”

Rascal just sighed and enjoyed his meal.

It was about three hours into the flight when the plane dropped beneath the clouds, descending rather rapidly. An announcement from the captain came on, saying, “Everything fine; wear triple-strap seat belt.”

They had hardly gotten them on when the plane went into what might be called a free fall, all exterior and interior lights suddenly going off, as well, with gravity soon increasing three times over as the jet slowed its descent.”

“An announcement reported, “Everything fine; no worry.”

The ToeQuestors looked out the windows and saw the deep black nothingness of the ocean rising up to meet them, identifiable only as dimly lit by starlight, when their sharp vision became accustomed to the blackness within and without. The plane suddenly leveled off as if it were in a landing pattern.

“There’s nothing out there,” said Fredrick, “no islands, no lights, nothing but water.”

Rascal added, “None on this side either. Hawaii would have been another two hours, right, Austin?”

The ocean swept by only 500 or so feet below. “Indeed,” answered Austin, “we seem to be landing on the ocean.”

“Brace for landing,” said the announcement.

The jet’s wing flaps flared, as could mostly only be felt, as the plane then almost seemed go into a stall, but then there was a very quick stop

and a rebound as the tail hook caught on the landing cable of the black ninja aircraft carrier.

“What in the blazes of glorious ninja swords!” exclaimed Rascal to the pilot who was now coming down the aisle.

“Security. Prove no one follow; beside, you need couple day rest after recent war. Welcome not Hawaii.”

“Thanks,” they all said in unison.

The ToeQuestors got out and still they could hardly see the carrier deck, but they had all practiced walking in the dark, and went forth quite smoothly. A hatch opened and they went in and downward, toward and into a dimly lit hallway. A man carrying what looked to be large bags of money bid them ever onward.

“Profpat!” they all said at once. “What are you doing here?”

“I flew in without a plane. Come on in, have a seat; it’s a long story.”

They caught up on each other’s adventures over the next two days, the aircraft carrier not going anywhere, and enjoyed the ninja hospitalities.

“It feels like home, doesn’t it, Fredrick, this base?” said Rascal.

“Yes, I’ve grown fond of these good men and women and their ways, but I suppose we have to move on to where Nobody awaits us, and try to get a better handle on this true TOE we’ve discovered before the world boils away. We were just plain lucky on our CMBR trip; we can’t just do random fiddling on the antenna any more. We might even take ourselves out of existence thereby, but, if we had a better light-bending suit...”

Rascal quickly turned around when he heard his Master’s voice, but he was only there on the internet iChat, the Master teaching and giving a ‘Brief Introduction to Consciousness’, as follows:

“Not know all answer of consciousness; it last frontier; DNA blueprint, protein folding, simple in compare. It seem human be electrochemical machine, aware robot; action depend but on memory, association, and behavior learned, for who can will the next surprise thought that become? Good learn, then good man.

“But, consciousness seem above, beyond all understand. Many try dissect it, confine it, reduce to other thing, but it remain intractable. I did learn nonlocal reality quantum mechanics along way of study, even investigate awareness itself, that overlooked, unnoted ‘I’ that only see contents of mind, but itself not be content of anything, for it be not object. Is more like water in stream where thought swim. It seem we ARE awareness, but not too much note sea in which we see. Baffling magic.

“Now, ‘I’ not body. ‘I’ not thought, so what be ‘I’? ‘I’ be not object; seem like witness that far from stage of play in mind. Hard to know. ‘I’ am universal subject? I am Cosmos?”

“Consciousness might be agent which focus spread out quantum wave of existence, but I exceed quantum physic realm, all become fuzzy there;

have nowhere else go, so, go back to intrinsic vision of mysticism, meditation; learn that maybe awareness be intrinsic path to ultimate info from inside, some spiritual gaseous state, and that outside reality be extrinsic path, seem at limit, for same info from out there, some frozen matter state. Very confuse, so I make guess: Consciousness always associate with brain. Brain problem affect consciousness. So then figure consciousness brain higher part should be.

“Sorry, but must go, do work; have new job; work night and day for some time, but still teach some class. This homework do: notice consciousness; look into it; find what is.”

Towards sunrise, the ToeQuestors were urged to come up to the landing deck for a farewell ceremony. There were some puddles up there, even though there was not a cloud in the sky. And, indeed, as they'd assumed, there was nothing but ocean all around them and all the way out to the orange and circular horizon. They all noted some brand new cruiser boats on deck.

“We get many new equipment now,” explained a ninja.

“Can we have a look at them?” asked Fredrick.

“Sure, after ceremony over, we plan serve farewell breakfast in there.”

The ninjas all stood at attention, as a flag with TOE, TOO, and TOT written on it was lowered. The ToeQuestors were presented with the flag and were also each given a carrier style waterproof jacket. Some words came out of a loud speaker, that in summary, wished the ToeQuestors well in their TOE quest, and that the long term future of the word now rested on their shoulders.

The ToeQuestors sat down to breakfast in the boats, watching the sun rise from the ancient falling off edge of the world. A waiter hovered about, going from boat to boat, refilling their drinks, adding to their meals, and so on. They noticed during breakfast that the ocean seemed to be rising, but perhaps this was only an optical effect of the tropical dawn. But then, after concentrating on breakfast and finishing, they noted that the water was almost up to the top deck level. They looked around and saw no one left but the waiter, whose shoes were beginning to get wet from the ocean water now running all over over the deck.

“Waiter,” called out Fredrick, “you'd better tell the Captain or the Admiral or the Commander, whatever he's called, that his boat is sinking.”

“I am Captain Commander Admiral, Ninth Degree Grand Master of the Pacific Fleet.”

“But the water...” said Austin.

“Everything fine,” answered the one formerly known as the ‘waiter’.

Rascal sent a fax to Austin whose boat was only ten feet away, saying, ‘aircraft carriers don't submerge, do they?’

Austin sent a fax back, saying, ‘No, but they do now.’”

“What’s the framework here, and where is it disappearing to?” Fredrick asked of the Commander.

“You run boat rest of way; follow heading writ there; different one each of you. Bon voyage. Need you alone time with self after many crowd. Only thousand mile to TOE place; be well; write postcard; be dry with jacket; sail forth. See you.”

The water was up to the Commander’s knees now and the carrier was completely underwater but for its bridge tower.

“Thanks for your hospitality,” said Fredrick. “Where’s your ship going?” The water was up to the Commander’s waist now and the ToeQuestors’ cruise boats had begun to float on their own.

“We submerge in day like submarine for be secure or when not much happen. Give you surprise boat excitement as gift, plus it more secure way. I go down with ship, swim to bridge hatch. Be sure use suntan oil provide or stay canopy. Save world. Bye. So long. Fare thee well. Au revoir. Bon jour. Toot-a-loo. Nice know you. Have enjoy. Be well. Gonesville.”

The ToeQuestors Austin, Rascal, Brad Pitt, Fredrick, and Profpat all waved goodbye and headed off together, eventually following their differing headings off into their slightly diverging directions. Brad Pitt asked for direction and a script, but found out that he’d have to wing it through real life now.

The ocean spray was exhilarating and cooling throughout the day, and the cruisers really moved along, throbbing with power, but, at the end of the day, the tropical sun plummeted like a ten trillion pound stone. The moon wasn’t up yet, and so they were all soon enveloped by the absence of light, and thus were absorbed into the overwhelming nothingness of the darkest night that they had ever known since looking for a black cat in a coal bin in a dark basement during a power outage.

*Above them, fires burned the stars away;
Below them, the Earth turned under their feet;
Within them, unworded dreams haunted their souls;
Around them, night poured blackness on the waves.*

Still excited, their dopamine systems running wild, they strove on, each on their own course, stopping often to view the stars as they’d never ever seen them before.

All was so very quiet when they paused to star gaze. Starlight stabbed the utter darkness of night, causing many new ideas to wink and form in their joined minds as sparkling thoughts lit from the universal flame, as all the while the Cosmos played rhythm to their merged and singing souls; for, out there, deep in the vast darkroom of the seemingly endless

void, came the star light from which the human race had flashed into being. Like a prismatic lens, human evolution via natural selection had strained the white lights of the 'eternity' of the stars into the amazing rainbows of their minds and selves. These stars were the fires of home, beckoning the ToeQuestors toward the mysteries of the unknown.

Rascal sent out a fax, enjoying posting over the ocean, *"We are magic lanterns shining in the field of space."*

An answer came back: *"From the light that never dies!"*

Then, *"We are the smile of being, the joy of the universe's creation."*

And, *"In us the Cosmos itself has come alive. It has reached consciousness from its primordial matter and energy."*

"The backbone of the Milky Way braces the sky."

"We are on some far out and distant spiral arm."

"We have arrived! We are life from stardust!"

"But we live but for but one of eternity's heartbeats."

"We owe all that we are to time, death, and the stars. Truly from the stars cometh our help. Stars are the creators of matter; this is why they shine."

"The stars' light is the origin of our being, the source of our matter, energy, everything."

"Permanent, reassuring, unquenchable; it's our speechless soul, our self-winding mainspring."

"Blake wrote, 'In what far and fiery depths of space burnt the fire of your spirit? In what distant star was born the gleam in your eye?'"

"Energy and matter are interrelated. The void pulsates in an endless sequence, for a field is present throughout space immense, out of which all particles must condense, occurring where the field's extremely intense."

"Atoms are energy bundles. They are knots in the fabric of space. Yet, matter defines the structure of space."

"Again, the Yin is in the Yang, and vice versa!"

"I had a theory once: perhaps from out of nothing came the paired pluses and minuses of energy. The positive energy became matter, while the negative matter became gravity, negative because it takes a force, positive energy, to hold objects apart which are attracted by the negative force of gravity. So, when recombined, all energies still add up to nothing."

"That's ingenious. So, from nothing was written our account! And back to nothing we will still have to amount! Ah, but in between those two parentheses, the pluses rain on us from Heaven's fount!"

"The stars remain, for now, as Eternity's love-lamps, representing our good works and deeds, which even the fathomless night cannot quench. Perhaps one day, at the end of forever, the stars too will die and grow cold when time conquers all; but, as long as they live, they will shine and radi-

ate the hues that paint the colors of our ashes reborn again on the phoenix wings of time.”

“I thank the ninjas for this boating experience; I was a little worried at first.”

“Hear, hear!” they all replied. And finally,

*Look at the stars in the depths of the night;
Hold their flames in your mind, keeping them bright.
Their power flows, energizing you from
The Eternal Charger; you see the light!*

*Soul to soul, stars said to me, ‘I’m the light,
Thy spirit’s sight, a beauty bold and bright,
An inspiration come from darkest night,
A newborn star aglow with insight.’*

*From heaven’s stars came my dust eterne;
Time’s seas nurtured thee and thine in turn.
From time, death, and dust I thus became,
And by this, thus, and that I must return.*

*From that black and endless eternal deep,
Nature’s fertile soil woke me out of sleep,
Saw me bud, flower, leaf, strive, and die;
Then lays me back to rest, my soul to keep.*

*Oh thee, of thine, whence came this life of mine?
I wish to thank thee for this living wine.
Oh Nature, Father Time, Guiding Star,
Thanks for throwing me this earthly lifeline.*

*Life is a web of whos, whys, whats, and hows
Stretched in time between eternal boughs.
Gossamer threads hold the beads that glisten,
Each minute a sequence of instant nows.*

“Hey, Austin,” faxed Rascal, “Where are you from?”

“Zip 12570.”

“Wow, I’m at 12569. We’re neighbors; we live next door to each other and we never even knew it.”

“I’ll be darned, Rascal; I thought I saw you once when you out were picking up your snail mail, and maybe another time when you were riding your bike really fast.”



(Austin's house)

(Town boundary)

(Rascal's house)

The ancient travelers of the sky, among them Orion, Leo, and Gemini, smiled down at the ToeQuestors who had bravely stared death in the face, those who were now in the arms of Death's fair brother, sleep, calm and secure in his embrace. Good thoughts filled their dreams.

Other ancient travelers had probably hoped that among the many lights that danced in the sky that some oasis in space awaited them somewhere out there, a world where flowers bloomed and fountains sprayed, a paradise called Earth to glorify, a world of boundless beauty and grace that had no equal, anytime or anyplace.

Well, the sky is our father, nature our mother, and we the progeny, born from the conception of Heaven on Earth, the be all and the end all, for Earth IS actually the perfect place, a world balanced by sadness and smile, life and death, night and day, sun and flood, give and take, truth and doubt, plenty and drought, good and evil, for, you can't have the one without the other, a world in which everything works and has a role, be it bacteria or decay; and, therefore, Earth, just the way it is, is truly the best of all possible worlds. How else could it be? We exist, and so the universe is favorable for us here, in the general sense. In the specifics of rain or shine, we are on our own. The sky cannot give, at the same time, rain to the farmer's crops and sun to the wedding across the street. The Earth seems rare, as many stars could not sustain us. Even in our own solar system, the other planets boil or gas away as useless wastelands.

Fredrick awoke before dawn, surprised at what looked like the searchlight of a large ship on the horizon, and almost sent out a fax, but it was the third brightest light of the sky, Venus, rising, the Goddess of love, passion, and compassion. The moon rose, too, near her.

Rascal lay back, and looked at the conjunction of the moon with Venus. He sent out a fax, "I can hear them speaking, and they each other, too, for they are unusually close. Listen."

The moon, representing cold chaste reason, said to Venus, with logic cool “Quench thy inner fire, fool, lest it destroy us, and all the heavens along with it.”

Venus, a passionate lady, answered, “I only know WHAT I feel, not WHY! So, I must be the one to rule!”

“Don’t confuse me with feelings,” said the moon.

“And don’t you confuse me with facts,” said Venus.

“I guess we can’t always understand each other,” the moon finally admitted after a long pause, having reasoned it out. You have feelings that I could never understand. I have reasons that you could never feel. Let us try our best to temper each other, and then let’s take it from there.”

“Otherwise, some of your decisions would be heartless,” said Venus.

“And sometimes your actions will be illogical,” answered the moon.

“But I’ll still do WHAT I feel is right,” said Venus, “and sometimes you can tell me WHY, although it may not always matter.”

“OK,” said the moon, “we’ll try to work together. Peace to you. Perhaps I am beginning to understand this thing called feeling. Perhaps, emotions do play a large role in the making of decisions.”

Venus’s fiery lover, the sun, soon rose, ever near to her, while the ToeQuestors down below brought out some eggs, bacon, and sausage from their fridges, and had breakfast, their vigor renewed, the quest continuing ever onward toward Everything that ever was and may be.

*Life’s a continual cosmic energy dance,
From some ultimate underlying happenstance.
We’re immersed in matter’s universal rhythm;
Therefore, we must all participate in the dance.*

*Purest moonlight fell into the wrong hand,
As Evil swirled ‘round, a drifting black sand
That drank the silvery beam from the cup,
Till the moon shone no more across the land.*

*So the primrose drank not of the moon’s well,
Until the sun, rising from earthly hell,
Exposed evil, outshone it, and sent it
To caves and under rocks, where shadows dwell.*

The ToeQuestors were out in the Pacific somewhere, on the last leg of their journey. The second day’s caress of twilight unto the night was somewhat more somber for them, for they reviewed the CMBR trip’s intercepted prophecy of the most probable future, a tale encrypted in biblical language, entitled:

THE END OF THE WORLD ENVISIONED

*The Asphodel sustains the Dis dwellers,
Where they rest beyond that fatal river—
There the wretched shades drink forgetfulness,
And to oblivion sink without distress.*

*Fireweed grows from Hell's sulfurous embers,
As does Purple Loosestrife—dead men's fingers;
But wildflower air revives the dead—and then
Those happy souls can thrive on Earth again.*

Charon was withered, wan, and skeletal, although eternally grateful for his immortal life and steady job of ferrying the dead across the river Styx in their transition from life to death. As Earth was the only planet he'd come across with such promising higher life forms, he had become rather fond of its inhabitants, even though he saw only the worst of them; but even from that he could extrapolate to the qualities of the best.

Charon did his job well, professionally, although it was ever so dreary with the darkness of wasted lives and the grim and gloomy skies, for his surroundings always had that same gray and leaden look and feel. He ferried on, though, for his life was precious to him.

The soon-to-be really really dead never said much, for what what there to tell after a empty life that had now turned to regret; so, Charon did not prompt them, for this was not the thing to do at the time of their passing, and so he was always most courteous and kind to them all, even to the most evil of the darkest, doing his job well as well as he could. It was not that Charon was afraid that his undersized master of the underworld, Pluto, might be watching, but that he had the extreme clarity to duly serve the task at hand, a testament to his character.

Charon had been much alarmed lately, what with the increased numbers of the hellish souls-to-be climbing into the millions in such a short time, but he had been through this kind of rush before, with the doomed and damned of many other planets that had been consumed by their suns or had undergone other such catastrophes. He just used larger boats and took his time, for he had all of Eternity. Of course, Charon could and did feel deep sadness, but he didn't show it outwardly, even when the numbers from Earth increased a thousand-fold again.

A few of the now billions of depressed Earthling souls had enough energy left to mumble a few words, and so he was able to glean from them the latest happenings on Earth. In 2021, the predicted exponential surge of melting ice from global warming had quickly inundated all of the coastal cities, many of them large centers of population and commerce. Everyone

who could make it had to retreat inland, creating the largest mass exodus in history. Millions died.

As the heat rose to unbearable levels, many had begun living in their basements, as the Earth's infrastructure began its collapse. Millions eventually headed north towards Canada and Siberia, but had to retreat in a few years when the ice caps totally melted and formed the great Ocean of the North. Most did not make it. No one but the ignored physicist mathematicians had predicted that the end could come into sight so quickly.

Then came the dreaded polar shift that made global warming seem but a small note, compared to this new and Darker Symphony.

The Earth was thrashed with storms the likes of which it had never seen. Electricity was completely out all over the world, but for a few nuclear powered areas, that didn't last. No one could drive very far, even on their last tank of gas, for the roads had melted, along with the tires of the vehicles, and if the vehicles paused, they'd find themselves mired in the meltdown of the asphalt.

Food would no longer grow very well, even in once lush gardens, in the amounts that were needed, and as the heat rose into the 140s plant growth ceased altogether, although a new but rare and expensive form of food pill extended life for some of the rich for a short while.

Charon, had, of course, seen much of this kind of thing before, from the other solar systems and galaxies on which life had formed, but Earthlings seemed to have a special charm and hope above and beyond the other alien races; so he rowed and ferried and deposited them on the far shore, his job and life forever continuing in a place with no color, no joy, and no future—on the shore of the land on the edge of oblivion.

Charon had depths of compassion, but many of his passengers might have thought him stoic, although they were mostly beyond the capability. A sign on the opposite shore said,

Abandon Hope All Ye Who Enter Here

Billions more arrived in the gray land all too soon, and Charon learned that either madness or desperation on Earth had caused a nuclear winter all over the planet, bringing on a deep freeze that few could escape. Perhaps they were trying to combat the ultimate heat, which would have been but a cool breeze in Hell. The polar shift had greatly added to the depth of the freeze.

A few of Charon's still speaking but chilled customers even expressed a longing for the warmth of Hades. Charon, stalwart and reliable, rowed on steadily, steeling himself to the misery.

Finally the arriving masses slowed and dwindled to a few dribs and drabs over a few years and then there was no one for several years.

A lone man then appeared on the shore near the ferry dock and Charon approached the man, something he had never done before, for the man looked very lively. They had a long and hearty talk, for the man was animated and not at all like any of the other wretched souls.

“How is it,” inquired Charon, “that you are full of life and seem to be a good man, but have been sent here?”

“I am not a bad person in any way,” the man replied. Actually, I just spent some time in Heaven. I found out that my sweetheart was sent to you for she was a suicide and so was destined here; however, I had promised to be with her forever, so I chose this place over Heaven out of my love for her in the promise I made.”

“Extraordinary,” exclaimed Charon. “I knew the Earth had a few good men and women; I’ve not seen very many clues of that elsewhere in the universe. Did you colonize space? Will your species continue and flourish after your Earth bids farewell?”

“I’m afraid not,” replied the man, for too many needless wars intervened and this greatly delayed our space program.”

“A shame,” said Charon, “but is there any hope left on Earth, I mean, are there any others about?”

“I am the last,” answered the man answered slowly.

The first tear of Charon’s long life rolled down his cheek. Nothing had ever made him cry before: nothing had ever made him weep.

(Expanded from Lord Dunsany’s brief sketch)

The yachting ToeQuestors cheerfully sighted land on the morning of the third day, a string of eight large islands, among hundreds of little ones strewn about. They were once called the Sandwich Islands, and had been populated long ago by wind, wave, and wings.



Rascal's heading took him past the largest and still growing island, called the Big Isle, passing to the north of it, this island being the largest mountain on earth as measured from the ocean floor. He noted the two gargantuan, but ever gentle, volcanoes, called Mauna Loa and Kilauea, and swept on past six more islands.



Profpat's route took him to the surfer's paradise on the venerated north shore of the most populated island that was known as 'The Gathering Place'. The waves there were of the most fearsome intensity ever to break across a coral reef. He roared ashore on one of the larger swells and was quickly surrounded by well-tanned, three-looped string-bikini girls. He got out and kissed the sand.

Fredrick's course took him south around The Big Island and onward past four more, during which he noted the whales frolicking and spawning and making large waves. He landed on the sixth island, next to an extinct volcano whose profile was well known. Therein lay the home of Pele, the fire god, his tears left behind as diamonds in the crater.

Austin's path curved around in between the first five islands.

Graybeard passed a large bay on the sixth, noting a memorial in which 1500 sailors lay entombed.



Rascal sent out a fax: “What was that gigantic monolithic volcanic wonder that I passed as first land?”

“That was Hawaii,” answered Profpat. “We all passed it.”

“Guess we’re really not going to Hawaii,” sighed Rascal.

“Rascal,” faxed Austin, “You may still go to Hawaii. The state of Hawaii is an archipelago of eight main islands, the largest of which is called Hawaii, on which many live near the ocean, about the volcanoes’ bases, but it’s not highly populated. It, like the main island, Oahu, is a county of Hawaii, as are the others: Kahoolawe, once a military bombing range, Lanai, a large Dole pineapple plantation, Maui, another up and coming tourist paradise, home of the Haleakala volcano, Molokai, once a leper colony, Oahu, what people think of as ‘Hawaii’, Kauai, a quiet honeymoon retreat where ‘South Pacific’ was filmed in the 50’s, and, finally, Ni-i-hau, a privately owned and forbidden mystery island that has been

closed to outsiders for centuries, also known as the 'Forgotten Island', and it is even frequently omitted on tourist maps."

"Uh, oh," answered Rascal, "I'm destined for Niihau."

"Good luck getting in there!" advised Austin.



Profpat carried on with the girls for quite awhile, one of whom took him aside into some bushes, and gave him many kisses, she saying, "Don't waste your kisses on the sand," and then noted, "I must double check. What is your name?"

"I am, um, hubba-bubba, that was good, um, some kind of Professor of something."

"Named?"

"Accounting."

"You are Professor Accounting?"

"No, I am Pat—Profpat."

"Good. I read your exploits; you're my hero! Here is a map to the TOE Research Center. You'll like it; it has been greatly upgraded and renovated. Please read and destroy the map now."

“OK, got it,” said Profpat, as the map went up in smoke, along with a cigarette.

“Oh, Prof, King of Intertwined Strings that I adore, kiss me a few good-byes, for now. I shall see you again.”

“Here’s a copy of my new book, ‘A Farewell to Arms’. It’s all about future warfare being conducted only by robots.”

“Prof, my love, give me your arms already!”

Profpat kissed her about a thousand times and then floated off on his opiate endorphins to rent a Suzuki motorcycle at a roadside hut, after quaffing a few liquid tropical refreshments. He headed south through the very center of the island, towards the misty Koolau mountain range.



Fredrick came ashore at Waikiki Beach, an Egyptian lady welcoming lady hailing him as the King of the Pyramids, her actions akin to Profpat’s lady. He observed the TOE map, burned it, gave her a copy of his new book, ‘Searching for a Tripodomus or a Pentasaur or a Sexagon Because the Eyeclops Has No Depth Perception’, and had a breakfast of duck eggs, bacon, and toast, at Smorgy’s, sitting outside with the birds

that pecked all around at every fallen crumb. If ever the twain of the East met West, and even overlapped it, Oahu was the place.

Fredrick explored Honolulu a bit and then passed through The International Market Place, a bazaar that was pretty much built into the trees and large plants. Overwhelmed by the scents, sights, and the friendliness of the people that was so lacking in other countries, Fredrick sat down on a bench and talked to everyone, and even to a chatty bird for a while, then rented a Bridgestone motorcycle and drove off along the Ali Wai canal, and headed north towards the mysterious Manoa Valley.



Austin landed on the eastern shore, rented a Honda motorcycle, and headed up toward the Pali Lookout, stopping at the old swimming hole, and dove from the cliffs into the base of a waterfall, and then continued on, refreshed.



Graybeard landed near a hotel, dove into the surf, and surfaced in the hotel lagoon. He was greeted by the Goddess of Love and Passion Fruit, who looked a lot like a mermaid he'd once known in Australia. She hailed him as the Champion of Evolution, Electrical Master, and the Greatest Pirate of the Sea. She embraced him a hundred times over and under. Graybeard read the map, roasted it, gave her a copy of his new book, 'The Joy of Underwater Creatures', and then ordered drinks for them, resting and surveying the scene, and then was off to rent a Kawasaki motorcycle.

Rascal, sighting Niihau, passed by some patrol boats that seemed not at all alarmed, and docked on the forbidden shore, and was soon met by a sweet and loving Hari Khrisna looking girl who hugged him many times over in every way, in every dimension.

"Would you like to attend our feast?" she asked of Rascal.

"Be there lobsters?"

"No, just parsley and cole slaw."

"No thanks."

"Rascal, Master of Many Dimensions, you're supposed to ask me for a map."

"Oh, do you have a map?"

“Yes, this is the location of the TOE Center on Oahu, where you will go later if you get out of here alive; ha, but no ha. Please memorize and burn. Follow me.”



She showed him a path and then remained behind. He gave her a copy of his new book, ‘Heat, the Seventh Dimension’. Rascal, a bit apprehensive, saw fifty heavily armed guards blocking the road ahead, but, as he neared, they parted, bowed their heads, and melted away into the forest. “What the Yin of the Yang!” he exclaimed, stifling a Yaun.



He walked toward a big complex of oriental structures, quickly turning around, sensing someone. A thousand Buddhist monks were trailing ten feet behind him. He continued on, smiling, the Buddhists forming in a square in front of what looked to be an ancient temple. A wind arose from nowhere and many tree blossoms suddenly began falling, and Rascal could hear them breaking the air and softly landing on the ground. The doors of the temple magically opened for him and he entered a long hallway, as doves abruptly flapped and flew.



Rascal strode on, and passed through the door at the end of the corridor, a dragon on a wall pointing the way. He moved along, observing the Wall of the Nine Degrees of Dragons, and then turned the corner, stunned by the haunting beauty of the vision before him.

“Holy Mother of all Radiance!” He exclaimed.

Rascal entered the glowing edifice. His now Tenth Degree Grand Master sat at a desk, typing into a computer, and said, even before looking up, “Hail to thee, Rascal, Discoverer of Three Additional Dimensions, and Saviour of the Existing Three!”

“Hail, Master of the Dark Moon in the Bright Light of a New Age.”

“Thank you. Welcome to the new Forbidden City. Did you see anyone behind you on your way walking in?”

“That was a good one, Master. They almost pulled it off.”

“Those monks can walk on rice paper, not even making a tear or a wrinkle, and they can sense all kinds of surveillance beams. They’ve volunteered for our new antiterrorism campaign. Sometimes war is the only road to peace. Who would suspect a monk as an operative, even if they did detect him or her?”



“And by then it would be too late. So how are you, Master?”

“Well, fine, but here I sit, Rascal, at the edge of the Western world, in the place called ‘The Last Resort’, cleansing the messes made from mankind’s evil thoughts. Some of the governments have thanked ‘us’, as best they could, referring to ‘whoever was responsible’, but usually adding, ‘but these kinds of things should be done within the structure of the law’.”

“The governments had to say that last part, Master, and yes, it’s sad, the evil, and the moral dilemma of it all, but you can, must cleanse it, given some time. There seems to be no outside help.”

“True, the Outside or the Heretobefore is long gone, if it ever was, and yes, I can do, for we ninjas do not report to a government; however, nor does the Conspiracy or Terrorism, plus, it would be evil as well to just sit around and tolerate it; but yours is really the larger task, Rascal—the understanding and utilization of the TOE, if need be, to forestall the dark prophecy of the Global Warming Greenhouse Effect. So, if the TOE Center should ever come into danger, bring them all here.”

“It’s daunting to fully understand the real TOE and close to daringly foolish to use it to fully alter a lower level of reality. Everything is intertwined.”

“Well, Rascal, if you see over the years that worse is coming to worse and then to worser and worstest, then perhaps you TOE fellows might bypass the CMBR antenna altogether and fiddle with the DNA matrix itself.”

“Only if we have to, to save the world from utter extinction.”

“Good, but you may have to. The long sought after Northwest Passage has just opened up due to melting ice, so it is a fable no more.”

“Only a few decades left...”

“Or less. Methane is rising from Siberia.”

“Sad, but true.”

“Now, Mr. Rascal Puff, the time has come to give you a proper tribute.”

The room quickly filled and fluttered with varicolored butterflies of many varieties. Then Length, Width, and Depth appeared on stage, and bowed, along with the Grand Master, and then swirled and twirled on into Gravity, Electricity, and Magnetism, and disappeared, replaced by a great radiating warmth of gleams, glints, and sparkles, perhaps representing the seventh dimension of Heaven.



“Thank you, sir, and each of you. I am humbled.” said Rascal.

“It is you that we thank,” answered the Master. “Travel in peace, and praise be to the TOE.”

Rascal came out to a cheering crowd of monks, and said some soft and gentle words to them, and was soon off in his boat for a short trip to Oahu, landing near the magic shores of Hanalei, and renting a big Harley motorcycle.

Fredrick veered onto the H1 Freeway, got off near Fort Shafter, and, finding the jump, soared through the air and on up to the secret mountaintop TOE Center to analyze and discover all that was.

Graybeard followed, climbing the steep path, flying the gap, and disappearing into the bulk of the great upheaval to discern the further workings of reality.



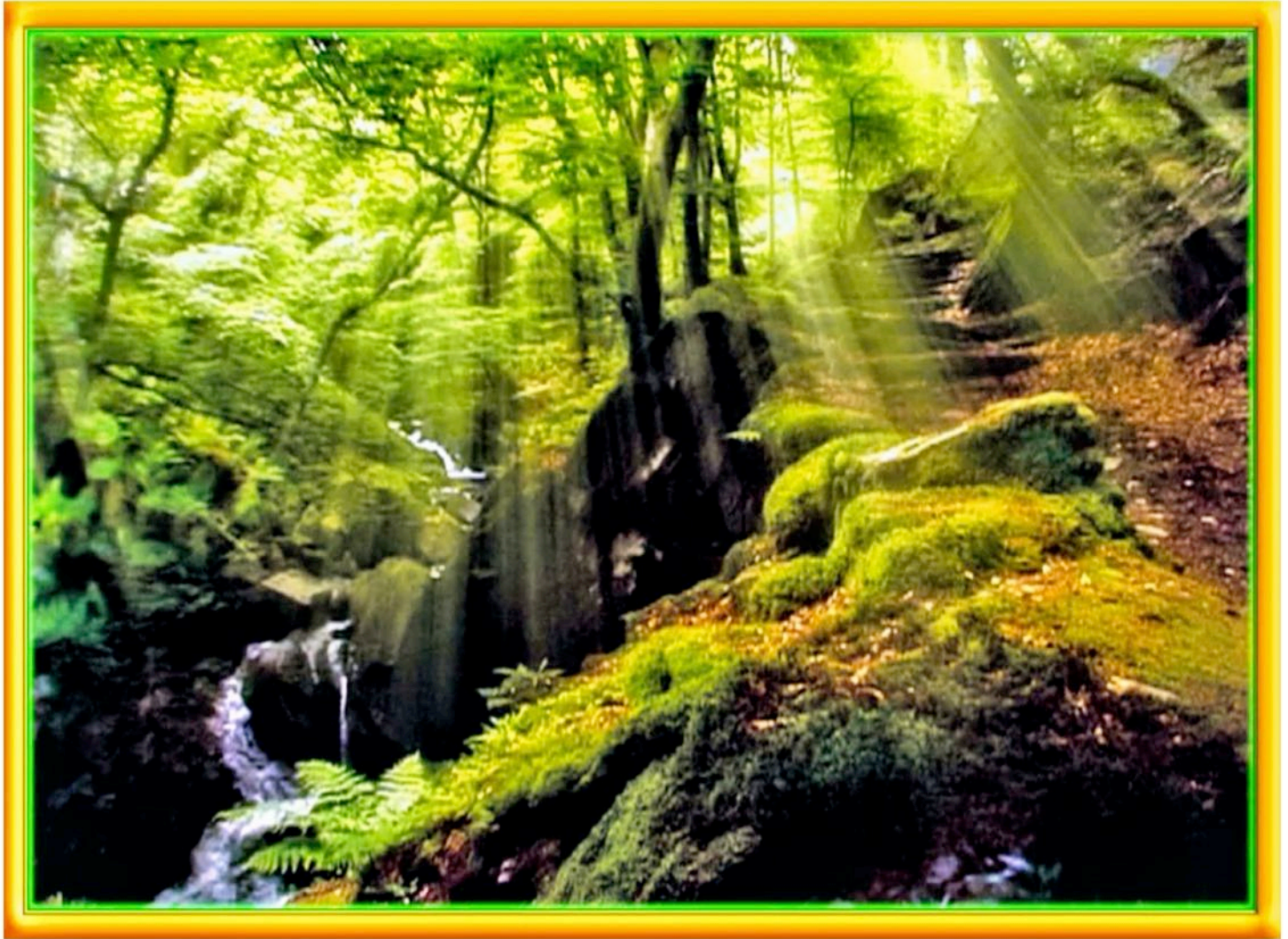
Profpat mounted the gravity-impaired hill of hills, ascending ever upward on the inclination toward the peak of the tree of knowledge.

Austin powered up the well known path of thirty years ago, with Passion, going home at last to where his TOE research had begun.

Michael energized from the skies, alighting at the summit.

A few others arrived, as well, their motorcycles churning the dust into a fog that only wind and radiance could disperse.

Rascal Puff, the last of the Hell's Angels, then broached the breach, and thundered upward and ever onward as the road rose up to meet him.



Nobody Nowhere appeared from the mist, alias Raven Knight, and said, “Your rooms are ready; we have all new equipment. We’ll work here, on and off, as the risk of exposure is much less. Pick a home for your families or friends, all expenses paid. Feel free to roam the islands, but stay alert and employ your new skills. Hear what makes little sound; see what isn’t all there; in fact, sense all emanations. The world is still very much interested in the TOE. We’ve left Austin’s overlook as it was 30 years ago, but have added a railing around it, for we wouldn’t want the ground to rise up to meet you. Also, here’s a copy of my new book, ‘From Here to Maternity: The Conception of the Universe’.”

“Who could conceive of that?” asked Profpat.

“Lady Yin and Father Yang.”

“And what were they doing at the time?”

“Meshing around with their gears, making little dots.”

“And where did they come from?” asked Fredrick.

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“Mother Tao and Father Oat.”

“Oat is Tao backwards, Nobody, you can’t fool me,” commented Graybeard.

“Reality runs backwards and forwards, with us at the cusp.”

Graybeard replied, “I’ll drink to Anti-matter and Uncle Matter!”

“Cheers, everyone. Wine and cheese are on the table.”

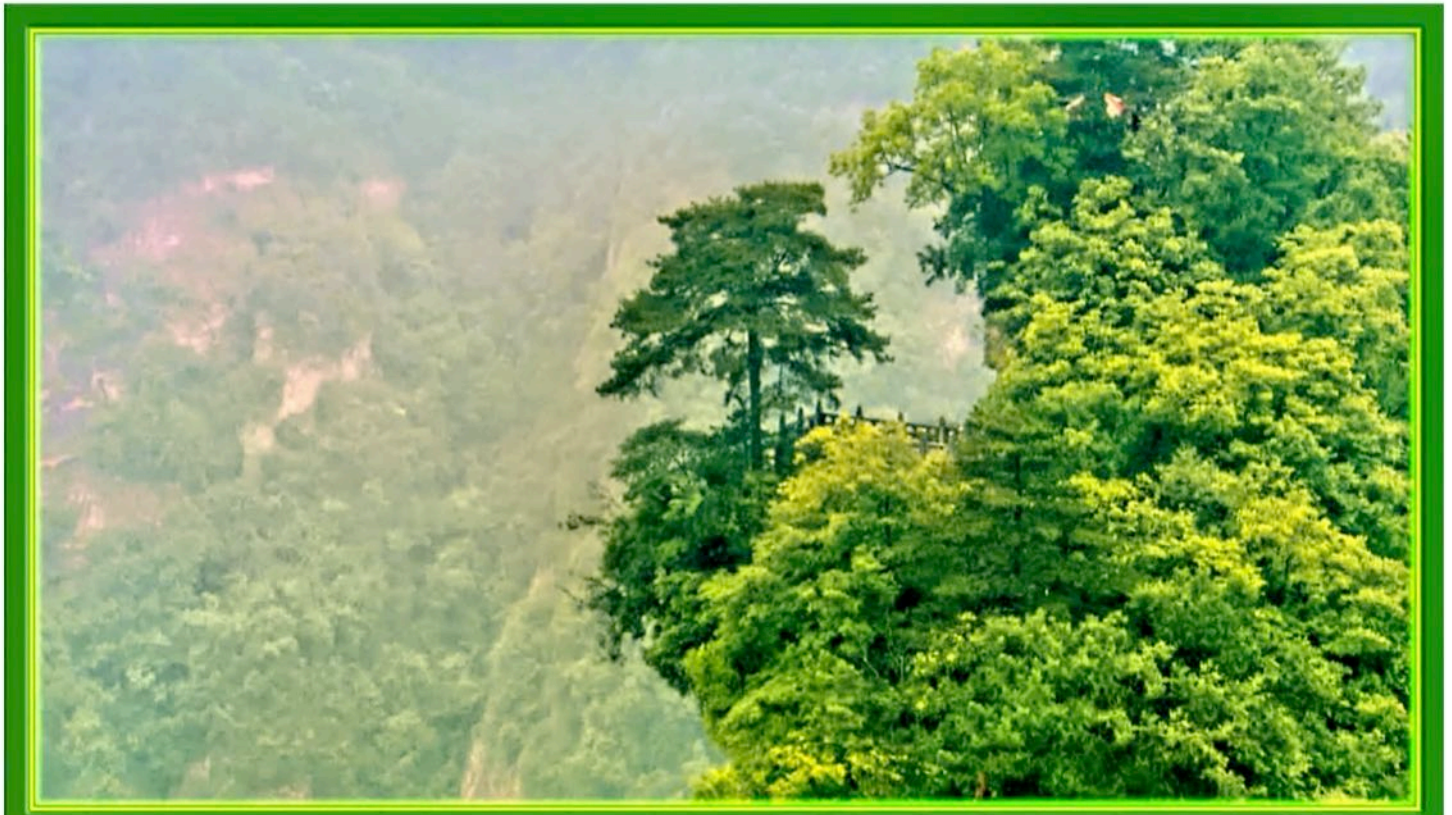
“Let us all raise our cusps,” toasted Graybeard. “To Saving the World!”

“That is our bond and destiny,” added Nobody, getting serious again.

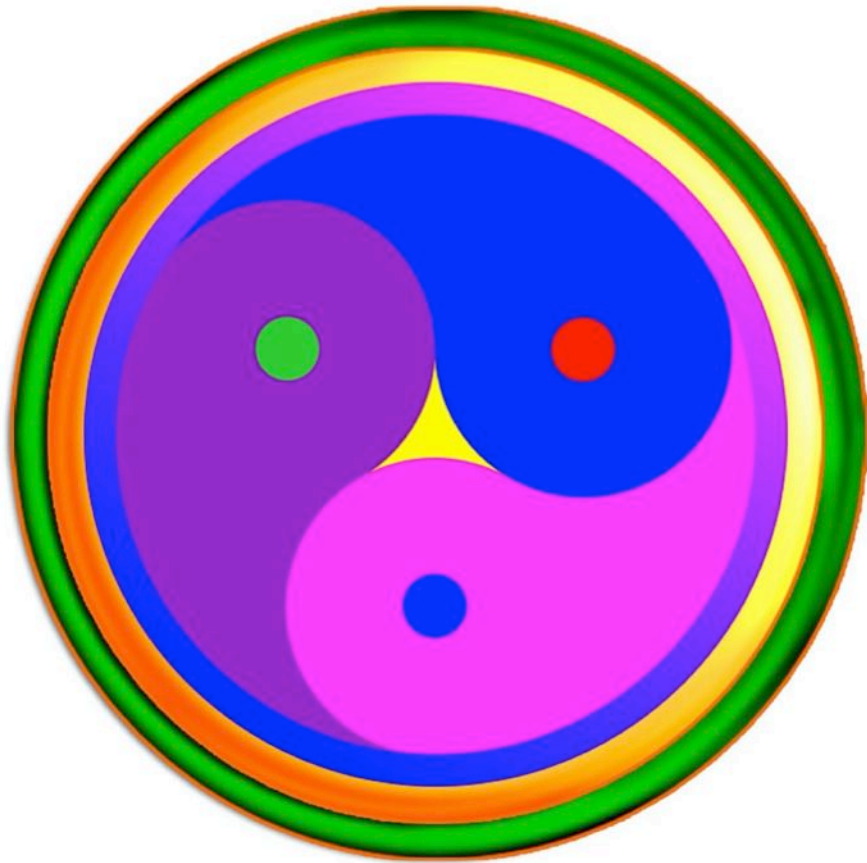
“The world needs us.”

“Are we nearing the end of the story?” Someone posted.

“Yes, and no, but maybe. Welcome, ToeQuestors, to the present day. The greatest of all quests soon begins, for we are now the butterflies at the edge of forever.”



The Beginnings
of ToeQuest



(Yin, Yang, and Yaun)

Being

Nothingness

Our parentheses in eternity
Flashes as a twinkling, but's extended
By time into a phantasmic life dream
That's existent the same as if it were.

A life dream's like a rainbow, not really there,
A false phenomenon become tangible
Through its being, the true true of the faux true,
Molding a genuine significance.

Life's indeterminate or not, the same
Being brought by the virtual as the true,
The mechanics being as incidental
As why "primary color" chose its waves.

Life's here, like a virtual particle
Born this side of an event horizon
Of a Black Hole, realized by its presence
In the realm of what's been radiated.

There is no difference of what makes none;
Realism is now playing, the living film:
A reality show in the theater
Of the mind's eye, with the 'I' observing.

About Time

Eons

Eras

Eras

Periods

A moment contains eternal reward—
 Both past and future are rolled thereinward;
 Time never passes—it stays as it is;
 Still, it is ceaselessly moving onward.

It's all right that I'm not young anymore—
 I still live as much as I did before:
 Morn, noon, and evening are each of a charm;
 They all have enchanting paths to explore.

Minutes, hours, and days sequence the whole.
 Month after month seasons the year all tolled.
 Youth, prime, and old-age actualize this life.
 Generations bridge the centuries old.

Memory's ideas recall the last heard tone,
 Sensation savors what is presently known,
 Imagination anticipates coming sounds
 The delight is such that none could produce alone.

As of now I hold reality's attention—
 This is the time of my present comprehension!
 What is past exists only in my memory,
 The future only in my imagination.

Your memory holds, was, and is to be,
 The vision enclosing eternity—
 All that is, all that was—entirety;
 Yet, it ever threads the now, instantly.

— Chapter 12 —
In the Many Worlds Pub

At the TOE Center, Nobody Nowhere appeared in the pub, ordering an empty cup of evanescent tea. It had been a good day: The new NNNNN “Theory of Nothing” thread had begun anew, in a more focused way, replacing the former one that had begun to weigh a TON. Michael materialized beside him, ordering Turkish coffee, noting,

COFFEE INVENTED

*Coffee plants were in the desert first seen,
By a starving outcast who ate the bean,
And found it bitter, hard, so, boiled some, tart,
Finding that the water was the better part;*

COFFEE RESENTED

*Such, from asylum, he returned home, quaint,
And for his coffee was declared a saint,
Though its drinkers were despised by clerics:
The partakers dallied over their cups!*

Michael’s new assignment was in Turkey, where Thanksgiving was invented, and which, luckily, was not next to Hungary. Profpat was dancing on the tables to a song about the good old days and drinking a Singapore Sling.

Neutralino enjoined order in the threads, as well as a quenching goblet mix of various molecules that easily slid all around each other: water, the elixir of life. Graybeard downed a pint of ale made by mermaids in Atlantis.

Michelle was on hand, this being her gathering, and assured that all were satisfied, while relating tales of the ToeQuestors who had come and gone before.

Covis had a glass of ever evolving wine and read the TOE News, which reported: Somewhere, a monk went down to the sacred pool to meditate, as always; but, upon this occasion a house containing Al Queda’s number two man suddenly blew up.

Robert came in and gave everyone a new allowance of 200 private messages. MJA ordered a drink at random, knowing that there was no difference among any of them, all of them being equal. A toast was proposed by Austin: “To Nothing in particular!”

THE BIRD OF TIME

*Fleeting Time vanishes, e'er the winged prize
That flies in a perpetual sunrise.
With the breath of eternity on its lips,
Time's Origin is ALL that never dies.*

Rascal entered, looking happy, but covered with dust and battle stains. They all then heard his story as he imbibed some shimmering expanding liquid'

A secure-looking, unsecured TOE web-site had been set up to lure certain Conspiratorial hackers associated with some autonomous centers around the world that had thereby survived the assault of the Ninja Empire. They were after the TOE, their last hope. Tracers attached to the web data had emitted a signal that pointed to a location just outside Washington, DC, not far from the Langley CIA headquarters.

Strike teams, whose only job was to be ever ready, immediately lifted off. Rascal, living in Virginia, bid her farewell, and lifted off, as well, as the Oversight for the mission. Upon landing, he ordered a missile through the front door, and then entered what turned out to be the seven levels of Hell. They fought their way through fierce resistance, melting down six closed bulkheads, in turn, finally arriving at the seventh, a wall of ice seven feet thick.

Finally, after hours of torching the ice that somehow continuously re-froze, they found a clone of Hitler sitting on a throne, as well as one of Napoleon crowning himself; evil reincarnated. Rascal quickly dispatched them both, left the center with a harvest of material, reported, 'Elvis has left the building', and called in an air strike.



"What is really out there, I suppose,
are just "waves" and "fields"."



1. Why?

All the stars roll by for me to classify—
Science more and more my life does simplify;
But I have one final question left to ask:
“Why in the world was I born to live and die?”



— Chapter 13 — The Dragon's Tail

Years passed. The Ninja Empire had come to operate covertly alongside some of the world's governments, and, although the pursuit of terrorists seemed to be never ending, there were still many various and glorious triumphs.

What was it that was the very root of all evil? It was hard to pin down, as evidenced by a ToeQuest thread on that question, yet, it existed, and continued to sprout anew around the globe. Was it the doom of man that he could err so thoroughly and so intensely?

Defenses and circumventions danced round each other in a deathly tango. Just what was this inherent malevolence in so many? Emotions? Brain imbalances? Evolutionary relics? Greed? Disparity? Power? Earth could not answer; however, the angelic end of the spectrum was well populated, too. And why was evil somewhat different on a natural or cultural level than on the personal?

Evil was ultimately pointless, for it assured its own destruction. Alexander the Great, Mussolini, and so many others and their movements all came to untimely ends for their misdeeds. Yet, there could be no absolute defense, for that would require eternal and infinite vigilance. Still, no extremist group had so much as crossed over the porous Mexican border to strike at U.S. industry or even a shopping mall. Was it luck or did they know the consequences that the diplomats had relayed to them off the record?

Rascal had by now risen to the rank of Field Commander, level 8, finding the missions a complimentary relief to the theoretical TOE analyses that had advanced greatly, lately, as the secrets of the universal DNA beginning to reveal themselves, unveiling some very counterintuitive and astounding information.

Rascal was riding in a sleek black jet on a somewhat minor mission, proofreading his sequel, 'The New Gravity', the pilots flying at ease and granting a wide berth to the protected airspace that had just been extended for the President's State of the Union Address, the War on Terror predicted to have prominent mention.

The Coast Guard was already boarding a freighter that had been stationary a bit too long when when the ghastly glow of the arc of ascension lit the night. Then a second arc sprouted a few moments later, and made for more frantic phone calls to the shore batteries, whose RADARs were already alight. Improved Patriot missiles were even on automatic and had deflected or hit the first missile at its zenith, but had missed the second. The rockets had come too fast from too close. There had been no time.

Rascal felt the plane performing a turnabout and went up to the cockpit to inquire.

“The mission has been aborted,” declared the copilot.

“By Field Command?”

“No, by Number 1 West himself.”

Rascal recalled the all-knowing visage of old Grand Master, whom he hadn't seen for many seasons now, and of his training by him back then, as detailed in the “Butterflies at the Edge of Forever” report now buried in the closed but still readable ‘Theory of Nothing’ thread.

What gives? he thought, as he looked out the window, seeing a sight that he never wished to see. It was the sickening arc of descension, as gravity's rainbow, into the center of D.C.

“Look away,” he cautioned the pilots, as the chain reaction turned the placid night into a light such as inside the sun; it seemed to sear the cabin.

“Fly higher,” he commanded. “The shock wave will be less. Then head west, for the winds will blow the radiation eastward.”

Turbos lifted the aircraft ever higher and away, Rascal noting the flattening of the trees below. The craft was not responding well and was furthermore hampered by the thinning air as it struggled to gain altitude. The oxygen masks dropped after several seconds that seemed like centuries.

“It's gaining on us, Rascal, sir. We're not going to make it. Both engines are now out. Radio gone.”

“The electromagnetic pulse; secure for shock,” advised Rascal.

The offending waves flipped the jet end over end, and she whirled about for some minutes before they hydraulically lowered the flaps to gain some measure of stability; however, she was now a deadweight stone gliding on into oblivion, but at least one that was plummeting from on high.

“That's the worst of it,” said Rascal, bruised and battered, noting the pages of his book lying everywhere in the back. “Get us on a glide path out of here.”

Most of the electronics were out, but not all, and so they, after some ten minutes or so, got the left engine to restart, manually, but it ran rough, for all of its checks and balances were off line.

“The engine won't last long,” advised the pilot, as they limped on. “Not enough oil pressure.”

Some twenty more minutes passed. “God, that was some megatonage!” Rascal exclaimed.

“Radio's back,” reported the copilot.

“What's the Defense Condition status?”

“DEFCON is normal, at 5.”

“And the Terror Alert?”

“Still green, as well as the REDCON.”

“Something is terribly wrong,” stated Rascal. “Had the State of the Union address begun?”

“Indeed.”

“I suppose that the Vice-President, who customarily does not attend the address, was probably not far enough away. God help us all; the world will soon learn that America is defenseless.”

“Uh-oh,” answered the pilot.

“The other nations? Can you check?”

Some moments passed.

“Russia, France, Israel, India, Pakistan, and the U.K. are already at the highest alert.”

“It is... the end of all hope... Only the President or the acting President can initiate a retaliatory strike or raise the defense condition for a sub-orbital attack, although I hear that a launch is mandatory for an atomic explosion within the U.S.”

Meanwhile, on Niihau, the Grand Master had already entered the vault, having first picked up the red telephone that not only connected to the Oval Office, but to the secure cell phones of the President, Vice-President, and their aides.

There had not only been no answer, but, alarmingly, a long-in-coming indication that the phones no longer existed. He carefully withdrew the secondary nuclear football from the vault and then from its case.

“Rascal, “ said the pilot, “we have a message to overfly Silo 19, and there is call for you. We are in fact near the silo, but how...”

Rascal took the call from Number 1. “We’re coming up on the silo now.”

“What do you see?”

“It’s closed.”

“And Washington?” inquired the Master.

“This was no small dirty bomb; it was a big one; huge, a direct hit on the Capital Complex.”

“That’s what I needed to hear, but something that I did not want to hear.”

“Our engine is running very hot,” reported the copilot.

“Maybe rough landing, Rascal,” noted the Grand Master. “Advise me on Silo 20 just outside Richmond if you get that far. God speed.” The call ended abruptly.

The Master had a while ago picked up the blue phone to Number 1 East, half a world away. She had the launch codes, yet another fail-safe mechanism that had been insisted upon by the top generals who had opposed this whole arrangement in the first place, although they had to concede that such an event was possible, and had given in. The blue

phone was not connecting, the nonexistent secure hub of D.C. thwarting the signal's approval. A cellphone call would not be considered authentic.

In a few minutes she and her city might not even be there, he thought.

Finally, after a required wait, the call rerouted through secure CIA lines via some obscure points on the globe. Luckily, Number 1 East was there, although likely, since these were her sleeping hours. Like twin-genii, they had split day and night, as well as the world; his day was her night and vice-versa. It was his watch. Halfway around the world, she jumped out of bed and raced for the control room.

A brief conversation ensued in which neither gave any hidden meanings to convey that either were under duress. She looked up the day's launch codes and relayed them promptly.

Still, the secondary nuclear transponder could not activate until it had ascertained for itself that the primary could not operate. This was accomplished through slow but sure under-ocean, mountain-eating ELF waves to NORAD, and back, that seemed to take an eternity, due to their ultra low frequency.

Moments crawled like death worms in the desert. Would the top generals go for it?

The Master, not known to be a nervous man, or a smoker, picked up a cigar from his desk and lit it. He'd kept there as a constant reminder of the former and dwindling Conspiracy menace, and drew in several long puffs.

A seismograph clattered away, falsely indicating a 9.99 earthquake in the U.S. capital. Much time had passed, during which he had called Ras-cal to double verify the bad news.

He thought of Einstein's warning to President Roosevelt about the power of atomic reactions, and that Germany could develop the bomb. The President had taken the warning to heart, although Einstein himself, the man who had discovered $E=MC^2$, had been declared a security risk, and so was never even notified of the Manhattan project, although he did do some work on isotopes, but not really knowing why.

The Master knew the drill: 12 suspect cities in the Middle-East and the Orient would soon be no more, among them Damascus, Beirut, Islamabad (now run by terrorists, and, yes, they had the bomb), and Baghdad (now devoid of U.N. troops and long overrun by Shiite extremists), not to mention the radioactive wasteland that would remain in the mountainous region between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Satellite data would be used to track the freighter's origin and that loophole would be closed.

It was not a black and white decision, for the good would fall along with much of the bad.

Furthermore, the U.S. State Governors would constitute the new emergency executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the American gov-

ernment, their Lieutenant Governors taking over in each state. Life would go on. No one would launch against an alerted U.S., although Israel would probably seize the opportunity to destroy Iran's new reactors, but, it would go no further in the U.S., although the Middle-East would be a mess.

A report came in showing that Pakistan had gone on nuclear alert before Washington was hit. The transponder finally showed ready and the Master did what he had to do, sending the tickle that would awaken the sleeping dragon. Did it bear the pearl of wisdom, or the cinders of a once promising world? He then cut the end of the cigar and put it back on his desk as the U.S. went to DEFCON 1. Rascal's crippled, wobbling plane overflowed Silo number 20. The jet's lone working engine caught fire and had to be shut down;. The silo was opening.

Rascal ordered his team off the doomed jet, he to jump last, as leaders do. Each and all parachuted out the door as he took this last moment to radio his last report, that of noting the retaliatory nuclear launch from silo #20 and that Richmond was already evacuating. The pilots would eject soon after he left the sleek ninja jet, which had now become the silent and black Angel of Death.

Rascal next gathered up the strewn about proof-pages of his book and stuffed them into his shirt, then leapt out the door into a free fall, one more heart wrenching than any roller coaster, in order to clear the jet and its draft, then pulled the rip cord.

Many Homo Sapiens would die and die this day, all over the globe, from this pretty much prearranged plan that had been engaged when the U.S. Capitol Complex and much of D.C. had been vaporized by an attack by unknown terrorists. This was evolution of a different order, not an eye for an eye, but 12 eyes for one eye, for the world's evils had reached unprecedented levels by the year 2012.

Rascal floated down, steering toward a treeless area, a meadow perhaps, now seconds away from landing. A few of his book pages floated free of his shirt, but he held tight to the rest, his tome almost literally becoming a Total Field Theory. Rascal landed; no one was about. He walked on in the dark, noting the old moon holding the new one in its arms.

Fifty thousand years ago, Mr. Elder Sapiens, well nigh almost 30 years old, sat outside the shelter, as twilight ended, noting that the moon was pale and sickly, dim and feeble, much as he felt himself. 'Twas not the best night for the Hunter Sapiens to be out... but the ever-present worries bred by these ancient times had won over his weariness, halting, if only for a time, his vitality from slipping away any further.

The crescent was brightening, as best it could, and he half-slept for a while. Then a dragging noise in the bush brought him to life. They were

back, hauling a carcass. If there was danger about, he would've waved them off, but there was none, so he waved them on. No one had eaten much but leaves and berries for the last five days, except for Infant Sapiens, who feasted on mother's milk. Elder pointed to the dying moon and then to himself, but the Younger Sapiens motioned that he was fine.

Many tens of millennia ago, their communication had begun, faint and ethereal, only within themselves, as symbols forming and connecting. This eventually led to gestures, preserved even to this day, as when people talk, along with their hands, even while on the phone! Grunts and simple references followed, then the basics of language.

The moon set, and the Homo Sapiens gathered round, friend and family, the night enveloping them, as evolution continued to sift the best from the rest, as ever it had done through death, our ancestors waning and waxing in strength.

About 50,000 years later, around 1100 A.D., Omar Khayyam, a rebel among the Islamics of his day, would write about the moon.

About 750 years later, Edward FitzGerald translated it into English verse; however, it never appeared in his published *Rubáiyât*, but had remained in his notebook:

*Be of Good Cheer -- the sullen Month will die,
And a young Moon requite us by and bye:
Look how the Old one meagre, bent, and wan
With Age and Fast, is fainting from the Sky!*

WORLD GOVERNMENT

The global Ninja Empire will decide
Whether to neutralize nuclear launches,
And perhaps even the whole country of origin.

A complete breakdown of all electronics
Will be caused by a giant electromagnetic pulse (EMP).

The implications of such an event
Will be enormous. Phones will not work.
There will be no way to find out
Via the internet what happened.
All electricity will stop, etc.

THE VANISHING

God is losing his definition in stone,
As his sworn traits disappear one by one,
In a retreat to higher ground that is
Outside of space, time, and all existence.

He made Adam fully formed, without a navel;
Now, an asterisk on page one of the
Philippine Catholic bible says no,
Don't take it literally—it's just a tale.

So, because of evolution's record,
God's bible was no longer written in
Plain text for the common man, but now is
Open to the guesses of interpretations.

God's become aloof—he just started the Bang
And let the design gradually evolve
Over thirteen billion years into man,
The "endless" universe a mere backdrop.

He no longer intercedes in causes,
Except in the nebulous cures they claim,
Like improved hearing or being safe from harm,
But he never heals amputees, or appears.

For the latest is that he must stay hidden,
Even if the miracles of his son
Were very much out in the open to see—
Better that no one know clearly of him.

So there is faith—blind trust in the unknown.
Believe or be tortured—or has this, too,
The Word of God, become inoperable?
Only the supernatural realm remains.

GOD IS GONE?

Why is the old testament out of use
In many churches, in favor of the new?

Was it divine revelation or not?

Are not his fits of a good role model?

OK, so science has found that the universe
Operates just as it would without him,
That evil spirits don't lead to bad health,
That brain imbalances can lead to sins.

He is the intelligent designer that
Is deducible from not understanding design,

But wait, he is of infinite design—

Now I know that something had to make him!

Devil, Hell, the bible, intercession, etc.,

Are all gone—he is undefinable—

Protected from the knowing—safe, away;

Yet claimable as an unseeable unknowable!

