

Alchemical Weddings

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The Book the Soul Ate

Shin
publications



“Alchemical Weddings, The Book the Soul Ate”
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Acknowledgements

The Alchemical Weddings website was originally conceived as a curation of sacred texts and spiritual writing spanning a timeframe stretching back from the legendary library of Atlantis to the contemporary era. These inspired works have been invaluable to our soul on its solitary journey and we thereby hope to shine a light for others by sharing them, as lights were shone freely for us in our time. We frame these pearls of wisdom with stories of our own experience, which may or may not demonstrate how a lifetime of mystery might unfold from arcane symbols and way-markers.

Profound thanks are due to Robert Powell, publisher of the Christian hermetic masterwork, *Meditations of the Tarot (MotT)*, who gave his permission for us to use excerpts from that book in our own. The balance of our gratitude is held between the author of *MotT* and others like him, without whom we might never have made sense of anything much at all. One author who has not been quoted but to whom thanks are nonetheless due is Hans urs von Balthasar, whose seminal book, *Prayer*, helped us walk through the magical door into the realm beyond the veil.

We have used images featuring the 22 Major Arcana of GO Mebes' tarot deck (artist unknown) throughout *Alchemical Weddings*, together with the ten of swords created for the *Rider Waite Tarot* by Pamela Colman Smith.

No amount of books, reading or writing can make an effective substitute for the only essential catalyst for true theurgical soul work, which is LOVE. We therefore acknowledge the following truism provided by Eleanor C. Merry, which dryly indicates the practical basis for the work we were given to undertake:

Even the alchemist required a soror mystica, a mystical sister, to perform the opus.

Inexplicable Notes

I leave to the reader of these enigmatic notes the task of comparing, of coordinating versions, of extracting veracity from its allegorical setting

Fulcanelli, The Mystery of the Cathedrals

*

*Love is the Alpha and the Omega of life. All else has only secondary significance...
Man is born with the Alpha. It is the intention of the present work to show the path
which leads towards the Omega*

Boris Mouravieff, Gnosis

*

*Don't listen to anybody. Decide by yourself and practice madness...try to open the
Great Door of the Hidden Place.*

Tulshuk Lingpa, Guidebook to the Hidden Land

PART 1

Mixing the Elements

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PART 1

Mixing the Elements



Learn at first concentration without effort; transform work into play; make every yoke that you have accepted easy and every burden that you carry light! This counsel, or command, or even warning, however you wish to take it, is most serious

MotT, Letter I, The Magician

Drama at Mysteries

God is nowhere; God is now here

The Witness was deep in thought as she approached an overloaded bookcase standing against the Eastern wall of Mysteries' upper West room, where crystals were charged and horoscopes cast. A major cross-section of the case was illuminated by resplendent sunshine but the rest was left veiled in darkness, forming a vivid chiaroscuro on the rich mahogany canvas.

The lovingly burnished bookcase was home to an eclectic mix of esoteric masterworks, legendary Russian novels and other timeless classics. Ancient philosophical volumes were interspersed with lavishly illustrated fairytales, whilst archaic poetry and scripts written entirely in the green language were stacked two-deep in places and upside-down in others. It would not be a simple matter to extract from all this the book she had in Mind. Indeed, at that precise moment it would be impossible.

"God will permit a discovery of the highest importance to be made, although it must be hidden till the advent of the artist Elias¹," she suddenly recalled, evermore consumed by the search for Revelation. It was also high time she began to make literal sense of the results of her agonising theurgical procedures.

So where on Earth *was* the magical book?

A home-spun dream catcher hanging in the open window was framed by reddening skies. It cast a shadow which crept along the ceiling like a spider's web as minutes passed by into over an hour of fruitless seeking. Church bells began to ring in the middle distance, signalling the end of day with their call to evensong as tension mounted in Mysteries. She lit two candles and paused to watch the sunset, nodding to the flaming orb as it began its descent towards the western horizon.

¹ Paracelsus

Farewell to the living one, Ra-Horus of the horizon who rejoices in the horizon in his identity of light which is in the sun disc².

Snapping back to attention, the witness resumed her search with zeal, racking her brains for *"the sign and harbinger of the approaching revolution³"*.

Didn't I see it after Halle Bop appeared in May '96 and the moon was side by side with Jupiter? She wondered. Or perhaps it had been Venus. Either way, she felt sure this was when the fragile copy of 'Pros Theon', which translated into English as, 'By the Gods', had last been consulted. It *was* a Jupiter return ago, she realised, but where was it now, for heaven's sake?

Who could say?

Precisely as the sun was crossed by a thick, scudding cloud, the atmosphere in Mysteries was electrified by sudden anxiety verging on panic. To lose the book would be an unmitigated disaster, of this there could be no doubt. There were only eight available copies on Earth, another two having been lost in the midst of time whilst an updated version was still being recalled from the Akashic records. The Witness felt a sudden chill. What if the most accessible text had really been lost or – it hardly bore contemplating – stolen? The horrors if that were true! She wondered what her Father would say and the hair-raising thought brought about cold shivers and a search renewed with zealotry.

Holy Mother of God, please don't let Pros Theon fall into the wrong hands and forgive me for so carelessly misplacing it!

After more precious time spent rearranging the whole of the small but superlative library – by now engulfed by a vast, dark shadow-web of captured dreams – she ascertained that Pros Theon definitely was not on the bookcase. The situation had become intolerable. Suddenly, a brainwave struck.

Did I put it in a safe place following the comet's portent?

² Attributed to Akhenaten

³ Paracelsus

The brainwave triggered an instantaneous response from one of her spirit guides.

You've lost it, man.

She sighed and gazed out of the window to where citrinitas treetops were rustling in the magical sky, whispering their other worldly secrets to whomsoever crossed the bridge of twilight. It was a glorious evening but her appreciation of its glory was marred by frustration. She had to admit that the Lizard King was right and she *had* lost the book. She desperately wished Apkallu would fly by to deposit a pearl of wisdom at this critical moment.

It was all too much. Exhausted by the frantic search and obeying the impulse of some crazy wisdom or other she abruptly switched tactics and went to make a cup of chamomile tea infused with ashwagandha powder. Clutching the steaming brew in one hand and a copy of Psychic Circular in the other she sank down on the velvet couch beneath an etching of Artemis and settled into an absorbing article about the destruction of Atlantis.

That's the Spirit, if you relax it'll find you.

*

...What we loosely term 'Atlantean' civilisation was spread out over a large area spanning the Atlantic Ocean and far beyond, with administrative centres at magically and astronomically resonant locations, each displaying different characteristics and expressions of the culture depending on their elemental orientation.

It is not unusual for greater Eastern portions of submerged civilisations extending through the oceans around India and further still, to be known as 'Mu' or 'Lemuria', designating an even more ancient culture than is usually implied by 'Atlantean'. For present purposes, however, we shall consider them all under the umbrella term of 'Atlantis' as evoking the meaningful spiritual 'key point' and catalytic DNA determinants that are still, for the most part, lost in time and locked in the deep unconscious of the human race.