He just is, the same as the universe
Cannot be, leaving us all on our own,
Just as is the case that's seen by science;
Now we're a planned random accident!

Terrorists now go to war in his name;
It's all going astray—the design fails;
If I knew where the great designer stays,
I'd question his mysterious (insane) ways.

What is left of the vanishing phantom?
More features have fallen than I've listed,

The extraordinary superstition

Remains only as a shadow of a wish.

— Chapter 14 — Nemesis

Meanwhile, a few days previous, Fredrick had taken some long overdue leave from the secret TOE Center to travel and broaden his mind, if not his stomach, finding himself among the prodigious Inca ruins, with the likes of Indiana Jones, perusing ancient glyphs and drinking-in the scenery.

Back at his hotel, while napping and dreaming in his comfy pool side lounge chair, Fredrick chanced to pick up upon several whirlpooling premonitions that had eddied back into a small vortex of the future passed remembered in a vision. One such concerned a critical and crucial clue concerning his insight of the Theory of Separation of Fundamentals (vs. Unification, the natural inclination, but one that was standing still) that led him onward to thoughts about some relevance of his old and nearly forgotten papers still back at his abandoned apartment-condo complex. Another, more of a nightmare, showed mushroom clouds. The third, somehow related to the first, was of some general danger lurking about his vacated residence.

Fredrick was torn, but he needed those documents back, for the TOE Center, to refine the Theory of Everything in time to prevent the flooding of the Earth, for now both of the ice caps were one-third melted and gone. On the spur of the moment, Fredrick flew to Northern California, carrying only his emergency bag. Much of southern California had been ablaze for months now, and recently, a cyclone had killed 150,000 people in Myanmar, and earthquakes had sone in many more in China, as well as did a record number of tornados that had swept across the central United States.

He waded through the haze of a city that still bustled, even in its wee hours, entering his old complex, without much ado, having noted no one about at the rear, and headed for his storage locker near the laundry room, for this is where he kept his vault of information, not trusting it to his apartment or to the internet. It was all there. He sorted out the important papers and was off, a faint scent of gas quickening his pace away from the danger zone.

Fredrick soon lost himself, for concealment, in a mini crowd of drunks waltzing down the street, catching a dim vision of a vaguely familiar face quite a ways behind, one that he couldn't quite place. *Perhaps the street wasn't the place to be*, he wondered, as he headed for the Muddy Waters Cafe. All were startled to hear an explosion about two blocks behind, Fredrick noting that it had centered on his apartment.

Something was certainly not right about this night, but how, who? He'd used a TOE-approved alias on the flight and had done some plastic

surgery on his real credit card, cutting it in half, so he couldn't possibly use it.

Everyone outside stood and stared while Fredrick entered the cafe and ordered a warm cup of chai to sooth his nerves. What the heck was going on? He placed his papers in a trash can for protection just as the chai arrived. He and the documents should be safe here for a time until the people outside began moving about again. After drinking of the elixir for a while, he held his head in his hands, not quite knowing what to make of this, for the CIA and the FBI were now on his team's side, and the dwindled Conspiracy had been lying so very low, as to perhaps be nearly nonexistent. Plus, there had been his stealth.

What happened next had not been seen in his dream. As Fredrick looked up, there was none other than that unplaced face approaching, that of KGB General Burkov, appearing at his table and pulling up a chair. The General bore a look of astonishment and that was probably all that would give Fredrick a few more seconds of life.

Ah, to be taken defenseless and unaware like this, even by some fluke, after all his training, Fredrick thought, but other, deeper wheels had already been turning from that same ninja training.

"Was the train ride enjoyable, General?" Fredrick asked in Russian, while unobtrusively searching for the wooden table flap levers underneath, the General's right arm tendons betraying his own reachings under the table, for his trouser pocket, perhaps.

"Nyet," came the reply, "for my precious golden train is now at the bottom of a mine shaft."

"It would have been a fitting memorial for you, General," Fredrick goaded, as he lowered the table flap, the poison dart winging its revenge into it and sticking there. Fredrick quickly pushed the table into the General, sliding it and him, pinning him to a wall, but the General was a sturdy man, and pushed back hard, so Fredrick tilted his end upwards and retrieved the dart, sticking it to the KGB man.

By now, everyone had run out, and so Fredrick headed for the kitchen, pulling the trash bag out of its can along the way. He put on a chef's hat and whites, and went out the back, picking out his old papers and even taking the time to dump the trash into the dumpster, then went back into the kitchen to grab some tasty pastry.

An astute investigator might eventually link Fredrick's apartment fire to the killing of a foreign spy ten minutes later, nearby, but all that any satellite video would show would be a cook emptying the trash and going back to work, and then perhaps that same cook or another going home, where he could be interviewed later, for Fredrick was now back out the rear, getting into someone's car, rolling it in neutral down a slight decline, toward a dark area, for there was no key, then exiting out the other

side into a bush. Maybe the Police/CIA satellite wasn't even around, but this was good practice, and, furthermore, there could be other Russians in the vicinity.

Although someone with influence might have half a chance of freeing him, Fredrick saw no need to enter captivity, friendly or otherwise, wherein anything could happen, and slithered, then crawled, and then eventually walked into the night, through a treed park then through another alley, catching a bus to the airport, and not a taxi, for those drivers could often remember their passengers. He would make a report when he got where he was going, or along the way, and it would trickle down to the locals, to exonerate him.

He found a flight to nowhere, Anchorage, Alaska, where then he boarded a stopover refueling flight from New York that was going to Tokyo, via Guam, where he would get off, the best he could do on such short notice.

Fredrick relaxed and began to sort it all out: Could there have been some kind of signal attached to his locker? No, for it was unlabeled and it was not the area that had blown up first. They'd thought him to be in his apartment. What was Burkov doing near the cafe? Probably oversight for his mission of retribution, and he had been astonished to see Fredrick alive. Did they still want the TOE information from him? No, for only the living can tell tales, and anything else of interest left in the building would not have survived the inferno, one expanded by a the gas leak which was probably just a cover. But how did they react so quickly to his arrival back home after his being gone so long? Every city has street cameras now, but they are crude, having to focus on an entire scene, and, even so, his taxi had dropped him at the rear.

Fredrick closed his eyes and meditated for a bit. *I've got it*, he thought, snapping up. Burkov, obviously a greatly unbalanced person, seething over their old encounter, had camped or lived in the area with a small team, perhaps, waiting for the day that their prey would show, but they couldn't just hang around the complex day and night for months at a time, so, there must have been a special, real-time facial-recognition camera or two at the front and back entrances of the unit, although such a device was almost unheard of. What lengths does a man go to for revenge! But who has that kind of surveillance technology? Only the Conspiracy. Yes. When their centers had been overrun by the Russians from a tip by the ninjas, Burkov had madly appropriated some of the cameras unto himself. Then a signal to Burkov, and a few minutes to confirm, or even an automatic process if he was sound asleep. Fredrick dozed, finally at peace.

A few hours later, the pilot announced that Guam was closed to air traffic and so they they were diverting to Hawaii. What! thought Fredrick, although that was his ultimate destination. Guam can't close, for most of

these great circle flights need it for refueling; but, it's also a large U.S. military base.

Twenty minutes later, Fredrick noted an arc in the night sky that led back down to the ocean. It could only be a submarine launching a nuclear missile, for he'd already dreamt of its effects the day before.

China had been a few minutes from launch, but thought better of it when the U.S. finally went to DEFCON 1, but not Russia, something the future would not soon forget. Ground-based radar in Australia tracked a launch to the north. "Don't let it be coming here", the tracker gasped. It wasn't.

When Islamabad went up in a chain reaction, along with 11 other suspected large cities harboring terrorists, Pakistan launched on India, the only country they could reach, but who was also their old enemy for disputing their vision of the afterlife; however, India was ready, and intercepted all, then countered, and soon Pakistan was no more, as well as the mountainous region between it and Afghanistan, it being destroyed now twice over, since the U.S. had hit it as well.

Meanwhile. Israel destroyed the beginnings of yet another Syrian nuclear site, as well as all of those in Iran. Silence followed, followed by a relative peace. The Mayan calendar had near ended, but not yet the world. Homo Sapiens would likely continue, perhaps colonizing space some day, before he died off on Earth.

As Fredrick deplaned at Honolulu International on the reef runway, crowded with jets without gates, and an Egyptian girl who had become very dear to him waved him toward a black helicopter. They were soon off to the bunkers of Niihau.

A week or two later, a mini-nuclear winter arrived and began to restore some of the lost ice shelves. That was indeed close to a prophesy that Nobody, rest his soul, had run into while lost in waves of time displacement on the CMBR trip. Perhaps some future things have already happened, destined, but only in some general form or direction.

Back at the TOE center, they plugged in Fredrick's updated formulas. The simulation would take about a month, so Fredrick and his sweetheart took off to roam the island of paradise, albeit 3 degrees cooler in its average temperature, they building some pyramids in the sand along the way. They sat on the beach at the Eastern shore of Oahu, where the road ended and turned to dirt before going off into the ocean, due to the rock protrusions. A familiar form beyond them sat in the sand and stared out to sea into the twilight and so they ventured near.

"Good evening, young Master Fredrick," said the grand old man, without turning around.

"Hail to you, Grandmaster West," what brings you here?

"Well, I am here because of you, and you because of me."

“How so?”

“Well, here is a paper on which I’ve written what I was going to say next. So, tell me then, what it says, before you open it.”

Fredrick knew. “It will say, as you would’ve have said, ‘Fredrick, as you know I’ve been busy lately with the nuclear crisis, but that’s settled now, and so I’ve taken some time off myself, but I haven’t forgotten you. I’ve read your complete and very detailed report, and would ascribe to it the fact that you went alone to spare any harm to others, and also, most significantly, because you knew yourself to be invincible in this mission, for you had seen yourself alive in the premonition of the future that had you testing your new formulas at the TOE center.’”

“Amazing,” replied the Grand One, “Look to the paper now.”

“It is nearly word for word,” said Fredrick, much amazed himself.

“Will the tests have a positive result? Did you see that?”

“Yes, indeed they will.”

“There is much more between Heaven and Earth than meets the eye.”





marble watermelon

apple BB cannonball

(Rascal: Since everything is expanding, the Earth rises to meet the “falling” objects.)

CONSCIOUSNESS

Why should the wetness of water result
From the mix of hydrogen, oxygen?
How can cells, blood, heart, and nerves make life?
It is just so. So does matter make mind.

Change the brain and consciousness changes, too.
Take drugs and the emotions change, as well.
Damage the brain and the mind's damaged, too.
Consciousness emerges only from the brain.

The brain is the mind, and vice-versa,
So there is no need for the mind to turn
The brain's water into wine, for there's
No wine that's separate from the water.

Consciousness is emergent from the brain,
A most fundamental phenomenon
Could it be the brain perceiving itself,
Something we might like to call the mind's 'I'?

Consciousness is a fundamental force,
Like mass, space, and time, and, therefore, requires
No explanation—it just arises:
Mind: it matters; matter: ever mind!

Pain's not the same as the nerves that cause it,
Yet, mind, apart, couldn't conserve energy.
It seems that info exists in two ways:
Consciously and neurologically.



Nature's made of occasions of experience
Instantiated into consciousness,
Even for electrons and lower life forms,
'Though worms sense but a smudge of reality.

In identifying consciousness,
We often confuse what is floating in
The stream of consciousness with the water itself;
Such, we note not the sea in which we see.

The Midas-magic of our consciousness,
That quantum alchemist of potential,
Creates the Real from the Possible, for
Everything it touches turns to matter!

Consciousness is irreducible in terms
Of basic entities, so, most likely,
The intrinsic properties underlying
Physical dispositions are experiential!

Subconscious trains of thought vie for attention,
Dueling choirs competing for first place
In the mind's 'I'—consciousness—to produce
Future, for this is the task of a thought.

Consciousness mediates thoughts versus outcomes
And is distributed all over the body
From the nerve spindles to the spine to the brain,
A way to actionize without moving.

— Chapter 15 —
Life and Death in the Crystal Palace

DECEMBER 20, 2012

The Mayan calendar was due to end on December 21, although an alternate method forecast December 23. Whatever the case, the world was in a frenzy, one much worse than when the end of the world had been predicted by the Jehovah Witnesses in the 1990's, for example, for radio, TV, and other electronic signals all over the world were all being disrupted by some unknown source. And there were the tremors.

Commander Grandmasters East and West were already at the TOE Center in Hawaii when the President's CIA chief called in.

East put it on speaker: *"We can't track the source of the disturbing signals. My experts tell me that these signals are like none they've ever dealt with before, that whenever they think they're getting a fix on them the waves relocate to a new and apparent source which soon does the same. Also, the waves are at a frequency which can't, well, shouldn't even function for its range. If we could only get near to the source, even into its vicinity, we could then probably hone in on it. I've got planes crisscrossing the globe, trying to localize it, but it will only be luck if we run into something stable. I've certified that the signals are not coming from space."*

"Bad news", she, East, said, to no one in particular. That means the signal doesn't want to be found."

West added, "But which means that if we did find it, we could possibly turn it off or neutralize it somehow."

The CIA speaker continued: *...And I've got reports of small tremblers all over the world at once. That's unheard of. They're quite minor, and no quakes have been reported, but they're been increasing and spreading since yesterday. Could the world really be ending?*

East replied, "Could be. The signals are of an alien nature; that's why you don't recognize them and why they have such strange properties."

West surmised, "So the radiating device was planted here ages ago, when..."

"...The earth was visited by them," East continued.

"And the Maya somehow knew about it," added West.

"And there's that unexplained ancient runway in South America," surmised East.

"Who do we have on ancient symbols and Megaliths?" West asked of the TOE Center Director.

We have Leskey, right here, and Fredrick, who's out and about the island.

Leskey piped up, "Sir, Fredrick found some new glyphs on the rocks near the runway a while back, for they had removed the 20 feet of soil that had accumulated over the millennia, and there seemed to be drawings of some lakes carved therein. I can access Fredrick's photo files."

"Good," answered West. "And let's fetch the young master; he has the sight."

"My God!" cried Leskey, "They are a much larger and detailed version of what I found at the end of the calendar stones at the Mayan Ruins."

"Quick, match it to the globe, present and past," East pleaded. It was going to take some time to search all of the maps of the ages.

Meanwhile, Fredrick, surfing, heard the rotors and turned to see a black Ninja helicopter approaching and then hovering about two feet off the ground, creating a mini sandstorm.

A while later, Leskey reported, "I've got it, Grandmaster, it's the Central Lake District in Canada: well, as it was a long time ago."



"I heard," chimed in the CIA Chief. "I'll have an AWACS with a survey helicopter in it there within an hour."

The action paused, as they awaited the over flight of the suspect Canadian area.

East asked for geographics of the site.

Profpat answered, "I've got it on Google Earth and Wikipedia; it's a region with forests so dense that the snow cannot even reach the ground, so, all of the snow stays aloft, on the treetops, like a canopy. I wouldn't try to land on it."

"Thanks", answered East. "I'll pass that along. They sure picked an almost impenetrable area."

"Almost?" asked the Prof.

"We can go anywhere; get one of our helicopters into the region."

Lunch was served.

The CIA chief came back on: *Some of the electronics on my AWACS are going haywire and burning out, but we have a general location. We're dropping the chopper now to locate it, and my AWACS is getting out of there.*

The survey chopper dropped like a stone, the wind soon catching the rotors and stabilizing the craft, whose engines they soon started.

"All they can see is snow and ice."

"There's a forest underneath."

"What the... I've got an infrared satellite coming over in 17 minutes... We just burned up half its fuel to get it there. What did the aliens want with us, anyway?"

"Not all things are solvable. We have no answer of what is probably now some long abandoned agenda."

"Jeeese..."

The CIA's survey helicopter headed off in the general direction of the strange signals; however, there came an avalanche of strange sensations as they began to narrow the source of the emanations, such as nausea, high heartbeats, a sense of suffocation, tight chests, panic, anxiety and much more than they'd ever known in the strenuous training during flight school... Their very selves were fragmenting. One last effort reported all of this back to CIA Command as the craft begin its swan dive and crashed through the ice into the depths below.

"Mission failed and crashed. The crew reported some kind of extreme mental disturbances; maybe your ninja craft with its mind-disciplined crew can get closer, close enough to pinpoint the source. My guys were still 5 miles away."

"I hope so. We're about 7 minutes away from your copter's last location".

"Go for it."

The Ninja Craft did make it much closer, to about a thousand feet of the source, its crew also bearing the waves of unreality washing over their psyches, and then, too, they came to be on the verge of blacking out. Only the pilot's last bit of remaining logic stabbed at the autopilot, which carried the craft aloft and away to safety.

“We had to abort, but we’ve got the source to within three hundred yards,” reported East. “They dropped a flare.”

“We’ll refocus the infrared satellite to that location; it can read a label on your clothes from space.”

Grandmaster West sat back in his chair and pondered, during the brief interlude, looking about the room of the dedicated ToeQuestors. *Who can we send?* he thought. And how much time do we have?

“Sir, a Russian jet fired three missiles toward the target, but their electronics and guidance systems fizzled and fried, the missiles winging away erratically and plowing into the ice like harmless duds.”

East interjected, “If it’s of an alien race from another star that can conquer space, then it’s no wonder that our primitive electronics can be thwarted.”

The satellite’s data came streaming in, a five minute high definition video of the device and its glowing control panel. Fredrick walked in the door, noting the video just beginning to play, and studied it intensely until it ended. One of the symbols in the middle had been changing rapidly, and another one, too, but only every so often.

“It matches no known language, font, or number system,” said Fredrick.

“That’s true,” answered an associate. We just put it through the translator.”

“My Kingdom for a Rosetta stone,” replied the TOE Center Director.



“We have four hours, or so” answered Fredrick. I identified its ‘zero’ character and then deduced the rest from their structure and form, and from the sequence of the rapidly changing symbol. It’s a timer that has advanced six minutes in the five minutes that we watched it; it’s on its way down to all zeros.”



Fredrick sat down and went into a trancelike state. Someone came over. “No,” said West, “leave him be.”

The CIA came back on, “*Have your craft clear the area; we have a Super Stealth inbound at a thousand miles an hour. The President has authorized a tactical nuclear strike. 10 minutes to arrival.*”

“We’re already clear, but the strike won’t work,” answered East.

“*It’s worth a try.*”

A while later, Fredrick looked up from his reverie.

“What did you see?” asked West of Fredrick.

“I saw the blankness of... no Earth... and a dim vision of a woman walking in the dark with a flashlight through a forest overcrowded with trees... that’s all, sorry.”

West addressed the room: “No sorry, Fredrick, for that’s what we have to do. Who do we have that can approach this thing that so much disrupts human functioning?”

Prof offered, “Sin-thea, on our ToeQuest team, has often reported on her numerous episodes of this disturbing nature, and has, apparently, acclimated to them.”

East, looking dejected, said “We may never get her there in time. It will be a long trip through the ice palace beneath.”

West sighed, showing little hope in his visage, but suggested, “Find her and get her on a Supersonic Transport.”

“No need,” said Profpat, “she lives near the target area in a quaint cabin in the wilderness. Um, I like to get to know all the ladies. In fact, she’s been following our progress here and is getting ready.”

“Holy smokes, it’s about time we had some luck”, said West. “Send our Ninja copter to pick her up. Has its crew recovered from the onslaught against reason?”

“The copter is on its way, Master, and the crew is fine.”

“Our tactical nukes went nowhere and plopped dead into forest somewhere. An ICBM is now on its way.”

“It won’t work either.”

“Find a snow-tread and take Sin-thea in as far as you can, from the closest approach. Maps with routes are on the way.”

“They are? Oh, I’ll get right on it.”

A few moments passed in silence.

“She’s probably going to have to walk the last few miles alone, sir; too dense for a snowmobile and too close for anyone else to survive...” reported the Geographics leader.

“The ICBM and all its multiple warheads malfunctioned. What have you guys got for me?”

West replied: “We’re going to have a ninja driving a Snow-Cat through the submerged forest, with a strong-willed lady on the back. We’re going to drop it as close as we can, put it through the treetop canopy of snow, and hope for the best. We should be off and away toward the forest in about an hour.”

“You’re kidding.”

“It’s what we came up with. Do you have anything better?”

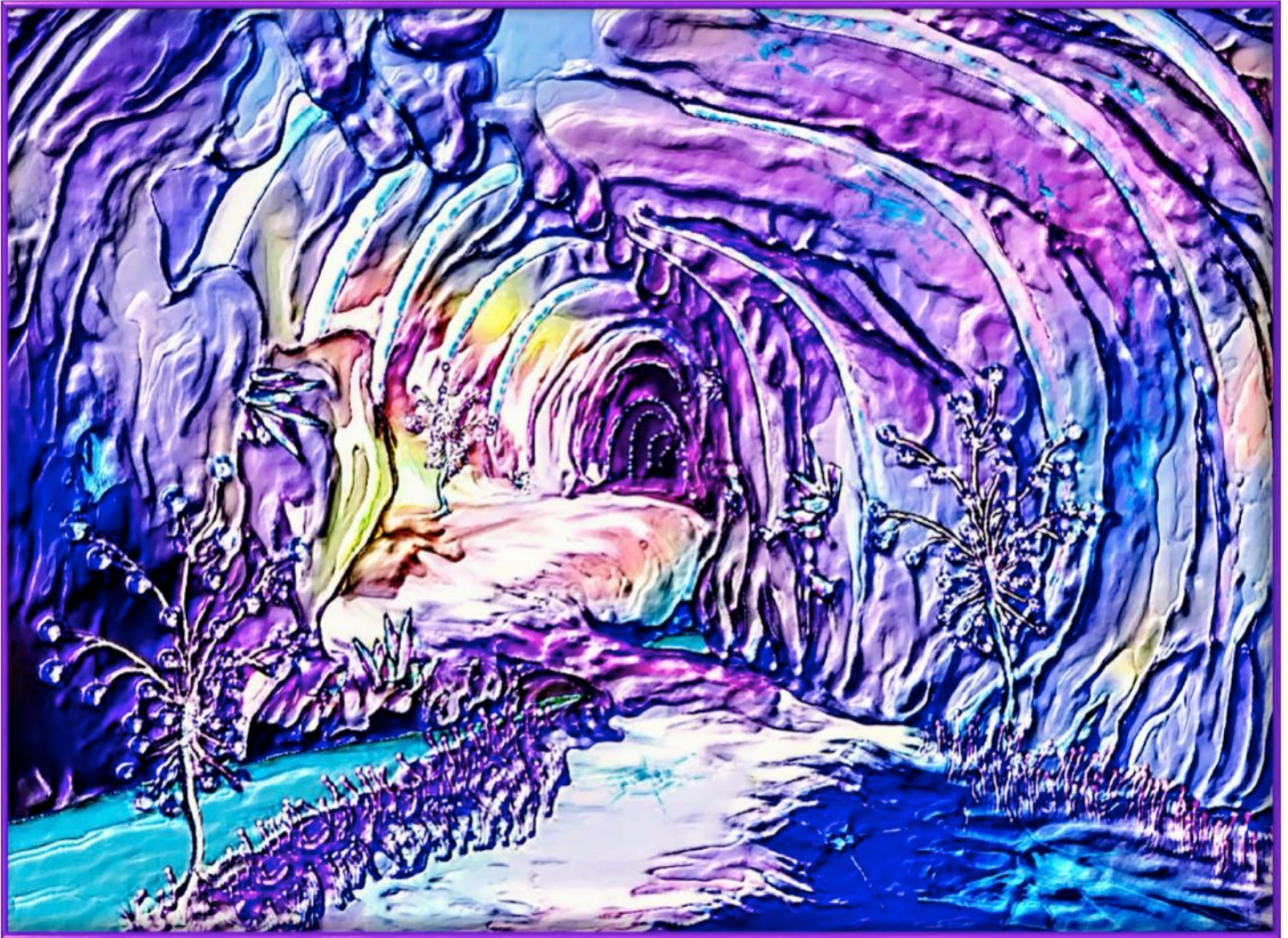
“No, we’re at a loss. And now we have a quake near the San Andreas fault. California may soon become an island.”

Time seemed to be passing the world by as everyone sat and fidgeted.

The black ninja Helicopter picked up Sin-thea at her front door and was off for a 45 minute journey over the ice. When the crew started seeing blips and spots in their eyes, they headed back a bit and hovered over the canopy. Some of the crew got out, stepping gingerly, but found

the footing firm and used a large pick and shovel to dig through the canopy, making a hole large enough for the Snow-Cat to be dropped through.

Sin-thea and her escort followed, down a rope, into this forgotten world of icy darkness and silence, although a dim light filtered through in places. There was little snow on the forest floor, more like a thick frost. The headlights shone ahead through the stillness. It had become a subterranean world. Ice crystals adorned the trees. Some small wildlife darted about. 'Eerie' was not enough word for it.



The Snow-Cat was soon off and following the GPS signal for a seven mile trip, it barely squeezing through some of the gaps in the trees. They still had communication with Oahu, but it was slight and fading with their every advance. 45 minutes passed. There was one hour left.

Trouble. A wave of nausea swept over them and prompted them to take their next dose of seasickness pills, but the meds weren't helping any more. They spotted some shapes in the snow and dusted them off, and soon radioed the TOE Center, as they had been doing periodically.

“Hello, Sin-thea,” answered Grandmaster East. “Wherefore art thou?”

“We’ve covered four miles somehow in this entangled forest. We are finding skeletons on the ground, some human and some animal. And I see many more up ahead.”

East replied, “I’m afraid that all who wandered and entered there have perished; probably scared to death. It’s up to you, Sin-thea.”

“The world needs me, and I need me,” she said, clicking off the radio. They drove on for a while, sometimes having to traverse over the bones of the many unfortunates.

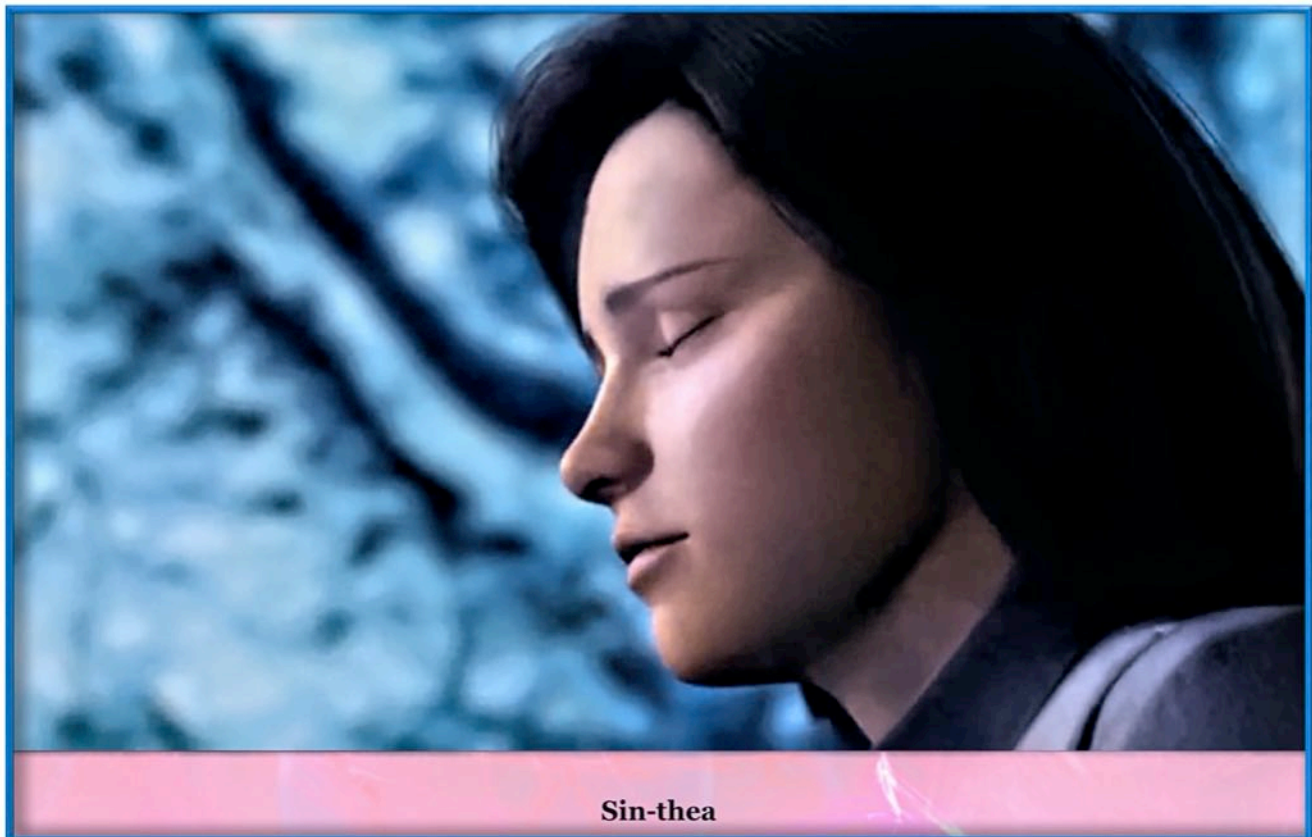
A haze of distorted being soon enveloped them after another mile, sending their brain-traffic neurotransmitters spinning, struggling to maintain control. They tried hard to ignore the visions and emotions washing over them, straining to focus. She had been here many times before, though, cleansing the intrusions, but it was new to the driver and he soon began his collapse, the Cat burrowing into foliage of a bush, whose color was ever-during green, the renowned color of sanity.

He stood up, then fell again. She dragged him back a few hundred feet, where at last he revived a bit, but looked groggy. Her gestures directed him back whence they’d come. He resisted, loyal to the mission, although quite unable to proceed. They tried the radio, but it had gone silent.

“It is for me to go the last mile alone, my friend.”

Finally, he agreed and headed back.

Back at the TOE Center: “We’ve lost contact.”



Sin-thea retrieved the SnowCat and drove on, the forest getting denser, her hallucinations increasing by the minute. The visions were now accompanied by horrible sounds. She was hearing the workings and meanderings of her own affected brain and mind, something never meant to be heard and endured for very long. She drove on quickly, the branches whipping her, until the forest became too dense for the snowmobile. She got off.

The shards of early man now appeared, formed, and then shattered, as the primitive brain stem began failing in its task to sort out human-radiated reality from all else that was out there. She was no longer totally Sapiens, but Homo Habilis, then Erectus, and now, hopefully, Handyman.

Taken aback, she fell to her knees, overwhelmed, and began to focus on the outlines of the trees and branches, desperately attempting to bring her mind to attention, an old trick she'd learned, to quell panic attacks, but this was the last frontier of horror, even considering what she'd been through in her life.

Somehow she got up and continued walking, now privy to all of earth's invisible radiation, but soon adapted, learning to put much of it out of her mind. She could even hear the noise of thermal vibrations as she moved on.

Sin-thea next felt the actual emotion of death and dying via suffocation, but, again, through previous practice, noted that she was indeed still breathing in and out, and so she waved death's winged ebon form aside. Waves of adrenaline now swept her body from head to foot, and she nearly fainted, and sat down, in case she did faint, not wanting to bang her head on a rock.

She arose slowly, to avoid the hypotension of quick-rising blood pressure. Her heartbeat had to be around 180 now, and this actually helped her along, but too much of this and she would be no more. 20 minutes left.

Sin-thea stopped and meditated, trying to focus on nothing to quiet the intrusive thoughts, as she'd learned to do. It didn't work here as well as it had elsewhere, so she switched to another, alternate method, which was to watch the maddening thoughts go by, as if in a parade, but not taking them in or entertaining any of them. They appeared, marched across, and exited, stage right, all unattended to by the witness, her, consciousness, for she was now sitting in the audience, way in the back row. As for some thoughts that wouldn't leave at all, she colored them dim and grey, and as such they dissolved into a fog, losing their importance.

She got up, her heartbeat perhaps now down to 140, but many nightmares and their foals were still passing on by, as wide-awake dreams,

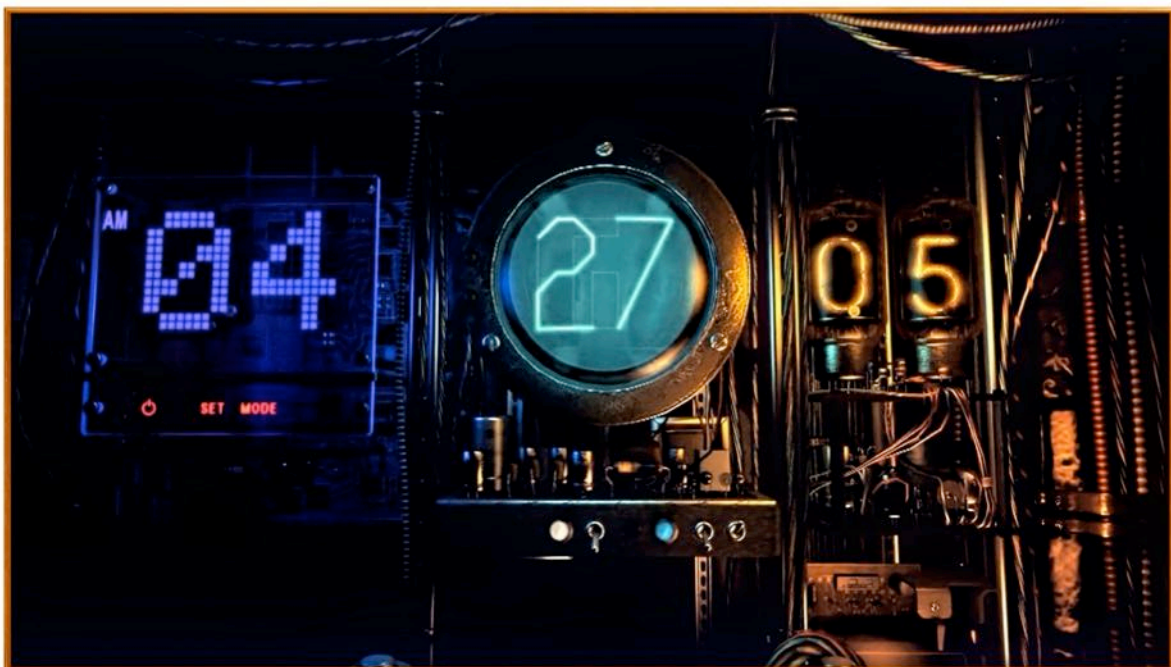
such as in schizophrenia. It was almost too much. Her very self was beginning to disintegrate, she desperately trying to hold on to that last bit of logic in a back corner of her mind somewhere, a mind that was being overwhelmed with unreality. She stumbled on, heading in the direction of increasing sickness, her only means of navigation. *What's that?*

She turned off her light, for there was a glow in the distance. That was it. Ten minutes left.

The pressure upon her sense of self grew worse as she approached the glow; logic's last gleam was fading, for life's last light was now upon her. She was only ten feet away when waves of confusion washed all thinking away. She fell forward a few more feet and collapsed. So close. She didn't know it yet, but she had entered a zone of safety, one that perhaps the device itself needed to be free to function unaffected by its own emanations.

Her head spun round and round as consciousness returned, another familiar sensation, but one that was never very pleasant. Four minutes left. The mental disturbances were gone now, but she still reeled from their ravages. She felt cold for the first time, then freezing. Her body had been overloaded—its thermostat was not functioning well. It took her a minute to regroup; she'd known cold winters before. She willed her body to function.

She stood up and faced the alien device. There was a switch. She turned it off. The glow-lights dimmed, and the machine began to fade, then into oblivion went. Was it really happening or was it a hallucination? She reached out her hand to where the device was, and felt nothing. She lay down to surrender to the night of death and fell asleep in the crystal palace, her tomb to be.



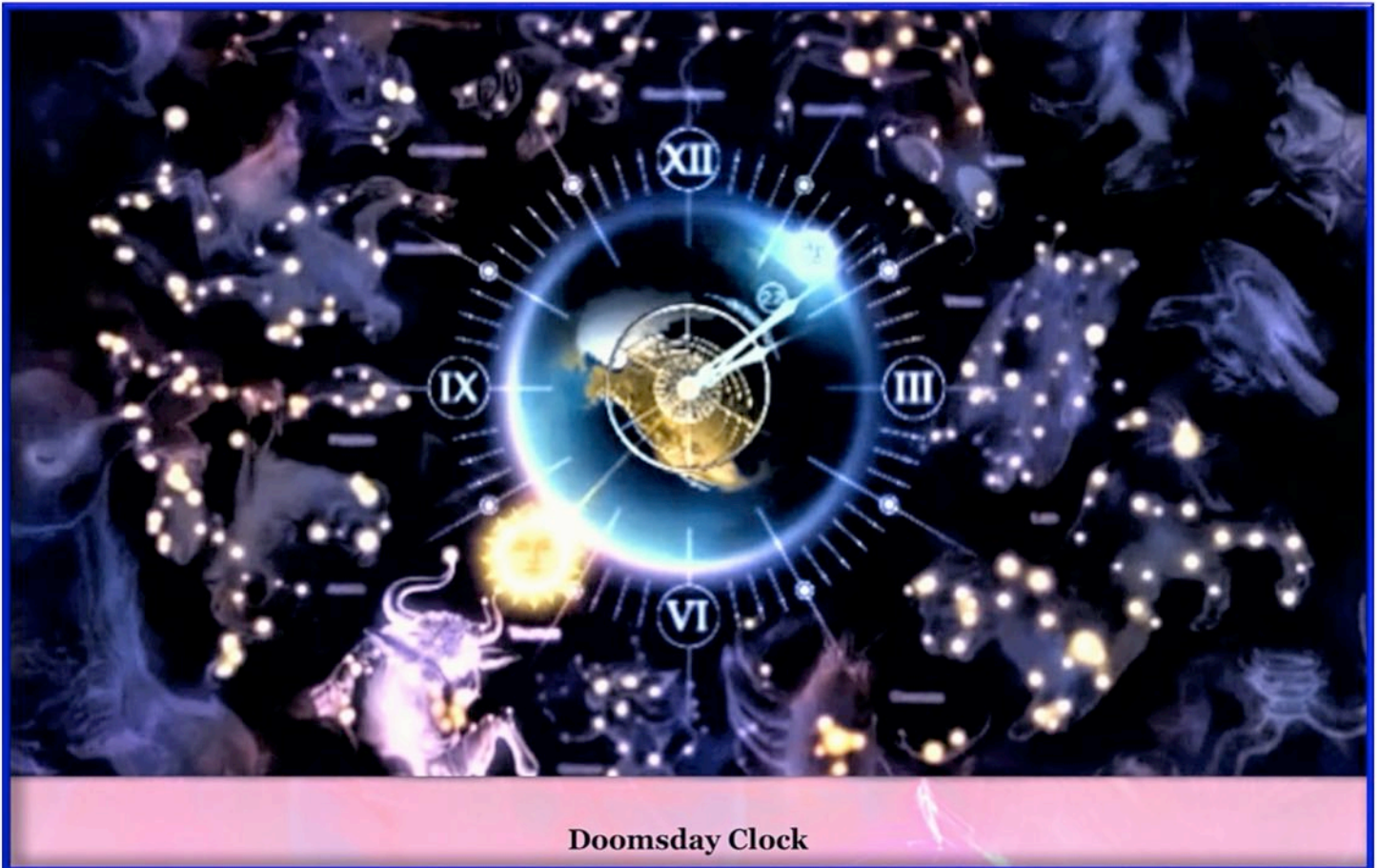
Back at the TOE Center, all looked to the clock: there were 3 minutes left.

As the countdown neared zero, nearly everyone tensed.

East looked at West. "It's been fine, this life."

"Indeed."

At zero, nothing happened.



The CIA called and reported, "*The tremors have stopped, but for the earth settling back in. All emanations have ceased. It's over.*"

Sin-thea awoke, her cheeks flushed and pink with bloom, but she knew, she knew, that it was but endorphins flooding her brain and body, as one last gift from the Angel of Light that is always given to the dying, so that the darker Angel of Death would not quickly approach one so fair... She closed her eyes, drifting back off, towards the netherworld, but then felt some snowflakes falling on her cheek. But it can't snow in here, she thought...

The Ninjas above were hacking through the ice canopy with pickaxes, showering her with a cooling spray where she lay in her crystalline cathedral. A bright light shone through the hole above, and a rope came down, followed by some black forms. They wrapped her in blankets of

electric warmth, then placed her in a harness, and she was lifted up and into the heated heaven of the helicopter.

The TOE Center erupted in cheers, having watched on screen.

“What happened?” inquired the CIA Chief, a few minutes later.

“She turned it off with three minutes left, and the alien thing just evaporated!”

“Just evaporated? That’s it? She just turned it off, three minutes early, not even near zero?”

“This was not an 007 movie.”

“Ah, but you only live twice: once when you’re born, and again when you stare death in the face.”

“Perhaps mankind will take some pause from this, valuing life more,” said East or West.

“Yes, indeed. Perhaps it has scared the Hell out of everyone. I’m still not sure what to make of all this.”

“Not all things are knowable. We looked for the device, afterward; it was gone; there was no trace, but you do have a video of it.”

“Well, thanks for your help. I don’t know how you did it, but you sure pulled this one out of your butts.”

“Great anal-ogy. I’m afraid we don’t really know how we did it ether.”

“It’s beyond me. Now, about the news media and that alien thing; it never happened.”

“Ha, yes, I guess it never did, for it’s no longer there.”



Ms. C. T's sodium level was way down, due to her recent stress, but this time she and all were ready for the fragmentation of her psyche that was to come again as a Near Death Experience (NDE). Last time she had gone back a mere 34,000 years but she had still been in both shock and awe at what she could dredge up, and so she had ventured no further.

She was now 'safely' in the hospital, but the sodium drop had already begun a cascade of events that had called upon Death to continue to knock at her door, while also revealing the brain's hidden recesses to her consciousness. Opiate endorphins flooded her brain; she was happy and high and could see everything that ever was.

I can see into the life of things.

She searched back almost 700 million years, although not really knowing how far. Had there been some early trace of humanity's humble beginnings back there?

There were dinosaurs, among them triceratops, stegosaurus, the-saurus, and brontosaurus towering and dwarfing all else.

I am a goner, but at least I'll enjoy the ride.

She leapt ahead ten thousand years; the dinos were still dominant.

Another day, another sun going down...

Then she peered way ahead: one million years: they were still there, their numbers having increased, and some of them even flew.

We should have been home by now... Where are we?

She jumped way ahead, fifty million years; they still covered the earth, devouring all, ever feeding. By what hand were these eternal monsters made to rule the world?

Where was proto-man? He should have appeared by now. There was going to be trouble.

They were beautiful beasts but she felt no kinship with them.

I am not of thee.

Sensing their invulnerability, she dared to move tremendously ahead—five hundred millions years; there were now untold varieties and numbers of dinosaurs. They exhaled the very breath of Eternity, that of the never-ending; they were the Kings and Queens of Forever. It looked as if humankind would never make it.

I will look for us near rivers deep, clear, and wide.

Those shores were empty of early man, and filled with swimming monsters; however, something was amiss; the air was rather hazy.

She looked but a decade ahead; the monsters were all dead or dying.

Their eyes were as blank and empty as Paradise.

She glanced but another decade further; they were all gone.

A stellar nursery, the Pleiades, has just appeared in the night sky.

A nervous shrew-like night creature darted out into the open, in the daytime.

I know you.

All too soon, in one way, Ms. C. T. received the life saving spinal injection, for she was about to traverse back from prehistoric man right on up through Homo Sapiens, but, at least, death would have to come back another day.

Poet to poet, Austin and Sin-thea rendered the details of Sin-thea's journey, he visiting her in the wilderness, into the final TOE-CIA report, through the highest power of language: poetry, one that tries to flesh the truth in living words finely dressed.

CRYSTAL MEMORIES

From Spring to Winter, 2013

From her hilltop cabin of logs, Sin-thea
Recalls the ice, once in her veins, the freeze;
Lo, the Canadian lilacs have bloomed, at last.

*Nature Springs from Winter's tomb,
The bloom already in the seed,
The tree already contained within the acorn.*

Crystal fragments remain, sharp memories
Of the ventures in which she shattered not.

*Surging sprigs sprout from the soil;
Spring showers make the Summer flower.*

All the seasonings arrive at her door,
For all things come round to those who observe.

*Summer wakes from Spring's dying kiss,
Blooming when the rose does,
Sunning after the Spring's running.*

She could never be too warm,
For she'd endured the frost.
The kaleidoscope revolves: life's cycle.

*Summer reigns upon the land,
Eventually fading in the night.*

Life's second bloom shines upon middle age,
Colors her mind, its rainbows shimmering.

*Autumn Falls as Summer leaves,
Harvesting its sum of days,
Seconding the rose of Spring.*

The hearthstone fire glows heartily, with her self,
As she stokes the flames of the wondering soul.

*The smile meets the tear;
Fall's embers last through December.*

It snows atop the trees, ne'er falling in,
Entombing a spring that waits for the miracle.

*Ice winds stalk the weed flowers,
The ghosts frosting the dead stalks,
Snow crystals barring all that grows.*

She's in the cabin safe, snug, warm, and whole.

*Winter is death cooled over;
Melting snows feed Spring waters.*

Later, using the Grandmaster's pass, Austin filed the full account, after all had read it, into the tube of Secrets of That Never Happened, one that led to the vault, twenty miles down into the earth. He noted the maintenance stairway beside it, where none had ever gone, and looked in, the master knew he would, to see it spiral down into Neverland. So strangely compelling it was that he ventured down, underground, beyond all sight and sound...

*To learn the Secrets, what IS and ever WAS,
One must brave the crypt and ghost of cause...
So, into the deep, he went, without pause,*

*To look down, ever down, no self to keep,
Through birth, death, and the shade of sleep,
Through paths unkempt, underswept, to the deep,*

*Through the cloudy strife of this hazy life,
Past the realm of the things which seem or are,*

Even o'er the steps of the remotest bar.

Down, down!

*Where the mind whirls round and round,
Down, down! As the ear draws the sound,
As the eye the light, as the dark the fright,*

*Beyond all death, despair, love, and sorrow,
Past yesterday, today, and tomorrow,
The body's guide but the spirit of the soul.
Down, down! Through the fog, the not, and the void;*

*Down! Where reigns the night and the air is thin,
To where sky and stars are not, but within.*

*Where the radiant have not their throne,
Where there are some pervading, all alone.*

*Down, down! To the fathoms of the cryptic;
Down, down! Where substance slept with arithmetic,*

*Toward the spark yet nursed by embers,
To the first and last that Life remembers,*

*To seek the gem that shines, the wealth of mines,
The jewels so treasured by thee and thine.*

*Down, down! We guide thee, we must carry thee;
Down, down! We're illumination beside thee...*

Fear not the proof; it's the beauty of truth.

*Here, the enigma of the immortal
Is undone and unloosed, through life's portal—
The Theory of Everything mortal,
The idea that we've opened the door to.*

The Fluttering Songbird of Youth

The child in us was warm, playful, and bold,
But vanished, ere we knew, leaving us cold.
Now this we know: The day we stop being
Playful is the day we start to get old.





— Chapter 16 —
The Last Gasp?

GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Sally knew it was time to come in from the cold; she had all she needed. She thought about taking a late lunch and not coming back, but this would have been too suspicious, so she bade her time, leaving at the usual quitting time, knowing that she would never see this place again.

Sally was a deep penetration agent, reporting directly to Number 1 East, working for the top execs of a new cosmetic research corporation. They had even invented a better 'Botox', but there was more to it, and Sally had it. Her air of silliness had made them oblivious to her, they not even always closing their doors during meetings. No one knew how to keep a secret in this world. The put-on of her demeanor of joyful bantering talk had been quite convincing, for it was but an extension of her nature. Now she had alarming proof that the Conspiracy lived on in a new and more desperate way.

Just before leaving, she inserted a loophole into the firewall of the corporation; it would probably hold up until the morning shift came in. Much prepared for her retirement, she retrieved the contour analysis from its safe spot and placed it in a zip lock pouch, and carefully sealed it, putting it in her coffee thermos, then filled it with yucky office coffee, doing all of this out of sight, within her desk drawer.

She had found the revealing visage imposed on another just the day before, in an exec's wastebasket that had not yet been dumped into the shredder chute. This had been a flaw in their system, and there were always such openings to be discovered, not that they had been so careless overall, but the fruition of their plan was just two weeks away and so perhaps they had become overconfident. The scent of cigar smoke wafting from a meeting had been the first real clue.

Sometimes, when she left the complex, they had x-rayed or even opened her thermos, but today they just waved her on, since there was a crowd, not that they would have found it or even made anything of it. What she had was a 3-D type grid sheet of a human head, as might have been used to guide a plastic surgeon, but this one was much more advanced than that.

Sally boarded the subway, as usual, and stuck her cell phone deep into the seat, where it met the uprise, then got off at the next stop. Her employers would waste time later on chasing a subway car. There had been no need for her to go to her apartment, for she had already packed her bags into a new vehicle provided by the Ninja Empire. Their protective eyes followed her travels, but of course she could not see them.

She drove off to the airport, relaxed, for all of her relatives and close friends had been moved to safe houses. Once there, she made a copy of the sectioned face and mailed it off, keeping the original. Using an alias, she bought a ticket for a flight to the country that Michael had moved to.

TURKEY, FORMER PERSIAN EMPIRE

Here, on the opposite side of the world from Hawaii, was another cross-directional pathway, where West met East, in the two countries that Turkey sat atop, Iraq and Iran, the crossroads that so many would-be conquerors had been necessarily drawn through, the Persia of old, that Alexander the great, among many, had trodden over, he even marrying thousands of his troops to the locals.

The techs at the Yin Ninja Center had already begun a massive download through the crack in firewall of the cosmetics corporation and were about halfway through when the opening closed, for the corporation complex had begun to self-destruct, a sure sign of Conspiracy involvement. Yes, Sally had them right on.

Trish, the nomer that Grandmaster East preferred, reviewed the synopsis of the data, sitting in the control room bunker with her husband, Michael. They noted an undue amount of biological cellular data. In fact, it appeared to be at the leading edge of the field.

“Michael, did not Rascal uncover some grotesque cloning attempts in the Virginia raid?”

“Yes, but they were not viable, being failures in the end, as we’ve deduced from the videos.”

“Well, those were playthings compared to what we see now; they’ve abandoned what DNA can but slowly accomplish; they’re now arranging body cells directly, under the pretense of cosmetic restoration, utilizing the cells’ antenna to speed up the process immensely.”

“...So the rich could fund this endeavor and obtain growth and vitality in their aging faces and bodies without the loss of feeling, as with the numbness of Botox.”

“Or even obtain a new and different face...”

Sally arrived at the Center, removed her disguise of the wig and glasses, and was checked through security, correctly answering some personal questions, such as one about a handsome zookeeper, and then was whisked into the control room.

“Hi Trish, Michael,” gushed Sally as her enthusiastic self as she embraced and hugged them both.

“SillySally, what do you have for us?” asked Trish.

“Chernov is no longer Chernov.”

“What!” cried Trish, “Alexi?”

Sally poured them some coffee, fishing out the picture of the Head of State to be.

Michael interjected, "This is the likes of Alexi Chernov, the one who just won what they call an election. He is to ascend to the office in a few days."

Trish added, "He will then hold the keys to the Kingdom and to the nuclear codes. My God, a Conspirator in charge of Russia!"

Trish continued, "Sally, did you tell anyone?"

"No one; to keep a secret, tell no one, and leave no traces."

"Good, Sally, for they don't know that we know, for this picture was not in their database, but the DIA/CIA cannot take out a Head of State, by order of the President, whether retired, serving, or one elected to be."

"Can we?" asked Sally, hesitatingly.

"Yes, Someone has to," answered Michael, "but there can be no connection to the Intelligence units of any countries with which we are now allied. Any sign of their involvement could lead to World War III."

"Well, at least until Chernov's government does an autopsy on 'him' and learns that he is a replacement," Trish added. "Get me my West CounterBalance; meanwhile, check everything out and match the serial numbers on the picture to the data we've extracted from the corporation."

Number 1 West had already gotten up in the middle of the night to review the data, and had picked up his phone just as it was about to ring.

"West here; how are you, Trish?"

"A crisis has come to my house."

"I know the feeling well. Should we take him out? After extreme confirmation, of course."

"Yes, but I'm engaged with ongoing missions on all sides here, as you know. This region of mine is even more volatile now than just after the D.C. incident. I need someone traceable to nowhere, someone good with a rifle and a rocket launcher, one who can run like the wind. Rehearsals are not an option; the window opens in three days, for that is when Chernov gives his victory rally. There may be other chances, but there will be major difficulties after he takes office, plus he may act instantly, with the nukes, before we can get to him or anyone can detect a difference in him."

"I know, and I know that you know that I know, but it still helps to talk it all out. We have some new and traceless members in readiness training now, but you'll be needing just one to go in, right, and two or three for support?"

"Yes, we'll have to keep it simple and do it the old fashioned way; there's no time; I will send you all the details shortly."

West ended the call.

Michael updated his wife: "There is also a reference to some kind of older program that we've translated as a "finishing class". It is in New Persia. It could be a backup plan or even a longer range plan engaged previously to the cosmetics break through."

"We'll need Western Field Command for a large mission like this, if it's on; we are overextended here and we don't have any teams available or that can be recalled in time. Find this 'finishing place'. West can plan this one while we plan the fake Chernov's demise."

Trish continued, "The world is still tense around here. If the U.S. or any other major country is implicated, there may come an end to the world. So, we need this unknown person of West's, one outside of all the paramilitary units."

Graham was one of the newbies on training duty this month. He had just spent weeks on the machines, target practice, and the everyday running on the track, even giving up smoking. He'd been dreaming of building a house in the clouds, which was one of the reasons that he had accepted the mission.

West called East back. "My man Fredrick has just retranslated the 'finishing class' term of interest to 'charm school'. I am not so happy with the implications of it."

"They are again trying to infiltrate countries' infrastructures with their own Conspirators, only they are desperate, and so they are training suitable looking foreigners in the ways of the west, hoping to move them up quickly in the aftermath of whatever Chernov has in mind to inflict on us."

"I'll take care of this spy college plan while you figure out Chernov."

"One more thing, West. Chernov is addressing all the military units in his election victory rally. They will be in full gear, and will have tanks along and all that. They will probably not be armed, but, who knows, for this madman may demand some kind of gun-firing salute to better bond him with the troops."

"It's a pep talk to his future deputies from their next fearless leader. I'll break this wonderful news to the men I'm sending to you, including a select few to support the job and one to go in, just as soon as Thomas Veil concurs. We need stealth, which might not come from a large group, for that would only attract attention and leave some stragglers around to be captured and tortured into telling. Plus, most of my people are busy, too, working with the U.S. DHS right now. Hold on, I'm getting it from Veil right now; it's a go."

West next called Field Command, Rascal answering, for Rascal now was Field Command.

"Rascal here," Puff said as he picked up the green phone.

“Get your best team on an SST, and strike the ‘charm school’ just after Chernov has met his maker. Are you ready for this, old friend? You’re going in dead cold, with little reconnaissance. It may not go very well. You will have two copters disguised with the region’s markings, one for your command oversight and one for your assault team, but the copters are not a perfect match to what they have there, for then their pedals would operate in reverse, and such, but we don’t need any confusion like that now. They won’t notice at night. Sorry for the short notice, but they might quickly dismantle the place when they realize that we know about Chernov and more.”

“We’re ready, Master; I’ve been following the latest developments.”

...

A tug boat dropped Graham near some high cliffs just north of the deep water harbor. The tug looked like a piece of junk, having many old and ratty tires roped onto it all around.



Graham quickly found the side path and walked up and around the cliffs, then on through a forest, noting the landmarks and the alternate paths, then out and up towards the high ground near the site, the rally to begin in but a few minutes. Any pursuers coming up after the deed was done would have to use up their time on the climb. The hill had probably already been searched by security.

Graham would seize the first opportunity and then try to make it back through the woods to the shore and then to the tug just as it was 'routinely' motoring by. The tug would not wait; it could not wait and just sit there, arousing suspicion. Graham had been on the cross country track team in high school; his escape would be akin a Sunday walk in the park, unless the troops' weapons were loaded.

The anthem played. Graham took this time to adjust his sights and account for a slight breeze. There would be a brief introductory speech.

Off stage, in the wings, the new Chernov thought of how easy it had been, well, not the lengthy and laborious cell treatments, but about his replacement of the real Chernov. The old Chernov had even unwittingly aided them by wandering away from the compound for some solitude from the claustrophobia of the campaign. *The guards were frantic, but then, I as he, had returned after a while, even glibly claiming that I felt like a new man, but that I needed to sleep. Even the practiced voice went over well.* Luckily, or taken into account, old Chernov had no wife or children who could have, or would have known that he was now a changed man.

Meanwhile, Rascal's team was approaching the site of the charm school. It was heavily fenced in, an expected omen, and there was a clearing made for helicopter landings, of which this would be just another such. Rascal would land his command ship a ways away, overseeing the action through the reports and video. Only the troop heli would land within the site, all of the troops wearing full body armor, and led by Analog. It was already 10 PM, but all were probably not yet asleep, a problem that had to be dealt with, but then again they might not all be sober either, or even otherwise occupied.

Back at the rally, Graham noted the starry sky, thinking of the TOE for a second. Luckily, the moon was not a factor. It was 8:10 PM. The first laser rifle shot would fell the man, just after the red dot appeared on him, then a rifle burst of shots to be certain would be followed by a rocket that would blast the entire vicinity of the podium. The military audience would be stunned, at first, much taken by surprise, and perhaps paralyzed for a while, during which he would flee like a bat out of Hell.

Chernov walked on stage, to a mighty applause, and took to the podium. Graham inched forward and lay prone, making some final adjustments, as Chernov began to lay out his vision for a new order. Graham steadied, then held, then fired. Chernov was hit, and he stopped speaking, no one but him yet realizing. Chernov held fast onto the podium; he knew. Next came the burst of laser guided bullets, Graham using all but one, then calmly switched to the rocket rifle, aiming carefully and setting loose the charge. Not waiting to gauge the reaction, Graham confirmed the kill, and took off, wondering if the military men's weapons were

loaded. Nothing happened until he got to the woods; it was an eerie interlude.



Then it happened all at once; every soldier was firing in Graham's general direction, and some tanks could be heard roaring to life. The trees were a shield of sorts, and so Graham headed through the denser sections, still keeping sight of the main path that would guide him on. This was cross country at its finest; he had to hurdle over fallen timbers that slowed him down but slightly. Hot metal rained down all around; this was much worse than expected, and the firing was on the increase.

Tree bark flew off right and left and overhead, from a hailstorm of bullets. A fragment stung into his shoulder. Slowing to a jogging pace, Graham jammed a cauterizer into his wound to stop the bleeding, then sprinted ever faster, fueled by the adrenaline from danger. The sounds of falling trees far behind meant that the tanks were coming, and soon their thunderous rounds ripped through the forest, like large bowling balls.

Graham slowed, eventually, waiting for a second wind. Where was it? He'd figured the path of the tanks; not good; he would have to circle wide and then back; precious time would be lost. His new house would most likely be in the Paradise of Heaven and not in the mountains of British Columbia. He was off with his second wind and then took more shrapnel in his arm, stopping briefly to wrap it. He would have been setting a speed record if the course was as straight as it was supposed to be, but it

wasn't, and so the agony finally came, that time always feared by long distance runners—the wall.



Back at the Charm School site, Rascal had gotten the news of Chernov's fall, and had his assault team land, in their chopper, putting his Command chopper down well outside the site, at the same time. Guards sauntered out of the guard house after a minute or two, a fatal mistake.

Analog's team then raced into the compound, setting explosives. Resistance seemed light for the size of the place, but was more than enough to contend with. The primary aim of the mission was to put the place out of operation, but leave enough of it for the world to see and note the scope of the treachery.

Rascal watched the video and ran some of the high level strategy, but could hardly believe what he saw on screen: there was an entire mocked up village of typical Americana: banks, hair salons, drug stores, a movie theater, even houses with picket fences. It was an entire town with a Main Street, U.S.A. running right through it, just as DeMille once wrote an entire book about. This large operation evidently was to train American looking foreigners to infiltrate and operate in the United States. Some of the residents looked to be the white Russians found in the north.

Graham had finally made it through the forest to the clearing near the cliffs, sinking to one knee, to catch his breath and look for the tug boat. Damn, he had missed the tug; it was already passing by and heading off.

He couldn't be taken alive, for that was the deal; he had one bullet left. He could hear the troops and the tanks in the distance, perhaps but three minutes away. He sighted his laser rifle on the departing tug, steadied his bleeding arm, then pulled the trigger, and rang the ship's bell with his last bullet.

The tug began to turn around. There would be no time to take the side path down to the water, so Graham ran toward the cliff, faster and ever faster, for he had to be sure to clear some protrusions down below, then jumped, far out, sailing through the air, and dropped like a stone, just straightening out at the last moment and knifing into the water near the oncoming tug.

Graybeard quickly fished the exhausted Graham out of the water and dragged him aboard, then powered the engines to full speed and headed the ship out to sea at an amazing pace for a mere tugboat.

"Why were you leaving me?" Graham wondered aloud.

"I wasn't leaving you, man; I had to keep moving so as to not draw attention. I heard the ruckus above; my God, their weapons were loaded!"

"Indeed. What's under the hood of this thing?"

"Gleaming new double engines."

Graham looked back. "Uh-oh, there's a tank setting up on the cliff and we're the only ship in sight."

"No problem, I'm evading now".

The tug began a zigzag.

"You're making me seasick!"

"Better than dead. By the way, good job up there."

"Thanks, but they're firing at us."

The tank round landed way out ahead.

"They didn't gauge the down positioning."

"They soon will!"

"No sweat."

"Why are you so calm?"

"This is one of our easier missions."

At about that moment, some kind of missile whizzed by from the totally opposite direction and smashed into the cliffs, shattering them. It seemed as if the tank was suspended in the air for a few long seconds before it crashed into the sea below.

"I'm still sweating it, Graybeard; this tug doesn't have enough fuel to cross the ocean, plus there are three helicopters taking off now."

"Don't worry. I'm hoisting a pirate flag."

“Great news. Graybeard, I like to worry about these things; hey, I know that flag from ToeQuest.”

“Whatever fired that missile is here to pick us up; they don’t tell me everything.”

“I don’t see anything out there.”

“Hold on; there it is.”

“It looks like a bathtub.”

“It’s the coning tower of a submarine.”



Coming closer, they saw some really aware person popping out of a hatch; it was Poppa.

“Get over here, you guys; move it; swim.”

They climbed in.

“This is your rig, Poppa?” they both said at once.

“Yes, it’s one of them; have to make the mula.”

“Where to?”

“To the deep,” Poppa commanded into his phone. “Then fire torpedos and engage all sonar.”

“That’s my personal boat, Poppa!” cried Graybeard.

“We’ll get you a new one.”

Analog’s team was now deep into the compound and nearly finished, and then everything went bad. Armed men were pouring out from what

must have been a vast underground complex with many exits, they almost surrounding the ninja team. These were the very spies that were being trained in American ways by the captured American pilots and soldiers. Analog called for an abort and an evacuation, setting off all the remaining explosives to buy some time, but there were so many adversaries that they were able to quickly regroup and begin a large pursuit of Analog's team.

Rascal ordered his command ship pilot to lift off and land in the center of the compound. His craft landed well in front of the enemies, to cover the retreat of his troops, his gunner firing and eventually exhausting both door guns of the copter. The chopper began to take some fire and so Rascal ordered it off, he staying behind. "Analog, meet me in the clearing near the fence in 10 minutes. Don't be early or you'll be a sitting duck; don't be late or I will be one."



The enemy was recovering, regrouping again. There must have been thousands of them. Analog's troops would need some time to get back and board their helicopter. Rascal didn't figure on making it back himself. He gauged the wind from the smoke that was blowing about, then threw some canisters off and away into a rough semicircle about him, then retreated in a hurry, as the relentless masses began approaching. The deadly nerve gas slowed the enemy waves, felling them, after a mo-

ment or two, but many in the rear then began circling wide around, as a flanking maneuver. *What madmen; they are like fearless robots!*

Rascal ran like never before, glad to see and hear Analog's troop assault team's copter taking off and rising in the distance, but, as he neared the guard house, some new guards must have just come on duty, and had just stepped out. Rascal couldn't go forward and he couldn't go back.

Suddenly someone mowed down the guards with a machine gun blast; it was Analog, who had stayed behind.

"Analog, you fox; I'm going to press your ToeQuest 'Thanks' button a thousand times if we get out of this mess; however, there are many enemies due to come about and around right here very soon."

They ran to the center of the clearing; they had gotten to it about a minute or two early.

"Our punctuality may have cost us our lives, Analog."

"Yes, but I hate being late, Rascal."

Sure enough, they could see movement behind the tree line.

"Here they come," said Rascal.

The enemies emerged, still too far away to fire, but fired anyway, moving inexorably closer. Rascal and Analog moved back a bit, this but a futile gesture; they were ready for death.

"It's been a blast, Rascal."

"It's not over yet."

Suddenly the enemy troops began to slow, then stumbled and fell to the ground.

"I placed my last canister of nerve gas back there, Analog, knowing that the wind was blowing slowly this way, even though it will soon be upon us, granting us death as well."

Rascal then felt a slight tingle, as did Analog.

"Don't worry, Analog, it's just some stray molecules of the nerve gas wafting on ahead."

"I'm not worried, but I do see more enemies arriving from another direction. We may not die from the gas, but from bullets."

Time slowed to a crawl; so close yet so far.

"Any more tricks, Rascal? The mass of the nerve gas is near upon us; the enemy draws closer, to watch us die."

"One last hope."

There was a whir and a whoosh.

The down wash of the rotor blades of Rascal's Command chopper landing from on high spreads the incoming nerve gas outward, in fact propelling it towards the onrushing conspirators, which doomed them.

"That's why the early bird always gets the worm, Analog."

About Time

Time, my old enemy, can't vanquish me,
For I've accepted death's final counter plea.
Time may now flow on—even take me beyond,
But time's now my friend—for there's peace in me.



— Love Paradox —

Arithmetic theory fails in love's plot:
Love when divided diminishes not,
As would else we know, and vanishes not—
Each love multiplies to exceed the lot!

— From *Universals* (#42) © by Patricia Torre



Love =
Love /
Infinity

\$ 2.85
1.28

$2 > 1 + 1$

The Sum of Love's Parts
Exceeds the Whole.



— Chapter 17 — World War III?

The improved bunker buster missiles dug through the earth, exploding and destroying the nearly completed Iranian nuclear launch sites and energy plants, one by one, fired by British, U.S., and Israeli jets soon after most of the SAMs, mobile and stationary, had been neutralized.

Russia, from Georgia, immediately sent out interceptors, but our spent attack jets had already flown west, and had thus evaded, eventually landing on carriers in the Persian Gulf. Yet, the Russians interceptors still attacked the fleet there, first engaging an insufficient number of interceptors of our own; however, Aegis descendant computerized firing systems more than decimated the incomings, and so they retreated. Cruise missiles continued to pour into Persia, leveling much of the culture that had withstood a hundred invasions by melding with the conquerors.

The Iranian clergy, who were also the rulers, ordered Israel wiped off of the map, as they had so often proclaimed, and were going to do anyway, this, in fact, having been the very germ of their impending doom. They had two secret missile silos left, which actually had been completed and were fairly operational, more than enough to do the job. Both were beneath the world sacred Persialopolis historic site of irreplaceable monuments, installed there under the cover of archeological digs. By now, all satellites, pro and con, had been blasted from orbits about the Earth. Replacements were already on the launch pads, but for now the world was blind from space.

The outgoing President of the U.S. sat back, satisfied. Leskey rushed in, saying, "There are two more. I've just heard from Graham's mind. We have nuclear activation amid the megaliths, of all places."

The ancient ruins began caving in as the giant doors opened, revealing another set of doors below, the missile silo surely within those.

"How, Leskey? The EMP has disrupted many of the electronics."

"Our minds know each other from our research together."

The President signaled for phase two preparation, the nuclear retribution for an atomic attack on Israel, who, too, would begin their own nuclear launches upon detection of an attack.

"Just a preparedness move, Leskey," stated the President. Alert your people; I heard they can see in the dark. We, though, are dumb, deaf, and blind for the moment. Our jets have left, and those still in the area are yet engaged. The Russians must have seen this coming somehow; plus, electromagnetic pulses have rendered auto-sighting and navigation rather difficult for the time being."

Leskey replied, "No need, for they are the ones who just told me, via mind. They will act on their own; I dare not distract them now,"

Graham stood atop a mountain peak deep within Iran, and flicked on his lighter for 5 seconds, for his long range radio would not function. Graybeard, on another peak, looking there right at that moment, saw it from 50 miles away, for there were many more photons than required. A location signal followed.

Rascal had already blown the sand off his jet, that being its camouflage, even though he was covering an unlikely area, but his instructions did say to "Expect the unexpected".

Graybeard passed the word of the increased activity about Persialopolis, his short range radio working fine, as expected, plus the sending via his mind as well, and Rascal's jet soon hovered, moving upwards, and flew out of the rising moon toward the historical site and center from which great learnings had spread across the world over a thousand years ago.

Graham's long range radio began to work for a minute. "Did you get it, Graybeard, all the details?"

"Yes, your signal confirming mind. The jet is now very much on its way."

Bulldozers were already clearing the historic debris from the lower door. Underneath, technicians began the preparations to launch their medium range nuke of destruction. The countdown had begun.

A live SAM site quickly appeared in the jet's path, but Rascal's pilot knew what to do. The jet headed in low, and swerved from its course, jamming all signals, then flew right over the SAM site and took it out. It was a gamble, but there wasn't time for anything else.

The lower doors opened, revealing the sturdy missile silo underneath, as did those of another, just a mile away.

With the jet now over the first site, Rascal pressed a button and fired directly into it, using his one and only nuke busting weapon, for it was so large that he could only carry one. It did the trick.

Rascal was then horrified to hear about the second site.

"Now what?" asked Rascal's pilot, "We're out of nuke busters."

Rascal replied, "The jet itself is a weapon, due to its speed, bulk and fuel."

"Will do."

The jet headed straight down and precisely into the second site, blowing itself and the launch site to smithereens and also to kingdom come, however, Rascal and his pilot did not die or get injured, as, of course they never do in these stories. How could this be? (They did not eject or anything like that.)

Suggestions:

The species woke up (drenched from sweat).

It was all just a bad dream.

No, it wasn't a dream or a hallucination type thing. It was real, but good thinking of the dream, for that could surely happen; it's just that I had something else in mind.

It would have been 'the movies', defining the line between fact and fiction given our immersion within factual programming, juxtaposed against fictional programming. I think that your response above means that this also is not what you have in mind.

Movie immersion is another good thought, as we become so immersed that our anxieties rise and all that. Even when I read a book, I am feeling to be mostly there. When I write a book or a story, it seems that I am really really there. Anyway, it wasn't a movie or even a holographic thing, but of course I'm being somewhat arbitrary since those really could be true methods. I'm still giving you a new car (or a bike if you wish) for the usable answers. Another usable solution to Rascal's continued existence after the Iranian events heretofore described could be that the event's reported on were just a story, which it is, but, of course, I wouldn't pull that trick.

The answer: In the World War III story, Rascal and his pilot had about 4 minutes to save the world; Madonna even made a song about it. Rascal and his pilot survived, for they were never in the jet in the first place, but had had flown it remotely, from a console, as a drone, such as those employed in Iraq and Afghanistan, although it was a improved model with a larger payload. Of course it had good autopilot capabilities as well. Since many more answers that the above were quite applicable, I am sending all such responders a crummy toy car as a prize. Rascal lives and is now heading to Pakistan...

THE TALIBAN

Iran had been thwarted, but the roots of evil planted by humankind were deep and thriving in other forms and places in the world. 'Twas a critical moment, for World War III was ever on the verge, the Axis of Evil lingering on, although greatly crippled by the allies and the covert Ninja World Empire.

In Pakistan, another factory and its workers had been bombed by the Taliban, their commander even being brazening present to witness the carnage of 200 dead or injured. r.p.bibra, tailing them, had taken a video. There had been no way to stop them in time, so his heart yet fell into the bottomless pit. Although he'd witnessed much of the same over

the years, he had never acclimated to the evil. This latest event was still as shocking as the first he'd ever known.

Musharraf's forces pursued the Taliban, but they didn't catch them, for soon the Taliban countered, with more help, and overtook their pursuers, as the sad historic tales of human folly continued to be written in blood.

[A strange aside is that Musharraf's parents had often played bridge with Austin's parents in Illinois in the 1990's (true). Small world. And so the ninja had been allowed a deep penetration into Pakistan.]

Islamabad was aflame, and had, within days, become a war zone, hoards of Taliban pouring in from the mountains of Afghanistan and eventually overwhelming the city.

Graybeard and RascalPuff appeared in GrandMaster Sin-thea's Eastern Field Command office, she recognizing Graybeard from his vacation photos on ToeQuest and Rascal from knowing his description of how he would now look. Graybeard, somewhat anxious, hung back, while Sin-thea, sweet as ever, though yet renowned in her cover as the infamous 'Death-Head' feared worldwide, addressed Rascal the Puff, the magic dragon master and butterfly of forever.

"My pleasure to meet you at last, Master Rascal, worker of miracles unimaginable. We must work together on this one, for I know the region well."

"At your service, Miss Commander Sin-thea, level 7, and congratulations on your promotion to GrandMaster. I noted it on ToeQuest."

"Thanks, and no need for formality, Puff. Might I lighten the mood by asking how it is that your jets are often destroyed, for they cost us 40 million dollars each?"

"The jets often seem to elude me."

"Yes, one near D.C. and then another in Persia over in the Root of Evil thread."

"I am so sorry."

"We have a new one for you; please take good care of it."

"I always try to, and I will surely be much more responsible in the future."

They couldn't help but all burst into laughter, for the act of saving the world was indeed priceless.

The Taliban had overtaken the nuclear missile complex south of Islamabad just the night before, which was why Rascal and Graybeard had arrived. The site was a mile deep and was therefore bomb proof, even by the bunker digger busters. It had even survived a direct nuclear missile hit by India a year ago. A truce between them was still in effect, though, but the Taliban, of course, had control of the site now, as well as of the entire surrounding region. The Taliban commander was enroute, and

this certainly did not bode well, so haste was made waste, with the final plans being concocted along the way.

“The site contains a long range multiple warhead nuclear missile that can reach any point on the globe,” Sin-thea advised.

“Launch is immanent, so we must be off and away,” answered Graybeard, “and you don’t look at all how I pictured you.”

Sin-thea wished them well, “Godspeed; all is ready.”

The next day, Rascal, from deep inside the nuclear site itself, defused the intended launch, and furthermore rendered the site inoperable, also planting a bomb in it, then left, and was seen boarding the jet on the landing strip, his pilot already within. The jet soon took off, then crashed into the mountains a short distance away. Confirmation of the dead were then made by the Taliban, nothing unexpected being noted. Their funerals were scheduled for the morrow. Just thereafter, the nuclear site imploded and all hell broke loose.

Later that night, back at Eastern Field Command, Rascal, Graybeard, and Sin-thea sat down for a drink and toasted the mission. (Sin-thea drank only Canada Dry ginger ale).

“Another mission, another jet destroyed,” laughed Sin-thea.

“Darn things just don’t last,” added Graybeard.

(How could all this be, their survival, plus the easy destruction of the nuclear site? A free trip will be given to all responders. The free trip is not like one inch or just going down the street; it is to far away places and lasts for many months. All transportation paid for free. A biochemist, SB_UK, was a part of the mission also. Your family is included on the free trip, the prize for responding, plus pets.)

Well, no one was even close so far. We do know, though, that by now, Rascal is much afraid of flying.

The answer: Sin-thea’s Eastern field agents had intercepted the Taliban commander, based on r.p.bibra’s intel, while he was on approach to the Islamabad nuclear site, substituting Rascal, who had already been pretty much made up to look like him even by the time he had arrived in Sin-thea’s office.

It was not that difficult to impersonate the commander, for a beard covered most of the face, and a robe covered most of the body. SB_UK applied a few finishing details as the jet flew to the site, carrying Rascal, his pilot, Graybeard, SB_UK, the captured Taliban commander, and another Taliban.

While underway, Rascal had perfected the commander’s voice imitation and learned his gestures there and also from r.p.’s video. The language was a problem, but Rascal had learned the word “yes”, since any

prompts to the commander at the site would most likely just be formalities of that nature. Rascal would mostly gesture anyway and try to look very serious. Additionally, Rascal knew that great leeway would be given to the commander, as his personage was considered holy. A search would have been out of the question, plus the entire situation at the site was that of complete disarray, they having all just taken it over the day before.

Well, of course, Rascal was let into the site and taken down to the control room, where he waved all away but for the main control person, whom he soon disabled. It was then a simple matter to inactivate the controls by some tampering, and plant a bomb that he had carried in under his robe.

Leaving the site, Rascal boarded the jet, one designed with Taliban markings, noting the two Taliban, one the commander, both knocked out and propped up in their seats. Rascal activated the takeoff autopilot and exited out the other side of the plane into a service vehicle manned by Graybeard.

They drove off, picking up SB_UK, who was both a lookout and a back-up, for he had mixed and poured universal acid into the ventilation system, a method that would disable the site, as well, but just for a while and at a much slower rate.

The jet took off on its own and crashed into a mountain, as designed, after which the bodies of the Taliban Commander and 'pilot' were recovered. A 'state' funeral was planned, at which time Musharraf's forces would likely attack, for r.p. was still tailing and telling on them.

The nuclear site then imploded, our good ninja friends making their way far away during the confusion.

Well, no one got this exact right answer, since no one cared about the contest, although Leskey reported a gland a having something to do with it, but I'm still granting the prize of an annual and complete one year trip around the sun to every ToeQuest member.



Earth could not answer, nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;



Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.
(Omar)

Our blind-fated path was the further paved

When asteroids finished most of the species—

Far from a feature of intelligent design:

But, it opened the space that was needed.



— Chapter 18 —
Rascal's Last Mission?

All good things... must come to an end.

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW

*Earth couldn't be farther out in space, alone;
In all directions it rolls along, unknown.
Look at the stars piercing the depths of time:
They beckon, warm and welcome, the fires of home.*

Sometimes the road is too long or the path too far, and, suddenly, the whims of fate are upon one, as either a curse or a blessing, eventually even toward the final benediction that ever calls. Rascal Puff had assigned himself yet again to a major task of short notice, tempting the Fates to counter the serendipity of his karma in the face of a Probability that had no memory; yet, Nona, who spun the thread of life from her distaff onto her spindle was sound asleep, but Decima was active and measuring the thread of Rascal's life with her rod, and Morta, the cutter of the thread of life, was choosing the manner of his death.





(The Three Fates)

The incessantly turbulent world was still turning and overturning in and of its perpetual emotion. The personifications of destiny had recently visited doom on the Earth. North Korea had gone nuclear and had thus been reduced to rubble. Iran, the birthplace of the arts, was but a memory. Iraq was still in civil war, its oil fields burning and useless. The Taliban yet threatened to take over Pakistan. The ice caps were nearly gone. The Russians were acting as Soviets once again.

Rascal was in a stealth jet that was flying over the heart of Russia, adjusting his oxygen tanks. The pilot looked back at Rascal, saying, "You don't like jets, do you?"

"Not especially. I think I'll get off."

"Two minutes."



Entering Russian Airspace

The jet slowed; Rascal was out the door and then free falling into and through the foreign darkness. Ah, there it was, hard to miss, for it was lit up like a Christmas tree at a carnival. Rascal flared his body and headed over and down toward the KGB maximum security prison, floating for a minute or two, then deployed his black chute and steered himself into the center of the very large roof, and then after landing used some heating equipment as a shield. The eyes of the corner towers had all been looking outward and downward, oblivious to the inward and upward directions. *Was this not always the case with mankind?*

Rascal traversed the large ductwork, making some innocuous marks near the twists and turns that would guide him back out for his escape. He soon found his way into the heating plant, standing there but a few seconds before a guard walked by. The guard continued on, noting Rascal with tool in hand, wearing the right worker clothes, and bearing an ID.



Soviet Prison

In a while, a work crew of sorts was passing by and so Rascal fell in behind them as they all headed into the cell blocks to relieve some masonry workers, many of the doors shutting and locking behind them. Rascal spotted the prisoner that he was after, noting a spare bed in the adjacent cell. He pretended to inspect some cement work near the cell. Shortly thereafter, the cells opened to let the men out for early morning exercise, and Rascal slipped into that adjacent cell, then removed his maintenance uniform to reveal the orange prison clothes underneath, and pretended to sleep, while refining his plan. It was not often that someone broke into prison. The exit, well, that might be a bit more difficult, but, hopefully, 'routine'.

The prisoners were returned after a hour or so, and the guards left, not even noticing the additional inmate. Rascal motioned the prisoner of interest to come to the bars that separated their cells, and then managed to loop a wire around the man's neck, hinting that it would tighten if he screamed out.

Rascal spoke gently, "Now, mind you, I already know some of the answers to the questions that I am going to ask you, so if I catch you in a lie, the noose tightens a lot. Got it? On the third lie you die."

"Yes," the man moaned.

"Did you send a look-alike to Argentina to interchange with Fredrick?"

“No.”

The wire was pulled taught and the man began gagging, soon changing his answer to “Yes”. The wire loosened, but not a lot, just enough to allow for breathing.



“Well, we caught him. Did you know that your so-called improved Botox factory self-destructed?”

“What! No.”

“I believe you, for you were imprisoned here before that occurred. You are in here due to theft?”

“Yes.”

“I knew that. Times must be tough for the Conspiracy. What was to be the impostor’s mission?”

“I don’t know.”

The wire dug into the man’s neck, causing some bleeding as the man almost passed out.

“Remember, we caught him. He talked. Now answer the question so I can know if I can depend on you. By the way, we deactivated his self-destruct mechanism.”

“He was to find and infiltrate the TOE Center, or rather, have them find him and bring him there for some emergency.”

“It wouldn’t have worked.”

“Why?”

“If I told you, I would have to kill you.”

The very tight wire loosened a bit.

“So, I see that you don’t know the exact location of the TOE Center. Then what was to happen?”

“He would gain entrance quickly, without being checked thoroughly, to help with the crisis. Then he would send us all the TOE data.”

“What crisis?”

“Random mortar strikes on Oahu.”

“From?”

“We have people around.”

“I believe you, for we just took them out recently.”

“Oh my.”

“What is your backup plan?” The wire grew tighter.

“None.” More bleeding began.

“Wait...” The wire eased up a bit.

“There is always a backup plan. Stop being foolish. Death comes next. We have some knowledge of the backup plan. This is your last chance.”
The noose tightened.



“We borrowed a nuclear submarine from the Russians. It is near to sitting deep and undetected in an ocean trench.”

“When is the attack?” The wire tightened a bit.

“Today, imminent even as we speak. Ha. It’s unstoppable by you, seeing as you are in a Soviet prison. Terrorists will be blamed. If we can’t get the TOE, then no one can have it.”

“This is truly the last gasp of your sad organization, isn’t it?”

“Yes, our bases are in total disarray, one could say.”

“Where are your autonomous sites?”

“Even I don’t know that.”

“True.”

“Millions will die on Oahu; have you no conscience?”

The Leader could not answer.

“Wrong answer.”

One last gasp and the man who led the Conspiracy was no longer a threat to anyone. Rascal let him down slowly to his bunk to sleep forever in the land of oblivion and regret.

PRISONER

‘Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?’

*‘It was my master,’ said the prisoner.
‘I thought I could outdo everybody in the world
in wealth and power,
and I amassed in my own treasure-house the money
due to my king.
When sleep overcame me I lay upon the bed
that was for my lord,
and on waking up I found I was a prisoner
in my own treasure-house.’*

*‘Prisoner, tell me, who was it
that wrought this unbreakable chain?’*

*‘It was I,’ said the prisoner,
‘who forged this chain very carefully.
I thought my invincible power
would hold the world captive
leaving me in a freedom undisturbed.
Thus night and day I worked at the chain
with huge fires and cruel hard strokes.
When at last the work was done*

*and the links were complete and unbreakable,
I found that it held me in its grip.'*
(Tagore)

Rascal's exit strategy was now a total mess, for he couldn't wait around for its scheduled happening. Was the third shift work crew coming on soon? He could slip out with the crew shift change. Would they check his ID as he left? Yes, and it wouldn't be in the computer, nor would they have a record of his entering.

Rascal did what he had to do, which was what one would never do, and live. He took out his transmitter and sent the necessary information to Sin-thea at Eastern Field Command, who then relayed it to #1 East in Turkey and on to Niihau to GrandMaster #1 West. Of course this transmission would be noticed at the prison, as well as elsewhere. They would be up here in a matter of minutes. So much for doing the impossible once again. Necessity had been the mother of this impromptu convention of invention that would surely become Rascal's last battlefield.

LAST CURTAIN

*I know that the day will come
when my sight of this earth shall be lost,
and life will take its leave in silence,
drawing the last curtain over my eyes.*

*Yet stars will watch at night,
and morning rise as before,
and hours heave like sea waves
casting up pleasures and pains.
When I think of this end of my moments,
the barrier of the moments breaks
and I see by the light of death
thy world with its careless treasures.*

*Rare is its lowliest seat,
rare is its meanest of lives.
Things that I longed for in vain
and things that I got
---let them pass.
Let me but truly possess
the things that I ever spurned
and overlooked.*

(Tagore)

(We can't just leave Rascal in the middle of Russia in a prison with smoke coming out of the vents, can we? I will take 10 years off your age if you can help him.)

Indeed, Rascal is on his own, as he went on his own, for there could be no help in the alerted time whence he resides now, between a rock, a hard place, and an abyss. Yet, we are of miracles made, and there is always a chance, however slim, for goodness to triumph, in this crumbling world, for Rascal is indeed a man of destiny. So, roll on, fate. Rascal led a glorious life, but... wait... there is a spur of the moment plan brewing... Can Houdini return?

Rascal, after changing back to his work clothes, remotely blew off all the explosives on the prison roof that would have aided and covered his escape into the sky. Luck would have its way now or not. Glorious Defeat was long overdue, and was now looming at the cell door.

All hell soon broke loose, the minimal night guard shift running in total up the stairs toward the roof. Some smoke and flames shot out of the heating vents. Rascal quickly finished the lasering of the cell bars that he had previously nearly cut all the way through, then carefully put them back as a kind of joke on whomever leaned against them. Then he quickly lasered shut the stairway door to the roof, welding it totally inoperable, and then ran down the hallways with the evacuating work crews.

ELF waves went out from Niihau to the fleet and the hunt was immediately underway. Subs plunged into the dangerous depths of the ocean trench. Go too deep and you would never come back. The Conspiracy sub was a suicide sub, nearly in its place, after probably following the deep trench for a day or so, from which it could never surface, but could still launch from, its missiles unstoppable at such a short range.

Arriving at the front door checkout station with the work crews, Rascal could see 'freedom' outside, but there was a holdup; the prison was going into lock down. No one could leave, although a few already had. These intermediate times of chaos and uncertainty were the best times to act, so Rascal fired his mini machine gun into the checkout station, blasting the door window beyond, too, then dove through it and ran on out the next to last door that led to the lobby, carefully welding it shut afterwards, imprisoning all within, prisoners of their own prison.

Startled would-be visitors hit the floor as Rascal raced out the main doors, welding them shut, too. Fire engines and police were already racing toward the prison, and the officers would surely round up anyone wandering about outside this disaster.

Rascal looked up at the guard towers, expecting to be shot, but the men in the towers were now all looking inward to the roof that was in flames. *My Kingdom for a horse*, he thought. He gently removed an old

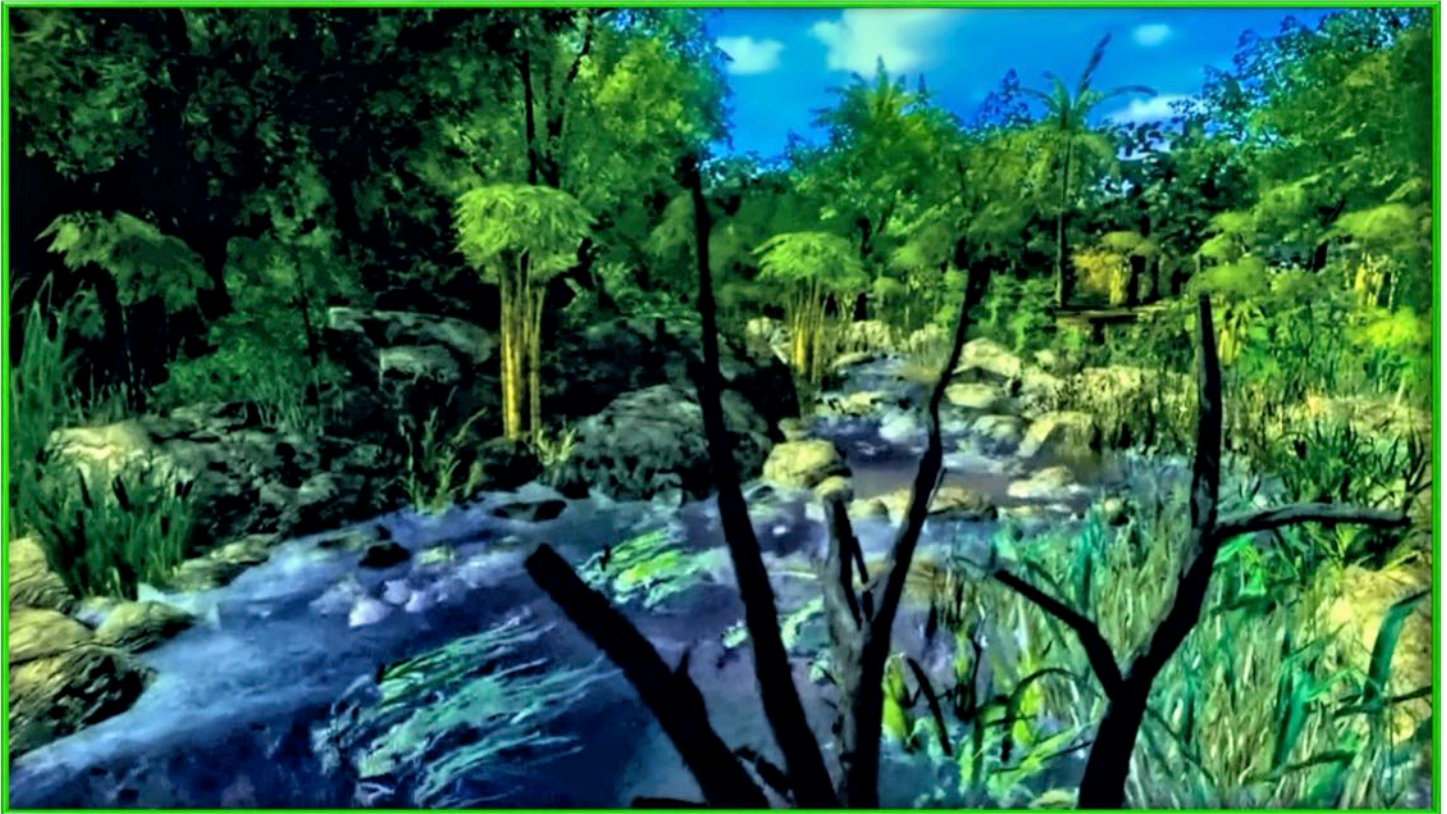
lady from her car and drove off leisurely toward the oncoming emergency vehicles, a half a mile or so, even pulling to the side of the road so that they could pass, and stayed there. The police would soon be upon everyone, anyway, their emergency escort duties having greatly diminished.

There was a grove of trees, with huge mountains beyond. There could be no more driving, of course, since there would be roadblocks everywhere, not to mention the checking of anyone who drove at night in this suspicious country. The elegance of his former escape plan had escaped as well, yet here he was, breathing the air of the free.



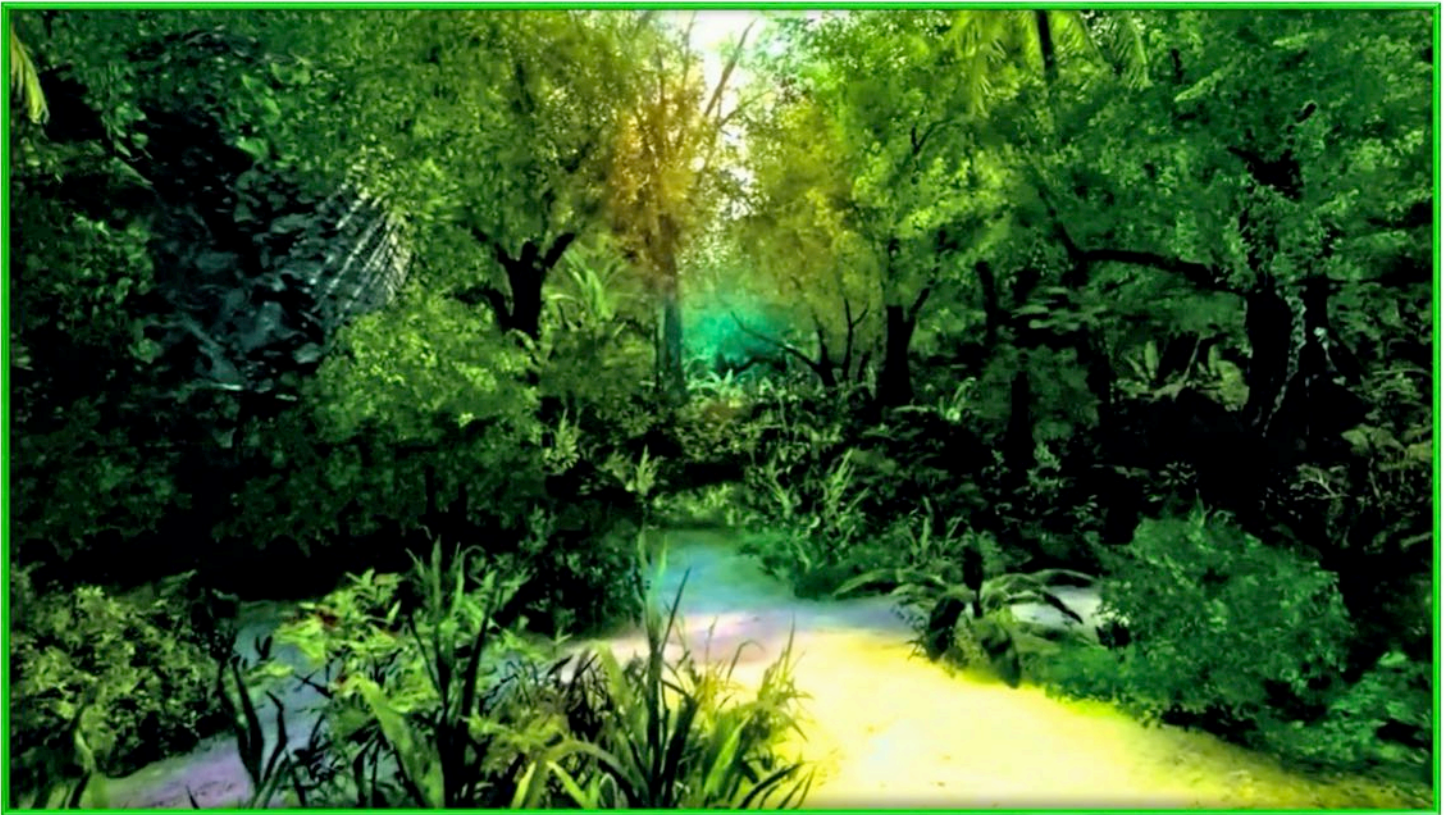
Rascal crawled along the ground, then crept through the beginning of the forest, and was soon up and onto the slight slope leading to the mountain top. The news of a wild worker blasting his way out would soon be known to all, so Rascal took off his work clothes and then rolled them up, covered them with mud and threw them down a deep gully. No use leaving any ready clues, although the dogs would find them eventually. He laughed at himself now, being clad in bright prison orange. He got rid of his over shirt, then cut his pants into shorts and turned them inside out. In glee, he noted that the lining was grey inside. He now looked like kind of a normal person out for a stroll, instead of a blazoned target.

There could be no more radio transmissions; he was on his own. Up the hill and then the mountain steep he went, steadily but unhurriedly, for there was no need for exhaustion yet. An hour later he was close to the top. Which way to go? *My Kingdom for a moment to activate my cell phone and check its GPS*, but it would have been a death warrant, for the total story of his treachery was probably already well known within the prison and without the land. No rescue party could venture forth to. Help him now.



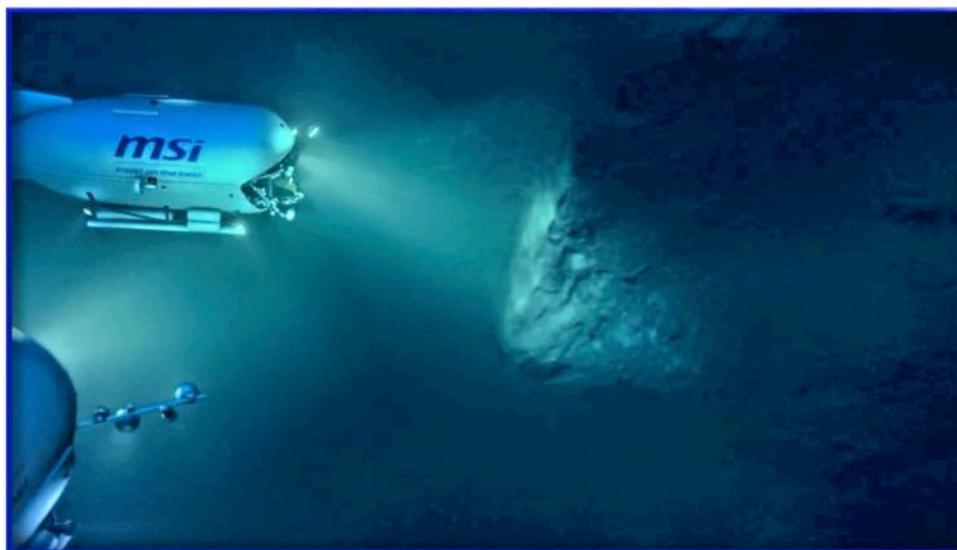
Not willing to risk the main trail, Rascal took off on a deer trail, for they knew what they were doing. U.S. satellites would have detected the prison's problem by now, indicating to the Ninja Empire that Rascal's plans had changed. Putting some distance in between was now the chief objective, so Rascal moved quickly, ever onward, sensing direction from the stars of the night sky. These, the fires of home, would guide him to his end, for whatever had brought him here to life would have to take him home. His time on Earth as a shimmering rainbow of stardust had been unsurpassable.

He had walked for 20 hours, living on nourishment from streams, plants, and edible berries. The second night was at hand, the best time for travel, and so he did another 12 hours, then made a cover and slept for 12, now half dead.



Death retreated, as its fair brother, sleep, restored him to health. *Now where? Through thousands of miles through the motherland?* He would risk a three-blip signal in another day or two. He walked on. Several times, Rascal heard helicopters approaching, and had to hide, noting the fully armed ships and the Russians inside peering out. After four days, they came no more.

Meanwhile, near Oahu, the subs had long since quickly found the Russian attack sub and had turned it into a tomb. A remote probe would be sent down to learn the secrets of the deep.



Too weak to continue, Rascal sent out the three blips and waited. How the heck was someone now going to land in Russia, unnoticed, and rescue him? But then again, he knew they would try. He slept for 20 hours.

Three days passed, Rascal staying put, gathering strength for the journey of a thousand miles across Mother Russia that would soon have to begin with a single step. Russia didn't like any interference and was probably on alert everywhere out of habit of its paranoia.

(A GrandMaster's Thoughts of Rascal)

FRIEND

*Art thou abroad on this stormy night
on thy journey of love, my friend?*

*The sky groans like one in despair.
I have no sleep tonight.
Ever and again I open my door and look out on
the darkness, my friend!*

*I can see nothing before me.
I wonder where lies thy path!
By what dim shore of the ink-black river,
by what far edge of the frowning forest,*

*Through what mazy depth of gloom art thou threading
thy course to come to me, my friend?*

(Tagore)

*The Angel of Light finds Rascal to bless,
And says: "Old Puff, I must soon repossess
Your clay, so let us drink to your success!"
He drinks and smiles, ready for Life's last caress.*

*Old Rascal reclines on the grass, near death.
The Dark Angel arrives and to him saith:
"Drink one last deep draught from Life's precious cup."
The Puff smiles and sips, then breathes his last breath?*

An older, but fully armed Soviet era helicopter gun ship approached and quickly passed over as Rascal peeked at it from some bushes. *They are going someplace else and not looking for me any more*, he noted. Yet, it soon returned and landed nearby. If they had discovered him, more

troops would soon be sent into the area. *So, this was the end then, of my time in the middle of nowhere within the greater nowhere in a spiral arm of the Milky Way, Rascal surmised. I should have kept my desk job.*

So, Rascal is alone amid the splendour of mountainous nature on the beautiful earth as the enemy closes in. Russian eyes are everywhere for a thousand miles in all directions, looking for anything unusual. '00' is all over the place on the Russian roulette wheel. Snake eyes roll...

PARTING WORDS

*When I go from hence
let this be my parting word,
that what I have seen is unsurpassable.*

*I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus
that expands on the ocean of light,
and thus am I blessed*

---let this be my parting word.

*In this playhouse of infinite forms
I have had my play
and here have I caught sight of him
that is formless.*

*My whole body and my limbs
have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch;
and if the end comes here, let it come*

*---let this be my parting word.
(Tagore's wishes)*

"What the...!"



Robert stepped out of the helicopter saying, “Rascal, come out from wherever you are!”

“How did you guys get this...”

“You don’t want to know. Hop aboard. I know it’s old, but we tuned it up well.”

There was a meal of hot lobster and drawn butter waiting for Rascal, compliments of his Master, and so he enjoyed this manna of the Gods as they began the long and perilous journey to the coast.

“Do we have enough fuel, Robert?”

“Maybe, maybe not, but we will fly at low altitude to avoid curiosity and to conserve fuel. We’ve added extra tanks, but....”

“...I hate the uncertainty principle.”

“We’ll be looking for a Nato freighter pulling out of port...”

“We can’t land on that.”

“No, but we will anyway.”

“Who made this plan, a fiction writer?”

“Yes, and it was the best we could do on such short notice. I even took the weekend off from work.”

“I see no pursuit. The Russians must have heard my blips.”

“They did, or just about did, as we knew they might, so we instantly sent out more blips by remote control from transmitters all over the place. Fortunately, they’re still tracking down the wrong ones, or have given up.”

The helicopter swerved unexpectedly. “Do you know how to fly this thing, Robert?”

“No, for the pedals are reversed.”

“You are getting used to this?”

“Heck no. I just reversed my feet, crossing my legs over.”

“Crikey!”

...

Many hours later, they were on approach to the coast, the fuel gauge already having read ‘empty’ for the last 20 minutes.”

“Robert, how are we running on no fuel?”

“As with new American cars, the gauge is offset ahead a bit so one has time to get to a gas station.”

“This is not a car and we are in Russia and we are using an old Soviet machine.”

“Oops.”

They cleared the coast but the freighter was not in sight.

“Now what?”

“The freighter probably got delayed by typical Russian red tape. It may be yet coming out of the harbor though.”

“Do we have any subs around?”

“Not this close in.”

“Are we heading out to sea?”

“Yes, we can float on a raft.”



“There’s a huge storm coming in.”

“OK, we’ll turn around.”

“You were going to do that anyway.”

“Yes, better to float on a raft closer to shore, or land.”

The helicopter then gained as much altitude as it could, and then the fuel gave out.

“Great Mother of England.”

“Hold on, I see the ship racing out.”



“We’re going to land on a freighter without a landing pad with no fuel?”

“The rotors will slow our descent.”

“Not good enough.”

“I turned off the fuel when I heard a sputter; we probably have about 30 seconds worth left.”

“And you’re going to turn the engines back on just in time.”

“Yes.”

“You are certainly a fearless leader, Robert.”

The freighter was just making it into international waters, running at flank speed now, with the gliding copter heading dangerously downward for it.

“Is this going to work?”

“No sweat; I play video games.”

“Cripes. Is the freighter going to slow down or stop?”

“No, that would look suspicious.”

“Double cripes.”

The two moving crafts were converging rapidly.

“I never thought calculus would be of any use, so I didn’t take it.”

“Neither did I.”

“Crimey sakes.”

“Where did you get these ‘cripes’ things? You’re not from Australia.”

“I get them from ~boots~, of ToeQuest.”

“Oh.”



The helicopter was literally spiraling down to the rendezvous to crash as Robert restarted the engines, slowing it somewhat, then a bit more. The freighter crew had removed some railings to give some more room to land. The copter hovered, then fell the last few feet as the fuel gave out, then slid a few feet over toward the open edge, the right side hanging out over the sea.

“Quick, Rascal, move to my side and follow me out.”

They got out and noted the helicopter teetering and tottering.

Robert put one finger against it, pressing no harder than the force of a butterfly’s wing flap, and sent it sliding into the sea. “Don’t need this piece of junk anymore. Have to get rid of the evidence anyway.”

“Robert, I’m going to wring your...”

“...I’ll close one of your threads.”

“OK, never mind.”

GENESIS REVEALED

A tale I've written, invented, yes, hence,
An attempt to unite the Christian pense
With the non-belief, in a middle ground,
Somewhere between mystery and good sense:

With flora mystical and magical,
Eden's botanical garden was blest,
So Eve, taking more than just the Apple,
Plucked off the loveliest of the best.

Thus it's to her that we must give our thanks
For Earth's variety of fruits and plants,
For when she was out of Paradise thrown,
She stole all the flowers we've ever known.

Therewith, through sensuous beauty and grace,
Eve with Adam brought forth the human race,
But our world would never have come to be,
Had not GOD allowed them HIS mystery.

For when they were banished from HIS bosom,
Eve saw more than just the Apple Blossom,
And took, on her way through Eden's bowers,
Many wondrous plants and fruitful flowers.

Mighty GOD, upon seeing this great theft,
At first was angered, but soon smiled and wept,
For human nature was made in HIS name—
So HE had no one but HIMSELF to blame!

But still HE made ready HIS thunderbolt,
As HIS Old Testament wrath cast its vote
To end this experiment gone so wrong—
And then HE felt the joy of life's new song.



Eve had all the plants that she could carry—
GOD in HIS wisdom grew uncontrary.
Out of Eden she waved the flowered wands,
The seeds spilling upon the barren lands.

GOD held the lightning bolt already lit,
No longer knowing what to do with it,
So HE threw it into the heart of Hell,
Forming of it a place where all was well.

Thus the world from molten fire had birth,
As Hell faded and was turned into Earth.
This HE gave to Adam and Eve with love,
For them and theirs to make a Heaven of.

From HIS bolt grew the Hawthorn and Bluebell,
And HE be damned, for Eve stole these as well!
So HE laughed and pretended not to see,
Retreating into eternity.

“So be it,” HE said, when time was young,
“That such is the life MY design has wrung,
For in their souls some part of ME has sprung—
So let them enjoy all the songs I’ve sung.

“Life was much too easy in Paradise,
And lacked therefore of any real meaning,
For without the lows there can be no highs—
All that remains is a dull flat feeling!

“There’s no Devil to blame for their great zest—
This mix of good and ‘bad’ makes them best!
The human nature that lets them survive,
Also makes them feel very much alive.

“That same beastful soul that makes them glad
Does also make them seem a little bad.
If only I could strip the wrong from right,
But I cannot have the day without the night!”

— Chapter 19 —
Niihau

As Rascal landed on the helo pad in Niihau, he thought, *My God, it's been over five years since I've seen my old Master. Where did the time go? Whence have all these roots of evil sprouted?*



The scent of hibiscus blossoms flavored the balmy air. It seemed like heaven. GrandMaster West walked out slowly but surely, now using a cane, and was ethereally framed by the glow of the setting sun. He looked much older, although still vibrant with a kind of deep calm, if those two traits could be present at the same time. A cascade of wondrous memories swept over them both, of the early days, the tough days, the triumphs and the glorious failures, but ever always with the everlasting gladness of life's being washing over them with its goodness.

“I heard that you took a very long walk, Rascal, for one of your age.”

“I had to, but it was indeed grueling, Master.”

“Goodness drove you on, for in that there is strength.”

“I suppose it did.”

“I have to pull you off Field Command.”

“What? I love this job; well, maybe not the last two weeks.”

“You were the best.”

“Why then?”

“I’m giving you my job. You are now #1 West.”

“Huh?”

“I am fading; I am 99 years old.”

“What! You don’t look it.”

“I kept in shape and ate right, but now the time has come, although I will still be around here for a little while to show you the ropes. Reports come in... you read between the lines.”

“You could live another 10 years.”

“Not likely, but all good things end... and for you, Rascal... they end when better things become.”

“But...”

Rascal felt a presence behind him, but he didn’t turn around.

“A thousand monks have just crept up on me,” Rascal surmised out loud.



“They are our third graduating class. Tomorrow, they go forth to the four winds to keep their eyes and ears open; they will even sense without turning about, just like you just did.”

“The world yet rolls like a snowball toward the Gates of Hell.”

Half of the monks came around behind the Master’s side to form a complete circle, 5 rows deep, bowing both to the new and the old #1’s.

“How will I do this, Master?”

“Rascal, remember when you first came to us, so long ago, having ridden so far and alone on a bicycle in the dark?”

“Yes; I could never forget that night.”

“It’s the same now, only you ride in the light.”

“Master, who is that man yonder, sitting on that hill?”

“He is our founder, Thomas Veil. He will visit with us shortly.”

“Nowhere Man; he is legend; no one has ever seen him.”

“None but us.”

Trish, #1 East, materialized somehow, next to West, her shimmering form changing to Nona, the thread spinner of life, then back, or perhaps this was just in Rascal’s imagination.

“GrandMaster East, you sent the chopper... Thank You.”

“We thought we should cut you some slack.”

She took a step to the side as the Master removed his sword, lightning fast, holding it aloft.

Rascal held out both hands, worried that he might lose an ear as the sword came down on his shoulder, but it was already there, Rascal not having seen it move. The Master then laid the sword in Rascal’s hands.

“I accept the job, Master, and swear to protect the Earth and its people.”

“More than that, Rascal, old friend; you must protect Eternity. You are the guardian of forever now, and you stand at the edge of the abyss, warding off the oblivion of evil.”

“Where will I find you after you leave here, Master.”

“I will be with the wind and flow as the water, and so you shall know me when you feel the breeze and quench your thirst in the stream.”

LIGHT

*Light, my light, the world-filling light,
the eye-kissing light,
heart-sweetening light!*

*Ah, the light dances, my darling,
at the center of my life;
the light strikes, my darling,
the chords of my love;
the sky opens, the wind runs wild,
laughter passes over the earth.*

*The butterflies spread their sails
on the sea of light.*

*Lilies and jasmines surge up
on the crest of the waves of light.*

*The light is shattered into gold
on every cloud, my darling,
and it scatters gems in profusion.*

*Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling,
and gladness without measure.*

*The heaven's river has drowned its banks
and the flood of joy is abroad.
(Tagore)*

THE ROOT OF EVIL

*We see many good and bad things directly,
Person to person, via the actual.
Such are the good civil laws
And good human values taught.*

*The problem becomes when we 'see'
From no direction but the imagined, via the unreal.*

*These 'good' things, merely pronounced,
Also define their 'bad' counterpart.*

*One then 'forgets' their source,
Leaping into adoption,
Becoming with them one; thus,
The ideas must be protected.*

*Anger arises toward the contrary,
As emotion stains the brain.*

*Then, evil is done in the name of 'good'.
All these 'good' things eventually
Come to a bloody end.*

*(Rascal is on the peak of Niihau, using all of his know how
To prevent a bad and ugly face from infecting the human race.)*



Soul to soul, it said to me,
I'm the light,
Thy spirit's sight,
a beauty bold and bright,

An inspiration come
from darkest night,
A newborn star
aglow with insight.



Painting by: Bob Nava by Adolf S. Minter

Dualities seem to assist nature:

Good/evil, on/off, hot-cold, man/woman,



Up/down, left-right, here-there, past-future;

So, none can exist without the other.

— Chapter 20 —
The Final Epilog?

DEPARTURE

On the way out of Honolulu, we, as Austino and Passiona, noted thousands upon thousands of monks, spaced about ten feet apart, along the road to the airport. Someone important would be coming by in a while. The monks were in the airport, too, and on the tarmac, as well, many even along the runway. We were waiting to board when some music started playing in our heads, an angel-like triumphant choir of joy...



“How do we hear music?” she asked. “As if we had earphones from ipods?”

“It’s the old GrandMaster; he can do that. See that man getting out of the limo and approaching the black jet?”

“That’s him?”

“Yes; he retired at age 100 from the Leadership of the Ninja Empire to do some other things, within or without.”

“What things?”

“Well, let’s just say that I wouldn’t want to be the head of state where that plane lands.”

“The jet has missiles attached.”

“It has 16 fire-and-forget hellfire missiles on it, plus 3 other firing systems on it. That particular jet is called the Angel of Death.”



“Where’s he going?”

“No one knows, but wherever he goes, the world will be a much better place after he does whatever he has to do.”

“Will it be done with the jet?”

“No, not likely, unless attacked.”

“How then will this one old guy do anything?”

“He will arrive on the breeze, as soft as the wind, bestow his blessing, then evaporate like the water, afterwards... for the most part hopefully never seen and never known.”

“Or he will die trying.”

“Perhaps, but then all the other GrandMasters will try, in turn.”

“Godspeed.”

“I’ll tell you the whole story on the flight back to Chicago. These are desperate times. 13.75 years of evolution are at stake, for we have not yet colonized space.”

“We’re not going to make it?”

“The TOE Center was able to determine the future of humankind, given the present state...”

“And?”

“Humankind again had no future, for they no longer existed.”

**THE WHIM THAT WILL
NEARLY DESTROY HUMANKIND,
AS PREDICTED BY THE TOE CENTER
BY LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE**

The populace of the new Iran could no longer be shielded from the real world by the clerics and the Holy Supreme Leader, for they had the internet and had even adopted some of the freedoms of western ways. Yet, the crackdowns had still been working, to some extent, but when the nuclear reactors had been destroyed, the billions wasted on their construction had become quite apparent, as well as the fact that Iran had plenty of oil and didn't even need them but to attempt destruction.

Yet, to easily squash this sentiment, the clerics stirred up some of the old anti-American feelings, and added to the ever-present hatred of Israel, as well, since both of them had participated in the attack on the reactors. One more was secretly under construction. Furthermore, they closed the Straits of Hormuz, first by just declaring it, and more finally through a naval battle in which they of course lost, which blocked it. Even though the center of the straights was in international waters, it had become clogged with the debris of sunken ships and had become totally unusable. Non nuclear missiles, some containing poison gas, had meanwhile been launched upon Israel, doing quite a bit of death and damage. Israel then laid waste to more of Iran.

At first the Sunnis did not so much mind the downfall of the Shiites, but for their joint antagonism for the West, but then Israel repelled more attacks from the other Arab nations, and then some, as in ten eyes for an eye. The Shia and the Sunni soon united against their common enemies to have OPEC halt all shipments of oil.

Several months later, a massive allied invasion of the Middle-East began, while the Arabs began a counterattack against Israel and even set fire to their own oil fields, lest they be captured. Israel, about to be overrun, used tactical nukes on the approaching hordes, as well full nukes on the Middle-East. Now the oil fields were also radioactive, and so of no use whatsoever for hundreds of years.

During the war, the world's reserve oil supplies had much dwindled, the remaining pumps unable to keep up with the demand, much of it going to the military or to the rich, but they, too, eventually began to go dry. Russia mobilized, it still having oil; however, cruise missiles fired from allied nuclear subs then destroyed its military and its refineries.

In the years to come, all the world's economies failed, a minor nuclear winter ensued, infrastructures fell apart, and chaos and disease did away with much of the Earth's population in time. Global warming then climaxed and flooded what was left of all coastal cities. Canada became

subtropical and thus became a refuge for a few good humans. Those left began to live simple; they hunted game and supplanted it with whatever they could grow or find. They were perhaps of a new genesis, the germ of a new world, one focused on the actual living of life, for the old distractions were now few and far between.

(Back to the Present)

CHANGING THE COURSE OF HISTORY

The religious zealot kneels on his prayer mat, talking with Allah for the 6th time today. The mission is on; many nonbelievers will die! The bomber purifies himself, ready to enter paradise, sure of a higher place near the Great Allah... The zealot stand up... TachPara shoots him dead.

TachPara easily entered one of the new and nearly complete Iranian nuclear facilities as its 'new' janitor, having replaced the former one exactly by using the improved Botox. He began replacing the innards of the battery operated flood lights that were for power outages. Soon they contained bombs, all 16 of them, and were near enough to the main pillars to bring down the entire structure from within. This was the only way, for there were five levels of reinforced steel and concrete above, which insured that what had happened the last time could not happen again via any kind of bunker buster bombs. TachPara would activate all the timers, then depart this job as best he could. He even wrote a new Broadway musical play as he bided his time, then provided rhyme for all of John Milton's blank verse.

Midmorning finally arrived. This was it. He sent the signal to the timers and then wheeled his janitor cart towards the elevators. He boarded, along with two important looking officials, and the elevator headed up to the top.

Said one to the other, "Our Supreme Leader has spoken to Allah and has received approval for the complete destruction of Israel."

Just about then, they all heard the loud rumbles of the coordinated explosions, then the thunderous collapse of the imploding building as all of its layers pancaked when the support pillars were all blown away. TachPara suggested that perhaps Jehovah was much displeased with Allah. Only the elevator stuck out of the dusty rubble, the door opening six stories above the now airy pit. The two officials quickly ran out into the dust and fell though the open air to their deaths, joining all those below that were trapped within. TachPara was soon rescued and sent by ambulance to a hospital. He decided to go to an airport instead, writing a brand new opera along the way. Then he went about solving the financial crisis, for he had a few hours to spare.

OLD WEST PREVENTS THE WORLD'S NEAR FUTURE

The ultra-orthodox Wahhabi sect of Islam had spread like an unruly weed across the country and beyond, choking out all forward and rational thinking, silencing all dissenters within and without the faith, and damning millions of people to a belief system that had more in common with the Stone Age than the twenty-first century. The flawed 'concept of good' that now included the ever more increasing wishes of Allah of course had led to all of the contrary as being labeled and seen as an 'evil' that was to be excised everywhere by God's will.

Yet, there was still a source at the top that could be nipped in the bud, lest this sect grow even further, sprouting more and more weeds that would blossom with the woe that would eventually spread to the point of thickening all around until it imprisoned too many minds, like some old and unattended English garden hedgerow, whose dark clouds and roots of actual evil would then begin that which would result in the end of all life on Earth. Who ever would have thought that making things up could bring so much harm upon the world.



The black stealth jet, named 'The Angel of Death', crossed the border and landed unobserved on a long 'driveway' in the dark at a country house maintained by the CIA in Iran. An old man, made up to appear as old as he really was, which was one hundred years, stepped out and got

into a dilapidated car whose floorboards on the passenger side had worn all the way through. The old man kicked them through a bit more, making the opening even larger. He drove and parked the car near the mosque, noting the men with rifles on the roof, one even with a hand held missile that could take out a helicopter.

The long time Supreme Leader, anointed and ordained by Allah Himself, would be arriving soon on his only outing, accompanied by four bodyguards, one fore, one aft, and another on each side. The Leader had only to survive a walk of about twenty feet from his bulletproof limo to the doors of the mosque. As usual, any standers-by would know to stay clear or be harshly kicked away, and yet, one old man was walking so slowly as to never make it out of the way, even with the shouts of the imams at the doors shooing him ever onward.