It is to be deeply regretted that the potentially darker and more chaotic elements contained within this DNA are still now, as they were then, relatively easier to cultivate than the divine particles of light embedded in the deepest recesses of

human beings as the hallmark of the Creator and activating blueprints of unified Ascension.

By a certain point in Earthly time the western wing of this civilisation, roughly corresponding to the Caribbean region and extending into present day Guatemala/Cuba and Mexico, degenerated to rather a dangerous base level. This was partly due to an extraordinarily hot and humid climate made even more oppressive by the violent draconian rule of their warrior-priest caste, which relied on human sacrifice for the performance of their potent magical procedures.

Many inhabitants were essentially serfs who lived fearful and unhappy lives in favela-type settlements near the coast, whilst the priest class retreated further into the jungle temple regions to advance the chthonic power of their god-beings.

Although much of the priest-craft was fatally corrupted through the widespread use of blood sacrifice and other dark practices, there were others who retreated further and kept to a pure high road, whence they held safe great mysteries of nature and served as custodians of the Earth. It was they who provided an archetype for the hidden shamans of the Americas, the condors of the West.

It is thought by some alternative historians that this Western flank of Atlantis was struck by a comet around 8500 BC. There have indeed been comet strikes in this region in the extremely distant past but this was not how Atlantean culture was destroyed in the west. It was more the case that a great and fiery volcanic fissure opened up in the centre of a temple and place of learning, which suddenly widened and swallowed an important urban centre whole. The rest was quickly dragged down with it in a terrifying catastrophe.

Huge portions of the city dropped like a heavy stone into the ocean, where they remained visible for some time before the entire edifice of civilisation sank between tectonic plates into the core of the earth to be consumed by fire. This is the origin of mythological and biblical representations of hell as the fiery pit, which expresses the unconscious buried trauma of this ancient fall, a memory too horrifying to be remembered as fact, only re-conjured as a warning against evil. Gigantic tsunamis rebounded from this and assailed western Atlantean civilisation. Environmental catastrophes - especially destructive weather events – cascaded one after another, triggered by the relentless elemental experimentation performed by the priest-craft, whose powerful magical abilities were cultivated by ever-darker means. Present-day analogues can be seen in the militarisation of macabre genetic-modification processes and abused weather manipulation techniques.

Meanwhile the Eastern wing – the older part of the ancient civilisation with a loftier vision of self-cultivation - degenerated in a spiritual sense through over-refinement whilst honing profound and complex psycho-spiritual attainments won through rigorous martial discipline. You might say that the priest-craft of this region advanced too far into the mind and cultivated their higher energy centres at the expense of the lower, which were locked into place.

As their prowess was elevated into a spectacular art form they ultimately fell prey to inflationary pride and having lost their essential purity came under the spell of unrectified Luciferic power, failing to harness the cosmic light in the service of mankind and using it instead to amass internal power and thereby further their own ambition. Thus did they create worlds within worlds and a labyrinthine psychic space that they inhabited through their crystalised ‘diamond bodies’.

The advanced inner technology which made possible these developments has, of course, been largely overrun by the controlling powers and principalities of Earth, who are now attempting to harvest human mind and soul power via an operating system based in the generated etheric labyrinth.

In the East, as in the West, the sexes were increasingly divided and the turning point of the disaster occurred in tandem with the final division of the divine androgyne into spiritual alienation between the two.

Although the material ruin of the Eastern quarter was largely bypassed due to the culture’s supreme mastery of physical functionality, the closed circuit of magic required to generate such an immense field of psychic-astral energy was shrouded with its own form of oblivion. If dissolution is the secret of the great work –*solve ET coagula* notwithstanding – this has serious implications for the soul-spirit encased in the armour of an immortal diamond body.

Whilst this was ultimately (though not obviously) a deviant path, so far did its leading adepts advance that they forged a trail long enough for neophytes to continue treading to this day without ever coming close to the end of the line. This leads to an exceptionally crystalised psycho-spiritual state where miraculous-seeming feats are still possible and may be witnessed.

One Psychic Circular correspondent who had been intensively engaged in crystalisation practices for more than two decades reported encountering a red-robed Rinpoche on the outskirts of what became known as Shambhala, who levitated by at least 20 feet in a highly-charged standing posture and clear display of power. She recalled feeling apprehensive about the intentions of the Rinpoche, who was accompanied by a pair of blue-clad Dakini which displayed a sublime

mastery of water in a complementary display to their fiery consort. The Rinpoche had the jet black, poker-straight hair that is typical of ancient Atlanteans, but the Dakini wore their hair in more elaborate pinned-up arrangements, in what we would recognise now as an Oriental style.

Our correspondent was called to witness a mystifying display of elemental force whereby the Dakini appeared to skate with effortless grace through relatively shallow areas of surface water in a show designed to celebrate both their own abilities whilst complementing the Rinpoche. They even did this in between the path of cars moving swiftly over a rain-drenched road, hypnotising our correspondent so much with this action that she, herself, was able to slide across groundwater through the vehicles in their direction, in a sympathetic reaction to the sublime elemental force.

As happened in the Western quarter, upright shamans detached from the degenerate culture and in this case retreated to the inner mountains and planes, whence they maintained through self-imposed discipline a spiritual-physical balance which made a way for the eagles of the East to survive the cataclysm. To quote Dr Evans-Wentz: *Though invisible to the eyes of normal men, these Beings are visible to Seers and can be communicated with by the pure in heart; and, as Silent Sentinels, They look out with divine compassion from the Himalayan Ramparts of the Earth, till the Kali Yuga Night shall have run its still long course and the Day of Awakening dawns over all the nations.*

Elsewhere in this region a terrible war was waged, but the Lordly ones in the hollow hills were safe from harm...

And so it went on.

The Witness put the magazine on the floor and turned her head to look out of the window. The sun had long since set but no longer did it appear dark outside, for an other-worldly azure blue now filled the sky. There, by some arcane twist of fate, was a tremendous sea eagle, black with a white head, whose eyes were fully fixed upon her. He might have been a shape-shifting magician who had waited an aeon for her to awaken and now was in a race against time to cross the space between them.

As Apkallu spread his immense wings and flew towards the window a heavenly surge of joy caused her astral body to spring from the couch and run in his direction, having reverted to childhood in the twinkling of an eye. In this state of

innocence she was able to grasp one of the bird's great tail feathers and later attach it to the dreamcatcher.

What you seek is seeking you....

Kybalion



Away with the Faeries

Lift a stone, and you will find me there

The Gospel of St Thomas

I peered at the flat stone disks. "Why do I have to go first?"

The large, weathered-looking stones, which were still partially concealed beneath overgrown grass had strange symbols carved into them which I did not understand.

The young woman standing by my right shoulder leaned closer to my ear.

"Because you're wearing the golden boots."

I could just see her out of the corner of my eye. She had mid-length brown hair, styled rather conservatively, and was wearing a long white dress. Her relationship to me was not clear but her explanation was straightforward enough, especially as she and the other girl were bare footed. I looked down at my own feet and admired the perfectly smooth and symmetrical round-toed golden boots that were on them.