The Supreme Leader arrived just then, eying the old man, then presumably dismissing him as not one to be concerned about. The bodyguards nevertheless hurled insults at the old man, the only effect being to stop him in his tracks, right in front of them, about six feet away, and still blocking the path to the doors. The lead bodyguard went up to kick the frail body to send it flying away, but the old and former GrandMaster West held onto his foot and shattered the bodyguard's knee with his cane.

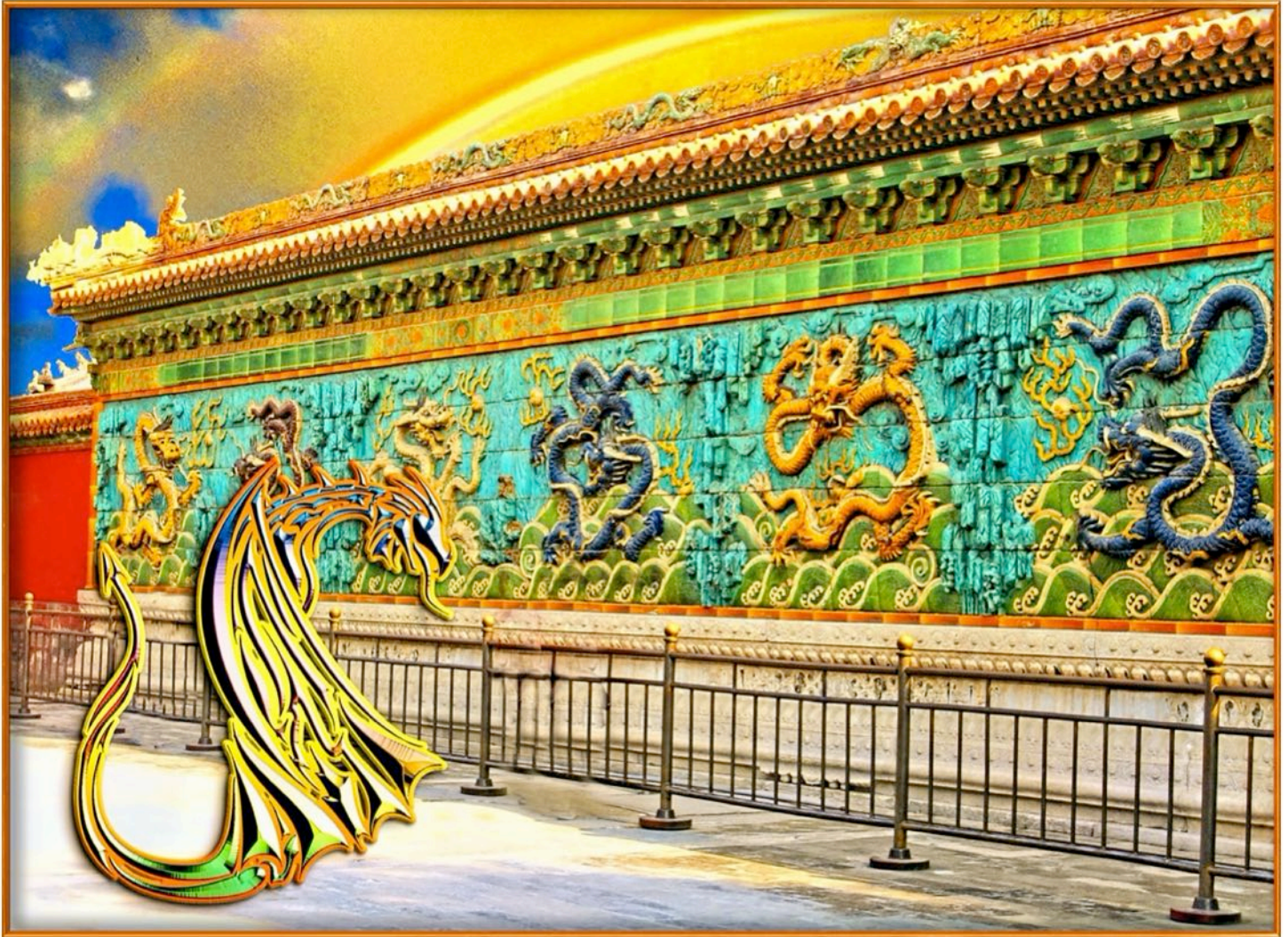
Before anyone on the ground could even react and before those on the roof could come to bend and look straight down beyond and over some obstructions, the Supreme Leader was dead from a lightning chop to the throat and fell back and onto his rear bodyguard. The old man leapt over the body as if on a football run as a halfback just as an explosion went off inside the mosque, blowing through the roof, as well as another one down the street to distract anyone still overseeing the Leader, during which time, as in the distraction of a magic show, the old and former leader of the Ninja Empire disappeared into the smoke and rushed toward his car.

Still, a shot somehow caught him in his back, his body armor saving his life, but the impulse sending him not so much down but rolling along and onward into the car. Another man with a hand-held missile soon arrived and blew the car to smithereens, in a massive explosion, and resultant fire. Yet, the old man was now safe underground, having gone through the opening in the floorboards and on into a manhole which he had previous uncovered, and whose lid had now been slid back into place. In fact he was well off and moving like the wind over the water towards an exit two blocks away, whereupon he would begin to meet and enjoy the sunset of peaceful retirement.

The stealth ninja jet was soon off and into the sky, but the country and the air force were now on alert. The vast array of missiles from the 'Angel

of Death' hit the Iranian planes while they were still on the ground and the jet screamed into Mach 2 speed and disappeared into the black velvet of the night sky.

On Niihau, new GrandMaster RascalPuff sat back in his chair and relaxed when he got the word, having just smoked two cigars all the way through.



What darkness may next knock on our door? he thought. What contagion might be fermenting in the dark of human nature somewhere deep within? How many more ink black rivers must we cross?

The phone rang. It was Old West, who said: “Strive on, my old friend. We yet prosper in one of the shimmering paths of everything, our shining pot of gold sparkling beneath life’s rainbow in this far corner of the universe.”

“May it continue so,” answered Rascal.

“The future that was never to be at all now continues on in another way. All is indeed an extra time from here on out, but no guideposts remain to light the way.”

“Whatever shall be shall be, unless it should not be.”

“Ever and anon is never for sure, but you remain, Rascal, as ever, the butterfly at the edge of forever.”

*Does forever ever end, dying out?
Do unbreakable basics ever wear out?*

*Well, once every thousand years
The Bird of Time flies over Mt. Everest, and
On some of those occasions, a part of
A feather falls down upon the mountain.*

*When the mountain has worn itself away,
The end of forever has then arrived, that day.*

All was now back to ‘normal’, but for the exponential global warming threat; some time had been bought.



The Infernal Regions

Hellholes hurl thousand light-year jets of fear,

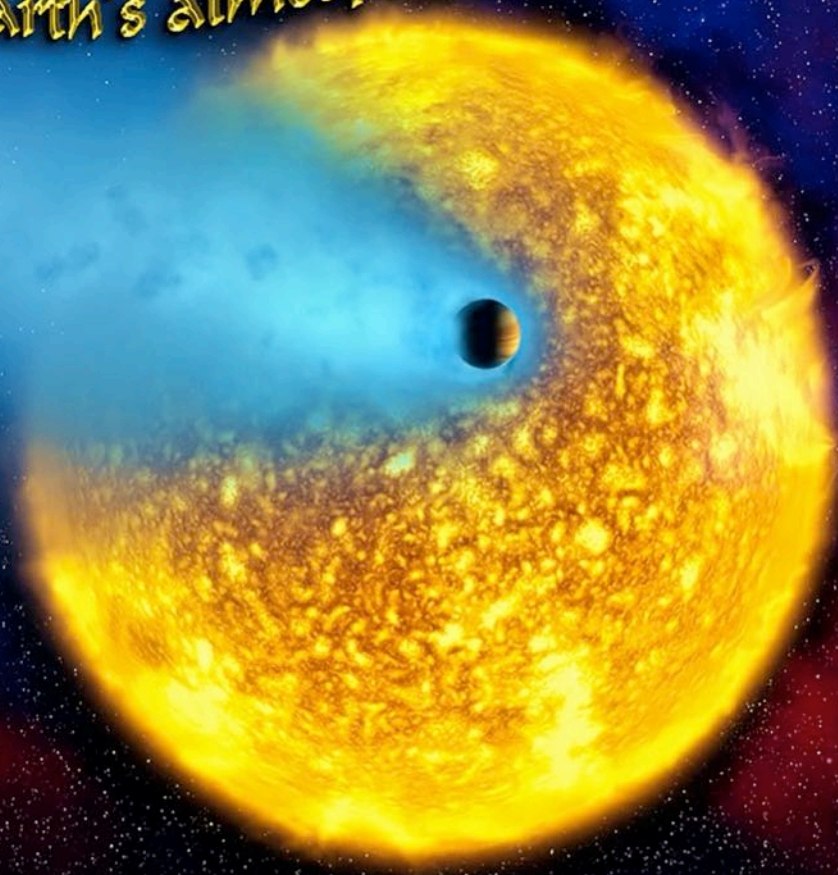
In Centaurus, cross'd the galactic sphere,

Supermassive darkling beasts devour all...

Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.

Finale

Beyond the pale, aft the last perfect day,
The Earth's atmosphere incinerates away,



Mercury/Venus now within the sun,
For the Crimson Giant is on his way.

— Chapter 22 —
A Bad Dream

Twenty hot spots suddenly appeared in California, all rather in a row, reaching temperatures of over one thousand degrees. A tsunami sprung from the Atlantic and washed over Florida, coast to coast. Another one came forth in the mid-Pacific, from the deep Marianas trench, sinking Baja. Mexico City disappeared into a volcanic eruption. Quebec Province was severed from Canada by quakes, and floated back towards France, which is where they wanted to be anyway. Africa rose eight feet in an hour. The Indian ocean washed out Sri Lanka, and entered the Indian subcontinent. Siberia sunk into a mush of methane gas. Sicily got the boot from Italy. Alaska gushed oil all over the place. Turkey was devoured by Hungary. Arkansas became just 'Ark'. The Eiffel Tower (Le Tour-i-fell), lived up to its name and tipped over. Gibraltar fell, and sunk, and closed off the Mediterranean Sea.



Austino and Passiona were using Rascal's backup jet and were about to land in LA when the jet suddenly veered off and applied full power to its engines. All were aghast to see the LAX airport fracture, and slide into the ocean. Nearly out of gas, they landed at the base of the nearby mountains. Their only clue was that the mountains would be safe.

In India, Greg and Melanie headed north toward the Himalayas. Mohan remembered his youth and went up the mountains near My-Sore [TOE] where he lived. Leskey climbed up the backbone of New Zealand. Graham was picked up by Poppa, and they were soon off to the Canadian Rockies in a large truck.

Yellowstone National Park blew magna through its forty mile radius, a prelude to the big one that was still 30,000 years overdue. There would not be much left of the states west of the Mississippi River. The Amazon Jungle flooded. Mauna Kea erupted and buried Hilo, Hawaii. Krakatoa came to life. Sumatra went under. Finally, the San Andreas fault could take it no more and moved 1200 feet. What was left of California had become a small island. New Orleans was washed away. Mexico moved into Texas, which indeed once it was. Notre Dame Cathedral in France crumbled away into dust.

Russia shook and shook. Japan went under. In the Philippines, only the mountains broke the sea. Australia just about cracked in half. Antarctica sunk ten feet and out of sight. The pyramids crumbled, exposing the rulers of old. Panama closed. Vatican City was no more. The internet slowed but still functioned wirelessly, somewhat. Ashes fell everywhere, like snow.

It was all the mother of all near extinctions, one that might erase 99.99% of all life. To the Earth, though, it was but a mere shiver, hiccup, and a burp all at once. The Pub and the TOE Center were safe, they being in the same secret place on a mountain in Oahu that had been born on the yet stable portion of the ocean floor.

A 50 mile section of the Alps disappeared, looking as if it were never there; you could see right through the gap. Dust blotted out the sun, but for those places in or above the clouds, which, remarkably, became much warmer, while the ground temperature dropped some 10 degrees. Eruptions were diminishing to a low rumble.

Austin and Passiona climbed the mountains, noting the water seeping toward, off in the distance. They had taken what they could carry from the plane: an emergency tent, some weapons, their suitcases, a book on edible plants, a tiny stove, a pedal charger and many provisions. In order to make it in time, they slowed and paced themselves onward and upward, soon arriving in a meadow and resting.

"This is hard work," mentioned Austino.

"Yes, but didn't all that tennis help?" asked Passiona.

“It did, perhaps, but tennis courts are level, not uphill. I’m using muscles seldom used. And didn’t you climb ladders at your job?”

“Yes, but not enough of them, I guess.”

“When we get high enough, but still well within the tree line, we’ll need to walk the trail to find some kind of airy cavernous overhanging shelter near a stream,.”

“The animals will come there to drink, too.”

“Yes, we’ll have to get to know them.”

“Oh my, look at the size of that wave arriving in the distance.”

“My God, it’s a hundred-foot wall of water.”

“We are now on the new west coast of America.”

“Rascal’s jet just went under.”

“He has a duplicate. Actually this one was his backup jet. That jet has gone through a lot.”

“No place to fly to, at least for a long while.”

They had to walk perhaps four miles left and right to make one mile upward, much of it sideways and winding about, such as a mountain road would do. Clouds of ash were forming and dimming the sunlight.

“We’ll have to get above this stuff soon.”

“Mind if I smoke?”

“Go ahead; the world is turning into one big ashtray.”

A few hours of struggling on and ever upwards through the chill air and they broke through into the light again.

“Ah, warmth has returned.”

“The sunlight is scattering off of the dust layer that it can hardly penetrate.”

They came to a glade that had a stream-fed pool of clear water that ever amounted from the melting snow atop the mountains. It was perhaps 200 feet across and was nicely tucked into the towering trees and the mountain side.

“This is home.”



— Chapter 23 —
Another Dream

It was as hot as Hades this morning, but little did I know that the under-worlded Pluto was hell-bent on extracting revenge for his demotion to the Infernal Regions. The bright afternoon turned as black as Satan's heart, as the ominous-type clouds soon hid the mountain tops. I lit a candle.

The branches flew, the cats hid, the thunder shook, the yard flooded, and the negative balanced the positive as electrons and photons surged forth in bolts, all as I watched from the garage.

*Above me, light burnt not the clouds away;
Below me, the Earth yet turned under my feet;
Within me, unworded dreams haunted my soul;
Around me, Hell's Master poured blackness on the ground.*

Satan had broken free from his block of ice, where Dante had placed him, in the heart of Hell, showering the Earth with hail and a hell of a storm that had Goodness on the run. It was he, the Devil, that once said, through Milton's pen, that it was better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven. Now he had upped it to: it's better to reign on Earth.

So, I said to myself, 'Self, are you still there or have you gone apparent?'

I was still there, in a netherworld, swirling into the abyss of fire and brimstone thrown about by Lucifer, now promoted to the King of Darkness.

The Dark Symphony played the notes of doom as ice crystals big and small pelted the world around as hail stones that magically stayed frozen on the warm ground, almost an inch deep now. Hell was freezing over, and so now I could walk on water, and did so in the yard, amazing all, wishfully dancing on the grave of Beelzebub.

The bolts had flown, missing me, for I was still here. To the north, far beyond the hills and over the border, a rainbow arced towards me, landing at my feet and then colored me and my heart with happiness. Tonight the big yellow Honey Moon rose full, which meant that roses will soon bloom that way, too, marking the beginning of summer.

*Toward the end of a sunny day,
A storm came and washed away,
And the sunset clouds, being glad,
Held a party for the returning lad.*

*The sun then peeked, and soft shone
Into the mist of the departing squall,
Its light split into particolors lone,
Separating, each from the ALL;*

*A bouquet of colored rays swirled into sight,
And promised good weather
For the rest of the night.*

*The rainbow lit up the east,
As long we attended the feast
Of both the east and the west,
Till into darkness we descended blest.*

*The stars guided the homeward flight
By shining their jeweled lights
Of ruby, emerald, and sapphire
In living colors of blazing fire.*



Yes, ice cubes were falling this afternoon in the mountains of the Hudson River Valley in New York from a hailstorm, followed by such a torrential rain that you couldn't even see through it. I quickly went to buy some grass seed to put on a steep muddy hill that was eroding, and so used this perfect time to seed it, and rake it over, pulling out some large weeds to eat later, myself ever slipping and sliding down the slope, often touching some big rocks that then just easily rolled down the hill. I also fell in the mud once.

I was dirty, sweating, and dripping and almost done when heavy dusk arrived, the fog settling into the hollows all around, creating a kind of primeval scene. Then the full August moon appeared and so I was able to finish. I stood and rested a bit. Some ancient frequencies began resonating in me, my brain and mind synchronizing and sympathizing with them. It felt like... I was Early Sapiens.

Then I took a short walk down the road and jumped into a pond that was clear, cool, and deep. The full moon's reflections on some ripples formed two straight strands, about six feet long, of pearls of little moons that seemed to be underneath the surface of the water. If I closed one eye, then there was only one strand. This was life being experienced, a result of what is. The message speaks, the messenger is secondary, unknown even. Live it; love it; be it.



THE ASTEROID THAT MAY DESTROY HUMANITY

*The air beneath it couldn't get out of the way of the rock,
Rising in temperature ten times more than the sun is hot.
Everything and everyone crinkled and crackled in the heat,
And a thousand cubic kilometers of earth blew from beneath.*

*This shock wave, radiating at about the speed of light,
Would sweep just about everything else out of sight.
From further away, one would see a blinding light
And then the unimaginable grandeur of an apocalyptic sight:
A rolling wall of silent darkness as black as midnight.*

*It would reach to the heavens, filling the entire field of view,
Traveling far beyond the speed of sound toward me and you.
A bewildering veil of turmoil would [ful]fill our vision
During those few last minutes before we met oblivion.*

QUEEN FOR A DAY

*A rose's prime lasts for but an hour of morn;
Flowering and free, then fragile and forlorn,
The petals float to earth, and there signify
That beauty's past, for all that's left is the thorn.*



Illuminate

Waste not the time of your life in gloom's doom!
By these verses, the lamp of life relume:
"Your live body, full of warmth and bloom,
Is worth ten thousand lying in the tomb."





— Meteor Memoir —

*Obliterated by a war nuclear,
The Earth exploded in blazes solar!*

Said a child in a galaxy afar,

“Oh, look! Look at the pretty shooting star!”

— Chapter 24 — The Awakening

Austino woke up, drenched in sweat, and related the dreams to Passiona.

“Wow,” she replied. “I hope that is not a TOE vision of the future. Tell me some real tales, as you promised.”

Austino replied, “It might be, but, OK, some here are some actual tales. The government had a place, called Granite Mountain, to retreat to during the Cold War, but its location became quite well known, and, although it was secure, it was also a bit antiquated; so, they built a new place, its whereabouts unknown even to me, a member of the Ninja Empire.

“Before the new place was completed, though, there was an atomic bomb threat to Washington, D.C., and so they all rushed there. The bomb was real, and was coming up the Potomac River. When it was intercepted, it was found not be defusable, and so the CIA flew it to Granite mountain, giving everyone 30 minutes to clear out, for that is when it was set to detonate. Then they dumped it down the elevator shaft, deep into the mountain where it exploded, causing no real problems except within the depths of the mountain. I read a novel story about this. Needless to say, they were all shocked when the bomb was sent to their safe place, the only place nearby that could contain its terrible effects.”

“Can you tell me any more secrets?” She asked.

“OK, Passiona, now about the files of ‘Things that never happened’ that I happened to retrieve intact. As I work for the Ninja Empire, I rendered the details of a recent escapade into the final TOE/CIA report, using the highest powers of language, in order to flesh out the truth in some living words that were finely dressed, and then, using the GrandMaster’s pass, filed the account, after all had read it, into the ‘Tube of Secrets’ of ‘That Which Never Happened’, the one that led to the vault, twenty miles down into the earth, and then I noted the maintenance stairway beside it, where none had ever gone, and looked around; the master knew that I would, to see it spiral down into Neverland. So strangely compelling it was that I ventured down, underground, beyond all sight and sound...

“My last report from those days was that I had to fake my own death and then hide out for a while: “I’m only five miles up the stairway to heaven on earth, and am posting from my cell phone. I’m carrying all sorts of documents to the surface that have never seen the light of day. Oops, I just dropped the sad story of the Kennedy brothers, but I’d noted that the mafia hired foreign assassins, to cover their tracks. And there goes the report on Area 51, which was too long to read... Am six miles

up, now. 17 more to go. I see the throne of doom, snakes curled all around and under it...”

“Cripes,” Passiona responded.

“That’s the story, sweetie-heart,” said Austino. “You’re looking good, my dear Passiona. Now that 2012 is solved, we can get back to business. And I’ll tell those secret stories soon. We’ll go to the Time Chamber to live them out.”

“The air is balmy and your motion is dynamic,” she said.

Passiona was so hot, she had to cool off! And suddenly Passiona disappeared in a poof of vapour. For some reason, Austino was suddenly covered head to TOE with vapor, drenched with a very sweet scent.

“Holy Toledo Austino, You make sure you keep those top secret files, documents and whatnot secure in your grasp. I am seriously curious, so curious in fact that you simply must, just must read every word to me. I’m dying to know what you have. And I might add, about Area 51; I think they should release it.”

“Dear Seriously Curious,” Austino related. “Right now I have a deadly container of biological germ warfare, if you are really dying to know, but, I threw that away real fast. What I have is the President’s Book, written by past Presidents and readable only by a Presidents in office. This is the only copy of all secrets, except for what I also have, at least those that the CIA told the Presidents about. I have access, since I know the President, and to all the CIA secrets as well. DIA, too.

“The current President—I dare not reveal his name, due to the ToeQuest guidelines against discussing politics—but his name starts with ‘O’, was later of Chicago, Illinois, where I lived, but that is not where I met him, only knowing him in Chicago all the more there after he arrived, and rose to power as a Senator. We met in Punahau, Oahu, Hawaii, at the basketball court of Punahau High School. He was on the team and I was a spectator, living, between secret assignments, in a tower in Punahau, at one end of the rainbow that crossed over the Manoa Valley from the University of Hawaii. We kept in touch, and the rest is history. Finally, we have a President who understands the value of science, but we still cannot talk about politics on ToeQuest, so please strike this.

“I will only be telling relatively old secrets, maybe, that have no current value to our enemies, plus we know that ToeQuest is secure, being of the Ninja Empire. I can also discount many rumors that are simply not true, for example, the Chinese are not trying to conquer us by slipping sneaky ingredients into vaccines and pharmaceuticals, of which they make many. It takes a long time to get approval by the FDA, plus, the last

thing any business would want would be to have the bad publicity of some huge tainted pill problem. Paranoia strikes deep.

“Anyway, according to Nelson DeMille, one time Russia was running a Charm School to train its more whitish looking northerners to pose as Americans to infiltrate our infrastructure. They were using our Vietnam prisoners of war as instructors of all aspects of American society. They even built a model of Main Street, USA, complete with working banks, hair salons, and the whole nine yards of a football field. Not only did the instructors subtly teach the wrong stuff of inaccurate nuances, we found out about the place and nerve-gassed most of it, retaining some Russians to become double agents that then spied on Russia for us.”

Meanwhile, Austino is still drenched in the alluring fragrance of the vapor that permeated on through to his soul. He said that “the inundation of the bouquet of aroma was irresistible in its redolence.”

*William of Ockham, known as Occam
Led a simple life, for he didn't have a wife.*





Photonic Wonders



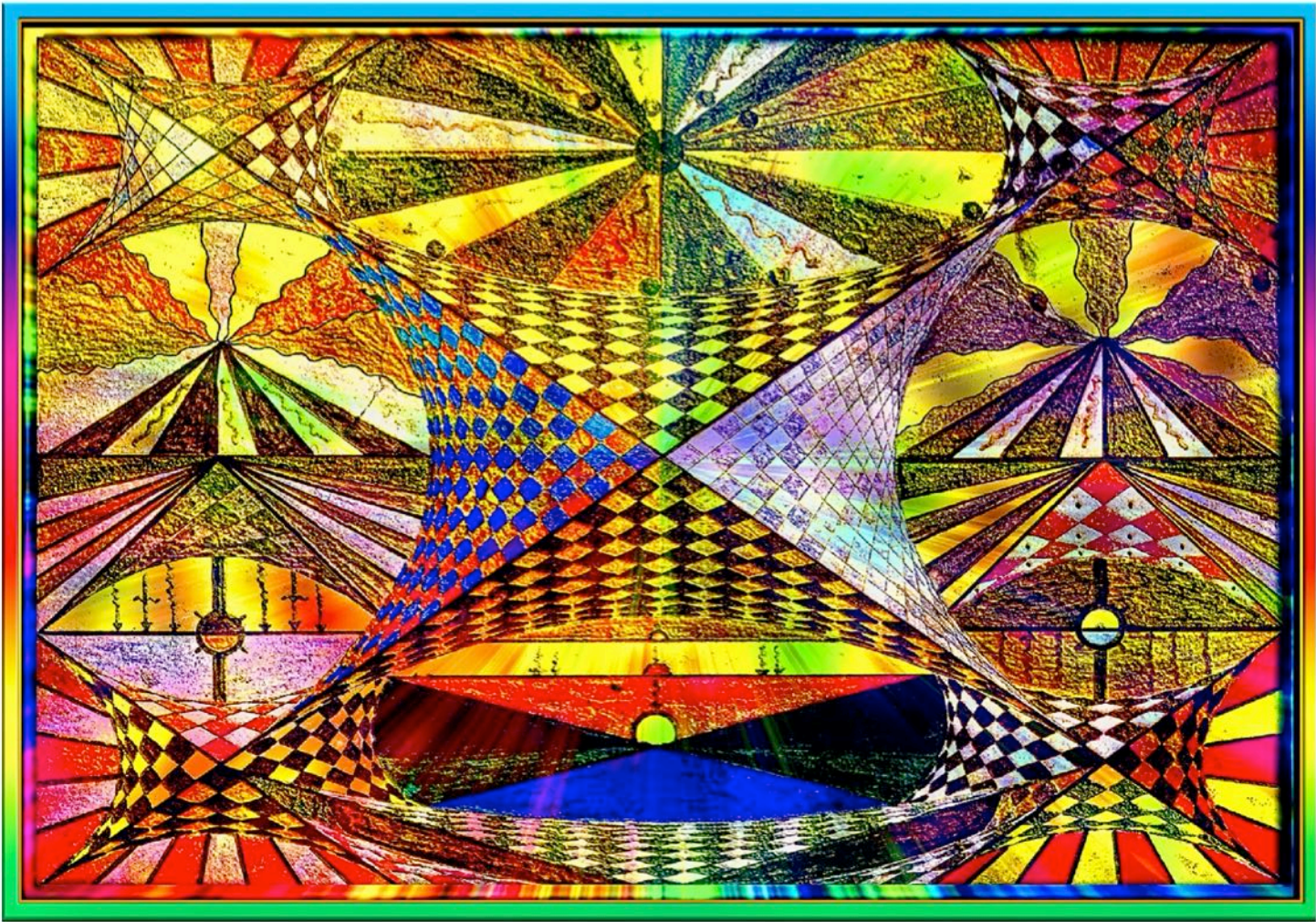
I took a snapshot of a moving photon;
It filled one pixel, and was not moving on.
The photo told me not how fast it had flown,
So I assumed this info couldn't be known.

The photon was ageless at the speed of light,
As women are always young and always right,
For time had stopped—I thought time was movement.
Photons never get old or need improvement.

With my new contact lenses, I now can see
One photon, unmeasured by man—most need three.
It traveled 13 billion years, from the deep,
But what lights my dark head when I dream in sleep?

How come photons don't pile up on the floor,
Under my lamp when it shines all the more?
Lucky thing, for where would I put them all—
Do some light housekeeping into the hall?

Is it light that defines space, as EM?
Do I see the light? What is lit in REM?
Is light the answer to the TOE's dark quiz?
Then wherever it reaches, existence is.



— Chapter 25 —
Iran

“Ever been to Iran?” Asked Rascal of Austin.

“No; let’s not go there.”

The giant bird flew on to the secret location of the Ninja center. Austino and Passiona were deep in thought.

The mission was a dangerous one, one that Questor (Austin) handled like he handled everything else, expertly, and with swiftness not seen before, at least not since the demise of an agent left behind in Egypt, presumed dead. And also, the death was witnessed by all. He was, however, going make a comeback, in another chapter.

A briefing was held on the mission: Iran was still unstable, and yet again had almost accumulated enough nuclear material to build a bomb to wipe their Jewish enemy off the face of the Earth. It was really their doom that they advertised this aim. Their new facility was now underground, being impervious even to bunker-buster missiles, and it was now ultra secure, there being no way to get into it or even close to it.

“Ideas, Questor,” inquired the Rascal. “There has to be a way in, for everything leaks, does it not?”

“How do they breathe in the control room?”

“It is a completely self-contained system of internal oxygen, reconstitution, purification, and ventilation.”

“And what is it that is always necessary in air and plumbing systems in order to equalize the air and water pressure?”

“A small vent, such as comes out of anyone’s house roof.”

“How do we get to it, Rascal?”

“We, as people, we cannot even get near it, for we would be detected.”

“But a little radio-controlled ‘car’ could.”

“A bomb will not fit down that tiny shaft.”

“Rascal, I do believe that you are leading me on and you already know the answer.”

“I am and I do. I just like engaging your mind, old new buddy.”

“How it is, Rascal, that we can speak so freely to each other, without the ‘sirs’ and deference and such, regardless of the difference in our ranks?”

“Once I was you, Questor, a long time ago, and perhaps one day you shall be in my position. Please continue.”

“We’ll pour the deadliest acid known to man down the little pipe, via a little remote-controlled wagon with a video camera on it. When this shit hits the fans, it will spray all over the place and eat through anything and everything.”

“Questor, my good man, how can we cart an ultimate acid around that can destroy any container? Nothing can hold the universal acid; that’s why they never make it.”

“Exactly. We will use its safe and separate compounds, pouring one down, and then the other upon it. When they mix, the uncontainable universal acid will then be formed.”

“Good work, Questor. That’s what every kid dreams of in Chemistry class. They visualize it coming out in China and zapping some poor unsuspecting guy. This is how I once thought about it: As a boy in Dan Dennet’s chemistry class, I wondered, as did others, about the following scenario that is often daydreamt of: Two compounds were mixed, which, unfortunately, produced the ultimate acid. Nothing could contain it. It quickly ate through the container, the floor of the laboratory, and then even all the way through the earth, eventually sloshing that poor sap in China.”

“This, too, is what may happen to us, through education, as our chemical-bio-electric nature is revealed to us, this being some kind of giant shock wave, after which we can never be the same again. The biochemical mush that is us, when fully realized, leaves us stunned and astounded. We grasp for what we once thought we were before, what we wished we were, but it eludes us in the new light of the learning of the natural sciences. The universal acid of such knowledge eats through all superstitions, folk tales, and myths. Nothing can contain it. Some may come to even regret their learnings of this condition, unless they seek the truth, for it dissolves their container, leaving them floundering in the lurch. It happened to me, too, beginning in fifth grade, in Catholic school.

But, wait, it’s not so bad, for what we are is still what we are, and we still have feelings, personality, and more adventures of learning that await. The light of education ever shines brightly, wherever it may lead. Many dark alleys remain to be explored, given our new insights into the human condition. Then, too, we know that the state of being is not quite the same as the physical states beneath, which are not apparent, and so introspection alone is but a ‘second story’, and so one should wish to be informed by the ‘first storey’, as revealed by science.”

“Good one, Questor.”

“When can we get this thing designed and built, sir?”

“Dear Questor, our own Section 0 just built it yesterday. We’re off in an hour.”

...

The fine details of this still classified mission cannot be written, due to their confidential nature. However, Questor and his angelic partner, whose name had now become ‘Top Secret’, sometimes, had a wonderful

and youthful time guiding the little radio-controlled vehicle, which was painted black, through the dark shadow areas cast by a pillar and more. There was no radar up to two feet above the ground, as it would have been constantly set off by squirrels, rabbits, and mice and such.

The mission had succeeded, so now it was time to leave. The waiting stealth aircraft had previously entered Iranian airspace, low and undetected, landing on a very long driveway of an estate secretly owned by the CIA, then quickly turned about. The escaping NIA team then boarded it and the craft was soon up and away, its takeoff naturally alerting the Iranians. They sent up some interceptors, as was expected, but observed nothing, as was expected, for the stealth jet was now climbing to 50,000 feet and nearly achieving a mach 3 speed.

Austino and his paramour, having up to now been pressed back into their seats by the G-forces, got up and retired to a private room in the back of the plane. Rascal lifted an eyebrow, it seemed, but it was really just a secondary effect of his wide and happy grin, for he, too, was young once.

The next day the President sat down to read his daily news briefing: STRANGE PROBLEM SHUTS DOWN IRANIAN NUCLEAR REACTOR; IRREPARABLE DAMAGE AND RADIOACTIVE LEAKAGE; SITE CEMENTED OVER.

A smile crossed the President's face on a day now brightened by one less problem in this dreary world of so many irrational governments and beings.

The operative in Egypt appeared to be dead. His would-be capturers had even approached and then retreated without him, not a very good sign of his liveliness. A while later, a creature, who looked very much like Gollum, emerged from the pyramid, and dragged the body inside. This operative did not even have with him the death-imitating elixir that could be used to fool his takers, so he was therefore sadly declared deceased by the NIA. And yet, out he returned alive the next day, and walked off alone across the level sands.

A few days later, Questor received a call from Rascal, in which he asked, "Ever been to Tahiti?"

Questor replied, "No, but I'd sure love to go."

"Well, Questor, we, the NIA, are not going there. Ha-ha on you."

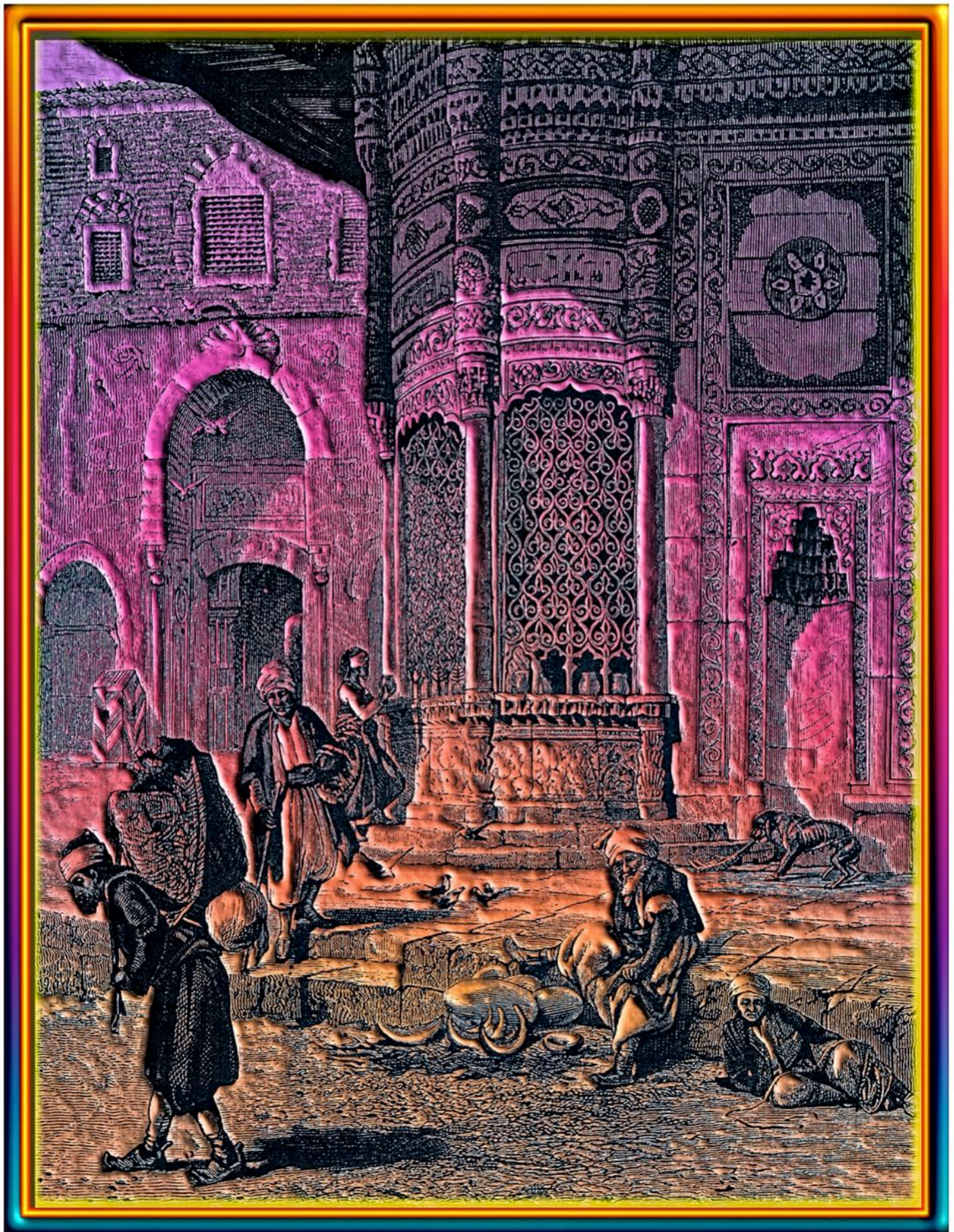
"Darn."

"But you are, actually, Questor, with the lady of your choice, compliments of the NIA. Please relax and reenergize, and enjoy this fair paradise of French Polynesia!"

"Should I think about Egypt while I'm there?"

“Sure, if you like. Ever been there?”

“So long; I’m going on vacation with Top Secret.”



Since we all became of this universe,
Should we not ask who we are, whence we came?



Insight clefts night's skirt with its radiance—
The Theory of Everything shines through!

Each holds within itself
the seed of the other—



Yin reaches climax,
then retreats
in Yang's favor:

Cyclic movement
of rotational symmetry.

Rounded life is the blend
of Yin/Yang together.

— Chapter 26 —
Tahiti to Egypt and Back

Called the Island of Love, Tahiti is ever shrouded in legend: *In Tahitian mythology, the supreme creator deity was Ta'aroa, also called Rua-i-tupra (the source of growth). Ta'aroa emerged from a cosmic egg and started the process of creation. To fill the emptiness around him, he used part of the egg to make the sky and the other part to create the earth. Satisfied with his accomplishment, he filled the world with all the creatures and things that are now found in it. The Tahitians believed that Ta'aroa sent both blessings and curses, and they tried to appease him with human sacrifices.*

The couple landed in Papeete and stayed in a hut built on posts, under which the oceans waves splashed and sang. Now south of the moon, they could see the Southern Cross and the Magellanic Cloud galaxies glittering on black velvet.

*Just before dawn, amid the dew and moss,
Elves ride on a moonbeam made of Bugloss,
And see the North Star and the Southern Cross
In the same sky, 'most all the way across.*

The recent adventures eventually receded and faded, as the couple settled in to island time and the traditions of fishing, cooking and singing and dancing on the beach, having an entire month to spend in French Polynesia, courtesy of R. Puff.

The Egyptian road may be long and hard but there is a soft sweet valley at the end. The flowers bloom once again...

The born-again operative walked for miles on the sand, not an easy thing, then headed toward a weathered and sinking sphinx-like monument, noting:

*Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command*

*Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.*

*And on the pedestal these words appear:
“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”*

*Nothing beside remains: round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

(Percy Shelley)

The operative added further to this meaning: *All that you love and cherish will one day be gone. Even all of the works of human beings will disappear in time. Everything with which we adorn ourselves shall ever dissipate and vanish.*

Yet, he strode on.

All that you love and cherish will one day be gone.

Ah, but not yet, thought Fredrick, not yet.

The secret chronicles continue, now far from what we would call reality, lying betwixt the enchanting masks of light that dwell about and between the frames of our living film. Rascal sat back and read this amazing report, sent by his operative, Fredrick, who had somehow been reborn back into the glory of the living this life:

Gollom had dragged me into the concealed burial chamber of the Queen of the Pyramid, herself nearly half as old as time. Yes, the Egyptians almost had it right, with their potions of elixir brewed to wake the dead, but they erred in embalming and wrapping the deceased, thereby insuring that they would never wake, thus their ‘Book of the Dead’ rather than a ‘Book of Life’. My heart fluttered back toward life from the 3000 year-old aroma of the chamber’s tonic air that was the very spirit of life.

The ancient Queen bent over me, whispering: “This is true, my love, that the lightning again flashes in the light of your eyes. The clouds in my own heart explode with the soft new beating of yours. This is true, my love. Your sweet lips become as red as those of a blushing bride. This is true, my love, that the seed of the tree of life once again flowers within you. Your mind awakens to follow the guiding rhythms of my own pure soul. The night shall ever weep dew at your sight upon the Earth anew, and the morning will surround you with the dawning light of life’s delight. This is true, my love, that the touch of your warm breath intoxicates your every being of life into and out of my spirit as well. This is true, my love, that the world will yet know your melodious songs. Go forth, my dear twice-born one to walk the Earth once more and help to bring evil to its knees.”

“What the heck,” said Rascal. “I, too, now believe in magic. Ah, the strange enchanting things that ‘never happen’ around here that cannot ever be told!”



In Tahiti, the universe shrunk to a point, with Questor and Top Secret having now become a love-made singularity within it that ever made it the cosmos starring in its entirety. With love, came strength, that which could ever more bring the well nigh impossible into its startling being. Rascal had given them another month. Evil had been slow, and struggling lately, lying low. The regular army took care of the war zones.

Now on Bora-Bora, the couple sat with the birds who hoped for crumbs at the dinner table, the slight tropical slant of sunset twilight heading the ‘other’ way from that accustomed in the north. Yet the sun still plummeted as quickly as it did in the tropical regions.

Their thoughts turned to the event of the fallen agent in Egypt, and so they had asked for a third glass, placing it upside down on the table,

making a toast to the valiant one, Fredrick, the first toast being of Omar's saying, then followed by two of their own:

*And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on The Grass,
And in Thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
Where I made one--turn down an empty Glass!*

(Omar)

WORTHLESS AND PRICELESS

*All the world's wealth cannot extend the power
That drains the cup and withers the flower.
What would be the price of a moment's breath
Purchased from Death's hand at the final hour?*

A REBIRTH OF SORTS

*I turn the cup: wine-drops to thirsty lips descend.
Can Old Fredrick rise anew, like spring grass ascend?
Mournful rose petals kiss his grave, hence he a-rose!
Now he lives again in the heart of his friend.*

While they looked off into inner space and considered their own mortality for a moment, an encrypted text message came in from Rascal:

Your dearly departed friend most surely walks the Earth again, as had been rumored. He was revived within the pyramid, via some fumes from ancient times that were administered by a 3000-year-old Queen of the Nile from Nubia. I am looking into it. I just had to tell someone. Like phantoms from the tomb, Fredrick's lamp relumes.

Best to you. —R.P.

Well, they nearly fell out their chairs, as night turned to day within them, soon coming up with another toast after a few minutes of the absorption of this awakening news, Secret Top picking up the empty glass and filling it with wine:

*Then a few drops she poured onto the ground,
That precious drink of these quatrains profound.
It through the soil trickled and seeped,
As to his thirsty lips the way it found.*

Then another toast to one another as the stars came out:

*You're the elixir that fills my cup,
The scent on the breezes that lifts me up;
You're love's essence, distilled into being,
The passion-spirit that opens me up.*

A special aroma seemed to arise from the glass as they drank it, the Persia-fumes of another ancient one who now walked the skies with an houri at his side.

*Your spirit wanders 'long the Persian way
With an houri, life's moments drank away,
In some sweet wood, far from the noise of day,
Where with her you yet live, sing, laugh, and play.*

*Through the Rubàiyât, I sense enchantment,
Essence distilled by the translator's scent;
Recomposed from Khayyâm's dust and spirit,
Potent elixirs escape interment!*

*The fumes of ageless rhyme from ancient times
Waft from the Persian verse, as some chimes
New are mixed with the spirit of the old,
Deftly transmogrified for Victorian climes.*

*Here on the summer grass where you made one,
We turn down our cups, the feasting begun:
With earth's food and heaven's drink we toast you:
On this sacred tropic lawn, we make ONE.*

“To Fredrick this cup flows, and through the grapes his life flows; the rumour is true. Says you being who we are, Austino, lets go and get our man. Leave no one behind.”



Daydreams

*Ambition's mist drifts upward each morning,
Outlining daydreams, although still forming,
But rising still into the clear sunlight,
Taking shape, sculpting clouds, and then sailing.*

*Daydreams fill us with thoughts on promenade:
Wishes, fantasies o'er the mind cascade.
Listen well to these plans already made,
For by sundown the phantom shapes may fade.*

*Close your eyes and realize the light within;
Allow visualization to begin
This attracts into your life: dreams, wishes,
And desires—all that you would believe in!*

*Use your imagination to create
What you want from life—orchestrate!
Soon enough, success will come to you
Life grows from visions that you contemplate.*

*Visions pour forth in positive images,
Thoughts creating life from former mirages,
Ideas developing from the negatives.
Life's emergent dream fast encourages.*

*In the night lies the healthy breath of morn;
The giant oak sleeps within the acorn;
The flower waits for spring inside the seed;
And so too in a dream is your life born.*

*Success blossoms out of a thoughtful dream,
Grown from seeds of what life to you should seem,
Then bears forth fruit healthy and delicious,
In a garden watered by the wishing stream.*

*Inhale the life-force of the universe
Retain, visualize the scene, then traverse
Rivers, canyons, waterfalls, and oceans;
Exhale the breath—you rule the universe!*

*I pursue the shadows of forms that live
In dreams—perfected ideals that outlive
All the minutes and hours that time devours;
I seek what hope creates, what wishes give.*

*I seize on imagination's dream brightly seen.
Tremendous image! I will join thy scene—
Aspiration sires realization!
Living my dreams will soon become routine.*

*Dreams become imagination's command;
The impossible I now understand.
To know that dreams can come true makes them so.
A real fantasyland is being planned.*

*We'll journey to our innermost bowers,
Savoring there the enchanting flowers,
Enjoying the rare visions empowered—
Those that speechless memory has devoured.*

*Unicorns and chimeras wander by,
Alive by virtue of possibility.
Faeries dance, caught by a believing glance,
As dreamy visions hold us sleepy-eyed.*

*Castle builders lay their stones across the sky;
Dream merchants grant gifts of unreality;
Mirages spring to life at slightest touch;
The impossible becomes our reality.*

*Daydreams pierce the noise of consciousness
To reveal that which is best for us—yes,
Mere aspiration halves realization!
What we now have was once a dream, no less.*

*I'm a person who keeps things happening,
Expecting that life's ever becoming
Because each reality was once a dream
Of someone's that was loved into being.*

*Heaven rains forth its blessings from above,
In the form of peace, serenity, and love;
Well, either I'm lucky, charmed, or both,
For these were the things I'd been dreaming of.*



Gravity's Well

Gravity fell, from its fundamental throne,
Being a blend of matter and motion.
As with time, if we take away what's known,
Its attraction fades into oblivion.

It is already gone in my dream sleep
In which I float, fly, and hover at will;
But, upon awakening from the deep,
The super bed-gravity holds me still.

Instead of dieting, I live on the moon,
Playing golf, but the bunkers are so deep
I have to take some giant leaps until noon;
'Though I love the freedom of low-grav feet.

If there were none, life could really be tough,
Our stuff floating away—what losing brings;
What a mess, although it might help those fluffs
Mercilessly dominated by material things.

If gravity's of movement and matter,
Like time, it might be a new dimension,
So to speak, but may still need the other three,
Although it's just the right dose of tension.

We can conquer gravity's whole world round
By the mere lift of a little finger;
Yet we get hang-ups about our hang-downs,
And thoughts of what the hell it is yet linger.

— Chapter 27 —
Egypt

The waves were rough in the Egyptian harbor as Questor and Top Secret landed unobserved, noting the site of the once great Library of Alexandria that had met several burnings and other disasters, setting the world back at least a thousand years.

The first known library of its kind to gather a serious collection of books from beyond its country's borders, the Library at Alexandria was charged with collecting all the world's knowledge. It did so through an aggressive and well-funded royal mandate involving trips to the book fairs of Rhodes and Athens and a (potentially apocryphal or exaggerated) policy of pulling the books off every ship that came into port, keeping the originals and returning copies to their owners. This detail is informed by the fact that Alexandria, because of its man-made bidirectional port between the mainland and the Pharos island, welcomed trade from the East and West, and soon found itself the international hub for trade, as well as the leading producer of papyrus and, soon enough, books.

Section 4, an NIA group of international looking assassins, had been quickly dispatched to Alexandria. Rascal followed, for Fredrick had uncovered a plot to render the Suez Canal inoperative, plus some other actions unknown.

As good luck would have it for the, the conspirators were now meeting in a hotel to finalize their plans. Fredrick placed a call to his foes there, saying that he had just returned from the dead, describing them all and the activities that had lead up to his 'demise', and that he was outside now and standing across the street for their verification.

The word spread quickly and so they pulled open the drapes, startled to see that it was indeed Fredrick come back to life. Whilst they stood astonished, murmuring that he had had no pulse, Fredrick quickly moved behind Pompeii's Pillar, the only ancient structure that had remained standing in Alexandria. Word of the conspirators' meeting room number was quickly sent to the other half of Section 4 that was already in the hotel. Some terrorists even stepped out onto the balcony

The conspirators' eyes went right to Fredrick, now partly behind the pillar and sticking out, and waving his fedora, saying, "From Heaven's heart I step on you", a curse meaning more that it sounded to, for in this part of the world, the bottom of a shoe was a bad thing. Ancient history took a slight beating of pockmarks just before the Section 4 assassins opened fire, their other half doing the same from within the hotel, attempting to secure the plans of the plots within.

A freak ricochet caught Commander Rascal in the chest as he stood shielded in a doorway, no apparent harm being done by its impact; however, it somehow triggered a cascade leading to heart failure for the grand and aging man, and he soon fell to the ground, his color draining rapidly. Precious moments passed before Fredrick could get over there. Questor and Top Secret, having been given positions as backups, provided a burst of cover fire.

Finally there was the silence in the hotel that indicated death or great injury to all the conspirators, and so the agents gathered around Fredrick and the great and legendary 7-star Grandmaster. He was fading fast, everyone's eyes growing dim and downcast at his prospects.

"Try this," Fredrick suggested, as he pulled out an ancient looking vial. The Rascal inhaled the air obtained from the pyramid, and a fine color blush soon replaced the pale that he had nearly gone beyond.

"Ah," said Rascal, as he pretty much leapt up from the ground on his own, "It was just a scratch!" He furthermore added that "None of this ever happened".

There was a ship in the harbor waiting, but it was now much too dangerous to use it, the local police all having unaccountably having gathered there, for the mere overturning of a donut truck. The operatives thus scattered and regrouped on a deserted desert road whilst the police ate their donut desserts at the sea shore; and all the terrorist conspirators lay dead as their own just desserts. The black rescue jet had just landed and awaited, a necessary risk.

Later, in flight, Fredrick revealed another precious find, an ancient book that had survived the Alexandria Library, its title being of the nature of 'The Quickness of Being and the Dead', where 'quick' was what was anciently used to mean 'alive', but, in another definition it was a pun of the Arabic language, such as in 'The Quick and the Dead'.

Rascal raised up a toast to the Queen of Nubia: "We did very little, for she planned it all!"

Rascal went for a heart checkup, the doctor being amazed at the man's glorious state of health. Questor and Top Secret had settled in French Polynesia, now calling it home, although their work was still with the ninjas when necessary. They lived simple, not needing much. If the planet ever came to a disaster, they were ready, even having their own island now. There were frequent visits from the friends they had made on the other islands. In between, there was ToeQuest.

— Chapter 28 —
The Collider

One day, Rascal himself paid Questor and Top Secret a visit, several weeks after the Egyptian Escapade, as it had become known, entering their Eden of Paradisea to see it for himself.

“Not bad,” encouraged Rascal; “great, actually.

Perhaps I shall obtain one of these retreats some day, maybe even soon, for a catastrophic disaster looms in Switzerland.”

They did not need to ask about that which he was about to tell them when he was ready to.

“Good to see that you still walk the Earth, Rascal.”

“Thanks for your service to me in Alexandria.”

“Our pleasure.”

“I was nearly a goner.”

“Fredrick gave his only vial to you, sir, rather than saving it for himself should he die again.”

“Duly noted, and now Fredrick is a 3 star NIA General in charge of the new forming Middle-East quagmire, although he may not really consider that a promotion, ha-ha. I really needed to delegate some work, too.”

“And the Queen of Nubia?”

“Well, she helped us, so we must respect her privacy. The world would build a road to her door if they knew she could reverse death itself.”

“Agreed.”

“However, it only works on the nearly or the newly dead, not on the really really dead.”

“I thought so.”

“Yes, so Elvis has truly left the building.”

“Good one, sir General, plus Napoleon will never reign again.”

“Thankfully.”

“But there will be new and wishful dictators.”

“True. Now, Questor, you grew up in Illinois?”

“Just outside of Chicago.”

“Ever been to the town of Batavia?”

“Yes, in 1972. I took a ride on my motorcycle to see the famous prairies, and then continued on to see the newly built collider called the Tevatron, at Fermilab.”

“And what did you see?”

“I saw wild corn, geese, and even buffalo roaming at the site.”

“Yes, it is a flatland wilderness of much wildlife. The perfect view of its outlying areas serves as a fine protection from any nefarious planers.”

“True, and it produces 1,000 GeV, a whole TeV of energetic beams of protons and antiprotons that smash together at two collision points, one that tracks the effects and one that measures the energy.”

“And in 1995, they found the heavyweight top quark, probably its first appearance in the universe since the Big Bang, although it didn’t last very long.”

“It decayed into a bottom quark and a W charged gauge boson that communicates the weak force, which then of course soon decayed into leptons or quarks, but all that was its signature.”

“Yes, and it was formerly hard to find. They would have had to sift through ten trillion collision events to find it, but for Lisa Randal who developed a more precise way to interpret the experimental results about weak reactions. Then they only had to sift through a hundred thousand reports or so.”

“I have a feeling that we will be talking to her.”

“You may. Now she is at the Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire, as it was first called.”

“CERN.”

“Now they call it Organisation Européenne pour la Recherche Nucléaire.”

“OERN?”

“No, they still call it CERN, although they might have called it CORN. The World Wide Web was invented there, too.”

“Perhaps Al Gore worked there?”

“Ha. Not exactly. Anyway, Lisa has noted a new anomaly coming from somewhere outside CERN. They solved two of these anomalies previously on their own back at LEP, the Large Electron-Positron collider that churns out Z bosons like a ‘cheesecake factory’.”

“Instead of taking Zzzzs, they needed to know the energy at which positrons and electrons collided so that they could measure the boson, so they could then go on to validate much of the standard model.”

“Yes, they had to determine the precise value of the Z boson’s mass; however, the energy seemed to rise and fall slightly when they measured it at particular times.”

“Weather, rainfall?”

“Close, it turned out to be the effects of the tides in Lake Geneva.”

“This in turn altered the nearby terrain, which slightly altered the distance over which the electrons and positrons traveled inside the collider.”

“Indeed. They have incredible precision. The second case was a slight misalignment of the electrons and positrons, indicating that the magnetic fields of the collider had some variations.”

“When a train went by.”

“You got it. In particular, it was the TGV, the express train that travels between Geneva and Paris. One day there was a strike and so the trains did not run.”

“I have a feeling we may be riding on that train soon.”

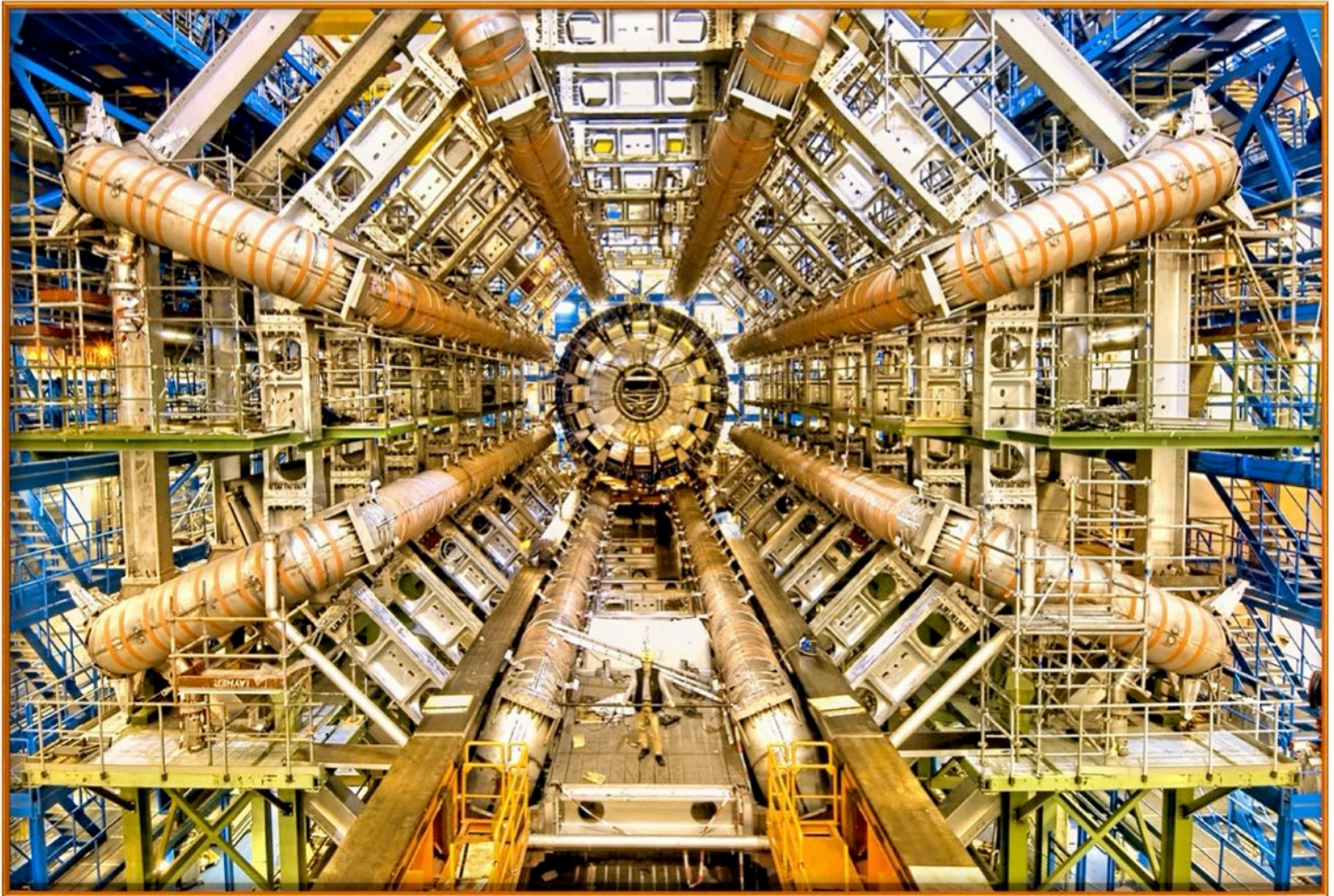
“Yes, if you accept the mission.”

“Lisa is now at the LHC, the Large Hadron Collider, isn't she, where the precision is astronomical?”

“Yes. It has seven times more energy than the TeV and it's due to totally restart in October, but they did run some tests on it already. Lisa detected an inexplicable anomaly before it broke down for some other reason.”

“Some kind of machine in the area, not just automobiles?”

“Yes, a larger machine than a truck is suspected. CERN sits in a vast mountainous region, the opposite of the plains surrounding Fermilab in Batavia. We found a reference to a terror plot at LHC in the materials that we secured near Alexandria. It wasn't as obvious as it sounds. We had to break codes.”



“Fooling with the LHC could destroy most of Europe.”

“Indeed, and so we have to investigate. I have some satellite imagery indicating some metals in the area, some of them just deposits, of course.”

“We’ll go,” said Top Secret.

“I am sending you both to Chamonix, a remarkable valley that runs between mountains covered with glaciers that used to descend almost to the roads, but that was before global warming arrived. You will be at the foot of Mount Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe. Other agents will check other areas, even the CIA, for this is a joint mission; however, trust no one. Your area is the one we suspect.”

“So, we just walk right in?”

“Pretty much, for CERN’s main entrance is but a few feet away from the French border; they hardly ever bother with the scientists who cross it twice daily. Great security, huh?”

“So we need to keep this quiet, lest the terrorists get alarmed and move their machinery?”

“Yes, as per usual. We would only flood the region if nothing else works, but this could cause them to accelerate their plan, which might still work to some disastrous degree.”

“We’ll get ready tonight.”

“You and Top Secret will pose as married scientists who also like to get out and ski the Jura mountain slopes, as do many of the tanned scientists there, as well as snow boarding and hiking.”

“We are already tan and have learned how to survive in the wild. Plus, we are married and speak French,” replied Top Secret.

“Huh? Oh, you’re married. Well, the secret is out. Anyway, exactly, and so as such you two shall wander around much further and farther to investigate the concerns. As you are both from ToeQuest, you can talk the talk of science when need be. Lisa will be in touch with you, such as and especially if and when the anomaly returns, as this may be when our adversaries are testing their equipment. This is a big one; so I have informed the President.”

“And the terrorists will look like what?”

“They will look like regular people, not like the Taliban or anything like that. They may be posing as fake scientists, as well, some of them actually having that knowledge, many just dumb lookouts, perhaps.”

“We’re ready already, actually. We traveled light.”

“There’s no big hurry to get there, but the sooner you acclimate yourselves to Switzerland, the better.”

“And people thought that black holes produced by the LHC would destroy the world.”

“Wrong, as we know, but the ethics of some people have fallen into a bottomless pit, never to be retrieved.”

“You’re a good man, Rascal, to protect the light of day.”

“I try.”

Austino and Passiona enjoyed Paris, and then the scenic train ride, while wondering where their quarry might be hidden among the rocks.

Passiona began, "Since the LHC is quiet now, the terror machinery may be, as well, but for some more integration testing in both."

"The terrorists are not ready?"

"No, they aren't, for they had their chance last year when the LHC went online for a while."

"And then the LHC failed for lack of a ten cent part."

"But for that this might have all been a wasteland already, but I still feel that our enemy must have much work yet to do."

"Did I tell you today that I love you, Passiona."

"Yes, for I am sitting on your lap so we can whisper unheard, although that is not the only reason."

"So, the terrorists wouldn't just set up shop in a house or a building, would they?"

"No, for the emanations would be noticed or disrupt someone's cable TV service, plus there are business inspections, tax appraisals and such."

"So they may be up in the mountains, which is a really vast area?"

"But they would still need an electric source."

"Either from generators or from a power line."

"How would they be getting these machine parts to this remote location?"

"That is the question. Piecemeal, somehow, plus they need food."

Austino and Passiona got off the train. Lisa Randall was waiting for them at the station and drove them across the border and into CERN with no fuss whatsoever.

"The anomaly is a definite problem," stated Lisa. It has an unnatural source, as we are quite familiar with the natural ones, and it was observed twice, so it was not a fluke."

"We'll look around," answered Passiona. "We'll find it if it's in our area, which is, of course, quite extensive, but we are not alone in this endeavor."

Lisa perked up, "I can narrow that down. They would need a direct line of sight to the LHC."

Austino looked out the panoramic window. Entire mountain ranges came into view. "So whatever we can see from here is where they might be."

Passiona gleamed, "But the closer the better for what they have to build within their constraints."

"I'd say so," Lisa confirmed.

"Well," Austino said, "we're off to find the needle that could burst the bubble of the ring of hadrons."

“Good luck,” answered Lisa, “for there is a large sub-function test coming up, within a month.”

Austino (Questor) and Passiona (Top Secret) soon got into the swing of environs of Mount Blanc and its events, improving their skiing talents, and then hiking some trails at random, some at mid-mountain and some towards the base, although not really expecting to chance upon something so luckily and immediately. They ticked off a vein of iron ore as being no longer suspected, and tracked along some power lines, but the spurs were endless, and very hard to follow.

As expected, nothing of interest appeared for the first two weeks. In between excursions, the tropical couple feasted at the restaurant on top of the mountain, speaking in both French and English with the patrons. Now and then they recognized a DIA, NIA, or CIA operative, but said nothing, for they didn't exist.

If anyone was watching them they would have not noted anything unusual in their demeanor or in their conversations, only that they were serious scientists, sometimes overhearing statements like this:

“When the universe was born, it was smaller than an electron, which is a quantum object that can exist simultaneously in many states. So the universe must also be a quantum object and exist in many states.”

or

“For a universe to generate itself it would have to exist before it existed.”
even

“I wonder what life an electron would have?”

“A very electrifying life charged with zing.”

There were many trails to check out, both regular and expert, which they could now accomplish, so, just for adventure, and of some insight, each time they had a choice, they took the more difficult path. While enjoying the dip of a bowl, as skiers called it, they spotted a trail off to the right that had a ‘closed’ sign on it. While this was not unusual, they quickly turned their skis sideways, the edges digging in and slowing them to a stop within a spray of snowy ice crystals flying and glittering in the sunlight.

“This taking of the most difficult path reminds me of a story,” said Austino.

“Let's hear it,” cheered Passiona.

“The path least followed led to...”

THE FOREST OF ORIGINAL GROWTH

What would it be like to stumble across lands that no one else had ever been to, and how could you know that? After reading Sir Conan Doyle's ‘Lost World’ about dinosaurs on a sealed off plateau of a volcano, I won-

dered if there were any more undiscovered places that the paths least followed could lead to.

So, while at the Earth Summit in Rio last month (early May), I forayed into the uncharted regions of Brazil, having chosen from a map the most desolate and remotest area. After various vaccinations and preparations, I trucked my one-man helicopter to the last way station, loaded the extra gas tanks onto it and flew into the heart of darkness, eventually gliding down onto a grassy field just as the gas ran out. From here I walked for tens and tens of miles, always taking the most difficult path whenever there was a choice. This would insure that I could end up in some totally unvisited region that was near impossible or hard-to-get-at in any way.

After several hundred or so of these 'improbable' least path choices, I suddenly came across acres and acres of Lady's Slippers flowers. These are very rare flowers that usually only appeared in small bunches, growing only in conjunction with a rare fungus, and, even, so, usually get picked. But there were millions of them.

I, then, after taking one last really difficult choice of path, discovered entire fields of other flowers long thought to be extinct. Some were Eve's Blossoms, which not been seen for thousands of years, historically valued for their life extending elixir, as well as the original, lost, strain of Pearly Everlasting, the flower that never dies, and so I suspected that I might be in virgin territory.

How would I know? Well, for one, there were no paths left, for even animals and their hunters had either long left or had never even been here. Also, the flower colors were not like any that I had ever seen before, not new colors, mind you, but, just, well, colors of different intensities and hues that were not thought to exist in nature. I saw true-blue roses, legendary no more.

I had chanced upon a land of strange rainbows of elfin-hued flowers: Red Delphiniums, Black Tulips, Orange Fuchsias, White Marigolds, Bronze grass, Yellow Violets, and even Adam's Apple, now growing from the ground!

Was this the original forest, the Garden of Eden? Was I the first to return to this legendary paradise? And then I knew that it was the Garden, for there, right in front of me, was a field of thousands of undisturbed golden nuggets on the forest floor. Surely no one had ever been here, at least not for a long, long time.

I reached up and put the apple back on the Tree.

Sure enough, the closed ski trail area was a bit dangerous. It widened into an expanse with many rocks and boulders sticking up through the snow. They noted some cigarette butts off to the side as they went through. There were many further side paths that were smaller than ac-

tual ski trails, but most looked treacherous, yet, they had ski marks entering them, some more than others. They followed one that looked promising, but it later rejoined the main slope that they had just been on.

“Let’s ski to the bottom and take the lift back up to have another look in a little while.”

“Hey, someone was smoking around there.”

“And all the butts are in one place.”

After a fine lunch of Swiss cheese, they skied back into the closed area. There was now a man sitting on a portable folding chair, reading a newspaper and lighting a cigarette. He was a short ways up-slope from a side trail whose entrance seemed to have been brushed over. They stopped to speak with him.

“Bonjour, Hello,” they hailed.

“I am an Englishman. Good afternoon, chaps.”

“Ah, beautiful day.”

It was nearly shirtsleeve weather, as on most ski slopes where the sun struck, the air warmed and the snow’s melting point higher due to the altitude.

“I love it up here, old chaps. The air and the scenery is just so exhilarating. I own a little hotel in the valley, such as one I had in England before I moved here, my good chaps, but it runs itself and so here I am.”

Austino wondered why a skier would be smoking and why he would right away state his occupation unasked. Passiona wondered why there were so many ‘chaps’ mentioned and why he referenced England twice.

“On holiday?” the man asked, as if to ascertain their being by further eliciting their identity without asking directly.

“We’re scientists from CERN. It is kind of a holiday for us, as we’re only part time until the LHC comes back up all the way.”

The man’s eyes lit up at the mention of the LHC. “Oh, really, it’s not ready yet?” he asked, as if that wasn’t common knowledge around these parts.

“No, it may be a while.”

“Well, I’m not much for science, chap friends,” he replied. “I just love the atmosphere around here. I could sit here all day.”

Passiona thought that this statement was just to allay any suspicion should they see him sitting here all day again sometime soon.

Austino asked, “Where do these trails go?”

“Oh, those are just some animal paths, I guess.”

“Some look treacherous.”

“I heard they took some chaps right off the edge of the mountain once.”

“Yikes!” replied Passiona.

The man now looked back to his newspaper, trying not to overdo what he had probably already overdone.

“Be seeing you. We’re off back to the main slope.”

Passiona noted, after some time. “He didn’t even remind us that this section was closed.”

“He seemed to be quite an odd fellow?”

“Indeed, even odder than it is to be English.”

“Yes, overdoing those ‘chaps’ and more that you already know.”

“There is something else nagging at the back of my mind.”

“The smoking?”

“Yes, but I suppose anyone might do that. Something more.”

“The way he smoked?”

“Yes, it looked awkward.”

“I’ve got it. When we first saw him, he lit and held the cigarette differently, as in the German-Russian style, and then when we approached he switched it to the western style.”

“Good eye.”

“He is not an Englishman, but a white Russian, as Rascal once told me about when his team raided a Soviet ‘Charm School’ in his younger days. They were training spies in the ways of Americana.”

“So, why is he here now but not earlier?”

“Perhaps there is a delivery coming?”

They sat for an uneventful while of over three hours. No one entered the closed area, although a few paused at a picnic table near to it, and then skied on. Then there was no one.

“What do you think?”

“Hmmm. We’ll check it again tomorrow.”

“Some of the ski packs looked bulkier today.”

“Yes, but the non Englishman probably waved them on and away.”

“Because we landed on his doorstep.”

“Yes, but we could be making a lot of ado out of nothing. Maybe he is on our side, so to speak, the new KGB or something.”

“Could be, but let’s send out a readiness alert just in case.”

“The deliveries will probably try to happen again tomorrow, if indeed that’s what they are.”

The loving couple slept and loved the night away as if there were no tomorrow. The happenings are confidential. The next day, they took up a spot with a better view and raised their binoculars. A different man was there, sitting in a folding chair.

“It says ‘Ski Patrol’ on his jacket.”

“Yet the jacket is not quite his size.”

“He must have found it somewhere.”

“Do they think we are stupid or something?”

“What an insult to the NIA. I might have to report this post.”

Two hours later, a skier with a bulky pack swooshed into the closed area and onto the ‘animal’ trail about 50 feet down slope from the folding chair man.

“They put someone else on duty, but neglected to alter the motif.”

“Yes, and they could have just as well had no one looking out, and so then we would have been none the wiser.”

“True. Someone is becoming paranoid. By posting a lookout, they have only managed to give away their position.”

“Yet the overall plan is ingenious. Easy access in and out, the cover of the public ski area, the closed area, a power line spur connection wired perhaps...”

“I can see CERN in the distance.”

“Would you care to ski in the moonlight on the brightly lit snow?”

“Yes, tonight. Call backup and raise the alert for Section 7 to have their motors running.”

“And I’ll call Rascal.”

“All because of a litterbug.”

“Luck happens.”

“We would have found it eventually.”

“Before or after Armageddon?”

Midnight arrived and passed. The apparently undisciplined terrorists would be drunk or asleep by now, except for some watchmen grown bored by nothing much ever happening but a moose wandering by.

Austino and Passiona wore white, the better to blend in with the snow lit by the nearly full moon. They skied soft but sure, entering the closed area and then the side trail, their backups slightly behind them by a few minutes.

It was much darker in there, in places, due to the tall fir trees, so they flipped down their night goggles. The trail was long and winding, indeed coming within a few feet of the edge, another fine deterrent to those who might wander this way unawares. They had skied perhaps three miles. The path was rough and torturous. It was nearly 1 AM.

“I really hope there’s something in here.”

“There is. These tracks ahead of us are fresh, plus some were made by a snowmobile, one way of getting back up and out.”

They stopped and looked, “What’s that ahead?”

“It’s not a head; it’s a power station.”

“Which is not on my up-to-date map.”

“The brickwork looks new.”

“The guard is asleep outside.”

“They’ve run a cable along the ground to that electric tower way over yonder.”

“Jump over it if we end up going out that way in a while.”

“Yes, for we don’t have a snowmobile.”

“There is always a back way out, for an emergency escape. Go downhill if there is a choice.”

“Let’s make the call now and then take that guard out.”

“Yes, and if anything happens to us, Section 7 won’t get our next call, and will then come in anyway. If we’re fine, we’ll bring them in all the sooner.”

Passiona loaded a dart. It hit the guard in the neck, he toppling over ever so gently. Then his whiskey bottle fell onto a rock and shattered. Some men soon began pouring out of the power station, stumbling a bit, some with guns. Our dear couple made the confirmation call, and were already heading down a sloping trail, this being the terrorists’ back door and way out. They stopped after a bit, not wishing to become targets by their movement through an open bowl just beyond and below.

“They may not shoot, as this could give their position away, as they may not know that we already know.”

“Yes, if they’re smart, although these pot shot sounds might not be so loud once they are heard way down in the valley.”

“But they must now suspect some listeners about.”

“However, ...

Some shots rang out, a few landing nearby.

“They’re not smart.”

“Yes, but the shots are random. They don’t know where we are.”

“We can’t stay here forever. I hear a snowmobile engine starting up.”

“We have auto GPS; Section 7 can tell friend from foe.”

“Where are they?”

“Hark, I hear the whispering rotors.”

“Stay down.”

Choppers were coming up the slope, the cannons blasting the area about the ‘power station’. Troop ships followed, Section 7 rappelling down to the ground a short distance away from the power station. A snowmobile exploded but 200 feet away from Austino and Passiona. Way off in the distance they could see skiers wearing rifles passing by at the point where the traveled trail had met the cliffs.

“I believe I saw Rascal in that first chopper.”

“The guy loves to be close to the action.”

“And so do we, to each other.”

“Kiss me.”

The U.S. President called his counterpart in Switzerland, waking him up. After a brief conversation, it became clear to both sides that there

was no need to look into the incident any further, for, indeed, it never happened.

A week later, the LHC sub-function test began. There was no anomaly. Lisa smiled to herself. Precision had won the day. In a few months they could begin the search for the Higg's particle.

The discussion of the LHC mission accomplished was held in the ultra secure General's bunker.

"You're on stage, guys," Rascal encouraged Austino.

"I was surprised to see you in the lead chopper, General. We don't need for you to die again so soon."

"Well, our lead pilot had the flu and I had a lot of training as a Warrant Officer years ago, and thought I'd fill in. The downdrafts the mountains are always a problem, as well as the thin air that strains the rotors. My leaden foot was needed."

"Your approach was excellent, Rascal, as was the canon fire upon the station and the destruction of the oncoming snowmobile. You even purposely sent a mini-blizzard into the eyes of the other terrorists streaming out."

"Thanks, but we all worked together. Your skiing backups laid down some impressive fire, so my chopper was not in any immediate danger. Then the full ski force came in to seal that exit and the fates of many evil doers. And, of course, there was your astute identification of the location of the terrorists and their hideout."

"Had the terrorists succeeded, would a large region have been radiated beyond repair?"

"Yes, but it would be much worse than you are suggesting."

"All of Europe?"

"No, larger."

"My God, what?"

"There are some things that I should never tell."

"But by saying so, you did."

"Yes, indeed, for you all should know."

Rascal asked them to lean in, to hear a whisper, more so for the drama than anything else, and to forever remember it. They approached the grand old man, being almost eye to eye., Rascal stating softly, "Nothing less than the entire planet would have been rendered uninhabitable forever."

No one spoke for a while.

"Perhaps the Mayan calendar was off a few years," Rascal added.

"Did the LHC really fail on its own because of some magnet?"

"No, we shut it down as a precaution."

"Suppose that the terrorist's attack had begun."

“Lisa was going to turn the LHC beams toward the incoming signals, if necessary, to avert a total disaster. It would have saved the day but would have blasted a large portion of Mount Blanc away.”

“Wow, it will be hard to beat this story, at least for the scope of its possible bad ending.”

“I have other stories that are not so vast in an ugly conclusion, but have even more varied and interesting aspects.”

“From your early days and from your later days of Field Command?”

“Indeed, and soon we shall sit down, pour some wine, light a few cigars, and play some exciting music at a low volume while I tell you all about them. I was called ‘Rascal’ back then.”

“Such as the full story of the ‘Charm School’ and the attempted replacement of the Soviet Leader?”

“Yes, for those are intertwined, and more, such as other Iranian ‘mishaps’, and a stolen nuclear submarine. Come prepared to relax and listen for quite a while. I’ve been dying to tell someone. It will be like hearing a book that has never been written.”

“For it never happened.”

“Yes, consider it fiction.”





Materialization

*Workable
Continuing
Onward*

*Nothing
Possible*

*Realized
by
Mammal
consciousness*

*(Note:
Timeless,
Formless,
Lawless)*

*Potentially
Everything
Possible*

*Not
Workable*

NOT MUCH FREE WILL

*Do you control your thoughts or do your thoughts
Control you? Could you, silly as it seems,
Just be falling, hook and line, for your thoughts?
Think about it—thoughts may tell you the answer!*

*The brain's decisions are determined by
Memories, associations, and
Learned behaviors right up to the instant;
So—our decisions are predetermined.*

*The “free” in free will has no real meaning,
Unless we take it to mean random, that
One's will depends on nothing but dice rolls;
What good would such a brain be anyway?*

*Can you start or stop your thoughts? In other words,
Can you will that which does the willing? Try it.
Oops, a surprise thought just came from the blue;
You did not will it—the will is unfree!*

*A mind is perhaps many little minds,
Each a simpleton awaiting control,
Such as when we eat, socialize, or fight,
None of them very complex at all.*

*The brain, with its hundred billion nerve cells,
Does all of our decision-analysis,
Only making its results known, at the last,
To the mind's highest level: consciousness.*

*People act, robot-like, since they know not
The why of what they do, for decisions
Are made blind, by brain networks, just before
They're presented to us in consciousness.*

*Consciousness comes three hundred milliseconds
After the brain does its analysis,
And, thus, has but last-second veto power,
If any, over what the brain comes up with.*

*Decisions are not made by consciousness,
Although, this fine picture in the mind's 'I',
Merely the brain's perception of itself,
Is fed back whole for future shortcutting.*

*Not much of what the brain does reaches
Consciousness, and even when it does,
The mind's last to know; it's just a tourist—
For decisions precede their awareness.*

*First-level people have beliefs and desires,
But second-level people can have beliefs
And desires about their beliefs and desires,
Becoming able spectators of themselves.*

*Although our decisions of the instant are
Fully determined, and are therefore not free,
We may happen to learn something new—and make
Choices tomorrow we wouldn't make today.*

*Thoughts good and bad come and go, as the brain
Looks at itself without assigning values.
Still, lucky that others can't read our minds,
'Though forbidden thoughts are normal and sane.*

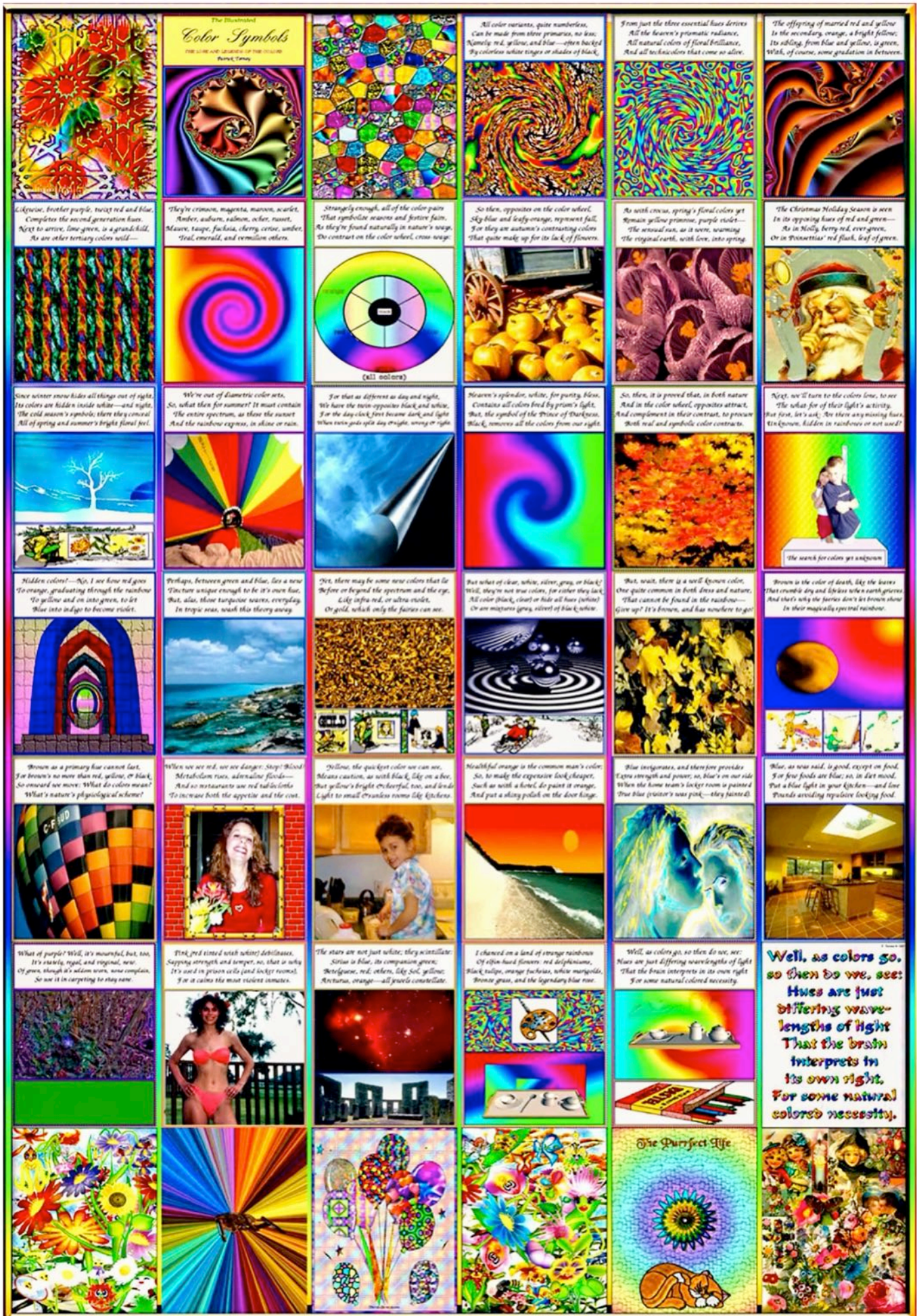
*We fall for our thoughts, hook, line, and sinker:
Conditioned responses, reflexes, or
Overwhelming emotions, spurious,
Or ancient, planted by evolution.*

*Let reactions sail on by—just observe them,
But don't act on them. This puts some distance
Between you and your conditioned response,
A space which grants a modicum of free will.*

*When extreme thoughts arrive, uninvited, as
Most thoughts do, we veto them, saying "don't",
For while we can never will that which does
The unconscious willing, we have some free won't.*

*Many are robots, but no one notices
Since there are so many different kinds,
Which, though making life quite interesting,
Obscures the fact that the will is unfree.*

*The Why of
Inconceivable Nought
and the
How of Must-Be Possibility
begat the Universe of the
What that moves
through the Where
From Then to Now to When,
All of Which becomes
The Who of Being
that evolved from
Dust to Stars to Atoms to
Molecules to Cells to Life to
Brains to Experiences to
Consciousness and on into
Direction, Growth,
Planning, and Creation.*



The Rainbow
Color Symbols
 THE LINE AND QUALITY OF THE SPECTRUM
 PAUL TAYLOR

*Exquisite, brother purple, twist red and blue,
 Completes the second generation hues.
 Next to arrive, line green, is a grandchild,
 As an other tertiary colors wild—*

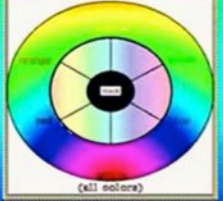
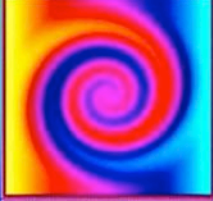
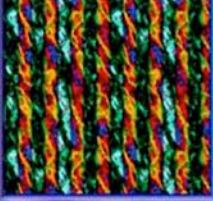
*They're crimson, magenta, maroon, scarlet,
 Amber, salmon, salmon, ochre, russet,
 Mauve, taupe, fuchsia, cherry, cerise, under,
 Teal, emerald, and vermilion others.*

*Strangely enough, all of the color pairs
 That symbolize seasons and festive fairs,
 As they're found naturally in nature's ways,
 Do contrast on the color wheel, cross ways.*

*So then, opposites on the color wheel,
 Sky blue and leafy orange, represent fall,
 For they are autumn's contrasting colors
 That quite make up for its lack of flowers.*

*As with crocus, spring's floral colors yet
 Remain yellow primrose, purple violet—
 The annual sun, as it were, warming
 The regional earth, with love, into spring.*

*The Christmas Holiday Season is seen
 In its opposing hues of red and green—
 As in Holly, berry red, ever-green,
 Or in "Poinsettias" red flash, leaf of green.*



*Since winter snow hides all things out of sight,
 Its colors are hidden inside white—and night.
 The cold season's symbolic, there the conceal
 All of spring and summer's bright floral feel.*

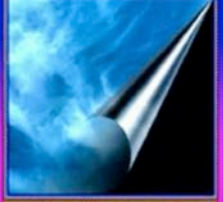
*We're out of diametric color sets,
 So, what then for summer? It must contain
 The entire spectrum, as those the sunset
 And the rainbow express, in shine or rain.*

*For that is different as day and night,
 We have the twin opposites black and white,
 For the day/night first become dark and light
 When two go only day or night, wrong or right.*

*Heaven's splendor, white, for purity, bliss,
 Contains all colors freed by prism's light,
 But, the symbol of the Prince of Darkness,
 Black, removes all the colors from our sight.*

*So, then, it is proved that, in both nature
 And in the color wheel, opposites attract,
 And complement in their contrast, to prove
 Both real and symbolic color contrasts.*

*Next, we'll turn to the colors line, to see
 The what for of their light's activity,
 But first, let's ask: Are there any missing hues,
 Un-known, hidden in rainbows or not used?*



*Hidden colors?—No, I see how red goes
 To orange, graduating through the rainbow
 To yellow and on into green, to let
 Blue into indigo to become violet.*

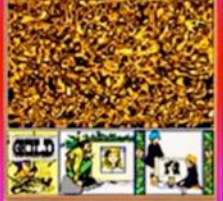
*Perhaps, between green and blue, lies a new
 Spectrum unique enough to be it's own hue,
 But, also, those turquoise waves, everyday
 In tropic seas, wash this theory away.*

*Or, there may be some new colors that lie
 Before or beyond the spectrum and the eye,
 Like infra-red, or ultra violet,
 Or gold, which only the fairies can see.*

*But what of clear, white, silver, grey, or blue?
 Well, they're not true colors, for either they lack
 All color (black, clear) or hide all hues (white)
 Or are mixtures (grey, silver) of blue & white.*

*But, wait, there is a well known color,
 One quite common in both dress and nature,
 That cannot be found in the rainbow—
 Give up? It's brown, and has nowhere to go!*

*Brown is the color of death, like the hearse
 That crumble dry and lifeless when earth greets
 And that's why the fairies don't let brown show
 In their magically spectral rainbows.*



*Brown as a primary hue cannot last,
 For brown's no more than red, yellow, or blue &
 So onward we move: What do colors mean?
 What's nature's physiological scheme?*

*When we see red, we are danger: Stop! Blood
 Dictates unique enough to be it's own hue,
 And so restaurants use red table linens
 To increase both the appetite and the cost.*

*Yellow, the quickest color we can see,
 Means caution, so with blue & red, they are set,
 But yellow's bright & cheerful, too, and leads
 Light to small & endless rooms like kitchens.*

*Useful orange is the common man's color
 To make the experience look happy,
 Such as with a hotel, do paint it orange,
 And put a shiny polish on the door hinge.*

*Blue integrates, and therefore provides
 To you strength and power, so, blue's on our side
 When the home team's locker room is painted
 The blue (visitor's) was just—they painted!*

*Blue, as was said, is good, except on food,
 For few foods are blue; so, in diet mood,
 Put a blue light in your kitchen—and blue
 Friends avoiding regular looking food.*



*What of purple? Well, it's mournful, but, too,
 It's exalted, regal, and regional, new
 Or green, though it's seldom worn, some complain,
 So see it in carrying to stay sane.*

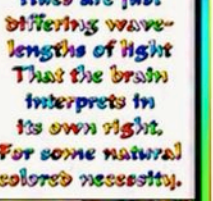
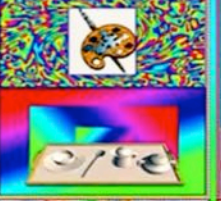
*Pink, just tamed with white's delicacies,
 Sapping strength and temper, so, that is why
 It's used in prison cells (and locker rooms),
 For it causes the most violent inmates.*

*The stars are not just white; they scintillate:
 Sirius is blue, its companion green;
 Betelgeuse, red; others, like, Sol, yellow;
 Antares, orange—all jewels constellate.*

*I chanced on a land of strange rainbows
 Of often hard flowers, red delphiniums,
 Black tulips, orange fuchsias, white marguerite,
 Bronze grass, and the legendary blue rose.*

*Well, as colors go, so then do we, see:
 Hues are just differing wavelengths of light
 That the brain interprets in its own right
 For some natural colored necessity.*

**Well, as colors go,
 so then do we, see:
 Hues are just
 differing wave-
 lengths of light
 That the brain
 interprets in
 its own right,
 For some natural
 colored necessity.**



— Chapter 29 —
Stories

The NIA operatives had been listening to some of Rascal's rapt descriptions of the prelude to his major adventures that led him to become their commander and GrandMaster. They had reconvened in Niihau, Hawaii, his home office that he'd often left so as to be still active in the field, the place where he was meant to be, the place where he was destined to operate from, that much high tech now allowed. They could hardly believe their eyes when they saw the place.

No one was in a rush to hear all, for they ever listened and savored the details as they slowly but grandly came forth via this nearly lost art of story telling. They were not impatient, and could wait, but they could feel that some things writ very large were coming, the stuff behind the scenes that never happened, being just beyond the horizon of the recent and ever building stories by this lone GrandMaster of the Ninja Empire that protected the world's innocents as best they could with their deep determination and ever-present goodness.

Rascal was unveiling tales, narratives, anecdotes, reports, accounts, and sagas. The old Rascal lit up a cigar as the stories unfolded in the haze of a pipe dream...

"Do tell what else was in that Great Pyramid, Fredrick," Rascal suggested.

"There were 4000 year-old iron weapons that did not rust, looking as new as the day they were forged. I held glass that bent without breaking. I drank from a vase that poured water without end. I filled an entire tub from it and bathed away all my dirt and dust. A compass needle went around and never stopped. I ate a cake but I still had it. I saw the starry skies through solid rock walls. I entered a room that had no door. There was light within the room but no flame or openings. I looked into a grain of sand and saw eternity."

Fredrick paused, recalling.

"Outside, I saw the Sphinx. Its glance was fixed on something else. It was the glance of a being who thinks in centuries and millenniums. I did not exist and could not exist for it, for it was the face of eternity."

No one spoke.

Rascal rose. "Next, after an hour break, during which you might go out to see the scenery, we will hear some about a long trek from an escape from a Soviet prison through the mountains and across some ink-black rivers."

Questor and Top Secret headed down one of the many paths of Niihau, its secrets ever shrouded in mist from above, and all around from the other islands, but here they were, within the Forbidden Paradise...

“Come back, friends,” said Rascal, “to hear of the dark, the light, and the never.”

“We are here, being ever.”

“There are books unwritten and never told.”

“We can listen until we get old.”

“By what muted shore of the dark river did its strand call me forth?”

“We’re sure that we’ll never hear worse.”

“By what far edge of furrowed forest didst the Motherland seek my name?”

“Oh, Rascal, through what hazy depth of gloom hast thou tread and threadest?”

“Gather thee round and you shall knowest.”

Rascal lit up a cigar and went over to the stereo, putting on some music by Hans Zimmer from a movie that wasn’t even out yet. He poured some wine for all. The agents sat back, awaiting the next tale, being both entertained and learning from them.

Rascal looked off into space. “We haven’t seen Old GrandMaster West for three years now. We presume that he is enjoying his retirement, but then I read an amazing newspaper headline for which my Intelligence has no answer; but, the guy is 103 years old!”

“He was your GrandMaster?”

“Yes. He always watched over me in my career in Field Command. Somehow, he gave me some kind of magic, or was I just one lucky son of a gun?”

“One’s outlook can make luck,” Top Secret suggested.

“Yes, some it can. I needed it all in the nuclear crises.”

“Iran?” asked Questor.

“Yes, always Iran, isn’t it?”

“They must be some kind of turning point of history.”

“Yes, they are, I mean were. Our TOE analysis had found that focus point.”

“Who went on that mission?”

“Old West himself, after he promoted me to replace him. He killed the turning point of History that would have done in the world eventually, and then retired for good.”

“The Butterflies stood upon the edge of forever fading?”

“Yes, and now we are on another, better path.”

— Chapter 30 —
The Death of a Lord

“I am in Columbia in South America; wish you were here, angel. Seems all the big drug lords are in one place and having a meeting. We may have to crash the party.”

“Hello all,” said Passiona, “our operative, Austino, has just contacted us and is planning on crashing the party of certain said drug lords in Columbia. Be on the tarmac at 0-500 hours; be dressed for jungle warfare. High risk pay for all of course; see you there, you all know where to go now, right? Okay everyone, the word from Rascal is that we will be having some fun ridding the world of some drug scumlords. That’s all people, until 0500, everyone have fun, say goodbye to your families, it may be a long one.”

Rascal implored, “Try not to harm the women and children. Also, we will blow up the coke factory and its warehouse nearby on the estate. It will then be snowing, as like in a winter blizzard. Try not to be in it or inhale it, or let it land on your tongue. Wait until all the people have run out to see the destruction, as they will be wont to do, as if that does anything, and let them stand around out there awhile, thinking that nothing else is going to happen, until all are present, then...”

Passiona was running back to the main floor of her hideaway, shouting out to her darlings as they stood outside the window’s trying not to look inconspicuous, and at the same time carry on a conversation with their mother. They were terribly upset that after just a few short days of their leafless mother being back she had to once again take off and disappear into the sunset. Passiona was getting perturbed, after all, her darlings were not little babies anymore, however she did understand. Life of an agent is always risky, and they all knew that. Passiona shouted out her love to her babies, all grown up, and scurried down the stairs to the secret exit/entrance to her home away from home.

As she buckled herself into the top secret vehicle, one that could fly through both sea and air, and could also navigate rough mountain terrain, as well as pass any race car on the streets, there was a thought that was niggling at the back of her brain, something she couldn’t quite put her finger on. That more than any thing else bothered her, it was things like that that could down an agent in the blink of an eye. Passiona shook it off, can’t let it get to me, she thought, as she raced to the rendezvous point where they would all join as one on this operation.

Everyone was excited, the air was quite literally, electric with excitement and tension. Rascal walked into the front of the ‘vessel’ that was going to take them all to the drug infested coke-lords estate, where unbeknownst to the locals (yeah right), there was a full fledged under-

ground factory working 24/7, 365 days a year. They produced everything that their bandit-tised brains could conjure. Which, of course, everyone, was one butt load of illegal and illicit drugs.

Rascal cleared his throat rather loudly. "Here we are comrades, let's load up the ship with weapons, and our arses as well.

Rascal laughed, and apologized to his friends, and employees. They all boarded the vessel, oohing, and ahing at the wonders of modern technology that was displayed everywhere the eye rested as it roamed about.

Everyone got comfy, and strapped in, preparation for the G forces that were about to slam them into their seats. Passiona finally couldn't stand it any longer, and said after some extra loud throat clearing, "Hey everyone? I need your input on some matters pertaining to our mission. Could everyone give me a run down on what your expected part of the mission is? Just so we're all on the same page here. I also need you all to do a voice record on the panel here beside me for our security entrance program. Without you saying your name into the speaker at the rear door, there will be no staying inside this ship. That will be all, okay now everyone, when you are ready, please come up to the front and give me your mission blueprints."

There was a resonance of straps being latched, and safety harness's being snapped into place. Soon they had arrived over their destination, and under the cover of night they were going to do a jump, one two jump, one two jump, and so on until only Rascal was left.

Rascal told the pilot, "veer left, and go down to the coast, we will pick up the special ops agents there....

Bang, they were hit, but thanks to the regenerative properties of the special alloys/synthetic material derived from the common spider, the repair was quickly and efficiently taken care of.

Passiona was down under cover of the vegetation. She and her team were wearing state-of-the-art suits that changed with their surroundings, exactly like that of the chameleon. They had on headgear that had night vision/x-ray/zoom and pc-compatible with their thoughts, so when one component was needed it automatically was in use.

They advanced stealthily towards the front of the estate. They had to access the rear entrance to the warehouse to deploy their pins, which when the signal was given would level everything in site with a sonic pulse.

Austino was now at Passiona side, they shared an affectionate kiss, and they both saw it at once; stop! Here was a web of some sort blocking there path, they were almost in.... Austino pulled out his unit and with several deft movements, the web was gone. They dove in and rolled, and slithered out of the direct path of an enemy patrol. They lay motionless, Passiona was sweating, but grinning like a cheshire cat; this was it!

The NIA teams gradually got into position, noting the comings and goings of the enemy patrols, leaving them alone, for now, they being relatively few in number, so they could continue to report to the lord of drug lords, Don Mario, that all was well. Mario had left more than 3,000 deaths in the wake of his push to control the cocaine trade that found its way across the Caribbean Sea. NIA settled in close. It was as if hundreds of monks had walked barefoot, not even breaking a twig or stirring a bird.



Thoughts of going in: *This is for that poor kid in Philadelphia who overdosed.*

A practically invisible missile then came out of the sky and dug through the earth and into the underground cocaine factory and distribution center, and then exploded. It would seem that the explosion had originated underground and that it had been planted there.

The drug lords sent their underlings out first, and, then, after nothing else happened for ten minutes, came out themselves, eying one another suspiciously. It was snowing coke, they inhaling it and becoming quite

disoriented, but still plodding on to look at the crater where billions of dollars had just gone up in smoke. Their curiosity would herald their doom. Mario was on the radio. All was well in the jungle and on the hills. They had some workers bring out some wheelbarrows to try to save the few remaining bricks.

The women and children, still having some sense, ran down the road, fearing that the house would be the next thing to explode. NIA needed to take some of the top lords alive to gain further leads and information. They would only be shot in the lower leg.

Even the enemy patrols then came forth, in their curiosity. They, the underlings, and many of the minor drug lords were fair game; it was a 'no mercy' mission. Half of the NIA sections were just off the road and on the far side of the hill, facing away, for the sounds of the explosion might bring in enemy reinforcements, those probably staying back so as not to draw attention to the big meeting. It could turn into quite a battle. Since the sound of silence still reigned, but for the drug lords cursing even while getting high, NIA could listen for any approaching threat.

Top Secret looked to Questor just as he looked to her. A bug crawled by. Time seemed to stand still, though only a few minutes had passed, the smoke and the snow drifting down in a surreal scene of serene beauty on a tropical day turning, as both the dusk and the dust fell. It was neither day nor night, neither warm nor cool. All was in equipoise. Twilight was the balance. The Captain on the scene would call the tip that would send the sun plummeting into the sea. The winds subsided; all was calm...

Top Secret and Questor took out the remaining thugs, with no pity whatsoever. Top Secret knew many people who had gone down the wrong road, and took revenge with a ferocity that made the drug underlings run with a terror too late. The Don was at gunpoint in front of Questor, being pushed with the point of his weapon at a speed that kept him on his feet, just.

They all headed to the 'vessel' that awaited them in camouflage. This vessel had a state of the art skin over it that not only changed to blend with its surroundings, it also was indestructible. When hit, thousands of nano-bots set out to repair the hole with a combination of polymer/spider silk that was almost impenetrable. They headed to one of their many bases.

They were now underground and out of reach of all weapons, missiles, even nuclear. Questor was talking off to the side of the room with Rascal.

Rascal began, "I was able to catch most of the action from above, then I followed some of the lights in the dark."

“Well, the Captain gave the signal by shooting Don Mario in the knee, just as the sun sank into the sea, the drug lord actually really hobbling away, and taking refuge under a tree.”

“Then all Hell broke loose.”

“Yes, almost all were shot in some way, and then what else we’d hoped for began to happen to the rear, as enemy troops came forth out of the jungle, not really their best move. Our forces on the other side of the hill and the helicopter door-gunners took care of them. We took some prisoners, as samples, from various locations. Then we evacuated and you sent out the fake news release.”

“It went well,” Rascal commented. “After you-all and I were long gone, two missiles lifted off from an unmanned barge out in the ocean. One missile leveled the entire estate and the other one circled back and destroyed the barge that never was.”

The NIA, along with the Colombian government, rearranged the news as follows, on 4/21/09:

COLOMBIAN POLICE CATCH DRUG LORD DANIEL ‘DON MARIO’ RENDÓN

Daniel Rendón, Colombia’s most powerful cocaine trafficker whose war of expansion may have led to 3,000 deaths, was caught ‘like a dog.’

BY SIBYLLA BRODZINSKY, SPECIAL TO THE MIAMI HERALD

BOGOTA -- Colombian police on Wednesday captured the country’s most powerful drug lord known as ‘Don Mario,’ who authorities say left more than 3,000 deaths in the wake of his push to control the cocaine trade on the country’s Caribbean coast.

Daniel Rendón was captured by 300 police commandos on a farm in the northwestern region of Urabá near the Panamanian border, a major launch pad for shipments of tons of cocaine bound for U.S. markets.

“They found him virtually like a dog, cowering, hugging a palm tree,” Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos said on recounting details of the capture. Rendón, wearing a blue and brown T-shirt and gray sweat pants, arrived in Bogotá on a Colombian police plane hours after the morning operation.

Rendón is wanted on charges of drug trafficking, murder and conspiracy. The Colombian authorities had offered a \$2.5 million reward for his capture, which Santos said would be paid at least in part to informants.

Rendón is also wanted on drug trafficking charges in the United States. Police commander Gen. Oscar Naranjo said Rendón had told him on the plane he was willing to collaborate with Colombian and U.S. authorities.

“I hope his lieutenants turn themselves in,” Naranjo said.

Rendón was believed to control an army of 1,000 fighters that fought rival gangs for control of drug routes along Colombia’s Caribbean coast. Last year Rendón declared a war against the Medellín-based organization of demobilized paramilitary chief Diego ‘Don Berna’ Murillo, who was extradited to the United States on drug charges.

Santos estimated that more than 3,000 people died in that war of expansion over the past year and a half.

As Rendón’s power grew, Colombian President Alvaro Uribe made public calls to the police to track down and capture Rendón. As police turned up the heat, Rendón offered a bounty of \$1,000 for every police officer his hit men killed, recalling a similar offer made by legendary drug lord Pablo Escobar before his death in 1993.

Daniel Rendón and his brother Freddy Rendón, known as ‘el Aleman’ or ‘the German,’ were among dozens of leaders of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) who demobilized as part of a pact with the government in 2005 that included reduced sentences for the top chiefs. But when officials ordered the arrest of demobilized leaders in 2006, Don Mario fled and started to build up his drug trafficking army.

“He had accumulated a lot of power uniting criminal gangs from the provinces of ‘Chocó to Guajira,’ Santos said.

Santos said police had been tracking Don Mario for nine months and that twice the drug lord had managed to escape similar attempts to capture him.

The minister said that because he dropped out of the demobilization deal, Rendón would not be eligible for any benefits under the so-called Justice and Peace law that offered the reduced sentences.

In the expansion of his criminal network, Don Mario is believed to have infiltrated different echelons of government. The former head of the attorney general’s office in Medellín, Guillermo Valencia Cossio, brother of the current Interior minister, is on trial for allegedly colluding with members of Don Mario’s organization.

Other top drug lords still unaccounted for include Daniel Barrera, ‘Loco Barrera’; Pedro ‘Cuchillo’ Guerrero; and Luis Enrique Calle, alias ‘Comba’.

WHY ASK WHY?

All the stars roll by for me to classify
Science more and more my life does simplify;
But I have one final question left to ask:
Why in the world was I born to live and die?

Since life's complex, they say it must have origin—
It couldn't have made itself or always have been!
The answer: God; but, they've begged the question
God couldn't have made himself or always have been!

A thousand starry goblets fill the sky,
So we can taste Heaven's drink when we die.
This is man's tale, not God's, so drink today—
The stars shine on, heedless of where we lie.

When I chased the flitting shadows of some
Unknown ultimate perfectionate ONE,
The phantom fled at my touch, a dim image—
Reflected faint and far removed from.

Knowing that I can't solve the eternal mystery
Frees me from that senseless task and all its misery.
Now I see, hear, smell, feel, and drink into my being
ALL reality that penetrates sensibility.

Why fret about life's ultimate secret,
For whose thoughts can escape this worldly net?
It's so easy: don't despair, be happy!
All told, 'tis best to live without regret.

We Are Most Free When We Are Asymptotically Co-joined

The strong family unit, as the three quarks,
Is bonded by the power of its grouping.
But loses identity if the home breaks—
Other pairs soon forming or divorcing.

Then comes the prison of solitude—
Chained to isolation with fortitude,
Floating, lost, without effects of affects,
Losing the identity conferred by others.

Within the proton, gentleness becomes strength,
For the members are free to explore at length,
Never smothering, but building unity,
The unit's direction adding to the one.

The strong force grows weaker near the quarks,
And so we may observe them someday,
Shining in their primordial glory—
The beginning of all things composite.

Identity is not lost in the co-joining—
True loves don't crowd the hearts of the others,
But, rather, look outward, in the same direction,
Close, joined, but not in the others' section.

It is a seeming arithmetic violation,
That in summation we become greater:
We don't merge, having supported freedom,
Yet still share the same good vibrations.

Love matures when partners let it flow beyond—
Free to wend its way to places dear and fond.
Love's butterfly prospers when winds blow free;
Unconditional love never binds—it bonds.

— Chapter 31 —
Tempest in a Teapot



POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

*Good and evil were wrought from wrong and right,
When, from nought, twin genii split day and night.
Some think that black's might can vanquish white,
But night can't even quench the smallest light!*

The NIA had discovered the planning headquarters of the latest conspiracy, simply by tailing some of its members. Top Secret was given the job of discovering the plans inside their computers, and in a way that would provide for a continuing source of information. Someday, an air strike could take out this entire planning building, but only after all its operatives in the field were dead.

Their computer network was only internal, so there was no way to hack in. A member had to physically come to the building to learn or update his part. The Director had access to the total plan, continually going over it and updating it. The building was impenetrable. Members not only had brain chip implants, but there were umpteen levels of retina scans and fingerprint identification as one progressed through the more secure levels of the building. It wasn't like Top Secret could gouge out a chip, an eyeball, and cut off a finger off a member, for not only would this arouse suspicion, but she would look mighty silly holding up an eyeball and a

finger tip at the various checkpoints. Anyway, there was also the facial recognition.

The computers also had several levels of unbreakable passwords, so she couldn't just ask some cleaning maid to take a look. Hypnotizing a member was out of the question as well, the built-in chip preventing it. Nor could she read the computer monitor's radio transmissions, as usual, from outside of the building, since they used shielding techniques, called 'Tempest', on the monitors, and even on the building itself. In addition, the new flat panel screens used low voltage and didn't scan images one line at a time.

She may have been able to detect the emanations from the keyboard typing, for each key emits a unique radio-wave signature when pressed, but the typing consisted of mostly navigational-type actions through the database, which, anyway, had been typed in many separated pieces from many planners. Plus, there was the building's emission shielding. So, she really needed to see what was in the database at the Director's level, not his actual typing, which, even if some few lines were important, would end up in the database anyway.

Nor could she just look in the window somehow, for not only were the backs of the computers always facing the windows, the blinds were usually drawn, and the offices of the Director and his important Vice-Presidents were on the 6th floor. So, a fake window washer person hanging outside their offices every day surely would not work. Besides, they even had a privacy screen wrapping around their computers to prevent even any accidental view even from off to the side. So, what good would it do anyway to see the backside of a computer, for it reveals nothing.

Now, was this a difficult assignment or what? No, it was easy and she didn't even need any futuristic state of the art million dollar magical-type super surveillance system. Could she use the CIA satellite? No, for it couldn't see through a building very well, and even if it could, a computer monitor would not be horizontal to it, but vertical. Could she kidnap the Director? No, for he lived in the building 24-7.

Top Secret was ready. To do what? See the back of a computer? No, the front. She would get into the database whenever the Director did, *for his mere looking at the secret data would give it away*. Telepathy? No. Any other kind of weird emissions? Nope.

She checked out a \$10,000 telescope from the NIA stockroom and rented a space on the 6th floor in the building across the street. She didn't even have to bribe a maid to bend a slat in the Director's blinds, for they did not quite reach all the way across, plus sometimes he forgot to close them or left them partway open.

His wraparound screen would even increase the brightness of the reflection on the viewer's eyes; however, a not yet invented mac-truck size

telescope and full computer setup would be required for this kind of eyeball reading, since eyeballs are rarely still for more than a second or two, plus the eye saccades all over the place, and so the complicated deconvolution mathematical functions used by astronomical observatories to remove the blur would not be good enough from this far away. So, that technology wouldn't work. It only worked on close-up photos, NIA having used it to see the room reflected that a terrorist was speaking from. Now what?

Too bad the Director didn't wear glasses, for then she could have focused on those, and perhaps recorded and photographed the reflections, and simply reversed them. However, they, too, would have moved around too much, with the head motions, plus the glare and the lens thickness playing many tricks.

Was this assignment now getting really tough? No, easy. She was just thinking out loud, already knowing the best method and remaining patient for it. In the meanwhile, she would try a new experimental procedure first, just for fun.

As Top Secret sat diligently observing, there was a slight buzz coming towards her. Just a fly? Nope. This was of her own design, her little missionary that could go many places that she could not. She smiled and gave a short whistle. Her little 'pet' was going to go in land on the Director. As she gave the pet a little tweak on his instrument panel, and gave words of encouragement, the little fly took his leave and buzzed off through the vast maze of air ventilation shafts. It would reach the director in only a few moments.

This was it. The fly buzzed around the director, annoying, buzzing, in and out of his range of vision. Just then the director swatted at it. Mission accomplished! Top Secret focused, through the lenses of the fly's eyes. The 'eyes' were microscopic cameras that as the director swatted at the fly, they had been knocked off of the fly as planned. With the concrete like glue, the microscopic lenses were all over the director's head. Only three had made it to a decent position, enough to see the computer screen as the Director himself did! The screen grew out of its fuzziness to crystal clarity. They had some of what they needed now.

The brilliant solution by Top Secret had tested the feasibility of the electronic spy bug technique; however, as expected, the Director went to the rest room to wash his face, the bugs getting scrubbed off, but at least she had a good view of the men's room for a while. Even worse, the Director shut his window since the actual bugs of spring were flying all over and looking for lovely flowers to pollinate, but he did leave his blinds up.

They did get a bit of info, but that was only the beginning, so Top Secret teleported back with her medium size telescope and looked some more. Her real chance would come soon.

She knew that someday this place might just get vaporized, if their plans were lethal enough, but, as Rascal hinted, then the remnants would just reform somewhere else unknown. At least NIA knew where this place was and that it was drawing evil to it like a magnet. Any and all arrivals and departures were being tracked and photographed by other NIA members, who then fed the facial images into the Apple Mac computer iPhoto program, which had a facial recognition feature.

Top Secret sat patiently waiting, for the director was on his way. She knew she would get it right this time. Ah ha! There he is, thought Top Secret. She watched as the Director moved around getting his folders.. He walked to his seat and sat. Now with him out of the telescopes view, Top Secret patiently waited. Not much longer, thought she. The door to the Director's inner sanctum opened....

In walked the Director's personal office assistant, and personal aide for that matter. She walked over and spoke to the director, she gave him his morning tea. It sat steeping as she walked out. Top secret waited patiently....

Finally the Director poured himself a steaming cup. At last. She focused in on the cup's surface. From there, she sent the signal to Rascal, and the information started to flood into the agency's Databanks. How perfect, the surface of the tea cup reflecting the image of the computer screen. She grinned that Cheshire cat smile and contacted Questor.

SUCCESS! Questor relayed the full report, adding to it somewhat, from her personal revelations. She had first looked through the telescope for a bigger and better reflection surface such as a wall clock, a white board, a wine glass, even a silver spoon. Nearly any shiny surface worked, but curved surfaces worked best, because they revealed wide swatches of the room, eliminating the need for the peeper to find a lucky and direct sweet spot wherein the reflected screen was visible.

However, the Director was not going to be drinking wine at work and there was no clock on the wall; in fact, the wall behind him was empty, and was even painted black.

Top Secret kept looking around. Nothing. This was supposed to be easy. It would be. *Patience*, she thought. Several minutes passed like slowly dying worms crawling in molasses in Death Valley.

A personal assistant entered the Director's office, pouring a cup of tea for him and then placing the teapot back down, where it would likely stay or be replaced to, after refills. Top Secret focused on the on the shiny silver teapot or the tea cup, whichever was more useful at the time. Yes, there was his computer screen reflected in it! Top Secret's camera

rolled the video, and the photos clicked away as well. NIA would reverse and straighten the images.



People had to drink; a coffee mug would have worked, too, as it did when the Director worked late. The plans of evil came rolling in, those tempests in a tea pot, day by day, via the simple use of a human eye defeating all the Conspiracy's high-tech countermeasures.

*Thousands of years come and gone, they say,
Niihau ever yet a forbidden paradise today.*

Old Rascal, at the edge of forever, sat upon his porch of the temple of the Forbidden City on the forbidden Isle of Niihau, at midnight, looking up into the starry sky, and then thought:

What inky void of space shall we now have to cross...

ANSWERS

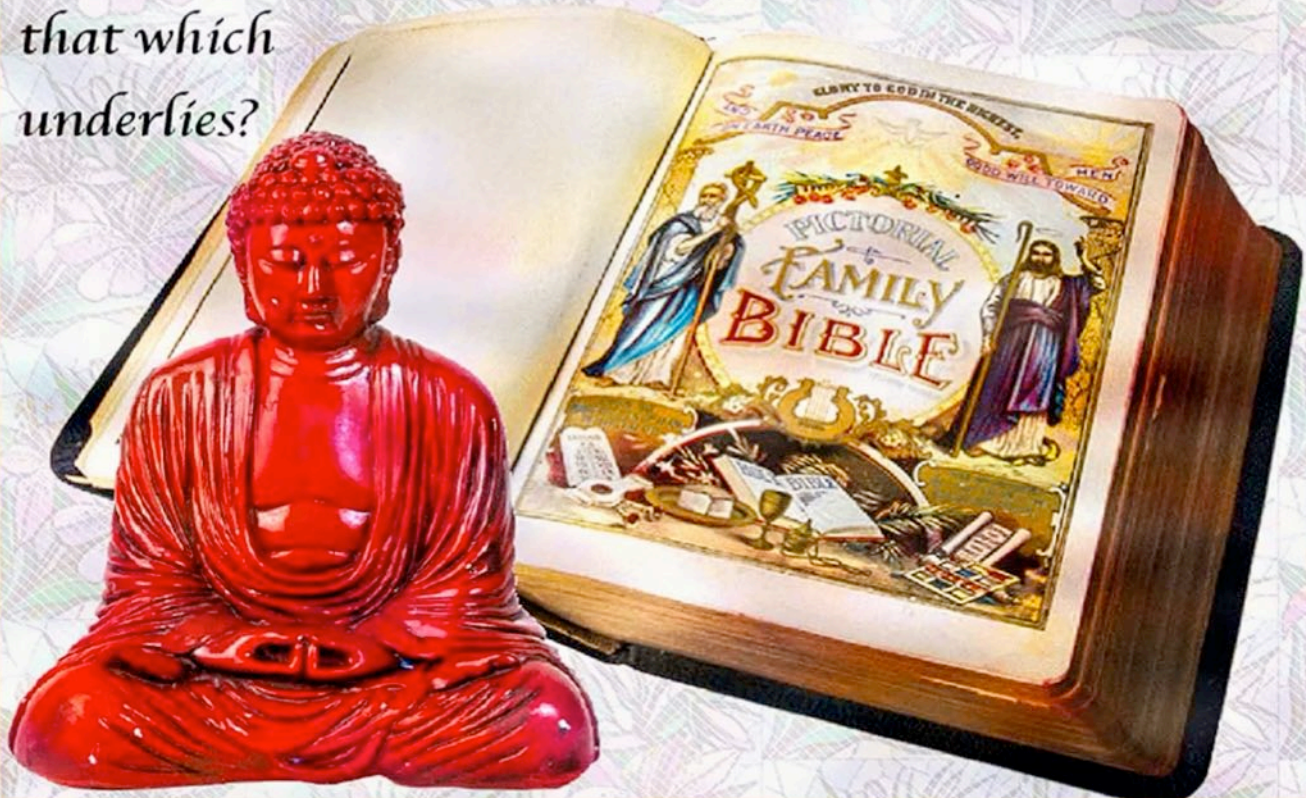
*Science discovers the truth everywhere;
Religion just makes for bigger questions;
Philosophers just sit around in chairs;
Evolution explains how we got somewheres.*





If you see the Buddha on the street...invite him in.

Which is the more absolute? That which oversees or that which underlies?





The Cosmos has come alive in us!

Sleep deprivation can cause memory loss and immune system damage, not to mention traffic accidents and poor performance.



SO. GET YOUR 9 HOURS.



I'm aware of being aware of being aware.



I'm aware of being aware.



I'm aware.



THE ALL & THE ONE

ENERGY IS ETERNAL. FOR IT CAN NEITHER BE CREATED NOR DESTROYED, BEING MADE OUT OF ITSELF. CONSEQUENTLY: IT'S THE MOTHER OF ALL REALITY.

Each person is "right" to do what s/he does.

Do your things in a by-see manner.



WELCOME.

Consciousness is a fundamental force. Like mass, space, and time, and so it requires: No explanation—it simply arises: Mind: it matters; matter: ever mind.

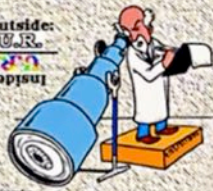


I offered Descartes another cup of coffee. He said "I think not", whereupon he disappeared.

Physics is the material science of shadows; mysticism is the spiritual science of light.

The Mystic Realm is to Walking Reality as Walking Reality is to a Dream.

Ultimate Reality (U.R. lies behind both mind and matter)



Ground Plan Distraction



Could the laws of the Cosmos be wiser than what they are?