Feeling more confident, I decided to try the stone entrance located about a metre below where I was sitting on the grass. Stretching my legs as far as I was able I managed to graze the nearest stone disk with my toes but it was just out of reach. The ladies ruminated that it might be more effective for me to jump directly onto the platform.

Easy for them to say. Rather as if the decision were taken for me or was preordained, I began to lower myself down carefully, taking my weight on my arms and resting my elbows on the edge of the grass where I was sitting. Dangling in this way I could reach down further and was able to tap on the stones with the flat of my feet. To the elation of us all the disk instantly slid away into the darkness, taking another slab with it and leaving the entrance to the portal entirely open.

The hole which emerged beneath us was dank, dark and uninviting and the others silently fell back as if nervous, leaving behind the reminder that I really did have to jump down first. I had half expected it to be a treacherous descent but when I jumped (for jumping was the only way down) I landed surprisingly lightly on the

wet floor of the catacombs, which was about 20 feet beneath the circular entrance embedded in the ceiling of the tunnel. Setting off purposefully into the gloom I noticed that the brown-haired girl was following me and felt assured that I hadn't been tricked into entering some deadly trap.

We were heading in a direction that was seemingly west. The walls were not entirely plain and bore striking geometrical patterns in some places. I tried not to be afraid. We were walking on a narrow path by the side of a dark stream of indeterminate depth. Looking to my left I saw that the guardian beasts I'd been told to expect were lurking together on the opposite bank of the stream. The beasts seemed agitated and I wondered if they were disturbed by our presence. There were a couple of reptiles which resembled crocodiles, Komodo dragons or some other kind of large and rather dangerous-looking lizard. There were also several smaller ones which dipped in and out of the water and looked like a different species to the others but possibly were females.

I did not fail to attract the attention of the largest beast, which scuttled over quickly in my direction as soon as I laid eyes on it. When it reached me I bent down instinctively to pat its head, as if it were a domesticated dog. The creature sniffed curiously at my boots before scuttling back to its shadowy corner, having done us no harm. I looked ahead and felt a leap of excitement, for there was a partially open door in clear sight.

We quickly reached the small wooden door, which formed the panel of a larger one and was very similar in appearance to the pedestrian entrances of old university college buildings that were cut into the great old coach gates. This doorway in the ancient gate swung completely open as soon as we reached it and we stepped through into a fine summer day.

Immediately beyond the threshold I stopped and looked around. It was strangely familiar. We were in the vicinity of a secret university and the tawny stones of its massive walls shone brightly in the bright sunshine, radiant with power. The blazing sunlight which suffused the scene but did not quite dispel an underlying sense of danger.

I felt uneasy and struggled to remember something that was eluding me for what I realised was the second time. Had it been a dream within a dream? I sensed that dark secrets were jealously guarded within those walls and realised there was a conspiracy, though I could not fathom the mystery that I longed to understand. I turned to address the one who had walked through the tunnel with me.

I've been here before.

The delightful garden and wider environs of the University were enticing grounds and I knew I had once spent an important period of time there. So pleasurable was that garden, beyond the burden of time, and yet it was only a staging post for me, a place where I could not permanently rest. The Elysium fields of my friends, from which I was now an outcast.... What was my destiny, how is it revealed through history....

“Do you two need any help?”

I turned around swiftly, shaken from my reverie by the clear voice which had mercifully prevented me from regressing too far into the being of a fumbling classicist. There before me stood a most remarkable creature, smiling through the sunshine and shaking her lovely hair in the soft summer breeze.

I couldn't remember having actually *seen* fairies or sylphs before this time, although I had always been sure of their existence. I was immediately a little in awe of this one, maybe because she radiated the most extraordinary confidence through glorious green eyes that betrayed no sign of conscience whatsoever. Or perhaps it was because of her incredible beauty, which combined all the lightness of air with the alchemy of fire.

Fairies are elemental existences, emanations of the Aether, and they follow natural laws. They have no allegiance to any but themselves and their master or mistress and they can take great glee from high-jinx and trickery. Quick-witted, easy to both anger and delight, fairies are beings that can never be trusted beyond reason and must always be treated with caution, but who might also prove to be extremely helpful under the right circumstances. I recovered some of my sense and eyed this one authoritatively.

“Thank you, ma'am, I was daydreaming for a moment – this ancient city was part of my last youth - and now I am trying to recall the way to the Elysium Fields”.

The vixen-like appearance of the elemental being softened and her eyes lost their mischievous glitter. “I see that you are a little confused, for surely it is not yet time for you to return. Come, let me first take you to the Potter's hearth for some refreshment while you decide what to do for the best.”

I was unprepared for a surprise invitation and looked around in a state of unease, feeling myself pulled in two directions. Evidence of this was to be found in the

demeanour of my companion, who had already moved away from me and closer to the ethereal sylph, at whom she was now gazing in hypnotic wonder as the Faery began singing:

*I am a spirit of no common rate; The summer still doth tend upon my state; And I do love thee: therefore, go with me; I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee*⁴.

My reason was almost captivated and asked myself how she could be so easily swayed. I did not wish to become beholden to creatures of the netherworld, however enticing they appeared, but I was disconcerted at a potential parting of ways with my unconsciousness, brown-haired and demure in her white robes. As she reached out to touch the fairy's golden hair I felt something indefinable slip away and spoke to somehow re-establish myself. "Thank you for taking care of my friend, I hope to join you both very shortly, I'm sure I will find my own way to the Potter's hearth. Is it easy to find, should I ask someone for directions?"

A silken strand of her mesmerising hair was lifted by the wind and coiled around my neck. "His house is well hidden but you shall find the way without having to look. Follow your instincts but remember to turn right, the way is not East of Eden, which is where you will go first."

Respectful of this Queen amongst fairies - and suddenly shy before her magnificent presence - I stepped back so she could return from whence she came. The air grew sharp and there was a sudden movement, then a flash in the corner of my eye as a large white bird flew hurriedly out of its place of rest and passed over my head. I felt the air beaten by its wings fanning my face, which had the remarkable effect of making me fall backwards towards the ground in slow motion.

The passing over of the faery with my unconsciousness left me with a sense of great loss. I longed to see the Elysium fields again as my heart burned with the memory of that out of reach place and time. I turned to the right and walked with my head bowed, once more alone and knowing nothing but my dreams. I wanted to see my past-life friends again, for us all to lie together in the fields watching time run away and summer fade to autumn. I knew then that I was a lost soul and longed for my reunion with the Beloved.

⁴ A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare

The intensity of this longing was hypnotically powerful and bore me into another unknown realm. I thereby fell unthinking into a stream of clear water, which rapidly bore me to the land East of Eden, the home of my parents and from whence I came. It was from this stream that I would pluck first the Ruby Ring and then, much later and with the help of my mother, a wondrous cosmic egg, which was no bigger than a hen's egg but marvellous and shining as a crystal star. How much grief and horror it brought me in later years to see rivers of the water polluted and tumultuous, its oceans poisoned and sea-creatures crying. Even the pool behind the Tree of Wisdom became stagnant and deathly, its undines diseased and lethargic, choked by a terrible leviathon which patrolled the sacred pool and hastened my exit from that scene.