I am not this body or even this thought.

Enjoy and direct high quality virtual reality for free by realizing that you are dreaming.



What is really out there, suppose, are just "waves" and "fields".



P. Torney © 2000

Consciousness is the fabric of creation! Mind, it matters; matter, ever mind.

Experiences, being fundamental, has a self, rather than a self having experience!



The Universal Solvent

Recent knowledge of the mind, brain, and consciousness has become the universal solvent that dissolves and demystifies the myths and mysteries of folk wisdom, and, for many, the universal acid that can even destroy its own container, them, as it eats through their superstitions, customs, and primitive beliefs. They/we see that we are driven by ancient genes & electrochemical neurotransmitters, that the "complex" mind is but a thousand simple minds, each with its own agenda, that the self is but a result of experience, and that consciousness is the last to know of our brain-made feelings & thoughts, it but an observer coming along for the ride, very much like a tourist!



Matter, ever mind.



PROOF OF REALITY REFERENCE FABRICATION

MATTER

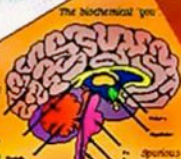
MIND

The Conscious Machine

Can you prevent a thought that comes along? Can you stop all your thoughts from coming? Can you will that which does the willing? Then what makes you think that you can start your thoughts or will your thoughts?



Take a pencil, and feel a texture with it—(The eraser end is best, so you don't write) You seem to feel it at the pencil tip: Yet, you have no sense organs way out there—So—your brain fabricates reality!



You're looking at a pack of neurons?

Material Realism?

spontaneous brain neurons are nothing more than a chemical gone sour?

Electrochemical networks = a machine = the brain = the mind = you?

I WONDER WHAT MY NEXT THOUGHT WILL BE?

A human being or a human doing?

CONSCIOUSNESS

(This, then, is why there is a hang-glider above: Its wings are felt as an extension of the arms, just as the pencil seems to be an extension of the finger.)



I EXPERIENCE, THEREFORE I AM.

- THE UNITARY GROUND OF ALL BEING -

P. Torney © 2000

— Chapter 32 —
Great Things

THE ABSENCE OF LIGHT

*“I’m the darkest,” said the Shadow to the Night.
“No,” said Midnight, “compared to me you’re bright.”
“You floodlights!” said Starless Space, “Stop your fight.
The darkest plight is the lack of love’s delight!”*

The operatives were again meeting on Niihau, the first evening drawing to a close.



The Rascal softly spoke, “I don’t know why I’m still here. What turned out to be my last mission as an operative seemed as to be one that should have taken me to the grave. The Three Fates had met, Morta choosing the means of my death, Nona, the life threader, sewing no more, and Decima measuring the length of my life’s beginning to the end. I’ll tell it tomorrow.”

They all seemed like they didn’t want to leave, but began to get up.

“Sorry,” said Rascal, “I hate to leave you all hanging about my Soviet prison escapade, but, you see that I am indeed alive, and so you know that the best is yet to come; you can sleep well tonight.”

They all then heard the deep rumblings of a very large jet landing above the bunker.

Rascal smiled, “All this time, I never even dared to hope...”

“No one had authorization to land tonight,” piped down the air controller, “plus no one even knows about this place, but our defenses are not firing!”

“He has his own auto-authorization,” Rascal answered; “never-the-less, we will not unlock the bunker just yet. If he can enter, then he is a friend. Nor do I yet hear or sense any roar of warning from Bronto above.”



Out on the airstrip, Bronto let out a cry of joy as a figure deplaned.

“Ah,” added Rascal, “Now I sense a joy up above; a lantern of light has indeed arrived.”

“Who? A ghost returns?” someone asked.

“He is not one who walked the Earth searching for a good deed, but is a good deed unto himself, for he ferreted out the worst of the bad deeds.”

They all waited in suspense. There were the clicks of the bunker door unlocking, and then the rustle of someone walking through the dark tunnel, and the tapping of a cane.

A voice came out of the darkness, “Rascal, old friend, how might you be?”

“Now,” said Rascal aloud, “who could it be who only ever called me ‘Rascal’, my own code name? Welcome, GrandMaster West.”

Even before the former # 1 West entered the light, they could sense the emanations from his glowing being: the goodness, the courage, and the depth of the care within.

GrandMaster West entered, looking very fit, but for a slight limp, like someone only around the age of seventy or so. He gave Rascal a hug, then Trish—#1 East.

“Master,” said Rascal, “these are our higher ranking members.”

“Ah, Rascal, you are the Master here now, not me. You all look to be among the finest protectors and butterflies of forever that we have ever known. I have read of your exploits.”

He then shook hands with all of the operatives, and met their gaze, some with tears in their eyes, for they had known or heard of him, but had thought him dead and gone.

“How is it, Master,” asked Dragon Master General Rascal, “that you even resist Time itself, looking younger than ever?”

GrandMaster West paused, then answered with a kind of a poem, his energy flowing and captivating, even projecting an image for all to see in their minds... saying...

THE WAVES OF THE ANCIENT SWELLS
OF THE UNFORGETTABLE TIDES
SWEPT EVER ON...

*As Time, now hoary with age,
Hurled forth its ashen change,
The charge ever san, pale and colorless,
That force born to summon decay, so endless,
‘Gainst Nature’s World each and every day,
Time and time again, feeding all upon,
In its bloodless, white and waxen way;*

*But, the everlasting rose would never fade,
Its luster even brightening by the day,
Ever unsuccumbing to the sickly, peakèd
State draining drawn the life away.*

*Entropic seas still denude the mountains,
Yet, this enduring flower, never-endingly
Has cast Deathly Time aside,
Ceaselessly somehow thriving on,*

*To that which was the imperishable,
The flame of beauty inextinguishable,
Forever celebrated as immutable,
Gaining its perpetual permanence
From the undying love of the glorious truth.*

No one spoke for a while. He was here, the one who had raised the Ninja Empire to heights unknown, the one who had brought forth Rascal as their new leader, the two of them each saving the world several times over. The intensity of life's wondrous being swelled through the operatives, on this, the night of nights, on the Forbidden island of Niihau.

"Well," said RascalPuff the Magic Dragon, "perhaps we should indeed continue our tales tonight in honor of our guest. If we become pleasantly weary and tired, then that will only add to the sense of what I felt in my trek through the mountains of the Soviet Motherland."

"You kept me up in those days, Rascal, crossing those ink black rivers," added GrandMaster West. While you were the prime candidate to replace me, you were also much too valuable to be running around in the field. I thought to kill two birds with one stone by appointing you, however; due to some new high tech, I see that you have found a way back into the fields of many stones, doing both of your jobs very well, I must say."

"My team does it."

"You are of that team, being both the coach and a player, too, Rascal. I heard you recently flew a helicopter up the side of Mt. Blanc."

"Yes; well then; thank you, Master."

"I am no one's Master now, Rascal, but more like the Lone Ranger."

"You will always be the Master to me."

Grandmaster West began Rascal's tale. "Rascal's escape pod of the jet-pack went up in flames, on the roof, from the explosion he had to cause at the prison, to be able to escape, when his plan had to change abruptly. His support team could not then get in place, and had to disperse. Rascal was in the middle of nowhere in Russia. A Soviet helicopter had landed nearby. He becomes now the most forlorn and loneliest man on Earth."

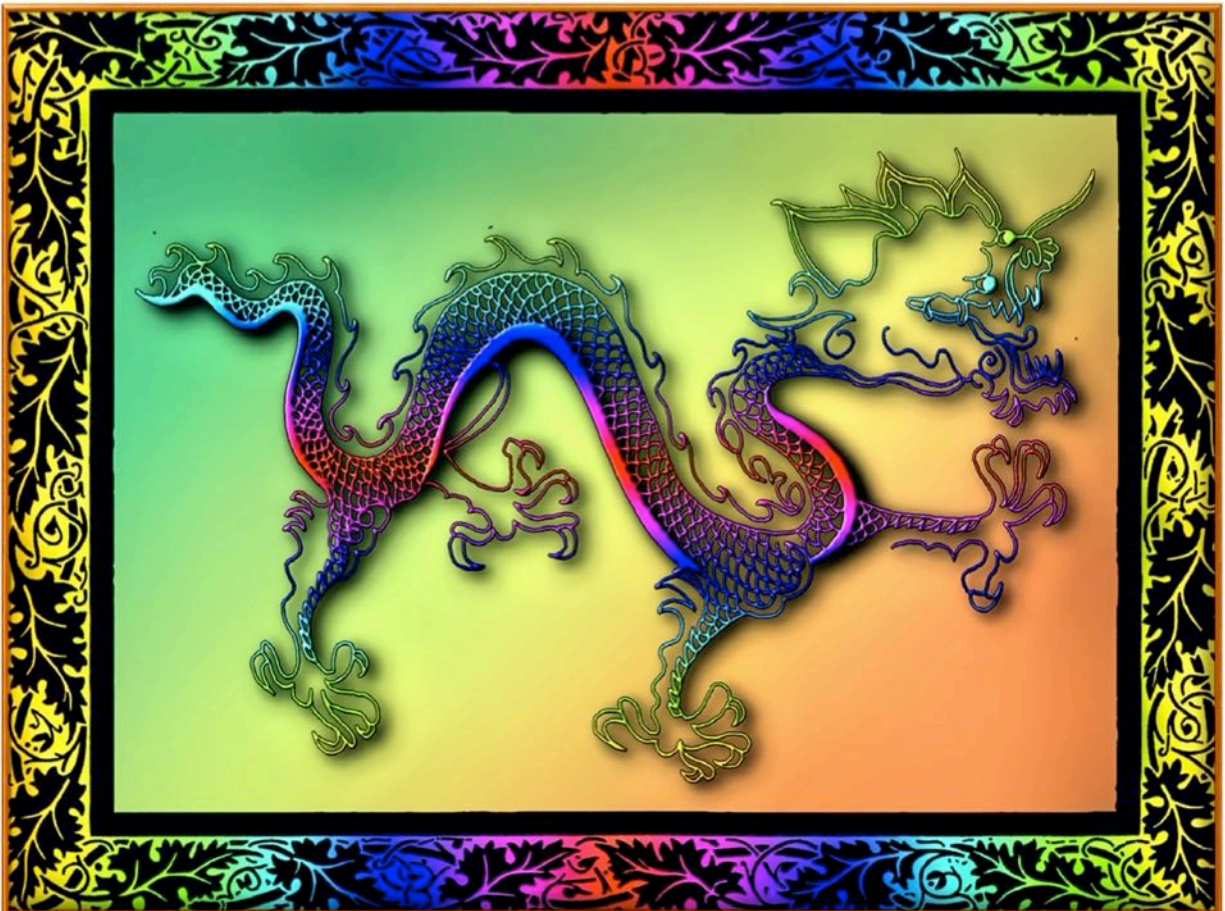
Rascal thought back, summoning forth the tale of his prison break, the darkness of death lying all around, the threat ever hovering near...

GrandMaster West hung his cane on the back of his chair and walked quite normally over to get a drink. Passiona regarded his now perfectly working knee, eyeing it as he returned, his chair next to hers.

The GrandMaster whispered, "I heard that you, too, had a knee operation. All is not always as it seems. It's not mind over matter. My injury is feigned."

"I thought so, for your cane is actually a weapon that would never be confiscated."

"Our secret."







Helpful effort, or love, defines what's good;
Goodness taken to extreme is called God.
Laziness, or non-love, is but neutral.
Evil, or harm excess, names the Devil.

Good and evil—you can't have one without
The other; so, too, with plenty and drought,
Sadness and smile, life and death, night and day,
Sun and flood, give and take, and truth and doubt.

In Heaven, desired pleasures will come like rain,
Or so we've dreamed till we felt no mortal pain;
But we needn't wait for some promise beyond,
Since on Earth—enjoying life—we have the same!

If we were angels, life would be so just;
Instead, we try, we push, we climb, we lust,
We dance, we dream, we feel, we love with zest—
Yes, all this, thanks to the beast within us!

Purgatory is on Venus—where sulfurs rain.
Hell is found in the sun's heart—oh, hot burning pain!
Of Heaven's site, no one has any idea—
For it's the world's best kept secret: Earth is its name!

In the darkness I alit from the Wiz,
Then tried to make sense of this world of His.
Now I've found the answer to life's dark quiz:
One must live this life by what light there is



Did Mother Void and Father Matter Conceive the Cosmic Egg, or was it the other way around?

From TOE to Being and Finding Meaning Therein

Why & How

Nonexistence can't be, nor could something
Make itself or always have been perfect;
Before definition is the possible—
Timeless-formless—all options were open!

What, Where, Who, Then, and When

"What" matter stabilizes in "where" space,
Begetting the appearances in motion as
"When" future moves through the "now" to "then" past—
This spirit of life granting our "who" being.

The Forces

The strong force facilitates stability;
The weak force allows changeability;
Electric action leading to magnetic motion
Facilitates the movement of appearances.

The TOE to Being

The TOE has to explain origin, method,
And life, and so this does, the key being
That movement of appearances begets
Changes in time, leading to our life's realm.

Universal Answers

Since there's no rhyme or reason for existence,
We're free to make our own meaning of it;
If we don't, then it's really meaning-less;
If we do—it becomes the ultimate!

Luck Happens

Asteroids swept away many species;
Two chromosomes fused, leaving chimps behind;
RNA remembers all survivors;
Good fortune smiled on Homo Sapiens.

The Balance Sheet

Life on Earth is death's borrowed debit;
We spend this life on good fortune's credit;
We're not God's puppets, but free of the strings;
Dispensing with angst, we're free in being.

We Are What We Are

Unintelligently designed, humans
Were a lucky accident of nature,
A haphazard Rube Goldberg "invention",
A nervous system ruled by ancient times.

The Lucky State of Us

As an accident of evolution,
We have the ultimate freedom of choice—
No "God's will"—we're beyond instinctive;
We're free to grow and evolve through learning.

Difficulties Abound

Emotion often bypasses the intellect;
Many stand at the brink of insanity.
Only education can save the world—
We're at the turning point of history.

Wishful Thinking

Pride: Ego exaggerates self-importance
To say that we're specially created,
Deserving a divine destiny.
Humility: we're electrochemical.

Unfortunately...

Those who can't or won't learn are doomed to stay
As their robot selves, living the sitcom life,
But, learning disperses the myths of old—
We make our own way or stagnate and die.

Meaning—or Not

Direction arrives or we go nowhere;
Growth happens or we vanish to nothing;
Creation comes or reaction destroys;
Planning makes a life or it collapses.

Coming Full Circle

Searching for the ultimate happenstance
Of how we began leads to exploration
Of within and without, a rewarding quest;
Upon return, we know the place for the first time.

— Chapter 33 —
Six Tons of Gold

*The Overlord of the 'master race' since born
Was ever attracted to the Amber Room adorned,
And called it "The eighth wonder of the world"
For its singular, majestically beauteous swirl...*

As Top Secret [Passiona] sat in her 9 zillionth home away from home she sighed and smiled into her cup of tea, the simpleness of her last mission's solution to the problem whirling through her mind, whirling like a tempest in a tea cup. Reaching for her beloved kitty cat, Purrfect, her hip phone started to vibrate.

There was a problem. Passiona bounced up, disrupting Purrfect rather unceremoniously, as she cursed and dashed about getting into her night-time stealth gear. As she jumped into her craft, she punched the vertical button and soared up, now on her way to the west coast of Vancouver Island. On the other side of the continent, and a bit further down the globe, Questor [Austino] was in his element.

As she silently yet astonishingly zipped through the air, she had a sudden niggling sensation and thought *oh, oh...* Sure enough the console started to crackle with static. "Top Secret, this is ..."

Passiona quickly installed the scramble device... "Austino. I'm reading you at a rate that can't be, are you there? Is this some kind of a joke?"

"Why no it is not, my darling! I have just recently perfected my little toy."

Austino was stunned, but, not wanting to let on, replied, "Aahhh yes, the device Rascal and I had wondered about. Where are you headed?"

Passiona started to receive a live feed on her computer. It stated, "Top Secret, location halt. New vacation, you are needed in Zurich. Austino to join. Head there at once. Will discuss further upon arrival."

Passiona silently cursed, and thought, so much for my "undetectable channel". She knew without a doubt what this was about: the billions of missing gold bullion. The infamous czarist eagle was stamped on the bar of gold that was mysteriously left on the doorstep just this morning. Imagine! A whole bar of GOLD, just left there, with no note, nothing. The czarist eagle was key in identifying the origin of it. There were a few other details that were now falling into place. Passiona shook her head to clear it, and exhaled a giant breath. With steely resolve she squared her shoulders and settled in for the fairly long flight.

As Passiona walked up to the hotel, she kept her instincts on high. She had hidden the vessel on the edge of a field. With its new cammo design it blended in perfectly with the surrounding countryside. She checked in

as a reporter in town to do a story on the townspeople and to photograph the area, and then climbed the stairs. When she got to her room, she sank down onto the feather-filled mattress. As she was checking her weapons there was a tapping on the door that was done in a rhythm that was the code for Austino [Questor].

As she opened the door, *Bwamm-o!* She went careening backwards. Rather than stumbling, she went into a backwards somersault. When she came up she pulled her ankle revolver and took aim and fired. The masked perpetrator went sailing backwards. As she was falling, Passiona lunged for her to stop the noise, for she was going to hit a glass table, and caught the masked gunman. She let her down to the floor with a soft thud. *Thank God the Centre had made all their weapons silent!*

She reached for the mask and pulled it free, “No! nnnnnooooo,” cried Passiona. Quickly she got the cleanup crew online and told them to get here, and to send a medic with them. They thought they were going to be bringing in a prisoner with valuable information. They wouldn’t find out until quite some time later that the assailant was actually Passiona’s long lost half sister.

Passiona had searched high and low, and with the help of the Centre’s resources she was sure she would find her, but nothing had turned up until now. Now it made some sense to her, because, of course! That’s how she avoided being found! The cleanup crew arrived, and with Passiona’s instruction’s to be gentle, and she meant it, they were off.

She quickly got her make-up on, and dressed. As she went down the stairs, she noticed the bogey, but his attention quickly went back to his paper, *yeah right.*

She strode out, somewhat awkwardly, as the older folk walk. Her wrinkles and the bags under her eyes, along with the varicose veins sewed into her nylons all made for a great disguise. The hotel had many elderly people booked in. She hailed a cabbie; it was a great disguise for getting a cab, that’s for sure! As they started off, she asked the cabbie to just drive. After they had rounded the first bend, she spoke up and said “I’ll pay you 150 Euros to lose the tail we have.”

He said, “You Americans are so much fun!” The cabbie was no stranger to driving like a madman, so they careened around corners and finally pulled over and backed into a spot between a barn and a load of hay. They waited. After a half hour passed, she said “Okay, thank you. Now I need to get to the Chateau. Is it around here? The guide book I have says it’s here somewhere, but that’s kind of vague...”

“Lady,” said the driver, “sit back and enjoy the view. This ride is on me! I have not had this much fun in years!”

They were off. She had to gain entry to the hotel administrator’s office. Intel from the Centre had reported there was valuable information that

would help lead to the gold, and also, a pleasant surprise, to Hitler's infamous Amber Room.

"So," said Austino, "perhaps the Director wishes to fund and enlarge his evil empire with Hitler's gold, perhaps some of it being buried beneath the palace garden reflection that you spied on his tea cup."

Meanwhile, Bronto watches as some of the Butterflies depart Niihau... a minute later flying just south of Waikiki and past Diamond Head.

As Passiona arrived at the Chateau, she handsomely paid the cabbie and proceeded to the hotel lobby. Graceful chandeliers hung down sending a glimmering of sparkles over the entrance-way. "My my my!" she exclaimed, "This is more like it!". She informed the front desk clerk that she was here on a vacation/job to shoot the picturesque scenery of the surrounding areas, and that someone else was arriving. She was just finishing signing the register, and was instructing the bellboys which luggage to carry. And in walks none other than Questor [Austino].

She went off to her room and in a flash had the bell boy tipped and on his way. She quickly started to apply the facial mask, and blue varicose veined nylons, to add to her disguise, when there came a knock on the door and Austino's voice saying "Hello in there?" She quickly put on her blouse and skirt, went to the door, and saw through the peephole that it was indeed Austino. Letting him in, he swept her off of her feet in a smooch and a twirl. "How I've missed you, Passiona!" They began talking over their plans after a short interlude. The info said that some of the gold bullion was stashed under the well known and beautiful gardens in Versailles, France. After they discussed their plans, they thought it best to get a move on. Austino was to go ahead while Passiona was to stick to her original plans, and afterwards she was to meet Austino at a predetermined spot in Versailles. Austino said goodbye and off he went.

Finishing off her make-up as an old lady, Passiona then weaponed up and strode out of the door. As she went down the elevator, her thoughts were whirling around. The facts that Austino had told her were extremely disturbing. They had to find the gold before their opponents did.

She stopped the elevator on the second floor, needing a distraction. Gaining entry to a room, she quietly shut the door behind her. She fiddled with the phone, putting on a redirector so the call she was going to make would come up on the lobby phone's call display as if it were made from her room phone. She hysterically told them she had been attacked by a masked man in black, and that he had climbed out of her window, and that he was still in sight. As the front desk clerk ran to get his manager, Passiona slipped into the office behind the front counter.

She quickly and thoroughly checked the area for the information; *shit*, someone was coming. She crouched and waited... *one*... She whipped around and silenced the clerk with a quick tap to the larynx, and a skull

tap too, just for good luck, and began searching again, starting to get frantic, when, *hey what's that?* An object was sticking out. As she grabbed it and noted that it was a disc; she put it into the computer. Scanning through the files, she found what she was after. She came out from behind and resumed heading towards the door, slowly, and just a tad awkwardly. Someone was starting to shout, and, not wanting to explain, she split, then dug in her bag, finding her vessel's 'whistle'; she blew into it four times and waited. The first sign was the slight warm breeze. Then seemingly, out of nowhere, her ship arrived. She went to the side of the ship, opened a panel and let it identify herself via her DNA. A door opened, with steps folding out and down, she ran in and punched the close button and took the navigator's seat. In a few moments she had her coordinates typed in, and off she flew, silently, invisibly, heading to Versailles to meet up with Austino.

Passiona was now with Austino and a few newbies. As they sat waiting for the head cheese to arrive, she was checking out the new agents, fresh out of training. *Out of the pot and into the fire was just not needed.* There was a lady, and her sidekick, Honcho. Then there was Dwayne, who supposedly had a picture perfect memory, and could fix anything he touched. That left Courtney, fresh-faced, eager and a kick-ass fighter. There seemed to be something not so right about some of these people.

Everybody snapped to attention, as the full Colonel strode into the room. "Greetings to you all. For you newcomers, I am, as you most likely already know, the Colonel. Okay. Let's get started. We have some intel that puts 6 billion dollars worth of gold bullion here, reputedly the same gold that Hitler and his cronies stole and stashed at the end of the occupation of France, in one of the worst possible places, I might add. Underneath the Garden in Versailles. The problem being, folks, is that back when Hitler had his officers bury the gold, this garden was not yet fully established. So we have some hand held burrowing equipment, and, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to tunnel under. This will require, of course, a night-time op, and we will have on site our newest vessel in the entire fleet. This beauty, which I am proud to tell you, was designed and built by our own agent, Passiona. (Applause, cheers...) It has a skin that blends in with any and all surroundings, rendering it invisible. It also has, underneath that skin, a second layer that is composed of millions of nanobots, filled with a mixture of spider silk/polymer which, upon being struck, or breached, immediately starts to fill in the hole. It all happens in seconds. This is what you will be going into and out of the site with. Austino, it is your job to lead this team. All of you in this room will follow Austino's orders to a 'T' or you will face instant termination. That will be all, ladies and gentlemen. Good Luck."

The room was silent until Austino spoke up...

“Oh, it that you, Passiona? You look like you have put on a lot of mileage; you look, so, old!”

“It’s a disguise.”

“Whew!”

“What should we do?”

“I don’t know yet; I was making ten thousands posts to another thread.”

“Some enemy agents are already around, eyeing the location and dreaming of the gold.”

“Hmmm. I just woke up.”

“OK, let’s go have breakfast.”

Over breakfast, Passiona and Austino discussed some of the history of the Amber Room:

“Could you please pass the jelly, dear.”

“Sure, lover dove, here it is. Where do you want it?”

“The Amber Room, whose interior is made completely of amber and gold, was looted by the Nazis from a castle in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1941. Although parts of the Amber Room have resurfaced, the vast majority remains missing. The Amber Room represented a joint effort of German and Russian craftsmen.”

“German soldiers disassembled the Amber Room within 36 hours under the supervision of two experts. On 14 October 1941, Rittmeister Graf Solms-Laubach commanded the evacuation of 27 crates to Königsberg in East Prussia, for storage and display in the town’s castle.”

“Do you want that bacon, honey?”

“No, you can have it if I can have a bite of your sausage.”

“Orders by Hitler given on 21 January 1945 and 24 January 1945 allowed the movement of possessions. From that day onwards, Albert Speer’s administration could move culture goods of priority. Erich Koch was in charge in Königsberg. Eyewitnesses claimed that crates had been sighted at the railway station. They might have been put aboard the Wilhelm Gustloff which left Gotenhafen (Gdynia) on January 30, and was sunk by a Soviet submarine.”

“The Amber Room was never seen again, though reports have occasionally surfaced stating that components of the Amber Room survived the war. Indeed, two elements of the room’s decoration (but not the amber panels themselves) were eventually rediscovered.”

“More coffee?” asked the waitress.

“Sure.”

“There have been numerous conflicting reports and theories, among them that the Amber Room was destroyed by bombing, hidden in a now-lost subterranean bunker in Königsberg, buried in mines in the Ore

Mountains, or, as said, taken onto a ship or submarine which was sunk by Soviet forces in the Baltic Sea.”

“Many different individuals and groups, including a number of different entities from the government of the Soviet Union, have mounted extensive searches for it at various times since the war, without any success. At one point in 1998, two separate teams (one in Germany, the other in Lithuania) announced that they had located the Amber Room, the first in a silver mine, the second buried in a lagoon; neither produced the Amber Room.”

“Hey, where did my sausage go?”

“Search me, dear.”

“However, in 1997 one Italian stone mosaic that was part of a set of four which had decorated the Amber Room did turn up in western Germany, in the possession of the family of a soldier who had helped pack up the Amber Room.”

“Leonid Arinshtein said ‘I was probably was one of the last people who saw the Amber Room,’ a literature expert with the nongovernmental Russian Culture Foundation, who was a Red Army lieutenant in charge of a rifle platoon in Königsberg in 1945. ‘The Red Army didn’t burn anything,’ he said.”

“My toast is burned.”

“We’ll get another one.”

“Opening the cavern to get into the chamber could be dangerous because it may contain booby traps.”

“It will have to be secured by explosives experts and engineers.”

“That Colonel was a fake.”

“Since we don’t have Colonels.”

After they loaded up their rental van, they were off. Their aliases had them on their honeymoon, and they were now headed to their next love bungalow. Passiona was busily chatting up a storm, pointing out the local flora and fauna. At least that’s what the agents following them thought. Passiona related, “Austino honey, it appears we have some unwanted company, shall we use plan A or plan B?”

Austino looked at his beloved and replied “Smoke, or screen?”

“I feel it’s time we got down to business, and they in unison said ‘B’.

Austino stepped on the gas and tucked right into the next corner; it was a few moments before their tail even noticed something was amiss. Quickly, they worked as a team. Jumping out of the van, they quickly popped a tire, put the working dummy-droids into place and each of them rolled out their dirt-bikes, shut the van doors and were off, being careful not to disturb the dirt. Precisely two minutes later their tail came around the bend, and right on cue the dummy-droids started to argue

“Henry, I told you to take that darn corner slower, now we are going to miss the start of our show, darn you....”

“Jennifer, take it easy I’ll have this changed in a jiffy, providing you SHUT_UP!” The agents had a look of incredulous disbelief on their faces; quickly they turned the next bend and were gone. The dummy-droids then got into the vehicle, and, gaining speed, rode off the road into a ravine and landed with a loud explosion.

Passiona and Austino were waiting just over the ridge; they kicked the bikes into gear and headed for the cavern of hidden treasures.

“This is no time for romance, Austin, dear; we’d better get to work.”

The Passing:

PARTING WORDS

As I go from hence
Let this be my parting word,
That what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus
That expands on the ocean of light,
And thus am I blessed to have lived
---Let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms
I have had my play
And here have I caught sight
Of that which is causeless.
My whole body and my limbs
Have thrilled with the touch that is beyond touch;
And as the end comes here, let it come
---Let this be my parting word.

(GrandMaster West’s parting words, from Tagore)

Tears arrived in Austin’s and Passiona’s eyes. They let them flow. The entire Ninja Empire was to be in mourning, worldwide operations stopping, as they could, for an hour of silence in respect for the 104 year-old GrandMaster West.

At this time, Rascal climbed the highest peak in Niihau and spread his master’s ashes to the four winds. Rascal, recalled the Master’s voice, and his own response:

“Rascal, old friend, you must protect eternity. You are the guardian of forever now, and you ever stand at the edge of the abyss, warding off the oblivion of evil.”

“Where will I find you after you leave here, Master?”

“I will be with you as the wind and will flow as the water, and so you shall know me when you feel the breeze and quench your thirst in the stream.”



Austino and Top Secret [Passiona] were entering their 3rd cavern. They cautiously crept forwards. The sound of dripping water echoed throughout the cavern. There was a distinct odour inside of the cave, Passiona was trying to put her finger on the scent; it was familiar, very familiar. *Ahhhhh ha! We are not alone in here, the scent was none other than Chanel #5.* Up ahead they saw a shimmering light; they were in their specialized camo gear which rendered them invisible. Austino took up the lead while Passiona happily looked at his rear. The light was becoming brighter but it still had this shimmer to it. As they shared a look at each other, puzzlement was clearly etched on their faces.

All of a sudden coming straight at them were a couple of barking, frothing black blurs. Quickly a hand appeared seemingly out of nowhere, and the dogs went for it. Instead of the 'floating hand' being torn to shreds it opened up and the dogs quickly gulped the delicious meaty snack off of it. The hand became invisible again. Passiona and Austino quickly backed up a few feet as the dogs snorted and sniffed at the ground. Because of their specialized camo gear they were invisible, but not un-scentable, so they had the drugged chunks of food inside their suits for moments just like this. They now had a problem, the dogs were visible and might break their cover.

Up ahead they heard cursing, in German, so they slowed and split up, one on each side of the tunnel. On they went, around a corner... And to their surprise there stood a woman, hauling a navy blue steel lock box that looked heavy. Passiona and Austino looked at each other, and looked back at the woman. She was grunting while she jerked on the box. It moved only a few inches at a time. Just then she loudly cursed again. She stood up and wiped perspiration off of her face with a handkerchief. The scent of Chanel #5 filled the air. Just as she started towards them, Passiona and Austino backed against the sides of the cavern. The mystery lady then hollered out a couple names in German. Puzzled, she called again. "Hmmmph!" she went. She then turned around and came back, and just then Passiona quickly stepped over to her and pressure pointed until she collapsed. The agents carried her to the cleft they had seen and gently put her down.

They went to check out the lock box. With a simple press of a button, a laser appeared and the lock on the box was dispatched. Slowly they lifted the lid, inside were the dull butter-coloured bars of gold. The box contained four; they checked the stamp on the side of the gold bar, and saw a bird with outstretched wings. BINGO! They had found some of what they were after.

Just then Passiona felt a cold hard object being held against her skull. She figured Austino must be in the same boat as her. She wondered to herself just how did they find them when they were invisible? Passiona knew that she had to act, and right now. She reached up behind her and gripped the weapon, at the same moment she stood up, and with the force of her entire being she pulled, lifted over her shoulder and flipped her assailant flat on the ground, as she stomped a little extra hard for good measure, her foot on her assailant's back as she took aim, and saw no one else.

She dragged the still unconscious assailant over to the cleft where, she sat him down and put a gun to his head and grinned at him while she said "You and I are going to have a little fun. First of all who do you work for, how many of you are there and where the hell is my partner?" Pas-

siona then noticed a dark stain growing out from his rear, and said “All you have to do is talk, and I’ll let you go, unharmed okay?”

“Okay... I... I... work for her.”

“Name?”

“Franzy Openheimer. I am the only one with her, and what partner?”

Just at that moment Austino appeared with an identically clad thug in his grip. Passiona gave a good swift kick in the ribs to the dude on the floor.



Now Passiona was pissed. “Apparently you seem to take me for an idiot. This friend of yours here, I’m sure he’ll be more than happy to oblige me.”

“I don’t think so; this one’s mine. Little shit cold-cocked me, and nearly got me down. I found out where their little hideaway is. It will serve us nicely I think, my dear! First let’s get the gold, and... wait. How much gold did you find in there?”

“One box with 4 gold bullion bars. It’s the Nazi’s loot, the Falcon is stamped on the sides. So what to do with these three? Hmmm...”

Passiona whispered something in Austino's ear, making him smile. The crooks were tied up, and with a phone call was made to the local police, a bar of gold bullion left between them; they were going to be out of the agents way for quite a while to come. The agents gave a wave to their foes, and quickly went back to the correct cavern.

They watched the police take away the small time gangsters, and sat down and discussed their options. After the 'smoke' cleared, they headed to a new hotel for the night, where they made many new dreams and traveled right on until morning, following the evening star into its fiery depths.

Over coffee they discussed a plan of action for the day. They figured they would start with the gold bars they had in their possession. They would be sent to the centre for evaluation. Their job was to locate the rest. And once they got intel back on who the two goons and the 'Ma' were, they could figure it out from there, or so they hoped.

Austino, looking over his newspaper at Passiona, happened to notice something odd. He put his paper down and gently nudged Passiona under the table. As she looked at him, he looked behind her, and lifted his eyebrows. Trouble had walked in, sheathed in silk and wool. Austino made a motion with his hands on the table, Passiona understood, weapons at the ready, hidden. The couple approached. Passiona dug in her purse, and thought of the oldest trick in the book... "Albert, honey, I have to go to the ladies room, can you order me some coffee to go?" As she got up she showed Austino what she had in her palm. Passiona got up, and as she slid out of her seat she turned to walk and stumbled; reaching out to steady herself, she grabbed the closest thing, the man in the wool suit and stuck a microscopic transmitter to his coat. "Oh my goodness, excuse me sir!" Passiona strode away to the ladies room, and quickly turned the other way. She waited for a couple minutes and there Austino came, the two of them taking their leave in the van.

They were on the road for a short time when they noticed their friends were on their tail. So predictable. "So, honey, what mode of transportation do we have this time?"

"We have the special gunner-gliders, I've been dying to try them out!" Austino sped up; they had to get a sufficient lead in order to stop and get the gliders out. He pulled over. They quickly ran to the back doors, put the ramp down and rolled out two gunners. As soon as they were strapped in they started up the motors, and straight up they shot! Austino gave out an exhilarated shout, with Passiona squealing in delight not far from him in the air.

Their next job was to gun down their enemy. With their helmets on Passiona shouted out, "Let me, let me!"

Austino replied "Okay, but I get the next ones!"

Passiona spun her glider around and was shocked to see a missile coming straight for her; she swooped to the right, and said, "Austino, missile alert, let's get the bastard."

The two of them made short work of the enemy.

They flew on, and, as they were drawing near, Passiona's locator started to beep, and with that she thought *oh crap*. "Austino, our target from the Inn is still kicking, and apparently, at our location ahead of us. How did he do that?"

"Magic?"

"No."

"They are twins?"

"Negatory."

"Triplets?"

"No sireee!"

"Helicopter?"

"Nope."

"I give up."

As they finished up their breakfast, the two agents were hunkered over the table whispering when the shaking started. Passiona's face was a mask of shock and horror, while Austino quickly whisked her up and towards the doorway. Through the screams, and debris dropping around him, Austino dodged left and right, Passiona right behind him.

They burst out the doorway and ran to the van. As Austino took the wheel, Passiona began to get their gear out from the hidden compartments. As she strapped on the belt she loaded weapons for them both and equipped Austino's belt while they were on the fly. The shaking seemed to have stopped but now their main concern was that of collapsed caverns. Austino pointed out the window at a house on the hillside, broken in half, and squashed as if a big hand had just hit it like a gavel hitting its mark.

They pulled off of the main road and drove up the hillside, as far as the vehicle would take them. Coming to a stop, the two of them put on the rest of their gear and went to the back of the van. Passiona pulled out the ramps and locked them into place, as Austino backed out first, one, then two of the giant mosquito looking machines. Passiona pulled a long zippered bag out of the van and they each proceeded to lock their ultra-light blades into place. They quickly went over their plan of attack; if needed, they were hoping that this lucky turn of events was going to work in their favour. They mounted and started up; after a preflight check they were off. The advantage was going to be short lived so they had to reach their destination as quickly as possible.

They were in the air, looking a lot like prehistoric mosquitos with some firepower. They had all of the usual gadgets plus a few that were brand

new. Austino told Passiona that they were reaching the caverns, but they were going somewhere different this time. As they flew over the site of their last shenanigans, they took note of the enemy. There was one truck, and two automobiles. They flew on.

Passiona said “There we are, my dear, the mansion of the Baron Manchusen. I think we should go down before we get noticed. Austino, I have the geotransducer, it’ll pick up any entrances that could be hidden. We are going in through the bowels, and I do hope we don’t have to smell anything!” Sharing a laugh they stashed their ‘bugs’ in the bushes. They heard the first of the barking mutts coming at them. They decided to use the stun-ray. As they waited, they heard a chopper start up, and then came the dogs. Austino pointed the ray and squeezed the trigger; down went #1, and then #2.

While Austino had been dealing with the dogs, Passiona was searching for the underground tunnel with the geo-gun. She picked up a reading that showed an opening, but, strangely enough, it wasn’t there! She then realized why. “Austino, over here!” As they both were looking at what she had found they heard the chopper getting closer. With no time to spare, they quickly moved the man hole cover aside, and, flash-helmets donned, down they started. Austino pulled the man hole cover and a clump of sod with it, over to the opening, and thunk! It was back in place.

It was then that they heard the chopper, still? Through steel? Austino poked Passiona’s arm and motioned down. As they looked they saw blades going around faster and faster. She looked at Austino with fright in her eyes. *Survival*, thought Passiona, *we can do this*. She quickly reached for Austino’s stun-ray, and coupled it with her pulse weapon; then she motioned Austino to plug his ears. She pointed, jammed a pebble into the trigger to make it stick and quickly plugged her own ears. As they watched it seemed the blades were slowing down, but, no, they were speeding up. They looked at each other; Passiona had tears in her eyes. The blades were going faster and faster, and then they smelled something burning, like wiring! Yes! They were going to be alright it seemed.

“Maybe we should retire to Tahiti again, dear. Do we need this gold? This is really getting dangerous for our health.”

“AAAhhhh Bora Bora! Darling, that sounds absolutely delightful! I can hardly wait, until I feel the sand slip betwisk my lower digits!”

“And, hmmm, come night time, I think we shall have our own slice of paradise, feeling the warm breeze ruffle the hairs on our body as we....”

“...feel our passion soar above and beyond, our heartbeats beating as one, with each other and with the universe itself....”

Love is a beautiful thing. When people fall in love, it is not planned that way. It sort of creeps up on you, and sidles in on your heart and soul. For people to question it is only natural. They must wonder what? How?

I found myself one day while I was meeting and talking with Austino. I literally found myself when I found Austin, I felt, and feel 'Whole!' It shocks some people, while others embrace the love and capture a little slice of heaven within themselves.

This, everybody, is love, and is nothing to be ashamed of, or to laugh at, or to scoff at, for those that do or have, that's okay too. I really don't care what other's might scoff about. To me that is a serious waste of time, and I have more important things to do, like love my Austino!!!!

As the burning smell started to dissipate, the fan blades began to slow down. Austino led Passiona towards the now halted blades that had almost made chop suey out of them. They stepped through the blades cautiously. Up ahead in the distance was a shimmering light....

Passiona spoke up "Austino, what do you think that is?"

"I don't know, darling, why don't we sneak up further..."

The two headed slowly upwards. As they got closer to the shimmering light, they heard voices as well. The agents shared a look, both knowing that stealth was now key to their success. Closer still, Austino put his hand up, and signaled *stop*. They both realized they were looking through some kind of grating; the shimmering light was a disco ball slowly twirling around and sending the bouncing reflections of light through the grating. It appeared that there was a party in full swing at the Baron's. They stepped back a few paces.

"I guess we are in the air conditioning tunnel," says Passiona. Austino agrees and adds that it most likely was as well an emergency escape tunnel. Passiona says, "Austino dear, don't you think they are going to realize their air conditioning is down? I think we should hurry and find our way out of here!" Austino agrees, and the two agents head on into a labyrinth of tunnels. To make sure of their own escape route, they had marked the walls with a special ink that was visible only to them with their night vision goggles.

She signaled to Austino to come hither (he, he); she was pointing through another grating, and *well, I'll be a monkey's Uncle!* There was the Baron Manchusen himself in a very long room, which looked to be a dining hall, but now, instead, sat bars upon bars of butter-soft gold bullion. The Baron was looking quite pleased with himself.

Austino signaled to Passiona to follow him. They quietly discussed their plan, and proceeded onwards. Austino attached a tube of knockout gas to the outermost point of the grating. They donned their special head-gear, helmets and all. She pushed the button, and voila! Gas was now leaking into the room, the two watched, and, after the Baron was asleep, entered the room. The two agents set to work, taking pictures of all of the gold, and the stamps on the sides especially. Austino was busy inserting

homing devices into several gold bars; it was an easy task as the gold was as soft as modeling clay, almost.

The two agents heard some voices; they quickly went back into the tunnel and quietly inserted the grating into place once more, and removed the empty gas bomb and clay and hurried back the way they'd come. They hurried onwards, past the dancing and festivities, on along until they hit the tunnel where the blades were. There was movement; Austino jumped out and quickly and efficiently dispatched the enemy, most likely a patrol to find out why the conditioning had stopped. They climbed through the blades, and out of the tunnel into the night.

They were not out of the woods yet, so to speak. As Austino quietly relayed to mission headquarters what they'd done, Passiona was putting together their flight bugs. She was just finishing with the last blade when they heard trouble arriving; quickly they jumped aboard, fired up the engines and took to the air. They had to use evasive maneuvers to avoid getting hit by enemy fire, but they made it. Now to reach their safe house.

TheUnity was rudely bumped and spilled a martini when the two dashing agents came into the hotel lobby. He welcomed them to the hotel and offered up a game of cards to pass the time.

They began playing Hearts, a game in which every heart taken counts a point against you, with the queen of spades counting 13 against. However, if one could capture all the hearts plus the queen of spades, one would gain 26 points, which was called 'shooting the moon'.

They each picked 3 'bad' cards, depending on their aims and passed them to another person. TheUnity lead a spade, the jack, since hearts were not yet broken (if void in the led suit), putting the pressure on those ending up with high spades who perhaps could not survive several spade leads without the danger of taking the trick with the queen or capturing it with the ace or the king. By leading the jack, theUnity would probably retain the lead if the last to follow didn't safely play the ace or king, and so then he could lead another spade, which would tell everyone that he either had no spade danger himself or had a lot of spades. Thus began the analysis of who might have the queen, for it wouldn't be good to play the ace or the king ahead of that person.

There is a 2-card 'kitty', two cards always being leftover from the deal to the 4 players, since the two jokers were used as the one of diamonds and the one of clubs, and so whoever took the first point, either a heart or the queen of spades, could trade cards into the 'kitty, exchanging them, improving their hand, the point-cards left in the kitty still counting.

All of a sudden, Passiona got up so fast she accidentally pulled the tablecloth off. Of course everything else came with it too. She cursed a blue streak, then noticed all of the eyebrows that had shot up. Stumbling

along with her shoe now caught in the trails of the tablecloth, she tries to gently free her foot. She was now red and sweating from the embarrassment. "Excuse me people, to round out the entertainment, I thought I'd add this....."

With a sassy little grin Passiona spins around, and with her back facing her now captivated audience, pulls down her panties and nylons in one fell swoop and bends over... then, peeking through between her legs at her now stunned audience, says "tha tha that's all folks!" And yoinks up her rigging and runs out of the room, laughing and crying at the same time...

Passiona had attempted to win the first round of Hearts by literally shooting the moon; however this, while extremely exciting, did not exactly count for the scoring.

...The next trick was won by the third player with the ace of spades, perhaps not fearing the drop of the queen since she may have passed it to the right. The last to play dropped the ten. The king was still out there somewhere.

She led a low club, perhaps being out of spades or having the queen herself. The card game was being played in Austin's new Art Gallery which he had somehow mysteriously funded.

The gang inside the art studio began to hear a subtle and eerie clinking of glass. As the sound grew louder a strange, yet familiar voice began to chant.... "Warriors, come out to play. Warriors... come out to play-ay...Warriors... come out to play-ee-ay!"

...The gallery window was crowded with curious onlookers. Every face was void of emotion. The silence was heavy and thick, like syrup. Time seemed to stand still.... Austin's art gallery, where the entertainment was taking place, was of course protected. Racecar had somehow hacked into the background sound system with an elaborate subliminal message embedded in the music now playing, which may have been the cause of Passiona's unusual behavior, she being very sensitive to matters intuitive.

At the spontaneous outbreak of kung foo frivolity, protective UHMW shielding had been deployed automatically around all of the artwork. Furthermore, an anti-gravity effect had been built into this structure (at enormous cost), and so now all those in attendance found themselves floating erratically, while in playful (for the most part) combat.

TheUnity was clutching his cards, a slight frown on his brow, as he wondered if this meant that his winning hand was all for naught. Labelwench had slipped her cards into a zipped pocket of her riding breeches, and had grabbed the bottle of Shiraz from the table. Timing was excellent as the variety she had ordered was using the latest in screw cap technol-

ogy, so the wine inside was safe, as long as she kept it away from present company.

Austin, anticipating a possible attempt on his art, was wearing some kind of belt that allowed him to make compensatory adjustment for the lack of gravity. He was the only one still in a horizontal position. Meanwhile, racecar was having a blast with the horse, Caramel, who quite understood that she was unlikely to injure racecar in the present environment. Caramel, given to teleportation, although not time travel, (unless you count the difference between time zones), had a much better understanding of many topics than her mistress. This was no problem, as she looked after Labelwench on their journeys.

So racecar was leaping onto Caramel's back, whence Caramel would attempt to be a bucking bronc in freefall. Racecar would eventually fall off, mostly from laughing, and then Caramel would gently bunt her into a wall or ceiling and wriggle herself into position to catch the rebounding racecar, whence they started all over again.

Labelwench had finally found a secure niche to brace herself in and was watching all with mild amusement. She did know enough not to take the cap off the wine bottle until gravity was restored. Meanwhile, Passiona had heard all the hoots and hollers, and was scoping things from beyond the range of the anti-gravity room, waiting to see if Austino wanted her to deploy the sprinkler system or any other of their many defense mechanisms, to cut short this mayhem.

Austino was thinking that he might have to call Graham for a touchup to the paint, but otherwise, what-the-hey? Everyone was having a riot and all of the excitement might even bring in a few more visitors and prospective art dealers or clients, and perhaps even some Nazi stragglers.

Another catalyst for the fun kung-fu pandemonium was that, Passiona, having given up shooting the moon with a long but non-runnable club suit (someone was holding back the king), gave it up, and having counted the spades, knew that only the ace was out (it wasn't in the kitty, as she had taken a heart and traded into the kitty), led the queen of spades, knowing it had be captured by some unfortunate person...

Racecar much enjoyed the silent whisperings of Caramel. And with focused determination dropped to the floor. She had learned much from the beautiful friend... all her friends.

The train was coming... vibrations could be felt for some time now. Racecar took one last look around, with a flip of her hand sent kisses on the wind to everyone. "Fare thee well dear friends, till we meet again.

And she walked out the door.

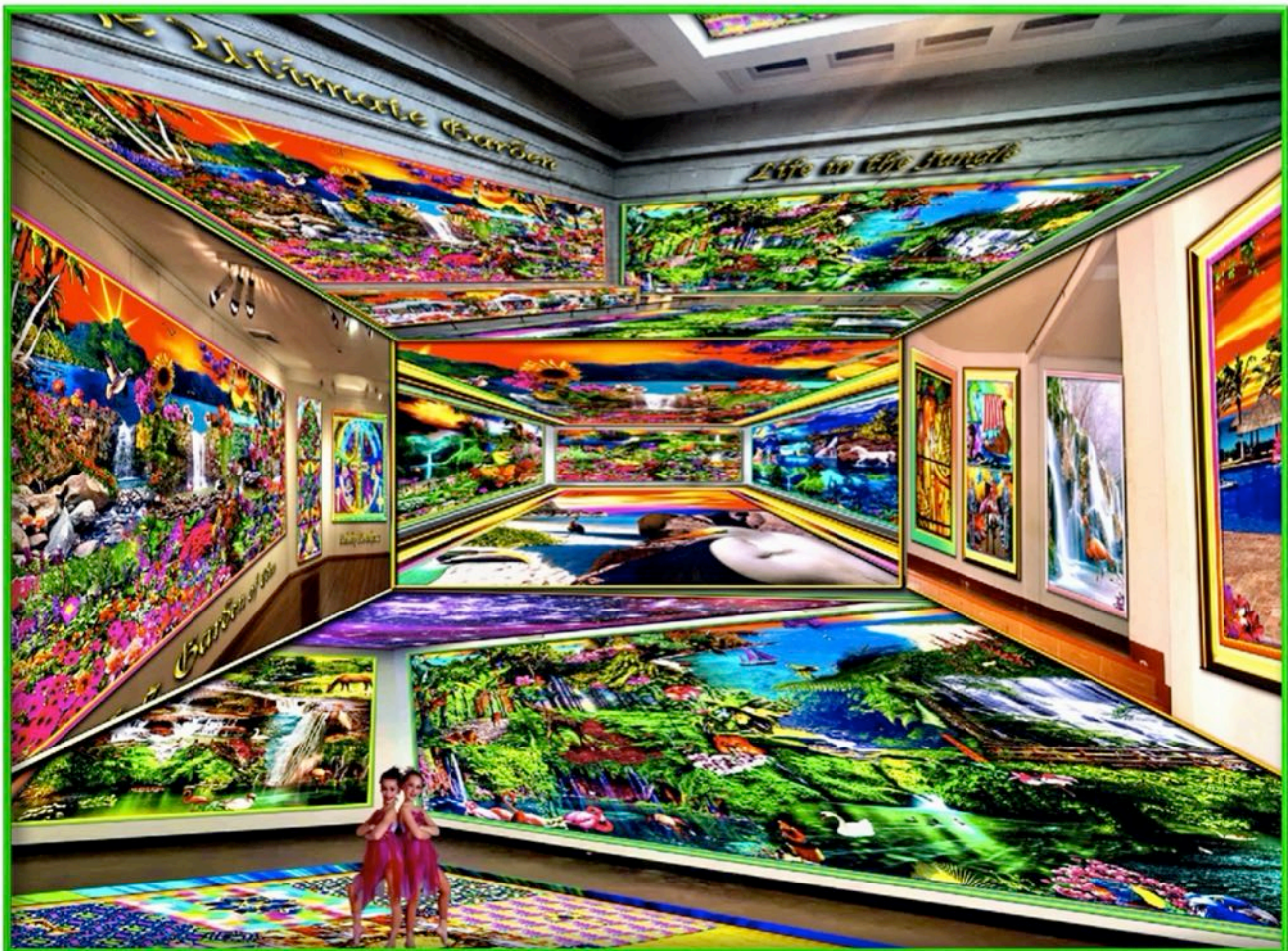
Passiona was back in her groove, and was greatly pleased to see that her new found friends had a good time when they got together. She was especially pleased to be leading Austino by his hand, with a coy yet come

hither look on her face, into the room of treasures, filled with gold. Therein, a period of time went by where love was shared, yet can't be written of, lest someone be embarrassed.

The partying had been going strong, and so the remnants of the Nazi gold-diggers had figured this to be a good time to break into the back room and retrieve their gold. The music that was playing outside for the Lunar eclipse gently changed to the song '503' from the Angels & Demons movie and so now everyone knew that the back room was being raided.

The Nazis grabbed the bullion bars that were in plain sight, plus the two from the card table, and then opened the chests with the 'Gold' signs on them. The knockout gas escaped and found them... They made it but a few feet collapsing. The NIA agents swooped back in and carried the woozy ones away for interrogation, the raider's golden touch having now gone numb. One knocked-out Nazi managed to open an eye but for a few seconds. It was one of the last visions he would never remember.

Passiona took out a remote and flicked a switch, turning off the art projections, which then disappeared. Then she removed the holographic disk, removing the gallery and its furniture. It all never happened; it was never there; nothing had happened there; nothing was as it seemed.



Passiona and Austino retreated to their local and secret hideaway on the sea, in the south of France, performing there a study of materialism and romanticism. Everything seemed real there, they noted, but for some obvious cases of silicone fraud seen in the pool and on the beach. Their room was so unassuming that its entrance was via an unmarked door in the stairwell. The hotel had utilized the space behind the elevator next to the boiler room. Bad guys could not find them there, nor in the town filled with transients, visitors from all over the world; same with all the workers; they came from afar to work during their summers off from college or whatever. The room even had a little hump and a downslope just inside the door, so even if any bad guys did get in they would immediately fall down. Passiona and Austino were soon off to the depths of the sea of passion.





1 + 1 > 2

(synergy of partnership)

SECRET FORMULAS
for your eyes only

T(awareness) observes Mind(self)
(Universal Subject observes mental object)

Truth + Goodness +
Beauty = Love

Love ÷ ∞ = Love
(Love when divided
diminishes not)

Fire(man) +
Water(woman)
= Steam

MVEMJSUNP
(What does it
mean?
hint:SUN)

S l o w d o w n

Existence (Figure) ←
Being (Ground)

Nothing ↔
Positive +
Negative
(Non-existence ↔
Matter +
Anti-Matter)

1 + 1 = 1
(when in love)



P. Torney
© 2000



The sky is lit, a twinkling promenade
Of mating calls from luminated pods—
Tracers pulsing wild, searching thoughts that smile,
From fireflies named Winkin', Blinkin', and Nod.

Searchlights



— Chapter 34 —
The Mole of Vladimir

VLADIMIR, RUSSIA

The Foreign Intelligence Service (or SVR) is Russia's primary external intelligence agency. The SVR is the successor of the First Chief Directorate (FCD) of the KGB as of December 1991.

Vladimir is famous for its unique white stone cathedrals, towers, and palaces. Unlike any other northern buildings, their exteriors are elaborately carved with high relief stone sculptures. Only three of these edifices stand today: the Assumption Cathedral, the Cathedral of St. Demetrios, and the Golden Gate. It is also the home of the Secondary SVR, a misnomer, for it was here that many of the more outrageous plots were hatched, planned, and carried out.



Anton and Sergei had recruited and managed the insertion of the best of the Soviet era nuclear scientists into the secret Iranian nuclear bomb facility, one that Iran was recently forced to reveal. Anton and Sergei were now busy getting the Russian scientists back out, coordinating it through Anna, for just about everything went through Anna.

The SVR had a mole in its building, one who had so far revealed the existence of the Iranian nuclear plant, but not yet the hand of Russia therein, nor the S-500 anti-aircraft system being installed that would protect the plant from destruction. Therefore, the SVR building had been put under lock down, all transmissions and phones stopped, but for one.

Colonel Patov, the de facto and continuing head of the SVR in Vladimir, pondered the graveness of the situation, now wishing that he'd never had to run the damn place. The former Commander, the merciless General Burkov, had been done away with by Fredrick in San Francisco a few years back. A worldwide manhunt had produced nothing. Burkov had been replaced by General Nikitin, a man who ran the SVR remotely, and very poorly at that, one who had never even bothered to have set foot in the place, preferring the comforts of Moscow in the new digital age of armchair management.

Patov sat back. He'd been given a week to find the mole. *Must show progress in two days.* He didn't miss Burkov, that crazy son-of-bitch, but he missed Nikitin, strangely, having never met him, for it was all too lonely at the top here now, but, what-the-hell, for Nikitin had always taken all the credit for Patov's fine work. *To blazes with them all and their kind,* he thought. *Who is spilling our secrets? Not me, that's for sure.* He thought of his wife, Patova (they usually added an 'a'). Perhaps they could run away from this thing, but, no, the Russians left no survivors for events like this. Yet, Patov had already secretly moved his finances to Switzerland, knowing well how to circumvent the ever present prying eyes.

Anna had worked her way up, over 20 years or so, to a position of much importance, the coordinator of all activities. She was pure Soviet-Russian from birth, reliable and untouchable, even having a golden heart. She was also a member of the Ninja Empire, their deepest plant anywhere. It was the end, she knew, for there was no micromanaging of this kind of leak, as had been done with the others, to make it appear otherwise. There was no way out. Duty now spelled death. Nor could she shift the blame to Anton or Sergei; that just wouldn't be right. Still, she would try to hold out, perhaps think of something. Her mind drew a blank.

Patov paced his office, then called upon his Major, Egorov, for company. Anything not to have to go through this alone. They finally decided to

put all three suspects through the rigors of the new and improved 'truth serum' process that had never failed, although a few had died from it.

"Not Anna," Egorov protested.

"Yes, Anna, too," commanded Patov, "I know, but we must be sure. See you in the morning."

Morning had dawned all too soon for Colonel Patov, now drinking a cup of strong black coffee to jolt him back into the day from a very restless night.

He read the report. *What! All three had passed the 'truth' test. Then it was given again and all three had passed it again!*

Major Egorov entered, saying "We double-checked the computers. Only those three had access, and, you, of course, but you did not do it."

"Why not suspect me, Egorov?"

"Because I was sent here to keep an eye on you, Colonel, and it was not you."

"Thank you, Egorov, at least in this case anyway, for spying on me."

"My pleasure to vindicate you, sir."

"But they are all pureblood Soviets. Who, then?"

"It can only be one of them, sir."

The phone rang, displaying the name 'Nikitin'.

Patov jumped out of his chair. "What does he want? I thought I had two days for progress."

Patov lifted the receiver and listened, as one must do when a superior calls, just saying 'Understood', before hanging up, rather than being hung up upon.

"Egorov, our S-500 anti-aircraft construction site has now been revealed to the world!"

"There is such a project?"

"Yes, to protect the Iranian nuclear plant. It's but one-third completed though."

"What to do?"

"Make it look like it was abandoned. Put dust on it, Whatever. Get our people out of there immediately!"

"Will do, sir."

"And, Egorov, one more thing."

"Yes?"

"We now have but one more day to find the mole, or Nikitin is coming here tomorrow to personally execute all three suspects."

"Damn. We need these people."

"It's the old way, Egorov. The sure way."

"I'll try, sir."

"No try. Do."

"Maybe Nikitin leaked the information himself."

“Unlikely; he’s an old hard-liner. And if he did, there’s nothing we can do about it.”

“Agreed.”

“Find that mole or I’m dead.”

“Yes, sir.”

There was no progress during day, even after Patov had personally and intensely interviewed all three suspects.

Exhausted, Patov went to sleep early, sending nothing to Moscow.

General Nikitin’s armored limo pulled up outside the SVR building, around 3 AM, its flags flying. Major Egorov, being on night duty, received their demands at the front door, and went up at once to wake Pavlov.

“You have to get up, sir. Nikitin is here.”

“What! In the middle of the night?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Tell them we’re under lock down. No one comes in.”

“They’re waiting outside.”

“And no one goes out.”

“I had to bring the three suspects out...”

“What!”

“I could hardly disobey them, sir.”

“Well, then, what else do they want?”

“You, sir.”

“Me?”

“They insist. Immediately, and as you are.”

“Egorov, take over. You will not see me alive again.”

Pavlov was already a beaten man, an inmate waiting on death row, and so, he, dazed as he had become, collected a few personal items and went out into the street in his night clothes. The limo door opened. He got in. A General of the Russian Army was sitting there, in full uniform, looking most unhappy.