There are fairies and elementals everywhere, my child, but they are not always so beautiful as those you see here

J Michaud, The Golden Star

The Gnome

And so she lay down upon it, committed herself to Heaven, and fell asleep

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, Brothers Grimm

The Witness opened her eyes onto a postcard of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a souvenir from a road trip through Mexico she'd taken one winter, when she had travelled the long and winding road to Ixtalan in search of Don Juan. As her eyelids drooped once again into a blissful half-slumber, the moon at the feet of the star-spangled Lady of Guadalupe, resting on the hands of a small winged angel, was precisely in her last line of sight.

Gazing with unblinking half-open eyes at the coin-sized circle of the angel's head, the witness saw something rather strange begin to happen. The colours of the postcard began to move, shifting shape from their positions on the flat surface, swirling into vivid primary hues until she seemed to be looking through the wrong end of a telescope at a circular rainbow of dancing light. Detached but inclined to follow the astral trail rather than lose consciousness by nodding off, she managed to focus more completely on the turning circle. A split second later it metamorphosed into something rather specific and very surprising.

Oh! Could it really be?

Yes it could be.

Well I'll be blown, she thought abstractedly. It WAS a gnome.

No sooner had this realisation struck than the witness heard manic laughter in her left ear, which unlike the right was not pressed into the pillow. As the high-pitched giggling intensified, the colourful wee figure within the coin-sized circle took on a distinctly pointy red hat and neat blue jacket. The witness experienced being slightly flustered. Still trying to concentrate on the gnomish figure whilst simultaneously being loudly laughed at, she realised with some surprise that the wee chap was tugging insistently on her inert physical figure's astral body.

Well I'll be blown again, what madness is this?

The sense of minor mystification remained as the conscious astral body of the witness was slowly spun around in one or two halting circles. Laboriously, no doubt, for he was a very small chap. Surprising, when you think about it, that something so minutely small could somehow manage to shift a much larger body, even of the subtle kind. Things were getting curiozier and curiozier.

Still the giggling persisted, having reached almost fever pitch by this point. Bewildered but feeling no fear, simply strange inertia, the witness recalled a genuinely terrifying occasion when a far more threatening inter-dimensional entity had done something similar with much greater force.

On that memorable occasion she had become conscious in the lower astral realm whilst being violently twisted out of her physical body and catapulted along the length of the upstairs corridor. What a horrible night that had been, in the middle of a horrible three and a half months during which psychic colleagues had agreed that a concerted devilish attack was taking place within Mysteries. But that was then....

In the next instant the astral body of the witness found itself crouching beneath the bedroom window in a perplexing state of sluggish torpor. It was quite ridiculous, in fact. Who had ever heard of an astral body being so dopey? To the predictable sound effect of more giggles the same astral sheath was clumsily made to lie face down a few inches from the wooden floor by the inordinately strong but particularly tiny gnome, from whence it was propelled along in painfully slow comic fashion in an exact parody of the horrifying prior situation.

Was this a joke?

Whatever happened next the witness did not commit to memory, but the unexpected appearance of the gnome was a vivid reminder of other elementary beings, of water, fire and air, that had also taken it upon themselves to manifest strangely in the space between worlds where time did not exist.



The revelation is perpetual, and the power to receive it is natural to man, requiring no miracle. That he fails to receive it is through defect, not of constitution, but of condition, being self-induced by his habits of life and thought

Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary and Work, Edward Maitland.

Order of Zeus

*And Zeus [...came to the cave, where]
Night sat, who knows all the oracles, immortal nurse
of the gods.
...to prophesy from his shrine.
She prophesised all that it was permitted him to achieve,
how he would hold the lovely seat in snowy Olympus*

The Derveni Theogony, trans. Alberto Bernabe

Zeus summoned the Eagles of East and West and gave to them their mission, saying: “Fly now each of you in his own direction and the place where you meet I shall pin down forever as the centre of this world, for neither is swifter than the other”.

When the Eagles had fulfilled their task, Zeus declared their place of meeting to be the navel of the world and he marked it with a great white stone. The gods and goddesses of Olympus came down from the clouds to place their mark upon the foundation of his temple on Earth. Apollo and Artemis came after Hera in their chariots of the sun and moon, lighting the way for Demeter. She was walking hand-in-hand with her love-struck daughter, Persephone, queen of the Styx-bound underworld.

Ares, Hera, Hephestaeus and Poseidon fulfilled the summons with grave splendour, just as a bull emerged from the forest and metamorphosed with a swagger into a shining youth. Undulating beside him was sea-born Aphrodite, whose love-child laughed as Hermes the Magician appeared from thin air.

Hera stared with brooding displeasure at the twice-born son of Zeus and a cloud descended on the assembly. “I see he comes before our sister, Hestia, again! I only hope you will not reserve too many honours for the youth, Dionysus, husband, for he is only just immortal with half true blood in his blue engorged veins”.

Zeus roared with laughter. “But see the ones who are with him my sister of the Stars, you must admit he is in great company? The body of desire with the power

of love and Herald of the ages. I see no issue here but that which is great!" He turned to smile benignly at the sun. "Come forth Apollo and shine with full strength on this land, for I will have you establish a great House of God where men from all corners of the world will come to learn their destiny."

Standing at the outskirts of the forest the Magician relayed a cryptic key message to his twice-born friend: *Jolly son of Zeus, who loves the living vine, Victory is One, the Priestess is in Time.*

The wolf by Apollo's side pricked up his ears and growled as he saw them whispering at the edge of the emerald forest, but his deer twin sister gave counsel in a sweet voice. "Lose not your reason, my Beloved, or the chariot of the sun would be struck down by lightening and the silver moon should die of grief – then would the licentious youth sit proud upon *thy* divine throne!"

"Ay, sister of the moon, with his hairy hand upon my priceless goblet while his sluts strum tuneless ditties upon my incomparable turtleshell lyre!" The wolf was lying down again but Apollo's eyes flashed hot and cold as he watched his kin raise a jar of ruby-coloured wine to his smiling lips.

Unperturbed by so much rivalry, Dionysus hailed them in merry voice, not wishing to start a conflict at the dawning of his mystery: "You have my blessings, glorious brother, I think not to steer the chariot of the sun and nor to take your hallowed place in heaven - I'd rather have a bit of fun!"

Beaming with sudden pride, Apollo dipped his rays upon the Youth and raised a high hand. "Muses, fair maidens of memory," he said, "The will of the King shall be carved here in lead, the voice of our Father shall speak here aloud, as dear Dionysus shall Hallow this ground."

Zeus clasped his Sun with both arms. "And you shall be the Prince of Paean, for although it is *my* will that shall be done it is *you* who shall dictate my whims and wishes to the wondering world."

The owl of Zeus's daughter, Athena, blinked inscrutably from her post in the branches of a large white tree as Artemis ran like the wind through the emerald forest and the Sun plotted a course through the Sky to meet her. She ran until she reached the pebble-dashed shore of the finite sea, where Poseidon threw waters from the churning, ink-black ocean out to land and cried: "The Sea shall move at your command, O Daughter Moon!"

A vast breaking wave reflected the glistening form of Phoebus Apollo. The top of his fin cut the air like a knife, carving out a circle of pure white light. Seven sacred colours framed his perfect, golden mind, as Artemis declared to him: "we two are

one combined! Now give me now silver arrows, for I shall strike down anyone who dares to come between us!”

“Swim, enchanting sister, while my light is still cool, deep into the salt-filled waters. A weapon such as this,” her twin held above him a golden sword, “may only be brought from the abyss”. His answering voice was like an echo of her dream before she dreamt it. She cast off her linen robe and dipped one foot into the ocean, shielding her eyes from the blue-lit morning star as it rose on the Eastern horizon. Every other face turned toward it as she made her way to the bottomless abyss, heedless of the dragon chained within.

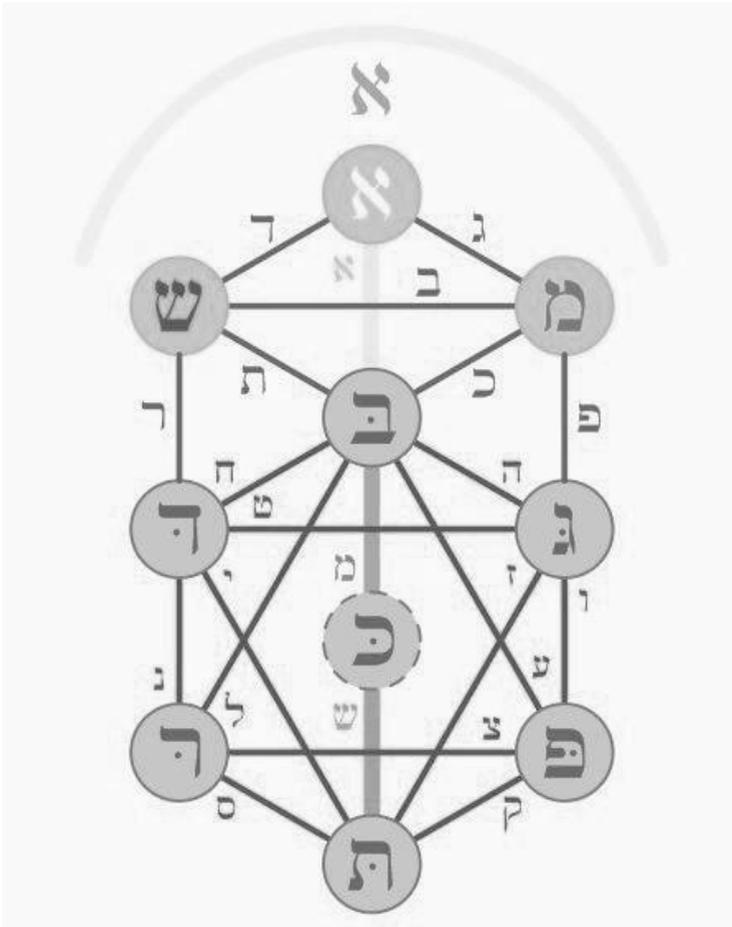
*Apollo, Lord, and Hermes, lead the way!
And thou, who wanders, this to thee we say:
Be still; enjoy the oracle's excellence,
for Phoebus Apollo has given it to us,
this Art of Divination from our ancestors.*

Translation of inscription found atop a mountain at Adada in Pisidia by John Opsopaus

The Formation of the Temple

To him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the Tree of Life –

Revelation 2:7



For the sake of Time and Space (even if they are theoretical constructs relevant only to the Earthly plane and not necessarily on a continuum!) we shall assume that readers have at least a basic familiarity with Kabbalah/ Qabala, derived from one school or another.

The differences between such schools can be both significant and bewildering. The Hermetic practitioner and author, Rawan Clark, remarked that “the differences between the Jewish and Western understandings of the Tree of Life are too vast to bridge *except through the imagery of the Tarot major arcana*”. Correspondences can also be made between individual Hebrew letters and the 22 Major Arcana of the Tarot, though which precise letters are to be assigned to which Arcanum is a debatable. Any exploration of the Tree of Life will similarly reveal that the Hebrew alphabet is fundamentally essential and integral to this field of study. The Tree of Life diagram pictured above was created by the Australian Qabalist and astrologer, Patrick Mulcahy, for his book, *Sefer Yetzirah Magic*, where he explains how the structure of the Tree is derived from very specific instructions codified into the *Sefer Yetzirah* - the Book of Formation – which is the oldest surviving Jewish esoteric text:

Ten sefirot beli mah: [interpreted as ten sefirot without ‘mah’ or Malkuth]

Their measure is ten which have no end.

A depth of Beginning, [Ain Sof – Holy Breath]

A depth of End, [Keter – Breath from Breath]

A depth of Good, [Hockmah – Water from Breath]

A depth of Evil, [Binah – Fire from Water]

A depth of Above, [Da’at]

A depth of Below, [Yesod]

A depth of East, [Chesed]

A depth of West, [Hod]

A depth of North, [Netzah]

A depth of South. [Geburah]

These associations between instructions in the *Sefer Yetzirah* and placement of spheres on the Tree of Life do not precisely resemble either traditional Jewish pictorial models of the Tree or Qabalistic models adopted by Western occultists. Whilst this novel approach might be problematic for those who are strongly immersed in the teachings of one particular school or another, it need not be an

insurmountable barrier. Our sense is that Kabbalah/Qabala is, like other mystical schools, a 'living tradition' rather than a set-in-stone historical archive and is therefore open to interpretation. As we once heard on the grapevine, the Tree of Life is 'the map but not the journey' and we cannot assume the same journey will be made through it by all pathwalkers. Indeed, it is more reasonable to suppose that an almost infinite number of paths can and will be taken through the Tree. From the version we have featured it will be seen that Ein Soph (meaning literally, 'no end') is present at the top of the diagram – hovering above the Crown of Keter – but Malkulth, which is the tenth Sefira in many other models, is not included. This is justified by the phrase, 'Beli Mah', which means without 'mah'/Malkulth. The 'Kingdom' of Malkulth is considered to belong to the active and physically manifest dimension (Asiyah-Gashmi) rather than to the Tree of Yetzirah in the realm of Formation.



The Trinitarian godhead is indicated by the Sefira of Keter, Chokmah and Binah, which have life 'breathed' into them by Ein Soph. These are the roots that are in

heaven, as famously shown in this image of The Hanged Man from the GO Mebes tarot.

Mulcahy proposes that the Sefer Yetzirah “is an instruction manual for building the ‘third Temple’—the sacred inner ‘Temple of YHVH’” – that was written in the seismic aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

Up and Down.

East and West.

North and South.

*And the Holy Temple precisely in the center
and it supports them all.*

This verse is highly significant, for it defines the position of Tifareth – associated most usually with Beauty and all that Beauty entails – at the centre of the Tree of Life.