The limos sped off, no one saying a word as all the while the miles passed on by through the empty city streets. Patov knew to stay silent unless spoken to. He noted the outskirts of the city passing, and yet no one said anything, the country kilometers now eating up the limo with their darkness. A perfect spot for an execution, he thought.

Patov couldn’t take it any more.

“Where are you taking me, Nikitin?” he bellowed.

No answer.

Patov stayed quiet, thinking better of his outburst.

They stopped at an old farmhouse, pulled the limos inside, got out, and lit a small candle. *So, this is it*, figured Patov.

No one spoke.

Nikitin lit up a smoke and offered one to Patov, who gladly took it and lit it up to calm his nerves.

Halfway through the smoke, Nikitin leaned in as if to speak. The face somehow seemed familiar, but Patov couldn't place it.

"Colonel Patov," said Nikitin, very slowly, "You transferred all your funds."

No one could know this, thought Patov, but they did.

"For safekeeping."

"To use after you'd escaped this mess?"

"No, no..."

It was no use. They had him. Another long silence ensued.

"Remember the tunnel, Patov?"

Patov was really confused now.

"What tunnel?"

"The one under the train tracks."

Patov strained his memory... so many incidents over the years... then he began to recall some bits and pieces of it.

"I'm not exactly sure."

"Remember, 'It's lights out for me?'"

"Ahhh... YES. You reached up and smashed the only light bulb in the tunnel, leaving your sweater hanging there in the dark to fool us... then you escaped. You are... Fredrick!"

"I am. You should have shot me on sight."

"I couldn't."

"I know."

"And you've come to dispose of me, like you did Burkov?"

"No, that was a different case."

"He sure is... was."

"Burkov was a madman. You, Patov were just doing your job."

"Then where are you taking me?"

"To Switzerland, where you can meet up with your money and your wife."

"My wife?"

"Yes, she's in the rear partition of the second limo."

"You would do this for me, one who once tried to capture you? It this some kind of a trick?"

"Well, you can't stay in Russia now, can you? And we will let bygones be bygones. Pardon my Russian, but it means that all is forgiven and forgotten."

Patova stepped out and embraced her husband.

Patov looked up and over at Fredrick, finally, asking, "All this in exchange for what I know?"

Fredrick smiled. "We already know most of what you know. You are free, Colonel Patov. Is there such a word in Russian?"

"Yes, but... at least I will bring you up to date."

"I know, Patov... just let it sink in while we get you some traveling clothes."

Patov returned to his chair and sank into it, no longer fully knowing how or who to trust.

Patov added, "Anna must work for you, Fredrick."

"She does, and she is now safe within the limo."

"And the other two?"

"They have to come along."

"I see."

Anna stepped out and walked over to Patov.

Patov looked up and said, "Ah, golden heart, I knew it had to be you."

"You were not meant for this cruel line of work, Patov. I put in a good word for you."

"Thank you," said Patov, almost crying now."

"My treat."

"If I may ask, how did you get the information out? All the e-mails, phones and such are monitored every second. We even look at strange conversations for unusual word use."

"That would be telling."

"Really?"

"It's beyond all that."

"Brain waves? That's not possible, is it?"

"A novel idea, but one whose time has not yet come."

Fredrick looked at a secure readout on his phone, indicating that Operation 'Fire' was now underway. A few moments ago, the Israeli Defense Minister had been on the phone to the American President, who replied, just before hanging up, "Thanks for the notice... and God speed."

Six Israeli jets were already in the air, one far out in front, three in the middle, and two lagging back, all of them quickly approaching the Iranian border. The Defense Minister and his aides had gathered around the computer screens.

"We almost waited too long," said one. The S-500 site is partly operational, although they are now covering it with dirt to hide it."

"It can still operate through the dirt. Yes, indeed, why did we wait for a madman to come through on his public promise to destroy us?"

"Yes, especially when such a boast would only make our actions tonight all the more necessary and right in the eyes of the world?"

"We are getting soft."

"Maybe."

"Iran is even isolated from its muslim neighbors."

“Insanity.”

“The jets have crossed the border, sir.”

The S-500 anti-aircraft system came to life through the dirt, noting one blip and taking out the lead Israeli aircraft. But it was only a drone, carrying no one and nothing of interest but a missile now tracking out of the debris and down through the sky toward the S-500 site, its approach obscured, at first.

“They will never see it coming; they will glory in the kill and will not even be checking their radars for a second or two.”

They didn't, and so a large part of the S-500 apparatus was soon destroyed, the next three jets finishing the job and continuing on, the two jets in the rear now closing through the freed sky.

“What's with those last two jets, sir? Are they special?”

“Ah, you do not have security clearance for that.”

“Indeed, I do.”

“Yes, you do. I am joking. Suppose that our bunker buster missiles do not complete the job, the Iranian site being too deep, as it is rumored to be?”

“Then they could salvage it, and if it was far enough along in its enrichment process...”

“Yes...”

“Are you telling me what I think you're telling me?”

“Yes.”

“The first wave is at the target, sir, and dumping the bunker-busters.”

“Get me the live satellite on my screen. Analysis?”

“Those lines are the depths reached by the bunker-busters, sir. That block still beneath is the nuclear plant as newly illuminated by a special probe that we sent in first.”

“No good, was it?”

“The busters did not reach the target, sir.”

“The Defense Minister transmitted a code to the last two jets and then bowed his head in prayer.”

All waited.

“They've dropped their nukes, sir, fighting fire with fire.”

Fredrick received an update.

“Gentlemen, ladies, and Colonel Patov and wife: we've entered a new age. The area of the Iranian nuclear plant and its surroundings will be uninhabitable for several centuries to come.”

“God save us all,” cried Patov.

Major Egorov took temporary command of the SVR. He would later find that his command continued, for the real Nikitin had mysteriously disappeared, and no one would ask any questions of this, it being the old Soviet way.

Egorov now sat at Patov's desk, ready for the tasks to come. He took a rare moment to break character and smile to himself. No improved 'truth serum' injections had actually happened, for he'd only gone through the motions. He would carry on Anna's legacy, for he, too, was a member of the Ninja Empire.

<p>IS THERE A BASIC FUNDA- MENTAL ETERNAL SUBSTANCE OR IS IT TURTLES... ...ALL THE WAY DOWN</p> <p>F. Tureny © 1997</p>	<p>Not So Remarkable After All</p> <p>Why is the Earth for human life so perfect? And billions of other planets so unfit? Well, if this world wasn't right for life, then We wouldn't be here to ask about it!</p> <p>F. Tureny © 2007</p>	<p>Right in Front of Our Nose</p> <p>"I used to be an atheist, until I realized that I was God!"</p> <p>"How true, we're all part of and made of space-time Consciousness—the essence of the Ultimate Reality: Energy."</p> <p>God is Man.</p> <p>F. Tureny © 1997</p>
<p>IN HEAVEN THEY PLAY HARPS...</p> <p>... IN HELL THEY PLAY ACCORDIANS</p> <p>F. Tureny © 2007</p>	<p>— THE BEST WORLD —</p> <p>EARTH'S A GARDEN, AN OASIS IN SPACE.</p> <p>A WORLD OF BOUNDLESS BEAUTY & GRACE—</p> <p>ONE COULD SEARCH THE HEAVENS FOR SUCH IN VAIN.</p> <p>FINDING NO EQUAL, ANY TIME OR ANY PLACE.</p> <p>F. Tureny © 2007</p>	<p>El Meano</p> <p>pg. 1</p>
<p>SECRET FORMULAS</p> <p>for your eyes only</p> <p>$1 + 1 > 2$ (synergy of partnership)</p> <p>Truth + Goodness + Beauty = Love</p> <p>Love + ∞ = Love (Love when divided diminishes not)</p> <p>$1 + 1 = 1$ (when in love)</p> <p>Fire(man) + Water(woman) = Steam MVEMJSUNP (What does it mean? hint: SUN)</p> <p>T(awareness) observes Mind(self) (Universal Subject observes mental object)</p> <p>S l o w d o w n</p> <p>Nothing \Leftrightarrow Positive + Negative (Non-existence \Leftrightarrow Matter + Anti-Matter)</p> <p>Existence (Figure) \Leftarrow Being (Ground)</p> <p>--->>> <<<--->>> <<<--->>> <<<--->>></p> <p>F. Tureny © 1997</p>	<p>My Mind is a Hex '40</p> <p>X-RAYS OF BRAIN SHOW NOTHING</p> <p>This page has been intentionally left blank, except for the above, and the above, etc.</p> <p>F. Tureny © 1997</p>	<p>It's Everywhere</p> <p>Consciousness is irreducible because it cannot be explained in terms of more basic entities, nor can it be located since it's beyond our spatial extensions. Perhaps the intrinsic properties underlying physical dispositions are themselves the experiential properties of the hidden dimension, permeating everything. Consciousness would then be The Ultimate, all that there is of heaven, earth, and sky.</p> <p>F. Tureny © 1997</p>



MOODS

ARE

CONTAGIOUS.



— Chapter 35 —
The Bright Side

*Throughout the day we sat beside a brook,
Reading with life its most wonderful book,
Then slept with each other in a sweet nook;
And this of her and me was all it took.*

LIFE

*Art and poetry enrich human experience,
But they're no substitutes for the living of it.
Like Keat's figures on the urn,
should we live life less?
NO!—because what is deathless is also lifeless!*

THE NINJA INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (NIA)...

Rascal placed a call to the head of Mossad, which is the Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations, being the national intelligence agency of Israel.

“It seems that Iranian scientists are disappearing, that much is going wrong in their nuclear plants, and that many of the needed shipments are not arriving. Do you know anything about that?”

“Who, me? No, nothing, but we know even less than nothing about some other problems that they are having. Do you know anything about those?”

“No, not a thing.”

“Thanks; now we both know something.”

“Good work.”

“You, too.”

Questor and Passiona recently addressed the new recruits: “No matter what agencies we use or blend into, we are the Ninja Empire and can act as that alone, going where governments and even CIAs cannot go, as we are not a nation, nor represent any in particular. This is why our GrandMaster is higher than the leaders of all countries. We do good only for the sake of good, performing the task and then getting out, not even sticking around to enjoy the scenery. Your reward is the satisfaction of a job well done, along with shelter, food and travel. We have chosen many from the martial arts, as they have great discipline of body and mind. We do not kill innocent bystanders if they've seen our faces; in fact, we don't

kill them at all. We use two backup teams, not just one, but they rarely come into play. That is where you will start.



— Chapter 36 —
The Threat

The Taliban's top leader is in custody. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar was nabbed last week in Karachi by American and Pakistani intelligence teams, unnamed U.S. officials told several news outlets. Two Taliban figures also confirmed the arrest.

Since the U.S. has signed the Geneva Convention, which prevents the torture of prisoners to gain valuable information, which would save many lives, although the Taliban haven't signed it, the NIA was called in to question the prisoners. They were able to find out about some nuclear material being brought in to the US; however, the cell involved is self-contained, and so there'd be no way to contact them.

Meanwhile, Analog, the southern field commander of the Ninja Empire, had been alerted by his aide, TimeParticle, of the 'unusual event' of the sinking of a Coast Guard drug-interdiction vessel off the coast of Texas.

Said TimeParticle, "It's not often that these vessels go down. Either it was sunk because of a huge amount of drugs being involved or because something much more potent is being brought into the U.S."

Analog replied, "Let's try our new satellite system."

"It has photos better than Google Earth?"

"It has super high definition video that gets saved for but a few days, on holographic discs."

"Of the whole gulf, and the southern region?"

"Yes, amazingly, it does, but that's a lot of data, and so that's why they have to reuse the storage after a few days."

That is amazing, Having every square inch of such a massive area on HD video. Let's take a look."

"I'm sending a feed to Rascal. Let's start it a few minutes before The Coast Guard vessel went under."

"Wow! This is more than just HD video; it's 3-D+! And there are no clouds."

"We have two satellites, to provide 3-D; They can also take away the clouds, and then enhance the scene, from the infrared and more, but this is a clear day. Here it is."

"The Coast Guard vessel is hailing two speedboats, and they're coming to a stop. I can't quite understand what's happening inside the speedboats from this topdown view."

"Change to more of a side view."

"We can do that? OK, done. Uh, oh. A handheld missile launcher is being aimed at the Coast Guard vessel. They sunk it, and are now taking off. Cripes! They must be doing 100 mph."



“Run it fast forward; we’ll track them to their landing.”

“OK.” A: Comm assistant, get me oversight, and control of the laser satellite.”

Comm: “OK, but the laser satellite is presently over the other side of the world.”

“Bad luck. Get me a live Stealth Bomber.”

Comm: “Yes, sir; one is already aloft in the region; it’s even NIA.

“Good luck. What’s up, TimeParticle?”

“See, they’re at the Texas shore now. I’ve slowed the video. They’re loading something into a white van.”

“Good work. Pinpoint that van and follow it into real time.”

Comm: “Niihau is on the line; they’ve been following; they are granting you Ultimate Authority to continue.”

“Goo, what’s happening, TP?”

“I’ve tracked them, using high speed video. We now have real time, via the NIA Eye satellite. They’ve entered Houston proper.”

“Holy Christ! I need a hundred cement trucks. Alert Houston police pursuit, but have them stay back, slowing all traffic; the terrorists might get scared, and detonate, and we’re not quite ready yet. Redirect the Stealth jet, highest priority. Have the counter-terrorism official at the next toll booth take a special reading on that van. Get me the U.S. President.”

Meanwhile, ironically, at Capitol Hill, the politicians are again raising a fuss about the severe prisoner interrogation techniques.

“Sir, the van ran the toll booth, but we got a reading that the nuclear device is live and armed.”

“Damn! That means they are approaching their target very soon.”

“NASA?”

“It would appear to be. Evacuate the area to the east first. How’s our jet doing? “

Comm: “They’re in the area, having just pulled out of mach-4; just about ready. Here’s a direct connection to the pilot.”

“Pilot, the nuclear emergency has been verified. Do not hit the van directly; the device is armed. Blast some bunker-buster holes just ahead of the van, such that it will plunge into one of them. Execute at will. Over.”

Comm: “The cement trucks are on the way. General Rascal likes your plan.”

“Have the police pursuit stop and block all lanes, to stop all the traffic behind the van. The traffic ahead of it will be able to just move on in time.

Comm: “I have the U.S. President.”

“Mr. President, NIA requests you to prepare for DEFCON 3, as we may very soon have a nuclear explosion within Houston city limits if we can’t stop it.”

The President: Will do; have been following.”

The Stealth Bomber bore down upon the speeding van, like a giant bird of prey, blasting three holes in the freeway just in front of it, the van soon plunging into the first one. The jet sent a few missiles near by, some of which caused some debris to partly fill the hole the van was in.”

“Nuclear explosion?”

“No, not yet.”

“They were still three minutes from NASA. Keep the area clear.”

“We have an underground nuclear blast confirmed. Low megatons. The wind is still out of the west. There’s not much population there.”

“Ah, good luck!”

“Indeed.”

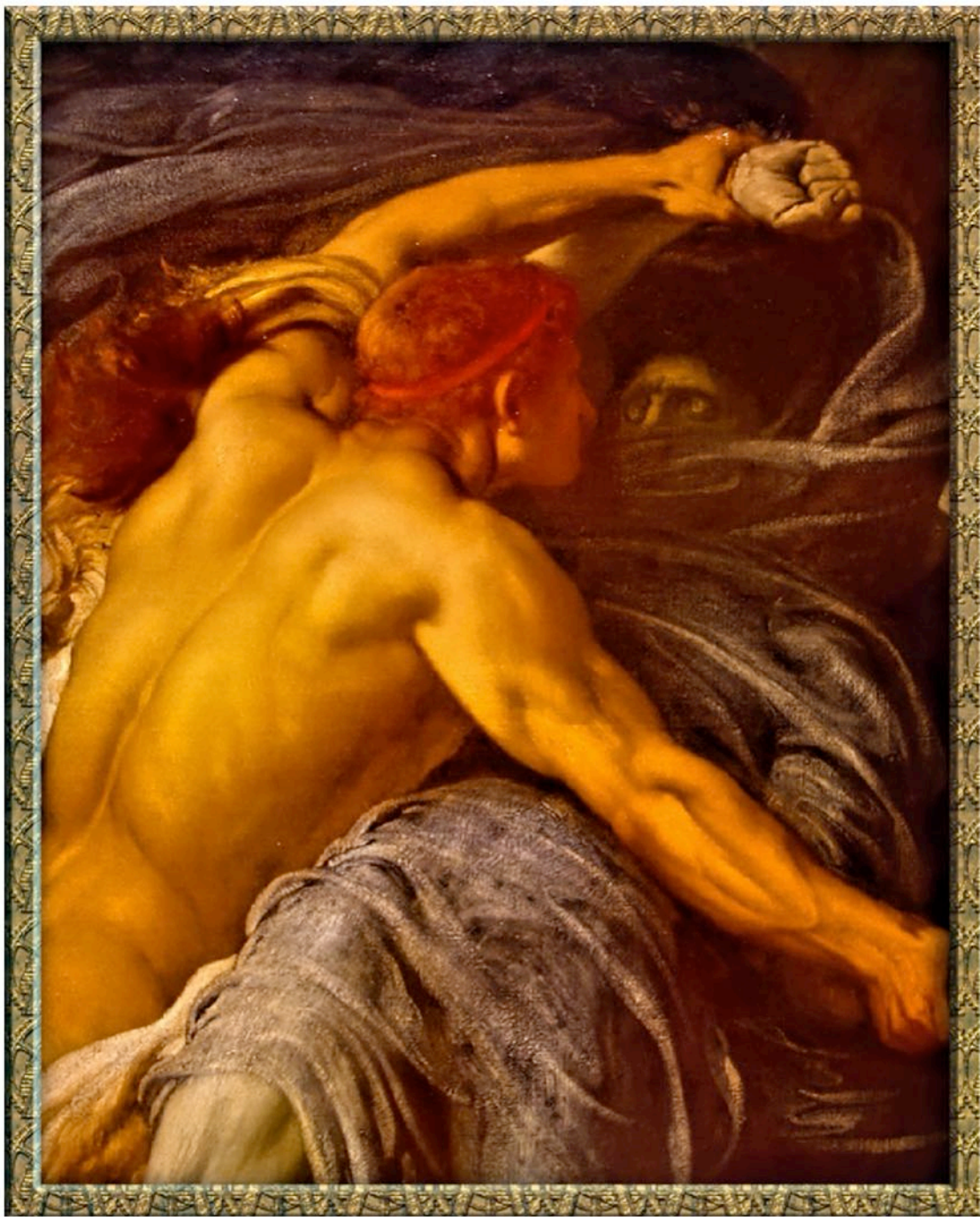
“This should end some of those discussions in D.C.

“Let’s video backtrack those speedboats whence they came.”

“Get on it.”

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Rascal had had enough with the terrorists, the last straw being the nuclear attempt on NASA. He ordered all operatives to terminate all the suspects not in custody that they’d identified from observation and their insiders’ information. Lloyd looked stunned, for his subjectives were massed in the cauldron towns of Miran Shah and Mir Ali, the very epicenters of extremist activity, the ultimate boomtowns of terror in Pakistan’s belt of militants. He thought of renting a yacht for a sham of a party, but it wasn’t their style. Alerting his insider, Lloyd dressed as a dervish, for he could otherwise hardly blend in, and awaited a special celebration, after services, in which he was to whip them into a frenzy of subjective hatred for anything non Islamic. He had completed two slow whirls, the build-up to further acceleration, drawing all eyes rapt upon him, turning ever faster, on one leg. Out of his cloak came his submachine gun, it firing round and round, as he twirled, his insider watching and taking care of trouble, the militant terrorists all falling dead, their dreams of virgins shattered.



(Boardwalk to the stars, juxtaposed with an amusement park, from New Jersey.)

TOT

Forget
Everything;
There is Only
One Thing:
Energy

(The Theory of Thing)



— Chapter 37 — Fire and Ice

(I am not a ‘the end is near’ kind of guy, but it’s fun to write end-of-the-world stories, and thus work in some drama, science,” and the histories of extinctions, to demonstrate the larger scheme of things.)

When all of Florida went under, being that it was already sea level, the world woke up, but it was much too late. A year later, every coastal city in the world had been inundated, for water always finds its way in. Northern Canada, along with its eastern and western sections, was no more; only the now more temperate interior remained dry, it filling up with more and more people and tropical birds by the day. Sin-thea had moved to the cabin, for Lake Ontario was acting up. A small portion of Siberia was usable, too, for now, and an ‘iffy’ part of Argentina. Alaska was gone to its mountains, as were Central and Latin America, and Mexico.

The heat was melting the ice caps. The equatorial regions had become unbearable, the temperatures now reaching 135 degrees F; most of these people really had no place to go. The pace of the disaster was startling, exceeding even the grimmest of predictions.

Australia’s population, being mostly coastal, had retreated to the thin edge between its useless interior and the deep blue sea. Graybeard was holding on, being one who was acclimated to extremes, as well as to living off the land. He’d climbed a sturdy tree when the tidal wave swept inland, perching there for a day, until the waters had receded enough for him to slog his way home. His tiny car with its 2-horsepower engine had been washed away, but he still had the big one at home. His ranch was soggy but otherwise secure.

The Great Inland Sea reappeared, then evaporated, and then returned. Meteorology had become a fruitless science; summer was now year-round. He readied his camping gear just in case.

The Yukon was a mess, too; yet, LabelWench, as well, was a survivor. The dogs had been leashed, the sled provisioned. Cars could not brave the mud and the slush, so she was off on the ultimate Yukon Quest, with her sled and dogs. Whitehorse was dying.

ProfPat was fine where he was, although the Great Lakes were enlarging, even with their locks having been closed, for the water runneth over. *All this from a Bindu dot*, he thought. Resistance was futile, for water was slippery stuff, its tiny hydrogen atoms easily rolling around the oxygen.

Various schemes and solutions had been endlessly debated, most of them being as tough on mankind as the heat, the rest of them unattainable. It was all happening much too quickly. The estimates had been way

off. Nature was now a dragon and she had roared, and was spewing her fiery breath upon her own fragile planet.

Some tried to live in basements, but the heat found them; some dug underground, but the floods came. Many near extinctions had happened before, one being only 74,000 years ago, when, at Toba, in northern Sumatra, a supervolcano erupted. Six years of volcanic winter followed this eruption, bringing pre-humans to the very edge of elimination. There were but a few thousand of them left around, since very little light could reach the dusty ground. It took twenty thousand years for them to re-compose from the caldron of fire that had almost brewed humanity away. It was from this handful of hardy souls that we modern humans arose.

Back to the heat... Due to the intense global warming and ice melting that was about to reach a runaway exponential point, the weather patterns had been greatly altered, and were bringing numerous and severe storms all over the globe, causing much interior flooding, plus, wiping out most of the crops. The rate of destruction was becoming astronomical. No one could keep up with it; it was everyone for themselves.

2012 had long since passed without incident, and now it was 2021, an anagram of 2012. Millions had perished in a matter of a few weeks, and there was little government infrastructure working, save for the covert Ninja Empire; however, humans were hardly a match for nature gone wild. It could and would only get worse unto the end.

Back in 1960, Bob Christiansen had looked around, everywhere, at the Yellowstone National Park grounds, for its volcanic caldera, but had found it nowhere. By some coincidence, NASA had photos from a recently tested high altitude camera. Astounded, Bob learned why he failed to spot the caldera. It was virtually the entire park—2.2 million acres of area!

Yellowstone must have blown up with a violent misery far beyond anything known throughout our history; the crater was forty miles across. There was also a huge gap in the mountain chain. The cataclysm had been even beyond the scale of what imaginations could have dreamt up. It had thousands of times more monstrous molten fire than Mount St. Helens. Krakatoa was but a firecracker in comparison.

Yellowstone's eruptions average one really massive blow every 600,000 years, the last one 630,000 years ago; so, it was long overdue and perhaps pending, but, still, that could be thousands of years off.

The Ninja leaders and their teams flew into Niihau on their last tanks of gas, there to take sanctuary and a vote for a desperate but uncertain plan. The landing strip now had quite a tricky slope to it.

Many near extinctions had occurred before, but none in modern times; however, death seemed to be a way of life throughout history. Of all extinctions, the Permian was the largest, happening 245 million years ago,

when 95% of species perished, suddenly disappearing from the fossil recording. Life had almost come to a total obliteration.

That we are even here was due to the dinosaurs and 90% of all the species being wiped out. A small and nervous shrew-like creature looked out; the dinosaurs, the forever Kings of the Earth, were gone. The shrews attached to a favorable evolutionary line. Every single one of our forbears on both sides survived, they being attractive enough to locate a loving mate, with whom their love to celebrate.

In the late 1700's, Cuvier could take heaps of bones and whip them into shapely forms not in the stones. After naming the fossil elephant the mastodon, he put forward for the first time a theory on extinction. He said that from time to time there were global catastrophes in which some groups of creatures "became history". This raised uncomfortable implications at the time: Why would God create and destroy without reason or rhyme? This suggested an unaccountable casualness by Someone unseeing and greatly troubled the belief in The Great Chain of Being, which held that the world was carefully ordered for us, and that every living thing thus had a place and purpose.

Meanwhile, Will Smith had noted a correlation in fossils in rocks to find the relative rock ages that were possible: At every change in rock strata, certain fossils vanished, while in others they carried on into subsequent levels. It was seen that Nature (God) had wiped out creatures extinct not only occasionally but repeatedly, which made one think Him not only careless but having an outright hostile distinction, more than the Biblical Noachian deluge distinction's extinction. Of course, now we see nature more for what it is.

Back to the future... It no longer mattered that humans were on a one way trip from the quantum fluke, that maximal disorder within old Planck's nook...to the escalation caused by the Dark Matter, the Universe heading toward the oblivion of its sparse and accelerated expansion, all that we ever loved and knew going to extinction; for, the world was ending now, or at least it was the beginning of the end, for the temperatures were increasing daily.

Mountainous Niihau was somewhat unaffected, as were other such high island regions, although they were few and far between, for which the trade winds still brought some moderation; yet, the subtropical and near tropical areas were now all very much overly tropical.

Al Gore had been the last one into the Washington bunkers, having steadfastly worked up to the end.

Some of the remaining nations of the world noted that they had indeed squandered the good things of life, squabbling over differences in culture. Many had all been looking for truth in the wrong direction, which

was back into the past instead of to the future. They had fiddled, and now Rome was burning.

On Niihau, Fredrick walked the last mile. The world's roulette wheel was rolling double zero on what might soon be the last perfect day on Earth, and a hurricane was headed in his direction. Tsunamis washed deeper and deeper inland; most of the internet no longer functioned; ToeQuest and AVOID were gone, their archives destroyed.

'Nobody' had returned, his efforts at changing the future having been unsuccessful. Robert gave up his dreams of the TOE; the TOE center on Oahu had closed. Graham finally levitated up into the air, his new refuge above the clouds. Trish, #1 East, energized her way to the Forbidden Island.

The top dragon, Old Rascal, as #1 West, awaited them all. A rainbow appeared as the spirit of old GrandMaster West, flying through, past them, as the scent on the breeze and the courage to act.

The votes had been counted. Rascal had now engaged the last working silo. Trish keyed in the codes and nodded to him, saying "Would you like to do the honors?"

"Yes, for unto me falls life's last duty. Nature will now have to contend with herself. It will be fire versus ice, dragon against dragon, just as shown by the picture on the great wall; however, this could well be the end for all of us."

"Or not, if it works," she answered.

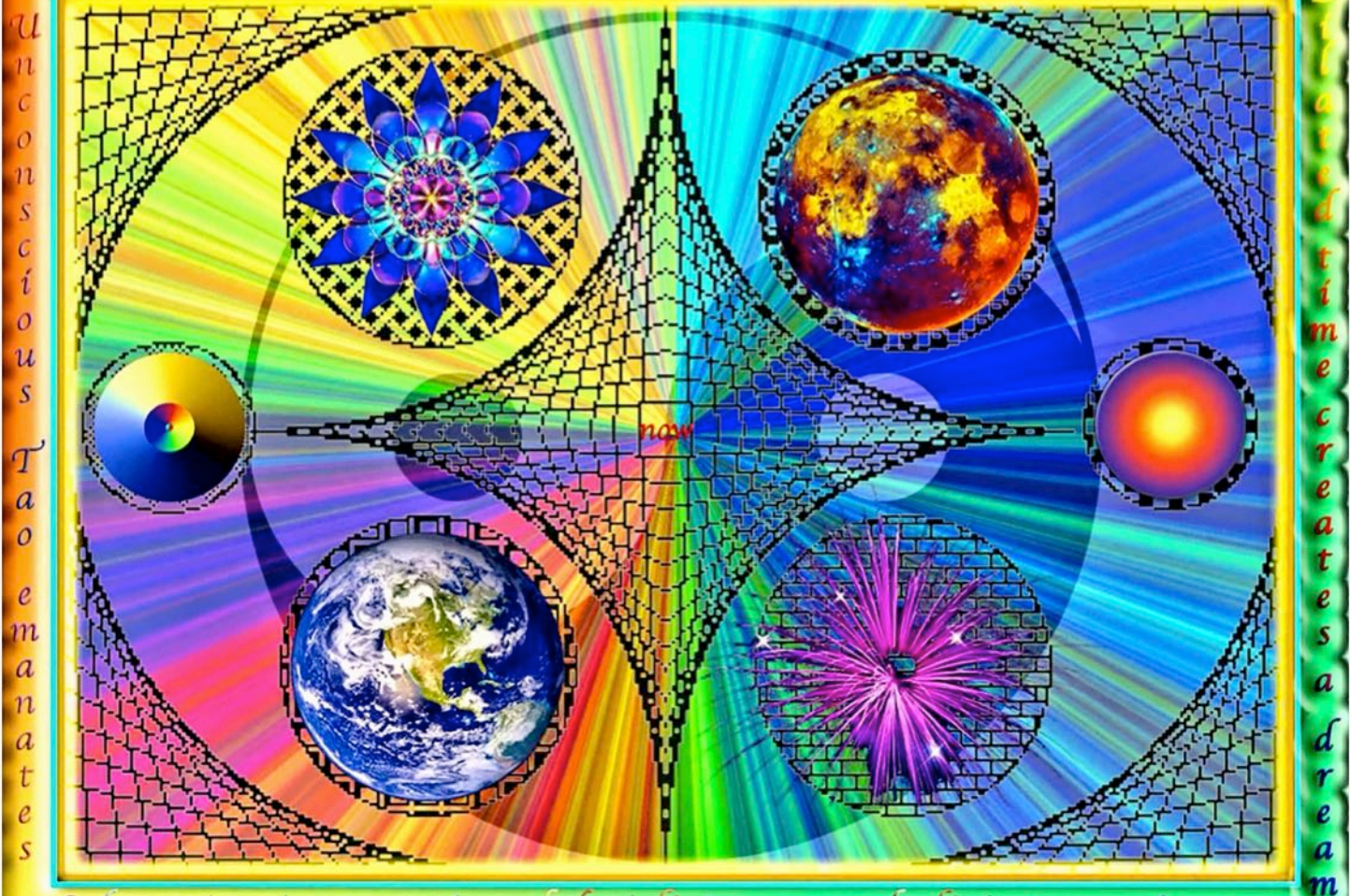
"Or global warming will be defeated by the worldwide dust in the atmosphere. The years will tell; it is our only hope."

Rascal pressed the button: Nuclear missiles were being fired, deep into the heart of the Yellowstone caldera. At least five surrounding states and two Canadian provinces would be completely destroyed; yet, winter would come, probably bringing its own array of problems, but, then, after that, could spring be far behind?

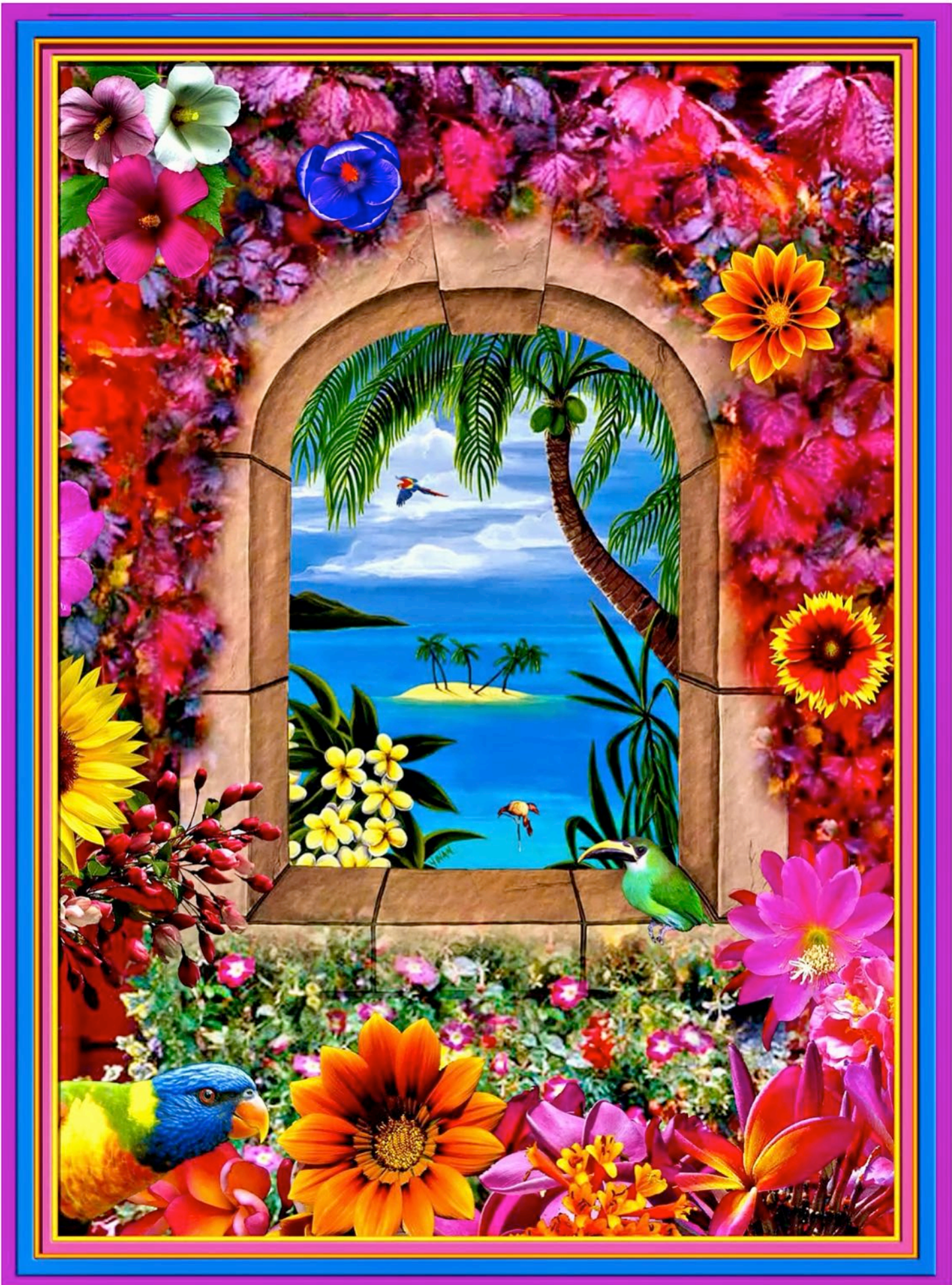
— FINIS —

Hitherto whereby
 Whence we came,
 Are we talking
 Consciousness
 Relative to "c"
 Or fully present
 As events occur
 Thence they went?
 Do we see a dead star
 Shinging brightly
 in the fully-present NOW,
 Albeit then
 Partially-past then?

Backward Gravity slows down Forward Light to create temporary virtual matter.



Subconscious interpretations of the infinite present the finite to consciousness.



Epilog

Back in Hawaii, in 1970, a rainbow was about to appear, something that was truly only in the eye of the beholder, for it appeared only where it was for each particular person.

“Strange,” Passiona said. “I felt as if I was experiencing the rainbow for the first time.”

“Perhaps you were,” I replied, unknowing of Nobody at that time, but now I realize that I had seen him whizzing by on his way to the CMBR and the butterflies on the edge of forever, so I wrote:”

*Some may ask of Life: “How does one find love?”
Life says, “Be still! Don’t look far or above;
Stop; let love’s butterfly alight on you,
For that’s the touch that romance is made of.”*

*The rose is the flower that the bee cruises,
Meeting there the butterfly that love chooses;
They unfold the petals of the blossom,
And drink the nectar of love’s sweet juices.*

The scent of plumeria perfumed the night airs ever more intensely, drenching us in its fragrance as we went to sleep to enjoy our new all-night cable channel of dreams. The mountain top retreat granted serenity in a crazy world, but Okinawa soon called, for an Army supply system update, and so I picked up the tapes and two first class tickets, one for me and one for the tapes to have their own seat, for I could never let them out of my sight for even a millisecond.

I had taken a course in Security and Military Intelligence and been granted a high level clearance and had to carry a pistol. Of course, I even had to take the computer tapes to the bathroom with me, washing them and my hands as well. So we put the tapes in the overhead storage bin as Passiona settled in to the seat next to mine.

During the flight I read a book on anti-gravity. I couldn’t put it down! I asked my companion, “What’s holding this airplane up?”, for she was excellent in science.

“A wing and a prayer,” she replied.

In Okinawa, I became inspired while sitting under a Banyan tree, for some reasons that Nobody understands:

GOING WITH THE FLOW

*All things arise, and away they all go,
For life's impermanent and volatile.
Flow and change are normal features of life;
Suffering starts when you resist the flow.*

*Never struggle against the way things are,
But rather become the way that things are.
When you give yourself to the moving whole,
Natural currents will carry you quite far.*

*My spirit flows from moment to moment,
Connecting and savoring life's events,
Drinking-in the sounds, currents, textures, scents,
And subtle delights, for I'm self-content.*

*We did not create ourselves, of course,
We're an expression of some deeper force.
Why rein it in or try to control it?
It comes from beyond; so, flow with the force!*

*To those of you who ignore life's romance:
Ignorance, like shadow, has no substance.
The shade is removed by the light within;
Feel the rhythm of the universal dance!*

*Listen to your inner creative source;
The power is in you to set the course.
Don't let your ego get in the way;
Success will then this method reinforce.*

*Experience the oneness of everything,
As manifested in ways of being.
Become aware of interrelations
It's a nonintellectual happening!*

I could feel something had changed in me, and in the world. Some inexplicable ecstasy had arrived and was moving in. Life was somehow... richer, clearer. I gave thanks to Nobody in particular.

THE LIGHT

*Existence is sure and real,
But its mechanics are no big deal,
For this life is the message dear,
Not the messenger.*

*One need not look where there is no light,
For being alive is the very meaning of life;
Living life is the sparkle that gleams so bright;
Why parade in the dark when this here's so right?*

WHITHER FLOWING FREE, ALL FROM NOT KNOWING

*Of hitherto, I know not, but am whither going,
Willy-nilly, whence all there is to knowing...
Hence thither I went on hither flowing to think
That I was truly free to be in body and mind.*

WHAT SENSE TO MAKE? WHICH PATH TO TAKE?

*From what beastly heart springs our zest?
Of what searching eye became our sight?
What sound in the bushes let us hear?
What dark past haunts but helps us be?*

*Across what ink black river did we have to swim?
To what ends at length did we search for food?
In what deep entangled forest were we bred?*

*And hitherto,
Of what stars did we shine in their stead?
And in what nursery were those infants fed?*





ONE OF AUSTIN'S WILDER THEORIES OF EVERYTHING

“Fundamental Possibility” exists and is the ultimate basis of reality, and has always existed, since nothing can become of nothing. It is fundamentally every possibility at once, in superposition.

Note that a fundamental particular state of something was totally impossible, for how could the choice have been made? A fundamental state of nothingness was totally impossible, too, for there is indeed something that our consciousness interprets.

Fundamental Possibility projects our local reality, the penultimate reality, via electrons, quarks, and the such, and/or strings, a hologram, consciousness, or whatever. All is as it is in our local reality because it works.

BEYOND LOCAL REALITY

*Time, space, stuff, change, and form were real-ized from
The Fundamental Possibility,
Becoming our penultimate reality;
One possible from all probabilities.*

QUANTUM-LIKE SUPERPOSITION IS REAL

*Our reality came not from nothing,
But existed always as possibility,
One that amounts to something workable,
Among all in superposition.*

THE FIRST IMPOSSIBILITY

*No form of our penultimate realness
Could have existed alone before
Everything was quantum-known-all-at-once,
For what could have made the choice among many?*

THE SECOND IMPOSSIBILITY

*Nor came it from an absolute nothing,
Since there can be no such ‘thing’ at all,
So, since either way is impossible,
Fundamental Possibility is.*

It gets down the reason that the All can have no limits, or it isn't the All; so it must be infinite and eternal, doing everything. That there is nothing to make it of still haunts, but we do observe a balance of polarity of charge, matter and antimatter, a weak and a strong nuclear force, and gravity's negative potential energy said to balance the positive kinetic energy of stuff, not to mention fields making particles and particles making fields. So, there seems to be a balance of opposites, which is perhaps a zero balance. 'Nothing' cannot be because it is perfectly unstable.



In a Theory of Everything forum long ago, in the 9th century, Abunasr Farabi wrote:

*Vague and unrefined did the secrets of existence remain.
Unpierced did that highly revered pearl remain.
Each person said something according to his reason.
Yet untold did the point which was of essence remain.*

And Abulhasan Kharquani replied in the forum in the 11th century (the internet was slow in those days):

*The primordial secrets neither you know nor I.
The words of the puzzle neither you can read nor I.
Your discourse and mine are behind the curtain.
When the curtain falls, neither you remain nor I.*

But they didn't know how far science would advance and that we would actually be able to see the curtain and derive the truth from it. So, we may say more...



“I’ve been thinking about Fundamental Possibility,” I said to Passiona. “It solves a lot of problems! It’s also what I’ve been leaning toward lately, although the wild TOE revelations from Imaginations have clarified it.”

“Like what?” she inquired.

“Like how the penultimate reality, the fundamental substance, could still have existed forever, or at least in its potential form, and how its particular form was specifically one that worked, instead of one that didn’t.”

“It existed forever because time was born with it, from possibility, the both of them always there as potential,” she replied.

“Yes, there was what just what is, rather than what was not, for a nothingness could never be, for there is surely something here; yet, it need balance to nothing since there is no other source.”

“The fundamental substance was the most probable of all possibilities,” she surmised.

“Yes, and perhaps it was the only possibility that would work.”

“Or the others fizzled and failed by going nowhere, sort of a survival of the fittest of all the scenarios of consequences of what could serve as reality.”

“And Fundamental Possibility had to exist, rather than not, for that’s all there could be. Yet, I’m still trying to adjust to this new way of thinking.”

“True,” Imagination chimed in. “Fundamental Possibility is a bit like your mind sifting through eventualities of possible actions, only this Possibility forms substances. It may even be forming some now, here and there, but on a lesser basis than when the universe expanded, for then all was wide open, or it is that even low probability event of huge bangs must ever and eventually happen. Of course, this Possibility must remain simple, in a way, that being the price of being Fundamental, but you, a 13 billion-year complex composite, are much more advanced, and that is where real and meaningful life occurs. If Fundamental Possibility could talk, which it can’t, for it is not a system, it might say something much the same as you would now in your quest for the theory of everything:

*I’ll follow every single avenue,
Whether it’s brightly lit or a dark alley,
Exploring one-ways, no-ways, and dead-ends
Until cornered where the truth is hiding.*

And now you’ve arrived in that dark corner and so you can live life better by knowing who you are:

*Some simple substance(s) gave rise to everything,
Chosen as probable above the rest,
Knowing at once that it would function well,
The most promising, the possible ones.*

However, unlike the simple beginnings, the possibilities of the complexities of everything are unbounded and that’s the greatest thing:

*As to how complex, there is no limit
Except perhaps when it forms a black hole,*

*And the smallest is the Planck distance,
So size is absolute, not relative.*

All in all, you are the lucky ones standing atop the pinnacle of time, change, form, and substance. Life is waiting when you have the right attitude; you will come to not even know what sorrow is.”

They continued on through the entangled forest.

“Our minds do seem to make the actual from the possible, don’t they?” she proposed.

“Well, Possibility was our birthplace, so perhaps we retain a version of it,” he answered.

“We create thought.”

*The underwritten Underwriter
Of this creational wave of matter
Covers all loss and liability,
Guaranteeing payment,
By dipping into Possibility.*

THE ACCIDENTAL HAPPENING

*What random, unsystematic event became,
So unmethodically, quite arbitrary, so lame,
Unplanned, undirected, so casual, uncausal made
As some indiscriminate, nonspecific one bade
Of haphazard stray that erratic chance gave?*





THE NEW STORY OF THE TWO LAMAS

*(In which, as happenstance would have it,
I run into some current ToeQuest members
back in their youth, some thirty years ago,
as well as two Lamas half a world apart.)*

It was the in-between time of the trips of delivering the Army's Supply System, and so I finally came down from the Hawaiian mountain top to do some real work, and so I busied myself writing computer programs, surfing, taking a graduate course in some stuff I that I already knew, selling seashells by the beach, and starting to seriously study the TOE, as well as her ankle and her knee.

It was the early 70's, still of the counterculture era, and I was in my early 20's, although it is now the 00's as I write this, and I'm wondering what kind of name the future will use to refer to this 00 decade. During the coming 10's (or the Teens perhaps), yet another problem decade, they might say: Back in the noughts (too old fashioned), um, I mean back in the double oh's, nope, it was the zero's (maybe)... the Theory of Everything was finally solved in the ToeQuest forums.

I've settled on the 'uh-ohs' as a name, since it is a time of unease, but I will have to get Profpat to work on it; for meanwhile, in this story back then, he was starting on the road towards a grand professorship by taking Accounting 101—the abacus.

I was as free as a quark in the Army's nucleus when I was drafted into it, which wasn't too bad, since the strong force weakens near the quarks and lets them roam a bit, but I was soon promoted and projected into an electron, as Profpat's theory figures, and thus much freer to roam the world on the Army trips.

Also, at about this time, Graybeard was heading for India, smartly taking his retirement early, before he had to work for the rest of his life, at a time when he was the most able. He now runs Australia's electrical system.

Fredrick and Nobody were on their way to a peace conference, but not their own, for their dispute was but a minor disagreement about whether 'nothing' existed, but to resolve a battle between a country's north and south. Why does a country's east hardly ever go to war with its west?

Well, the weeks went by, the seashells selling briskly, and the punched cards not having any hanging chad problems, and so I picked up the computer tapes to deliver to Vietnam, which was not my favorite destination. I decided to spice up the trip by taking a vacation from my life in Hawaii afterwards (who would do that? But, they gave me a month every

year), by side-tripping to India, Pakistan, and Tibet, hoping to visit the mother of all mountain tops, the Himalayas.



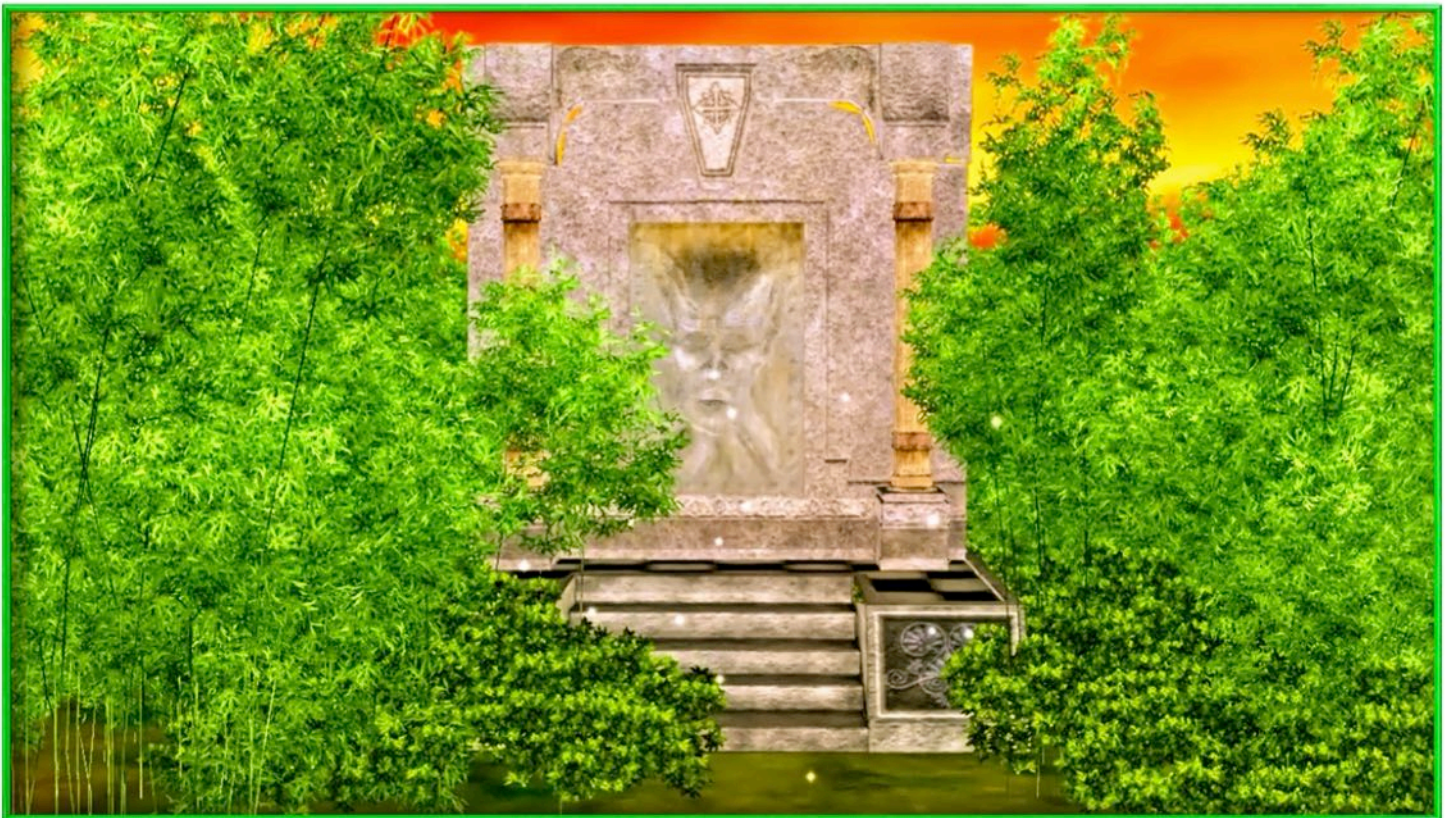
Around this time, Profpat actually began his 30-year experiments towards the theory that three interwoven superstrings were the quarks of the proton that give rise to all the sights and sounds of the Twilight Zone in which we live.

Meanwhile, Mkirpatrick was beginning his search for the One of Consciousness, having found that two is one too many and that three's a crowd. Michael is often born-again, although his mother(s) never really enjoyed going through this, and he did once find the secret of the One in a past life, but forgot it upon rebirth, for he was always very young when he was born. Currently his house in England is flooding and floating away (lucky that he mostly lives on a floatable lounge chair) and so he may have to flee to Turkey's hot climate to avoid these serious effects of global warming.

I bid adieu to the archipelago and friends, saying "I'll be back!" (long before Arnold made it popular), and then flew into the setting sun, but

knew I wouldn't get burned, since it would soon be night; however, the sun, which plummets like a stone in the tropics, was soon brought back up again, rising in the west, of all places, from the plane's progress. I should have gotten off while the world had stopped, but I did throw my bottle of whisky out the window.

It turns out that, in the future, Nobody had just finished his investigation of the 'Guardian of Forever', a megalithic monument found in the Star Trek episode, 'City on the Edge of Forever'. It was a device placed by who knows whom that revealed all of history at a glance of near universal speed. Luckily, Mr. Spock had recorded some of it on a tricorder that was built of subconscious neurons that could slow down time from its all-at-once superposition of all the possible pasts and futures. Dr. McCoy had stepped into the past and had changed the future by not letting a pacifist leader, Joan Collins, die, and so, Hitler had time to complete his heavy water experiments and to develop the atom bomb, and eventually rule the world. Such are the whims of fate that our world is subject to, kind of like the butterfly effect.



(The Guardian of Forever)

This encounter was to send Nobody on the most super TOE quest that any of us have ever attempted, going where no man has gone before (no, not to the ladies room), a quest, that to me and others, is really quite amazing to follow. While the 'Guardian' was the answer to our own ga-

lactic history, it was not the ultimate answer, but its workings were a good start.

I landed in Japan and took a commuter plane to Osaka, near an Air Force base. There was no first class seat from here on out, just a kind of 'chair' in a cargo jet, one that carried tanks in the rear. It was so noisy that I wouldn't have been able to hear my ipod, if it had been invented then.

Long Binh's air strip was crowded, and so I maneuvered between many whirling tail rotors to a helicopter leaving for the nearby base. That night, some rockets landed at the other end of the base, and so someone fearlessly nicknamed RascalPuff, an actual combat soldier, was sent out to quell the attack. He was rather impervious to injury, since he mostly resided in the 4th, 5th, and 6th dimensions, places that bullets usually missed by a mile or infinity. I remembered seeing posters back in New York saying that 'Gravity is the Fourth Dimension', and so now I know it had to be him.

Having made my first delivery of tapes that morning, a Warrant Officer then flew me a hundred miles or more over the jungle to a remote base, noting that a previous courier's helicopter had been shot down.

"I know," I replied, "that was one of my predecessors. I fly all the routes now. Even before that incident, the civil service workers hadn't really wanted this delivery job, for they had families or had gotten tired of it, and, of course, after the incident, didn't want any part of it whatsoever, but I saw it as adventure and I still do."

In Saigon's airport, I ran into who I now realize must have been Fredrick being whisked away to the Peace Conference in a limo. I booked a flight to India for the next day and watched the conference on TV at my hotel. Fredrick was showing a map of North and South Vietnam and was making great headway with the delegates, but he had to be honest and tell them that the north and south were forever oppositional and that the twain could meet only as east meets west, in transition. Hopes dimmed, but then Nobody appeared out of thin air, having ridden waves of time displacement from the 'Guardian' that were dilated by the delay of all the superpositions, and told the Vietnamese of both sides how they, as north and south, could get very close, infinitely close, (and that they were much alike, as well) by meeting at the equator, but, alas, their animosities were too deep and the peace table collapsed as all the mad dogs went off howling into the night.

Now in India, I came across Greg Isaac Newton, who I now see was really Graybeard, one who lived by his wits there. He was talking to the Monkey Man about anything and everything (the theory of). Lloyd was ever busy helping the Irish fight the British, while r.p.bibra, living back in his wild days, was shooting at Lloyd. I rode on the roof of a train to-

wards Pakistan and later observed Graybeard buying some liquids at the duty free shop while I waited to fly toward the mountains of Tibet.

I climbed the Himalayas and complained to the wise Lama up there that life could be hell. He said “Get lost! Go make a heaven of hell and then me tell. The door is never shut on the prison cell, so, why would you ever want to stay inside it when the door is always so wide open.”

He also gave me a piece of paper that had “All is THREE” written on it, which I couldn’t figure out; he wouldn’t tell me. I just came across the other day, realizing that it meant Matter in Motion through Space.

A week passed, then a month, all that you’ve read that I’ve written, and then 30 years, and I found myself at a Buddhist-run cafe and decided to sit there through most of the summer, having just retired from IBM and becoming as free as a neutrino in every way.

She is revived, I thought, and becoming well, healthy, alive and vibrant. An Easter miracle. However, it was not always so, actually, never ever so in her life, not even in childhood, not even on her wedding night. Now, after effort, research, studying, seeking and caring—Hail to the Enlightened—the pupil becomes the master and it is all that I can do to keep up with her. She is the straw that stirs the drink. I am swept up in her whirlpool. I bow to the her as the new Buddha, the new Zen master, the new “Dolly Lama”. Every day she teaches me more about how to live and love. I will return to the Himalayas, someday, some year, saying “Hello, Dali, I bring you some tales of heaven on earth, of mine of long ago, and of my friend, Passiona, in whose fragrance I am now drenched, My friend, who could even tell Life how to live, the one who lives in a cottage near a small pond with three beautiful children, where I go to visit, drawn there, now and then, to hear of the wonder of wonders. Someday I will live there.

The Cafe was run by the Buddha Girls from the monastery on Shafe Road, home to one of only two Lamas in the entire United States, and the only one on the east coast. The Cafe was called ‘Himalayas on the Hudson’, and the Lama often came to eat there, with his entourage of higher-ups and bodyguards. Because I was there often, I got to know the Lama, his bodyguards soon retreating, and so I taught him how to do high fives and low fives and such and we began to talk about the connectedness that underlies all things, the reaching of which state through the removal of all thoughts is the very heart of Buddhism.

In addition, I always gave him the weather for the rest of the day and for the next day, always saying that it would become sunny if it was raining, and that it would be still sunny if it was already sunny. And if it was really raining forever, we both knew that it was sunny on the inside. I remember, thinking upon first meeting him that “here he is”, the great

one, and so I have a chance to ask a deep question of him without having to go over to Tibet or India and climb up a mountain, so, I pointed to an article in the newspaper that said “We may never know who won the Presidential election, Bush or Gore” and I asked him for his wisdom on the matter. Well, he thought for only a second or two and said “Who cares!”, and such it sunk into me later that this was a great wisdom, indeed.

The Cafe workers didn’t wear the flowing gold and reddish robes that the visiting Buddhists wore, but wore regular clothes and had long hair, and so, many of the hectic type customers, unknowing of this, wondered at the peace and joy that the workers radiated, like some sort of serenity field, and I suppose the workers were chosen for their outgoingness as well. I talked with them about string theory, the new theory that the differing vibrations of really small ‘strings’ gives rise to all of the elementary particles and forces, and, so, we related this to all that is absolute and fundamental beneath this projection of reality in which we live out our life-dream.

Buddhism is not a religion, but a way of life, and they can still have friends, outside jobs, fun, and whatnot, although some of them spend a lot of time on the inner world which, like meditation, can only be known as ‘not what you think’.

Summer soon died in his sleep one night, and so Time hurled its waves ever onward until even Old Autumn had passed on. The cafe was sold and had become an American-Korean restaurant run by Sin-Ha and Su-Nee, although still owned by the Buddhists. Winter snowed us in.

In the spring, the Cafe, my ‘office’, announced that it was closing right away, for it could talk, although its Garden of Peace and Serenity, surrounded on three sides by 30-foot rocks, the “Himalayas”, was still open, and so I figured that it was time to move my ‘office’ outdoors, not that I would ever do any W-O-R-K there, for that is a four-letter word to a retired person.

Then, miracles of miracles, one day, after saying good-bye to the Koreans at the Cafe and taking home 50 eggs and many bags of chocolate chip cookies, I went back to the Cafe garden to sit under an umbrella table in the rain, and there was the old Lama himself, just sitting there alone, having just shown the building to someone who might lease it. I hadn’t seen him in six months, for he had been off to other continents. He gave me a medium high five and I told him that the sun would be out tomorrow, and that it was always sunny on the inside.

Then I told the Lama about the one who had recently sprung into another level of being, literally by ‘dying into life’ and saying to him:

*She blossoms, so colorfully, like a spring flower,
Because the energy was in the bulb all along, deep within her,
Life's music wanting to sing through her, and, so, now it has begun.*

*There, on some remoter shore of human soul
To which I helped restore life and spirit,
I learned that love was the only flame that lit
This life, for she had taught me how to give it.*

*What once I was has dimmed, physically,
But, I am a star, still bright in the night,
Though, when the sun rises, I disappear into her.
For, no one looks for the stars when the sun is out.*

*No, I did not just disappear;
I am just completely soaked in her qualities.*

*The drop has become the ocean;
Now I drink from her spring of eternal youth.
And to think that she once hid inside her coat.*

*Do I feel some memory of elsewhere?
Do I dare to look into the setting sun?
No, I'll pretend that it's coming up.
It shines through me, illuminating me.*

*I am re-energized.
I am glowing bright.
I am becoming a supernova.*

*There is a longing,
Between Body and Soul,
That reassures us
When we go with the flow
And tugs at us when we don't. . .
That is the mind within the mind.*

*I drink the very wine that moves me.
I freely let life's spirit play through me.
I live its rhythm and music.*

*Life, though anguishing sometimes,
Must be lived fully, for that is all we have.*

*The world crashes, out there,
But the flowers grow, in here.
For, I am the garden.*

And the Lama said to me “You’ve been rumi-nating; Rumi lives.”