Tifareth is clearly present in the model we are using but it does not (as already seen in the list given above) feature as one of the ten designated Sefira. It is, rather, the mystical ‘Holy Temple’ which ‘supports them all’ and which is to be rebuilt within the consciousness of humanity. This is one of the most fundamental points of difference between Mulcahy’s interpretation of the Sefer Yetzirah and more traditional, widely accepted versions.

Compounding this difference is the fact that this model *does* include Da’at as one of the ten integral Sefira, assigning to it the direction specified in the Sefer Yetzirah as ‘depth of Above’. Because of the position of Da’at between the trinitarian godhead at the top and human consciousness in the lower part of the Tree, it effectively signifies the ‘covenant of unity’ between God and Humanity. On the importance of this particular distinction Mulcahy says: “For the majority of human-beings the Tifaret-to-Da’at pathway [assigned to which is the Hebrew mother letter, Mem] represents a spiritual hiatus in human consciousness.

Activating Tifaret’s link with Da’at within the powerful framework of the Tree of Life bridges the gap that currently exists in consciousness between Humanity and the Creator. Without the covenant of Da’at we are lost in exile on planet Earth, unaware of the divine Presence (Shekinah) in our lives”.

Here we must note the existence of a highly esoteric text called The Maym [Mem] Key, which we have read twice but can no longer find or even verify that it ever existed in this dimension.

As for the sacred fire, the vestal virgins took it up, together with other holy relics and fled away with it: though some will have it, that they have not the charge of any thing but that ever-living fire which Numa appointed to be worshipped. as the principle of things. It is indeed the most alive thing in Nature⁵.

The spiritual gold of the Sefer Yetzirah may be seen in its offering of a “metaphysical blueprint” we can use to build an inner sanctum for our subtle bodies, activate the middle pillar pathway, access the ‘singular covenant’, and draw down the divine Presence into our conscious awareness. The structure of this inner sanctum is described by Mulcahy as the ‘Holy Temple octahedron’, whereby the full 3D design of the Holy Temple incorporates the lower section of the Tree of Yetzirah into a six-pointed, eight-faced, 12-edged design. It encompasses the sefira Da’at, Chesed, Geburah, Netzach, Hod and Yesod, ranged around the central Holy Temple of Tifaret. It is the realm of purified consciousness where the discriminating rule which decides between the forces of the Sefira is kept.

The Divine Presence – the life-giving force - enters the centre of our Holy Temple via the ‘singular covenant’ that is delineated via the pathway between Tifareth and Da’at and associated with the Mother Letter, Mem. Similarly is the lower pathway from Yesod to Tifareth assigned to the Mother Letter, Shin.

At the heart of this Holy Temple the centrally connecting vertical pathways of Shin and Mem (fire and water) merge into what might be regarded as the fabled fiery water (the *EshMayim* described in the Sefer Bahir). This then moves upwards into the divine consciousness of Da’at and onto the pathway of Air (or Breath) via the third Mother letter, Aleph. The importance of the interplay between fire and water is fundamental to any interpretation of the Tree of Life and is what vivifies the entire ‘octahedron’ of the lower section. A key to the secret of the ‘fiery water’ maybe found in verse 59 of the Sefer Bahir:

⁵ Life of Camillus, Plutarch

‘Why is heaven called Shamayim?’

This teaches that God kneaded fire and water and combined them together. From this He made the “beginning of His word.” It is thus written (Psalm 119:160), “The beginning of your word is truth.” It is therefore called Shamayim - Sham Mayim (there is water) - Esh Mayim (fire water). He said to them: This is the meaning of the verse (Job 25:2), “He makes peace in His heights.” He placed peace and love between them. May He also place peace and love among us’.

This merging of the paths of fire and water in the middle of the Tree is delineated by the ‘Shem Pillar’, which extends vertically through the middle of the Tree of Life along the pathways of the Mother letters. “All human-beings eventually undergo this high initiation, called the ShM Initiation (or ‘Name’ Initiation)”, explains Mulcahy, which saw the name of Israel bestowed upon the Patriarch Jacob *following the struggle with his angel*. This initiation empowers Jacob/Israel to consciously participate in the divine work of Formation (Yetzirah). Just as the three pathways of the Middle Pillar running through the Tree of Life via Keter, Da’at, Tifareth and Yesod are assigned (successively from top to bottom) to Aleph, Mem and Shin, so are the Sefira of the upper ‘trinity’ connected to the Mother letters: Keter to Aleph, Chockmah to Mem and Binah to Shin.

*

The four Kabbalistic worlds, as revealed in the Book of Isaiah, are known by the acronym, ABiYA, derived from: Atziluth (Emanation), Beriah (Creation), Yetzirah (Formation) and Assiyah (Action). It is possible to add to these a transcendental upper fifth layer corresponding to Adam Kadmon, and/or a layer below Assiyah – Assiyah-Gashmi – which denotes the physical universe. The worlds of Atziluth, Beriah, Yetzirah and Assiyah all incorporate a Tree of Life blueprint and it is with the third of these – the Tree of Yetzirah – that we have been concerned here.

The different worlds are emanations of the Divine creative light and life force as it moves through progressive stages of Tsimtsum, a procedure involving the contraction/condensation of Divinity so as to create a space – no-thingness – into which further creation might be emanated into and evolved from within. The degree of concealment, or ‘dimming’ increases as the Light of the One emanates further into the lower worlds.

The Sefirah are in and of themselves divine attributes and different Sefira are thought to predominate in particular worlds. The uppermost world of Adam Kadmon, Primordial Man, is one of pure Divine Consciousness, where all the Sefira are concealed and its pure light is perfectly at One with the Divine Intellect. It is here that the Crown Sefirot of Keter reigns supreme.

In the upper echelons of Atziluth, wherein the Sefira are first unveiled, the wisdom of Chokmah prevails at the head of the pillar of Mercy on the right of the Tree of Life and the light of Ein Soph is still fully united with its creative source. It is the World of the higher spirit and eternal soul of humanity.

In the subsequent world of Beriyah the concept of *tsimtsum* – broadly equivalent to the universal idea of creation *ex nihilo* (from nothing) - comes to the fore. The unified Sefira of the upper realm of Atziluth descend (or emanate) into Beriyah in the manner of a 'King on a Throne', and henceforth the Sefirot of Binah – Understanding - at the top of the pillar of 'severity' is foremost. This is the realm of divine or cosmic intellect.

Then we come to the world of Yetzirah, where creative thoughts begin to take on form. The right-hand Pillar of Mercy from Chesed (Mercy itself) through to Yesod (Foundation) prevails in this emotional domain, where the pathwalker's distance from the higher understanding of Beriyah is felt and a striving to return to Source at the higher level is experienced. Through this striving is the Divine vitality channelled around the Tree of Life, as Sacred Fire purifies the pathways for the influx of Holy Water.

Assiyah – Action - is the realm of action where Creation is brought to completion. The Sefirot of Malkuth (Kingdom) predominates here but it is nonetheless a spiritual world. Below this, at the bottom of the worlds, is Assiyah-Gashmi, our physically manifested world and surrounding universe, which receives its life force from the spiritual Assiyah.

The Tree of Life in all these worlds, but in particular the Tree of Yetzirah, is said to incorporate within its structure 32 Paths of Wisdom, a concept thought to derive from the Book of Genesis, where the name 'Elohim' is mentioned 32 times.

The first ten Paths (relating to verses starting with the assertions, "Elohim said") correlate to the ten Sefira. The relevant statement is assumed rather than outwardly stated in the case of the Path of Keter, the corresponding verse of which states that: "In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth". As an example, in Chokmah we hear that:

“*Elohim said* Let there by Light”.

The following three Paths correspond to the Mother Letters of Aleph, Mem and Shin and the “Elohim made” verses. “Elohim made the firmament and divided the waters” (Aleph).

The next seven Paths (“Elohim saw” verses) are connected to the seven Simple Letters of Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh and Tau. “Elohim saw the light, that it was good” (Beth).

The rest of the Paths are associated with letters corresponding to what are termed Elementals in some quarters, for example, in Verse 1:2 wherein “Elohim hovered over the face of the waters” (Heh) and Verse 1:4 whereby “Elohim divided the light from the darkness” (Vau). There is a second exception to the general rule (the first being Keter) in the twelfth Elemental Path of Qoph, where Elohim says directly: “I have given you all...”

Once again it should be emphasised that the assignation of letters to pathways differs tremendously between traditional Kabbalah and the Qabala of Western occultism, then differs once again between occultists of differing schools.

Whist Mulcahy assigns the Letter Peh to the Sephirot Netzach, the Golden Dawn assigns this letter to the path between Netzach and Hod, which it seems is notoriously difficult as intellect and emotion, fire and water, seek to reconcile. It is a journey characterised by turmoil which relates to the Biblical story of the death of the Kings of Edom (chaos), as the old and worn-out psyche of the aspirant gives way to that of the initiated 'philosopher'. The search for the Philosopher's Stone is thought to begin when this path has successfully been traversed.

The question now arises: If this particular Pathworking is so difficult for the human questor, than how much more difficult might it be for the human race to cross it in its entirety? And that's before we even begin to contemplate the Creation of the Inner Holy Temple and journey onto Da'at. It seems clear that collectively we are not there, yet.

Whilst individuals are making at least some of the necessary 'crossings', perhaps in increasing numbers as the locked doors of learning gradually open for access under the right conditions – one of which might be pure chance - a powerful counteracting force equivalent to the dark horse which pulls the Platonic Chariot of the soul downward is set on opposing the flight of the white horse. Let us call this white horse *Pegasus* to thereby strengthen its influence in relation to the dark,

which shall not be named, and also recall the sacred white horses of other mythologies, religions and philosophies.

For many people the Kabbalah is unfathomably arcane and one might well question why such a complex and veiled system is worthy of the intensity of study required to painstakingly unlock its occult gateways. An answer good enough to serve our purpose is supplied by J B Van Halmont in the Baroque text, Hortus Medicenae:

"A magical Power, put to sleep by the Fall, is latent in Man. It can be reawakened by the Grace of GOD or by the Art of KABBALA."

Victory and Splendour

He who operates Kabbala without extraneous admixture, shall die, if he sticks long enough to this work, by 'binsica' [death by a kiss]. In the final step of ascendance the soul is severed from the body, enraptured and united with God or, the heavenly Venus, in the ultimate mystical experience... this is the kiss in which our divine Solomon desires when he exclaims in his Song: "Kiss me with the kisses of thy mouth."

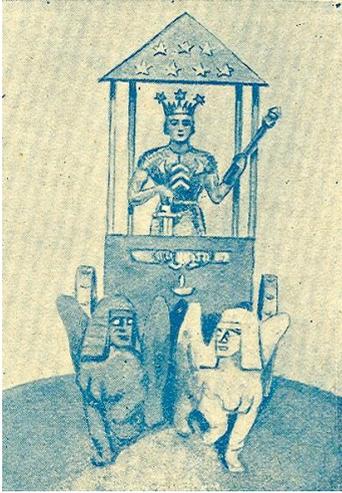
Pico della Mirandola, Kabbalistic Conclusions

Netzach and Hod are responsible for the spiritual gifts of vision and prophecy, functioning properly in relation to each other, as two legs and feet enable us to walk. Much psycho-spiritual work takes place in the sphere of Netzach – usually defined as Victory - and its companion, Hod – usually defined as Splendour - which signify respectively the right and left legs/feet of God.

The Victory inherent in Netzach is a quality of Eternity and has been described as an 'occult' or 'hidden' intelligence, the Gateway of the Mysteries, an intuitive and contemplative counterpart to the mercurial intellect of Hod, with which it works in tandem.

The mystery of Netzach denotes a 'hidden' intelligence because it cannot be fully comprehended by the rational intellect but requires intuition and faith for its cognition. It is hidden from the physical eye but visible to the mind's eye. With Netzach comes a vivifying remembrance which constitutes a form of awakening or rebirth.

Netzach encompasses the triumph of spiritual intuition over common sense or scientific materialism. Having transcended the rational discipline and clarity of Hod (essential to occult magical work) it signifies the power by which the mind receives the higher vision and is primed for the acknowledgement of a glorious destiny. It is here that the spiritual self expresses its longing to reach beyond its mortal and mundane boundaries via the will of channelled desire.



The Path of Victory is epitomised in The Chariot tarot arcanum, whereupon the victorious principle is visibly crowned. With their inner eye do the victorious perceive that their wishes are fulfilled at the moment they are known, that desire is really an inkling of what has already been karmically prepared with the value of Eternity. As the Mercy of God is Eternal.

The fundamental essence of Hod confers the ability of the soul to advance towards the supreme goal of the Beloved, to persevere in walking the Path of Return. It bestows the power to express gratitude and to engage in 'confession'. In the twin aspects of Netzach-Hod we see the scales of justice. Justice is the Tarot arcanum most associated with Hod.

Desire fused to will in passionate karmic experience is characteristic of Netzach, but the danger here is that desire can be supremely selfish and thereby unleash a catastrophic failure or downfall through descent into the Qlippot of the Sefirot; the inversion of victory. Perception of the higher vision must gain a decisive victory over the delusions of the lower nature, but here again is danger, inherent in the potential of selflessness itself to oppose truth with that which cannot be denied. Desire might be forced but it cannot be faked, it can only be transmuted into the search for the Beloved, anima, soul mate, anam cara.

Like soul mates who complete each other, Netzach and Hod are known as ‘two halves of the same body’, as the powers of the right leg are inseparable from that of the left. Whilst divine protection is conferred upon those who need it in Netzach, that protection may be lost along the pathway to Hod if one has fallen under the evil influence. A terrifying prospect and serious matter indeed.

Netzach – often considered to be the sphere of Venus - receives an influence which flows along the Tree of Life via the pillar of Wisdom and Mercy, from Chokmah through Chesed - realm of Jupiter, the great benefactor - and bestows the Vision of triumphant Beauty upon the Pathworker.

The upward path from Netzach on the Tree of Life progresses to the higher Sphere of Chesed - Mercy and Compassion - the attainment of which is the great reward for the searing struggles of the lower realms. It is with mercy and compassion that opposites are reconciled through completion of the key Hermetic task which is the neutralisation of binaries and resolution of antinomies⁶. (We recall the binary essences of fire and water in this context).