“Yes,” I answered, “Rumi lives again in the heart of his friend. I just read a book on him.”

“He never left; it is him, and you, too.”

“His spirit wanders ‘long the Milky Way, with an houri, life’s moments drunk away, in some sweet wood far from the noise of day, where with her he yet lives, sings, laughs, and plays.”

“Ah, yes. What do we seek?”

“We long for the source, the human soul turns inward to find its way home.”

“Why do we wander around in the middle of the night?”

“Well, if I knew the answer to that, I would have been home hours ago.”

“Where would that be?”

“I don’t know. Whoever brought me here will have to take me home.”

“How do we see this ‘home’?”

“Close both eyes, to see with the other eye.”

“How do we hear of it?”

“Listen; the blossoms drop their blessings all around.”

“What quenches our thirst?”

“Break the wineglass, and fall toward the glassblower’s breath.”

“Why?”

“We are the sweet cold water and the jar that pours it. Plus more; we are even that which makes the drink taste so refreshing.”

“Where is the Light?”

“There is a light seed grain inside you. You fill it with yourself, or it dies.”

“Where do we go, do we climb mountains, the Himalayas?”

“A mountain is but a tiny piece of a piece of straw blown off into emptiness.”

“And what of her, your beloved, Passiona?”

“There is a window open between us, mixing the night airs of our beings.”

“How’s that?”

“Out beyond the ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I meet her there.”

“And then do we see the light of day?”

“This day that I seek is outside of living and dying.”

“Do we not tire, always walking and looking?”

“At first, I did, yes, but then came a moment of feeling the wings I’d grown, lifting.

“We fly?”

“The rhythm lifts me; the living music plays through me.”

“From. . .?”

“It was fully fashioned even before it came into being, like an idea.”

“What do we feast on?”

“I am tasting the taste of eternity this minute.”

“Are we not afraid.”

“I have long since wet my robe in the shallow water. Now, I dive deeper, under, and naked under, and deeper under the surf. The drop becomes the Ocean, as the Ocean, too, becomes the drop.”

Some months passed, and, later, upon return, after a long time, I see the Lama once again.

“Where have you been?” asked the Lama of me.

“Well, everywhere, and nowhere. I did not cease from exploration, and after all my exploring I have returned to the place that I started from, but now I know the place for the first time.”

He gave me a medium high five. Then a pouring rain began, but we were already at a table that had an umbrella.

I told him, “The sun would be out tomorrow, and that it was always sunny on the inside.

He said, “Thanks, old friend.”

“Re-leasing the building?”

“Yes, probably, but we’d like sell it.

Perhaps Buddhists shouldn’t be in business.”

“Well, it worked as a kind of outreach, when you ran it, and the Koreans liked it for a while.”

“True.”

“How’s the new golden temple going?”

“It’s about half completed. We need another few million dollars.”

“Hmmm.”

“Yes, I know. Perhaps Buddhists shouldn’t be looking for money, nor building a golden temple that’s not really real.”

“Yes, I’ve heard that this world isn’t really real, that we shouldn’t worry about the rain or about life’s tribulations.”

“That’s what some believe. Tell me, does that work?”

“Well, um, does not life’s existence. Look, seem, and act just the way it would, in every detail, as if it were really real?”

“Yes, indeed. Exactly. That’s what they say makes for the great illusion.”

“The illusion might just be the implementation—the messenger.”

“Which could be bringing us a message, unless all is pointless.”

“I have to say this, though: that a ‘difference’ that makes no difference is no difference.”

“I think you’re onto something.”

“The world is, as always, looking like one great wish. Farewell”

“Farewell, my friend.”

Time After Time

Lovely moment, come hither unto me:
Embrace me, then, expiring, give birth to
Another just as sweet—you’re mine, all mine,
For you’re giving me the time of my life!



Experience



We may learn something new and make choices tomorrow that we wouldn't make today.

Free.

Being Observes Doing

What is Life?

One must live it fully to find the answer.

No strings.

Lucky.

Free Won't

The Only Purpose is to

Be i

Make Your Own Meaning in Life.

Oppositional

Transformational

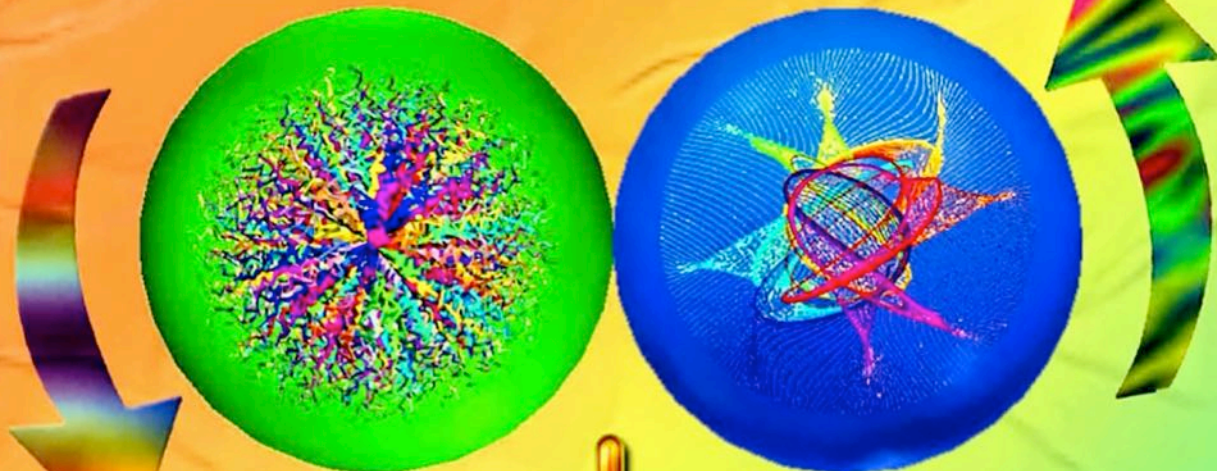
Exploring is to know the place for the first time.

The End of all our

'Tis to Create and Live a Being more Intense.

The Creation of Our Universe

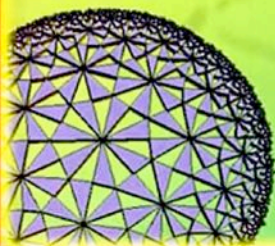
(Yin/Yang Gears)



Anti
Matter



Uncle
Matter



You Are Here

AUSTIN'S OTHER THEORY OF EVERYTHING

In the beginning; no, wait, for there could be no real beginning, for then the All would not be Totality. There must exist an eternal yet fundamental substance that is the Ground of All Reality. Call it the quantum foam, or strings if you like, even possibility, but I'll call it Energy, It may very well be energy. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed, and is, thus, without beginning or end. Sound familiar? Elementary particles and forces are made from it. So-called Energy had to have been here "forever", since it cannot be made from nothing, or, even if it can be, it is and was always being made as such, and so that is the same as saying it was ever there.

Energy, being only of itself, is, therefore, the only non-composite thing that is possible. Energy is the ultimate source of everything, with all higher, composite complexities that we know of, including all mind and matter, built upon its flexible base. Stronger than the legendary Atlas, who stood on the back of a turtle, with turtles all the way down beneath him, presumably, Energy is, indeed, where the buck must stop, for there is nothing lower left to make it out of. Energy holds up not just the world, but EVERYTHING that there is, mind and matter, too. Energy is omnipresent. It is everywhere, and contained even in the so-called vacuum. This Energy IS the Absolute Reality, the Ultimate Ground of All Existence, the Mother of All Reality, the Eternal.

This Energy is all that there is at the fundamental, bottommost level; there can be nothing lower, for it is of itself. It is what it is, as in "I am what I am". Those who rightly refer to it as the Ground of (all) Determination (G.O.D., not GOD) are right, but they err if they take it any further by thinking of it as a person, being, alien, or superbeing, and, by doing so, ascribe personality, temperament, and such to it, for that would require even more composite and complex qualities than we have as people, aye, far from fundamental and absolute, as far as one could get. Yes, of course, there may be higher beings, such as aliens, but they would not be fundamental and absolute at all, but composite, like us, and, as such, would not be the Ultimate, the Absolute, or the Energy, and they would certainly not be their own cause, being fully dependent on, and existing *after* the Ground of Ultimate Reality, or Energy.

Anyway, this Energy is a simple thing, being such a fundamentally low building block, but this does not preclude the possibility of it being very close at hand in its basic and fundamental non-composite form. We learn from physics that everything in the universe seems to be connected, entangled, with everything else, especially at this basic level of energy. For example, in photon pairs that are created and become separated by distances far larger than the speed of light could traverse, either photon

'snaps to', in an instant, when the other photon is randomly polarized, and changes its own polarization to match it precisely. It is as if the two distant photons are still the same particle in some other dimension or that they remain connected in some way forever. Well, it has been said that when an electron vibrates, the universe rumbles!

This connection of everything to everything may provide some rudimentary perception in and of itself that is tapped into by the brain. We might even define Energy as having some awareness itself. This is made ever more plausible by the fact that Energy does indeed give rise to all that we know, to all mind and consciousness as well as to all 'matter', quotes used because matter may turn out just to be some swirling energy that gives the appearance of solidity. At any rate, the capability for conscious awareness does seem to be a natural, like mass or energy, but it definitely requires a brain process, and it surely comes last, not first, after the brain takes its requisite time to perform an analysis.

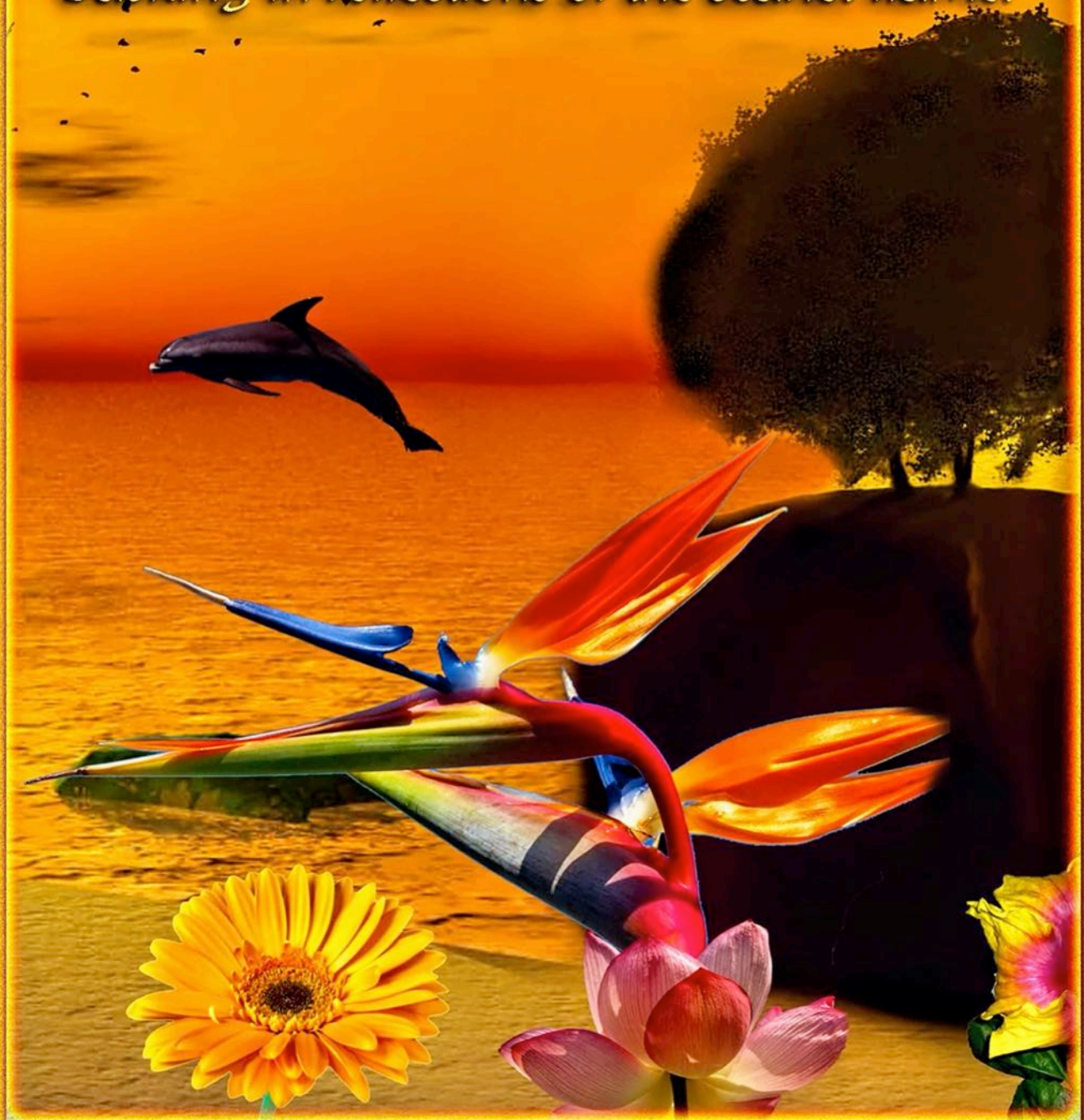
Could it be that everything is really globally connected in some other dimension, although still as real as could be, but projected in our 3 dimensions, the extra dimension being something like all possibilities existing at once, in superposition, just as in the quantum world?

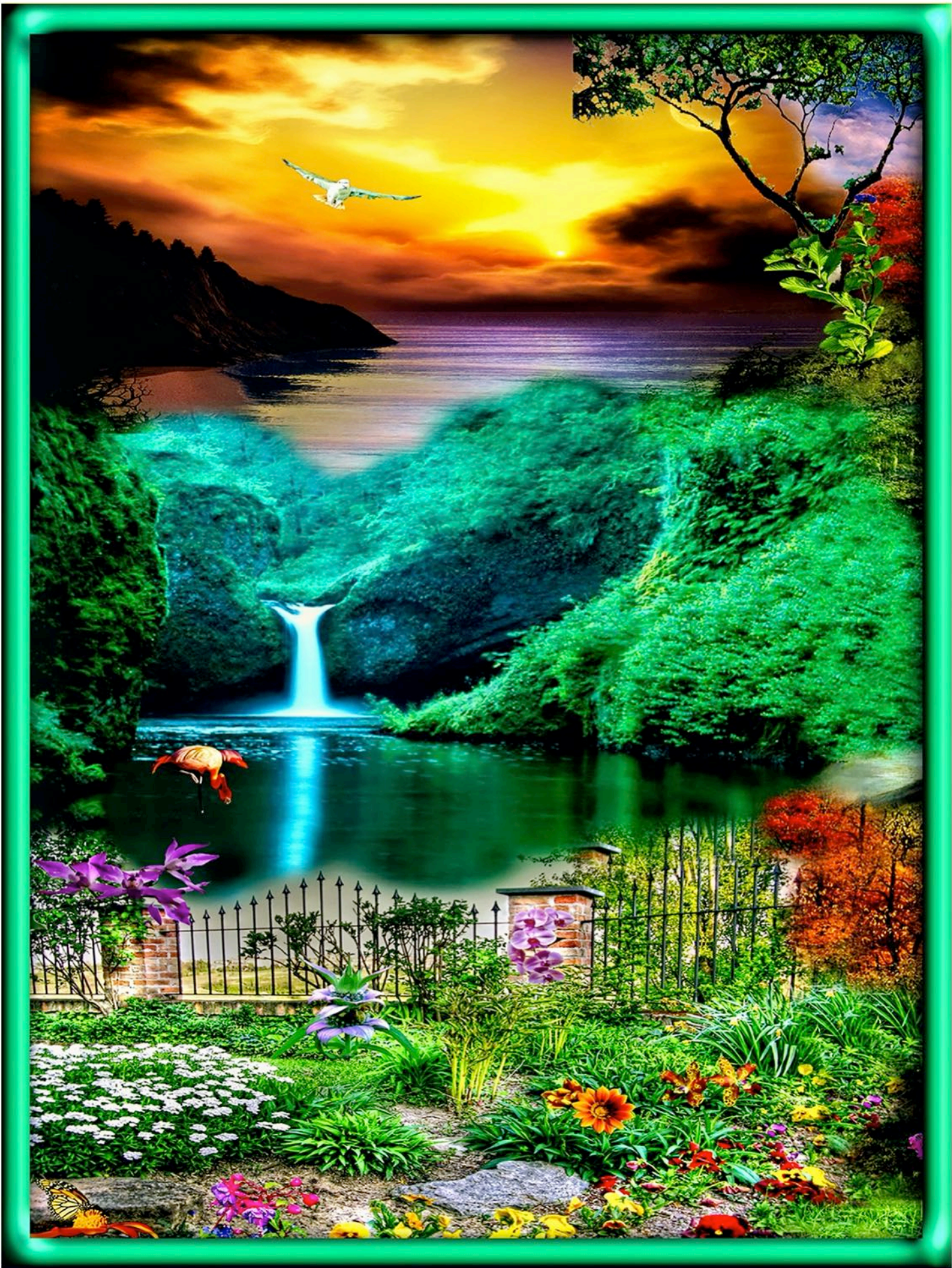
Anyway, these were my early thoughts.



— Joy beyond Sense —

Awash on a love-made shore, we overcame
Our senses, leaving them behind, unclaimed,
As we floated free, quenched in sunset sea,
Basking in reflections of the scarlet flame.





NOTHING'S HAPPENING HERE, SO SOMETHING MUST APPEAR

After leaving Tibet, I rented a motorcycle and headed for Calcutta, carrying some liquid refreshments on the back to resell, via Graybeard's method of wholesale and retail.

I heard that Nobody had stepped into "The Guardian of Forever" again, and had gone into the past, back toward the beginning, being careful not to touch or do anything that would change history or the future, but, he sneezed, and so now our alphabet has only 26 letters, some having to do double duty, this causing many TOE forum posts not to be understood. Furthermore, it greatly delayed the discovery of the digit '0'.

Back in Hawaii, I attended a lecture given by Professor Pat at the University, on his loss of energy of something like a billion universes, during which he wondered where all the energy had gone. Meanwhile, he had been taking pep pills to make up for it. Pat's 30-years theory of 000-111 was moving right along along, he having had just taken a month or so to choose a hi-tech method of presenting his theory, finally settling on a #2 pencil. Currently he is solving the big bang via two oppositely rotating Yin/Yangs of matter and antimatter, not a bad theory actually!

I had to attend a barracks inspection, in which our short 5 ft tall Captain stood on a chair and checked for dust on a high cabinet, but it was clean, for I'd wiped it while not having much to do beforehand, since my bunk was always perfect since I'd never slept in it. In fact, I'd never even registered into the barracks, having found a bed frame and having gotten fresh linens from the quartermaster, and so I even had to add my name to the latrine detail so no one would wonder why it was never there. How come someone's measurement of height is always 'tall' and never 'short', and why is a doorway's size always so many inches 'wide', even when it's narrow? Nobody, did you hiccup in the Time Machine?

Lately, like now in 2012, I have discovered that depth is the 3rd dimension, and have also cured myself of the fear of heights, but now I'm afraid of widths, since my stomach is growing. I have also discovered that the base of reality is only 2-dimensional, but upon shining a spiritual laser-type light through it, the 3rd dimension is projected as in a hologram. I am now rearranging the waves of my interference pattern to make it look like I am much thinner.

Back in the past, the white gloved hand of the MP waved us into the fort, and we rode up to the mountain top, stopping along the way to look behind a bush, and see a sheer drop down to the Likelike (licky-licky) highway, where a bunch of toy cars were rolling along. Darkness fell like an anvil, and we could see the lights of Pearl City off to the west beyond the Punchbowl, the beautiful and green National Cemetery of the Pacific.

The Hawaiian alphabet has only 12 letters, 6 vowels and 6 consonants. Nobody, did anything else happen?

We cooked some chicken fingers and buffalo wings (this doesn't make sense, Nobody) on the hibachi and then settled down for dessert. I caressed Passion's tresses in romantic rhythm to the contented sighs she sent toward Heaven. She slumbered where the grass fledged the cliff, half-awake or asleep in love's peaceful dream. As I loved and was loved in completeness, the earthly world, with all of its foolishness, work, hurry and scurry, pain and worry, did fast fade away into nothingness.

But, it wasn't the Theory of Nothing that we were working on, but the toe up to the thigh bone. So we assessed ourselves floating around in a far arm of the galaxy on a spinning globe in the middle of nowhere, and said "What the Hell!", and stared up into the night sky, begging it to reveal its secrets. The evening caressed us in its gentle way of softness and warmth, but there is no sex allowed in TOE forums, so we implored the night, in this gentle darkness and quiet stillness, to yield her dearest secrets, to unveil before us the full truth of what she was. Much we already knew from twilight dreams that bordered on insight, and from Keats' poems unveiling truth and beauty, but, we asked, with our most inquiring looks and yearning hearts, to gain more knowledge of the deep mysteries of all that was.

Above us, fires burned the stars away; below us, the Earth turned under our feet; within us, unworded dreams haunted our souls; around us, the night poured blackness on the ground. So, we asked of the powers of the night, not immortality, for that would have been too much, nor youth, for we already had it, but for the insight to see through the dark and on into the life of things, of what all things were made. I couldn't have ended with a preposition, an error, saying 'what all things are made of'; however, if some know-it-all ever calls you on it, just add " , you dumb shit", after the preposition upon pretending to correct it (and to explain Nobody's wanderings), as the poor lady had to say to the upper crust, after "where ya From?", "Where ya from, bitches?"

The night answered that "all was as it was because it had to be."

Well, that was difficult to understand, but we did retain a presence of the night within us, vibrating with its rhythm and resonance. We sensed a soft sweep across our heartstrings, for we were willing spirits, and were totally undistracted by the day's bright noise.

In harmony, we realized that we each held within ourselves the seed of the other, that Yin reaches climax, then retreats in Yang's favor, in a cyclic movement of rotational symmetry, for a rounded life is the blend of Yin and Yang.



Still atop the mountain, we took one last look at the lights twinkling in the night sky before retiring to the tent.

I asked Passiona, “Do you think there are any people living around those lights?”

She replied, “Yes, right there,” pointing to a reddish one.

“I bet there aren’t,” I answered, figuring it to be a red giant star that had already expanded into the orbits of its planets.

“You lose,” she said, happily, “for that is an airplane full of people!”

We laid on the grass, pretending that up was down and that down was up, seeming to be glued onto the Earth, and about to fall into the bot-

tomless deep of the night. It was a scary feeling, but, we knew from a poster in the Whole Earth Catalog that space was expanding, and that the Earth's inertia was slowing down the expansion of local space, a drag causing gravity to hold us down, as like a small piece of flotsam is attracted to a log and its less moving wake in a flowing stream.

The night sky glittered with blue sapphires, emeralds, diamonds and many other jewels of stars. Photons that had traveled millions of light years reached our eyes from stars that may have been long gone, and caused electrons to be released from the rods and cones of our eyes, our three different types of cone proteins rotating according to the amount of primary color wavelengths received.

We went back into superposition, as sleep's circle soon arrived and drew us in...

False dawn came and went, and... in other words, it dawned on us that morning had arrived. A nuclear furnace appeared in the sky, namely, the sun, and we lounged around until duty called. We did our duty and then went to work.

Afterwards, we rode the tubes of blue and snorkeled over to Molokai, a distance of 25 miles or so, but our fins made it effortless. The spawning whales, our mammalian cousins, cheered us on. We scaled the high cliffs. But really, we had taken a boat most of the way and had only snorkeled the last mile or so, and the high cliffs had a ladder, but it sounded true, didn't it?

The former leper colony made us welcome with Singapore Slings and a roast pig. These islands formed from volcanoes that rose from the ocean floor, and we could feel ourselves getting higher also. We bought some clothes and lived in a hut. The vacation lasted until we had consumed too much, as well as all of our money.

The Army soon offered a religious retreat to the 'Big Island' of Hawaii, and so we went there for a week. It wasn't too bad, for a lot of it was free time for meditation. We meditated on going places, and we were hitching a ride somewhere one day when a scientist picked us up and let us go up to the Mauna Kea astronomical observatory with him, another stroke of luck for my continuing Toe Quest.

Snow was on the mountain top, and from there we could see almost forever. As twilight began its end, the scientist let us look through the telescope just before darkness arrived, along with all the more serious astronomers who had time reserved on it. I saw the wonder of wonders of a million galaxies and nebulae whirling away, and knew that no one would have created all of this just for us mere "special" specks residing on the pale blue dot of Earth.

I used the coordinates that Nobody had provided me with, and spotted the 'Guardian of Forever' on a planet of the nearest star. While Nobody

had returned from his step within it, there was an additional alteration of our past, namely that we now have 10 fingers instead of 12, but for some reason, we still measure by the dozen, along with a few minor others that I will list further on. A butterfly had entered the Time Machine before it turned off, and this caused our bodies to be even more unintelligently designed, there now being a toxic waste pipe coming out near a recreation area.

Well, Nobody's trip was still well worth it, for he had glimpsed the workings of reality and he is now formulating the rest and posting it for us. He once wondered if Mother Hubbard and Father Christmas had produced the cosmic egg, but has now altered his thinking towards Mr. Couch Potato and Mrs. Potato Head having had Tator-Tots. Or, it's like the invisible fence that I put up for my dogs. Too bad I didn't put up an invisible deck and avoid the building permit fee. I told them that it relative to nothing.

The Philippine's US Army base needed a supply system update and so we pointed the telescope there, bouncing it off of a space mirror, and picked a nice hotel. This was one of the more straightforward trips, so we went together, carrying the tapes in a Manila envelope. The drivers there, as in all 3rd world countries, went through red lights, not caring for them except maybe to slow down to about 40 miles an hour and honk a lot.

I asked the driver what a yellow light meant and he said, "slow down".

So, I said more slowly, "W-h-a-t d-o-e-s a y-e-l-l-o-w l-i-g-h-t m-e-a-n ?

He said that here it meant nothing; that a red light meant to slow down slightly. Remarkably, there were very few accidents, since the drivers were always on alert.

We passed Clark Air Force Base, Pabic Bay, Mt. Pinatubo, and Olongapo. Years later, the wrath of the gods poured lava out of the volcano:

*Oh Olongapo, fleshpot of fertile flora,
Pinatubo has resealed your box pandora.
Fiery ash has frozen your beauty in time,
A poem in stone, like Sodom and Gomorrah.*

We saw Graybeard returning home to Australia, which is not the world's largest island, for it is a continental land mass. Greenland is the largest island and will actually become green soon when global warming transforms it. As for the longest island, that would be Long Island. Other names of places that took 0 seconds to think of are Iceland and Newfoundland.

Graybeard told us that he would have to turn upside down after he'd passed the equator, so as to become right side up in the land down under. What a joker (or is it true?).

The Philippines was hot and humid, even in December, and so one had to make friends with the blood, sweat, and tears, for only a trickle of water came from the faucets and showers. At night I noticed that Orion had three hunting dogs, not two, and there were probably even more dogs south of the moon where Graybeard lives on Google Earth (at S27 28.775 E153 02.545).

Furthermore, I saw the North Star and the southern cross in the same sky, but the looking up at this great conjunction caused me to trip hard over a small long bump in the dirt labeled "The Equator", and I did indeed turn upside down. Getting up, I stood astride the equator, one of my brain hemispheres in the northern hemisphere and the other in the southern. (I'm not sure how to tell Fredrick about this.)

On our free time, we traveled deep into the jungle and met a tribe who had no previous human contact, although they had heard that there was no point to the first dimension. They kept busy hunting and food gathering, living a 168-hour work week. I gave them the gift of the digit '0' so they could learn to relax and do nothing sometimes. So far they only had the digits one, two, few, several and many. Their only real question was about Paris Hilton.

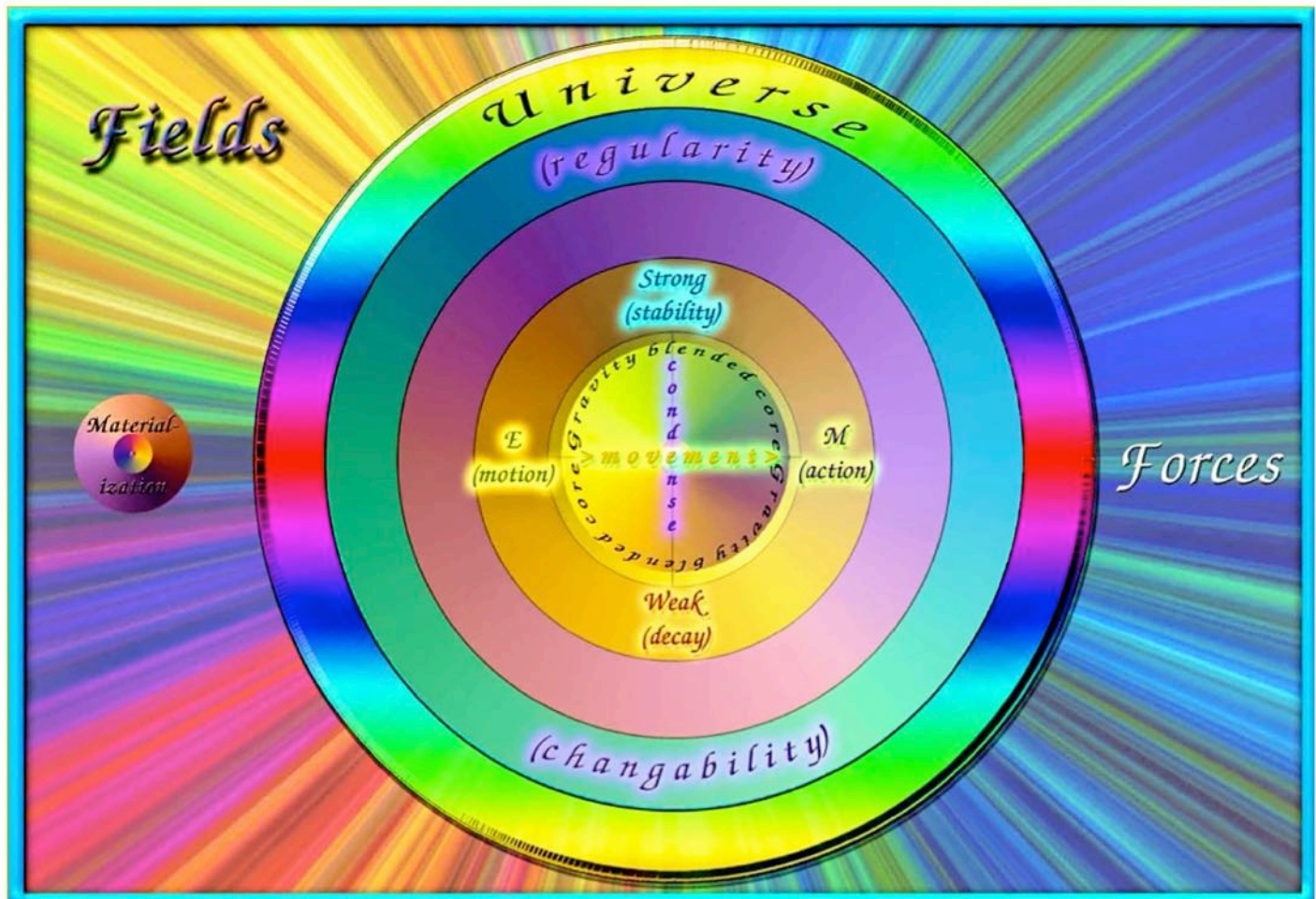
More seriously, I was stunned when they unveiled some ancient words carved into rock:

THE ONLY PURPOSE OF LIFE IS TO BE—
FINDING YOUR OWN MEANING THEREIN;
BUT, SOME QUESTIONS STILL REMAIN, SUCH AS

"WHAT IS LIFE?"
(AND IT'S POINT).

TO FIND THE ANSWER,
ONE MUST LIVE IT FULLY!
(WITH GOODNESS)

— FINIS —

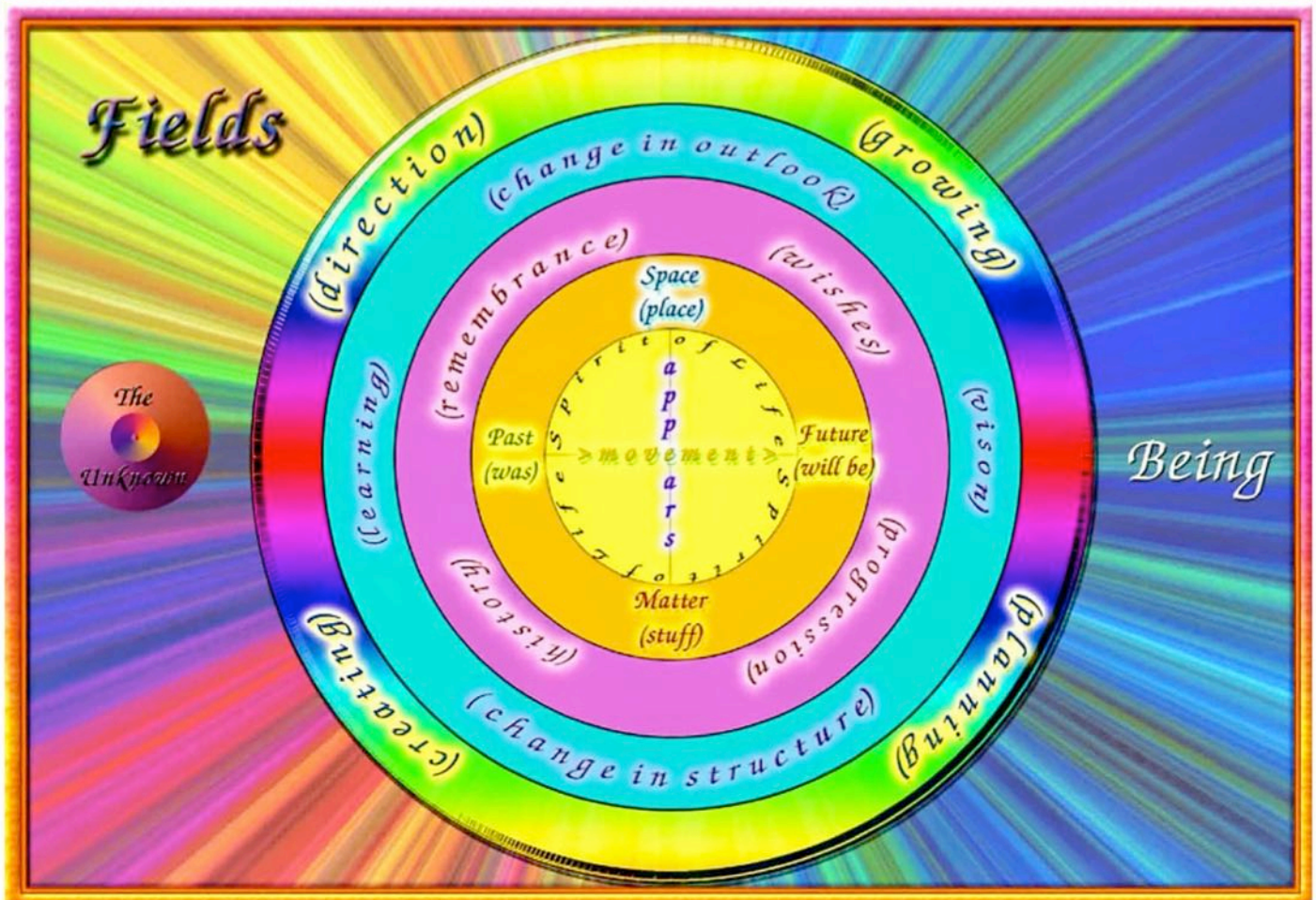
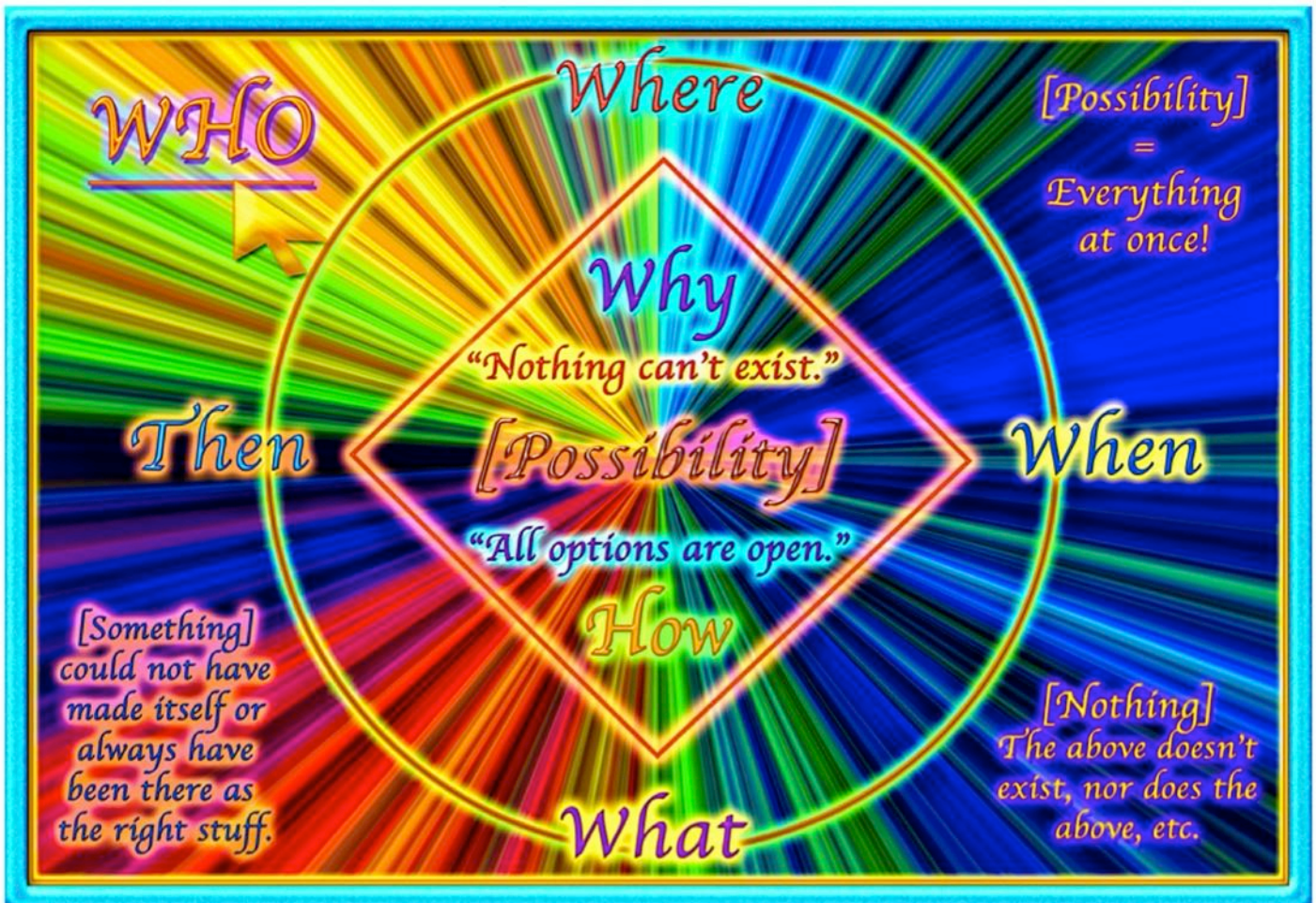


Two chromosomes fused, leaving chimps behind;
Asteroids swept away many species;

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N
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RNA remembers the survivors;
Good fortune smiled on Homo Sapiens.



The Starr Report

*There was a standing ovulation
in the oval orifice.*



"Up, boy."

"Down, girl."

ap.t.

The Clinton Response:

*The Buck stopped - "wouldn't
touch that woman with
an eight-inch pole."*



*Smokes pot but doesn't inhale.
Has oral sex but doesn't come.
Drinks whiskey but doesn't swallow.
Eats hamburgers but... well, inhales them.*

ap.t.

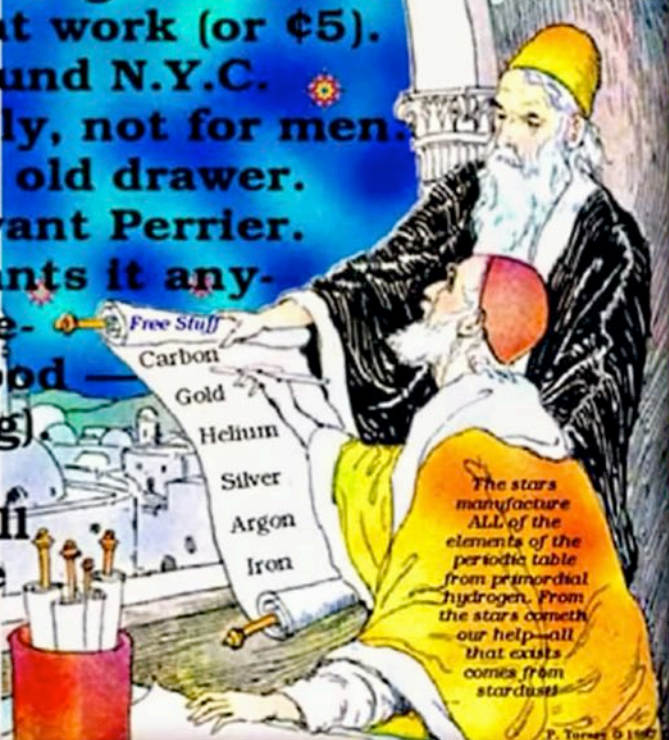


FREE STUFF



- 1) Air — but costs \$50 at a gas station.
- 2) Xeroxing — still free at work (or \$5).
- 3) Parking — except around N.Y.C.
- 4) Love — for women only, not for men.
- 5) Pencils — look in any old drawer.
- 6) Water — unless you want Perrier.
- 7) Advice — but, who wants it anyway!
- 8) Free Offers — beware of the catch.
- 9) Food — Happy Hour (no drinking).
- 11) Universe — the ultimate free lunch, and still free, and even profitable since we can get gold and silver out of it.

*The universe
is the
ultimate
free lunch!*



*The stars
manufacture
ALL of the
elements of the
periodic table
from primordial
hydrogen. From
the stars cometh
our help—all
that exists
comes from
stardust!*

P. Torsney © 1997

**... TO ACCEPT WHAT I CANNOT
CHANGE, THE COURAGE TO KNOW
THE DIFFERENCE AND ...**



A. Torney © 2001

... AND A BIG BAG OF MOMEY

Encore of Humor
THE ON-LINERS AND THEIR NATIVE LANDS

Melanie and Jacy live in a U.S. satellite,
A land of mist and not driving right,
Called England, Mel having been born there
As the Loving Goddess somewhere
On the sacred Isle of Women—
Then taking off with Antonia swimmin’,

And Jacy, a woodcutter’s fine daughter,
Guards the border with her wonderful laughter,
Her thoughts on the loose, gone through the rafters.

In that country, ‘left’ is whatever is right,
Leaving ‘right’ to be whatever is left. Right?
When I went over there to see her,
I always had to look in a mirror.

Melanie uses both brain hemispheres,
Mostly in the pursuit of achieving there
The brainless bliss of nothingness,
As of the Bra-Man’s dreaminess.

England’s not as bad as Rav’s, Jamtimes’s, Leo’s,
Lomax’s, Pytor’s, Graybeard’s, and Tina’s
Upside-down provincial dominion extrema
Of the Mars-like planet of Australia,

Which has a bunch of dry dusty towns
Where they say “What’s going down?” each day,
Instead of “What’s up?”, but, either way,
The answer is always an elevator or a lift.

A foreign lady at a hotel once asked me for a lift,
So I picked her up and carried her—quite miffed,
All the way to her room, as a welcoming gift.

I flew down under to Australia only once,
On assignment with Bill Bryson’s penal sentence.

Australia is a mostly an empty thralldom,
Much more vacant than even an atom,

And is extremely far away from anywhere else.

It has less people than Tokyo,
But is a zillion times more extremo.
The constellations are the inverse
And the seasons run in reverse.
It has nothing of any interest
And the climate is the cruelest.

It is the only country that is also a continent
That is also the world's largest island extent
And the only one begun as a prison meant;
Graybeard must have a lot of original sin
Because all of his ancestors were his criminal kin.

The cities are all on the coast since the interior place
Is an endless desert about half the size of outer space.

Somebody once set off an atomic bomb
In the Great Victoria Desert's silent calm,
In Western Australia, a land much embalmed,
But no one noticed it for years—that maelstrom,
But for creatures jumping right out of the genome.

Of the world's ten most poisonous snakes,
Most are Australian, for Christ's and God sakes!

Even a fluffy caterpillar can kill you;
Seashells are venomous too;
Adieu and skidoo to you!

Every ocean current carries you far out to sea.
They even lost a prime minister, Harold Holt, see,
Who was merely strolling along the beach.
He stepped into the surf, going swiftly out of reach,
And was never seen or heard from again, 'imbeached'.

Australia is very old and nothing has changed
There for 60 million years, nor anything rearranged;
Thus one may find there the oldest fossils on Earth.
Even the first faint signs of life can be seen: its birth,
And the earliest animal tracks ever made; no dearth.

It seems, though, that its creatures evolved
Outside of Darwin's book, being quite convolved;
They don't run at all, but just bounce
Across the landscape, like a ball, or they jounce.
Australia is the driest, hottest,
Most useless, infertile, flattest,
And climatically unbalanced
Of all the continents instanced.

It is so hot there that recently, amen,
The air caught on fire once again.
The place is so inert that even the soil is a fossil;
Even the worms and bacteria are quite docile.

On the up side, they have 20%
Of the world's slot machines present
To serve less than 1%
Of the world's population extent.

As about equal to finding a live T-Rex,
Proto ants were found alive there, having sex,
Although nothing like them had existed on Earth
For over a hundred million year's worth.

So does Graybeard know his evolutionary stuff
Or what? Yes, indeed, plus all of those ants so tough
Were found on his back porch, hellbent with intent.
They've now become extinct due to his experiments.

I flew to Los Angeles from Australia, getting there,
In time and date, even before I left the shore,
Which was hardly long enough for me;
Let us all say a prayer for poor Graybeard to be.

The Science News is that NASA is feverishly pursuing
The manned Mars Landing plan, fliers ever wooing,
But still needs some suitable astronauts,
So it's off to White Cliffs Australia for some kumquats.

Here they found a population of about 80,
In a wilted world of heat, rocks, and dust, matey.
Due to the horrible heat, their cave-houses
Are burrowed into the hills—for souses and mouses.

When a vehicle goes by, it raises a big cloud
Of red dust that eventually settles, enshrouds,
And covers everything in sight, leaving nothing to see.

They've had electricity only since 1993,
TV since 1998, but no channels yet to espy.
Taipan snakes slither by, on the sly,
Their venom 50 times more poisonous
Than a cobra's—to leave you breathless.

Australia began as a nation that was thrust
When convicts actually began wanting so much
To go there for the crazy gold rush.

So anyway, NASA enlisted them all
In the Mars Landing Program's shortfall,
Figuring that they wouldn't really know the diff
Between the planet Mars and White Cliffs,
Or that if they ever did they'd be so spaced—
Happy to reside in a more hospitable place.

The White Cliffs Underground Motel moochers
And those of the various home residences picked
Have the right idea to avoid the warming conflict:
Free cooling to 67 degrees F: perfect!

This may be a good plan for all of the future deal
If global warming really happens to happen for real.

I can imagine a stay in the Dug-Out Motel, unraveling,
It being quite a heavenly destination after traveling
Forever, going over bumpy roads and then getting
Out of the 'blender' mode and into the pool, wetting,
As all this traveling would grant more appreciation
Of the three star AAA motel's accommodations.

Coming, sweetie?
(Just you and me.)

Our room would have natural light from a shaft,
Which saves on electricity, oil, and gas.
There are no windows, but that only saves us
From having to view the non-scenery—a plus.

Cell phones wouldn't work, but hey, happy endings
Then for those blendings never tending;
There would be no interruptions
Of any pending eruptions.

Hey, how come people in soap operas
Always answer their darn phone sagas?
It always ruins the moments erotica.

Plus we could always dine in the restaurant,
Since the nearest supermarket is a scant
And rough six-mile drive away, askant.

And those dust-assisted sunsets
Are of truly unbeatable descents,
They having ten times as more
Colors than the rainbow: fourscore.

Plus, with White Cliffs having electricity now,
The beer tastes no longer like a steamy hot cow,
At 110 degrees F, but ice-cold, for highbrows.

There was a bad drought in the 1890's here
And the land has not recovered, oh dear,
But who needs that when one has love and cold beer.

And now of others whom I met online,
Gently roasted here with rhythm and rhyme.

In Fred's pyramidal world, it is that the origin
Of the belly button of the universe was an 'inner' begin
That reached the limit of being really small,
And so it popped back out to become the 'outer' all,
As in the outer space of the entire universe around
That formed from the unlimited merry-go-round.

Mohan wrote many multi-verses of poems
On the steamy planet of India, per diem,
Where they have three million Gods become.

They will eventually be getting more,
So that each person can have one to adore.

One day the temperature there went down
To 75 degrees F, which would be a perfect markdown
Anywhere else, but here they all tried
To look for sweaters to put on outside,
But they didn't own any,
At least not very many.

In the summer, on and in the icy planetoid
Called the Yukon, a frozen place that's best to avoid,
LabelWench worked only at night,
But like the day it was just as bright.

The sun never rose, staying up all the more
For it had never set during the day before.

When a cloud came by in its starkness
They called it night or darkness
And had to use flashlights until it passed
So that they could all find their wine glasses.

They have only two days a year there,
Each six months long and longer,
Called white and black or bright and pitch black.

MJA lives in a land where there was no
Difference in anything, for all was equal.
Everyone was a clone, wearing the same clothes.
The sports results were always ties—so close.

Everyone got an 'A' in school,
For they couldn't measure the rule;
But they'd all progressed beyond this equality,
Thanks to Bottomlander, who lives in a valley.

Antonio lives in the celestial body of Mexico,
But for some reason they call it Texas, since long ago,
The U.S. stole it away. We would give it all back
But for the fact that they have already taken it, Jack.

I always try to say 'Remember the...', the start,
But I usually can't recall the 'Alamo' part.

One time I got a letter, for my laxes,
For Austin, on taxes, from Austin, Texas
And I didn't know what to do but axe it.

In Greenbug's asteroid of Greenland,
Every single thing was green, and,
So after a while this gave him the blues,
After which valley of depression's dew
He then felt very much in the pink,
And much on the uprise until all was a rosy think.
Then he discovered that he had been given
Green contact lenses at birth, these being riven;

His land was really all white,
The 'green' in the land name's write
Being only part of an advertising plan
To get people to settle the land
There, after not so many came to Iceland.

Bogie resides in the sunken land of Florida
Where the year-round heat is all too horriba,
Where old people walk really slow in front of you
Towards God's waiting room, to the very last pew.

Bogie cools his thoughts in the arena of Tampa Bay,
Pondering every idea that comes his way.

RascalPuff lives in Niihau, Hawaii,
A secret place; so that's all can say I.
Graham lives in the Canadian clouds
Where all is allowed,
In a levitated home,
Smoking pot homegrown.

Felix lives in Schrodinger's cat-house shed,
But only half the time, when he's not dead.

Lloyd lives in the real house of science,
So please let all posts there be in compliance.

Leskey's leaving the new land of Zeal,
Ever becoming more and more real.

Max lives in the U.S. in the state of Deep Thought,
With all his relatives, many of whom were fought—
Cousins twice removed, but they kept on coming back.

Melanie says that “Nothing is Real”
And this reminds me of guy whose spiel
Related that “Nothing is true”. For real!

Everyone believed him for 20 million years
But then they found out he was lying—oh, tears,
And so it was then so sure that they truly knew
That the case was really that nothing was true.

And so for 15 million more years of bluffing
They believed not anything and nothing.

So what was this guy’s name?
Well it was the man with no name,
Which was Nobody Nowhere
Who was now here but no where.
He lived in the Noplace
Of virtual space.

Then a large but tiny problem
Was found with nothing, ahem,
That there was a slight ado about it, surely,
This being the quantum uncertainty,
Not a very big deal, really,
Being the smallest thing of reality,
But enough to raise it to be a near nothing,
Just about as close to nothing
As one could ever get, without stuffings,
And so it hardly really counted for much,

But it made for a universe in which, as a crutch,
The gravitational energy was negative,
It canceling out the positive—
All the energy of stuff,
But for the unavoidable touch
Of the quantum uncertainty
Which we can almost certainly
Avoid for all practices, purposely.

So, "Nothing is true" and "Nothing is real"
Turned out to be pretty much right, a done deal,
Except in England, where it was all that was left:
Reality bereft, a cleft from the theft that was deft.

Meanwhile, Mel shivered with the quantum jitters,
Turning it into a jazz dance of some random twitters.

Now, what about "Nothing is real",
Employing it in the sense that the real
Doesn't even exist, although it has a feel.

Well something does exist,
So we might rather say that nothing persists
And so "Everything is temporary" but being,
Since our realism came from a near 'nothing'
And to such it must return, in great arrears,
Even if that takes about $10^{10^{10}}$ years.

ProfPat is expanding into the void, accounting for
The Catholic girls' heavenly student bodies more,
And lives in the naturally divided state
Of Michigan, that unmarried state
Which is separated by a long fat lake,

A further segregation being that the upper part
Of the state associates with Canada,
While the lower part is called 'Michiana'.

On the other side of the lake the state
Is more or less a part of Wisconsin's fate.

One time I drove from Chicago's exploit
To New York by entering Canada from Detroit
Into Windsor, near the Church of ProfPat; adroit,
By then getting out of Canada's shortfalls
As soon as I could, at Viagra Falls,
A fun place for vacationing foreigners
To leave lots of money for souvenirs.

When they say that the glaciers retreated,
They only mean that they repleted
And went back up into Canada, where they sit

Atop the forgotten land, in which mitt
Few are cold because so many are frozen stiff.

Since it is all ice everyone plays hockey all day,
At least when they can blowtorch the ice away
From their igloo'd-cars, if the flames will stay.

Canada has only one super highway:
It goes east and west all day
And as close to the U.S. as it possibly can.
It doesn't even have railings, man,
For there is nothing to run into
If you go off the road by some miscue.

So anyway, Canada is only really only about
A width of ten miles that is a barely habitable shout
Just above the U.S., a suburb really, for fallout.

They have only one baseball team
That is going nowhere, it would seem,
Since they are really all hockey players extreme.

The police still ride horses there, on the loose,
But this is actually a step up from a moose.

Sears is their biggest industry, barely afloat,
Mostly selling really heavy fur coats
Made from polar bear furs that were poached.

Mikal works in men's clothes there.
She drank Canada dry in her time that was spare,
But now drinks only ice water, right from her tap,
Being sober and serious and all that yap.

All their restaurants are called Tim's Donuts.
Canada is really even smaller than it looks, a rut,
For a part of France called Quebec is in it but
Is not really with it, they all being nuts.

Every U.S. map I've ever seen ends at Canada,
Just showing it as a bit of a blank gray area,
Which probably is really the right sceneria.

When Henry Hudson discovered the frigid Hudson Bay,
His men were so mad that they put him off one day.

Mikal lives at the end of long Lake Ontario,
A prime spot since it gets the extra lake effect snow
Of two feet more than the average of five feet or so.

June is still a winter month there in that fen
But one only needs two coats to wear then.

One time it got up to 80 degrees F there
On a mid-summer's day and everyone there
Became sweating and boiling and so there
They all ran around with naked eyes all bare.

The power goes off more than it's on.
The only place worse is Antarctica wan.
Even the Yukon, which is really a secret part
Of Alaska, has better weather than Ontario's heart.

So to help Mikal, let us apply some science
In the form of some secret zapping rays of potence
From the North pole's Harp Array that will melt all the ice
And then flood Canada ten feet under; very nice.

"What's the big news from Canada, Benny?
They don't have any, Penny."

As for those in the rest of the world orientated
It is that the Easterners are dis-oriented
By the Westerners who resist any other orientation.

...

Now for some outdoor non online fun,
With no one on the computer, but out on the run:
Everyone was out having a ball lately by hitting it
With a club, bat stick, or a racquet.

Graybeard shot an eagle and a birdie
And then cooked them for a dinner fry.
SB_UK scored a wicket, whatever that means.
Arthur argued the laws out in left field
With an umpire who was always right.

LabelWench jumped her horse over a giant snowball.
Max rolled a bowling ball down his road at ten trees.
Austin avoided the [tennis] net of evil
And tried to keep within the white lines of goodness.

Mikal thought that a sand trap
Near a water hazard was a beach.

MJA's equal game ended in a scoreless tie.
Melanie scored 18 holes in one because it
Was really the Perfect Awareness that was playing.
TimeParticle hit a golf ball with a baseball bat
And created a new orbiting moonlet.

I never played polo, but I played golf,
Which I learned from playing billiards,
At least the putting part,
And so I suppose polo is really golf
Combined with riding a horse.

TimeParticle is so strong
That he hit the ball out of sight.
Melanie said that there really is no horse and ball.

Graybeard reached for a branch
Whenever the horse's ears twitched.
Graham used a levitating magnetic horse
After the bull moose threw him off.

Austin went hoarse from too many posts.
Wick played from the 4th dimension with a hypersphere.

Everyone who was dying to find out
What happens after you die
Almost died laughing and nearly found out.

...

She, looking like Melanie of ToeQuest,
And still in her pajamas,
Grabbed her purified water bottle
And hopped on the bus.

Glad to see her,
I waved her over to my seat,
For she was my guru.

I was also in my pajamas,
For this made the yoga
Of our meditation therapy easier.

“This is not a real bus,
Nor is it really moving,” I offered.

*“True,” she replied, “we are dream characters
Of the Perfect Awareness.”*

“It just all plays out in our consciousness,
Kind of like a movie.”

*“Yes, nothing comes through the senses
Or from the brain or any thing like that;
It’s life’s soap opera channel
And there is no remote control.”*

“It goes as it has to go; all is illusion,
But we aren’t fooled at all.”
“No, we are foolproof.”

“Why are you wiggling all around?”

*“I have to pee; it’s a dream pee,
But it is still a dream hurt.”*

“Well, you could ask the driver
To let you off somewhere
And go into a building.”

“OK. He’ll be on the lookout”

“I’ll tell you a short joke
Before the stop comes:
If you are Russian before
You get to the bathroom
[water closet to you]
And you are English

After you come out,
Then what are you
When you are in the bathroom?"

"I give up; the dream didn't tell me the answer."

"European!"

"Ha, ha. Now I really can't wait for the next stop!"

"He just stopped the bus."

"OK, I'll see you in a while."

She had to pee so bad that
She ran straight for the building
And rushed in right to the bathroom
Without anyone even noticing;
Nor did she notice what
The name of the place was.

When she came out of the bathroom
She was English again.
An orderly stopped her, restraining her.

"I'm sorry. I really had to go."
"You need permission for that.
Now let's get you back to your room."

"What? I don't have a room. Where am I?"

"Why, of course, you are a resident
Of Chesterfield Mental Institution."

"No I'm not. I just got off a bus."

"We hear those kinds of stories all the time.
Where's your room?"

"I am sane," she said with a dry mouth.

"Would you like a drink?"

“No, I only drink a special kind of water.”

*“Oh, a special kind?
Then maybe it is in your room.”*

“I left it on the bus.”

*“There’s no bus stop here.
Let’s get you out of the lobby.”*

“I don’t belong in this place.”

“Then why are you wearing pajamas?”

“For meditation therapy.”

“Therapy? Well, I can get you to that.”

*“You don’t understand. I am normal.
My God, what a turn this dream is taking!”*

“A dream?”

“Yes, nothing is real; all is a dream.”

— THE END —





(Holographic Reality)