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The Kabbalistic scheme of creative light emanations from Ein Soph Aur, the limitless light, which proceed from an absolute source of Divinity through successive Worlds is highly reminiscent of formative Hellenistic philosophy, which also recognised a spiritual hierarchy below the transcendent One. Here as well does Intellect rank highly, followed by the realm of the Higher Soul and then the Lower Soul or Nature. Some philosophers described a system of nine concentric spheres, ranging from the Prime Mover at the outer limit through to Earth at the centre, with each layer linked to the others by ‘sympathy’ or ‘correspondences’. This gives us an inkling of why the method of Analogy is considered so vital in Hermetic work as a means for glimpsing into – or even living through to some degree - the veiled upper worlds.

In Letter I, The Magician, of Meditations on the Tarot, it is written: "The open recognition of the relationship of all things has engendered an exactly corresponding method of knowledge. It is the method generally known under the title The Method of Analogy; its role and its import in the so-called 'occult' sciences has been illumined in an admirable way by Papus in his Traite

⁶ This is very important!

elementaire de science occulte. Analogy is not a tenet or postulate - the essential unity of the world is this - but is the first and principal method (the aleph of the alphabet of methods) whose use facilitates the advance of knowledge. It is the first conclusion drawn from the tenet of universal unity. Since at the root of the diversity of phenomena their unity is found, in such a way that they are at one and the same time different and one, they are neither identical nor heterogeneous but are analogous in so far as they manifest their essential kinship.

The traditional formula setting forth the method of analogy is well known. It is the second verse of the Emerald Table (Tabula Smaragdina) of Hermes Trismegistus:

That which is above is like to that which is below and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of (the) one thing.

This the classic formula of analogy for all that exists in space, above, and below; the formula of analogy applied in time would be:

That which was is as that which will be, and that which will be is as that which was, to accomplish the miracles of eternity”.

The Principle of Correspondence (one of seven clearly identified in the Kybalion⁷ text) is what informs the Hermetic method of Analogy, which is in turn fundamental to accomplishing the Key Hermetic task of neutralising binaries and resolving antinomies. This higher alchemical procedure is otherwise known as the Gift of Black Perfection; the drawing of light from darkness on the one hand, the encasement of water with fire on the other, as occurs throughout the Holy Temple Octahedron of the Tree of Life. This task might be associated with – or assisted by contemplation of - the tarot card, The Hermit, to aid full digestion of the spiritual exercises required for solution of the Arcanum.

If Netzach is aligned with Venus then Hod is with Mercury – Aphrodite and Hermes in the Temple – who together produce the Hermaphrodite. This spiritually manifests through the unfoldment of the Mystery of the Androgyne. Hod works in conjunction with Netzach to bring the powers and intelligences inherent in these two spheres to completion in the soul and spirit. Harmonising these two influences

⁷ The other six Principles described in Kybalion are those of Mentalism; Vibration; Polarity; Rhythm; Cause and Effect and Gender.

is difficult enough, but moving onwards and upwards from them is also a challenge.

With the intuitive faith of Netzach does the Bride-Soul enter into the transcendently rational consciousness of Hod, where she experiences the spiritual fact of her union with the Groom through the presence of Divine providence, which brings overflowing sincere gratitude from the depths of her heart. This is the Sphere of inspiration, Awe and Magic – of radical amazement - as form is drawn from the primeval chaos through the Mercurial Mind of the Magician Hermes.

The balance between them is held in Yesod, Temple Sphere and Portal of the Moon, Depth of Below and Foundation of the Tree of Life. The mystical formula for this Sphere is: I AM the Door, which can be found in the Spheres of Life Prayer reproduced in full at the end of this book.

Before moving on there is a further enigma for us to contemplate in relation to Netzach and Hod, for whilst it is usual – as we have seen – to attribute Mercury to the realm of Hod and Venus to Netzach, we are informed by Rudolf Steiner that these attributions are to be reversed for esoteric purposes. This would mean that Mercury really belongs with Netzach and Venus to Hod.

Rather than be bamboozled by such enigmas, we can understand them by means of the Hermaphrodite Archetype, the ultimate blend of polar influences; the neutralisation of binaries.

Upon crossing our arms over our chest at the end of a Tenebrae meditation, it occurred to us there may be a fixed Arcanum in the universal symbol 'X' (as seen in this pose) that is related to the occult 'switch over' between Mercury and Venus.

The Eighth Gates

Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us

Hebrews 12.1



Whilst the alchemical significance of the number 17 has given us much food for thought in past days, we must NOW consider the 'Eighth Gates' of occult numerology, which are known to be barred by rivalry, delusion, memory and inertia. The pathwalker cannot progress to the upper levels without first overcoming these negative oppositional hurdles.

We recall here the 'Holy Temple Octahedron' of the Tree of Life and observe that there are said to be eight gates to Shambhala, all equally inaccessible. The Secret Heart Centre, Hrit, is an Eight-petalled Lotus and the Star of Inanna / Ishtar is eight-pointed. Having passed through the seven gates of the underworld Inanna had to crawl naked through the Eighth before the Face of the Throne Room, where she met her alchemical Nigredo and thereafter was reborn.

The number eight marks a point where the Eastern and Western mysteries cross paths before advancing into their respective conceptions of Divinity and Eternity

(the 'parting of the Y'). The Eightfold Path extends from the East, while the Eight Immortals – reflected, perhaps, in the Olympian heroes of the West – were not gods but had earned eternal life, mastered magic and possessed supernatural powers. The mission of these lovers of wine – sometimes called The Eight *Drunk Immortals* – was to fight evil, in pursuit of which they could fly at rapid speeds through the air.

In the Western Revelatory system Eight signifies Resurrection and Regeneration for the soul having passed aforementioned gates, and is thereby the number of new beginnings and higher levels. Eight is also considered to be the number of Jesus, whose name in Greek has the numerical value, 888. There are eight Auspicious symbols, the Ashtamangala and the Pythagoreans claimed that "All is Eight".

What, then, is the infamous 'Eighth Sphere'?

In the course of writing this section we began watching a Youtube lecture entitled 'Rudolf Steiner predicts Eighth Sphere AI Invasion!', sensational though it may sound. It occurred to us that the gravely dangerous Eighth Sphere might be analogous to the Qlippoth of Hod, which like all the Qlippoth is a soul-destroying path which presents the double difficulty of trying to get back onto the right way through what would appear as a different dimension entirely and as far removed from the true Sphere as it might possibly be, being its direct opposition. This would be in addition to the specific danger and challenge posed by the Qlippoth itself.

If the Eighth Path is that of Magic (being Hermetic), the reverse would be black magic, the higher orders of which we are confronted with in the present day AI/transhumanist agenda. Perhaps a solution is in conscious recourse to the balance of power held in 'right footed' Sefirot Netzach? Perhaps by making the torus crossing to Netzach and activating the Victorious quality of Eternity through the reflection of Venus, one might find a way to 'back out' of the danger zone. The Octad, once attained, is the Foundation of Regeneration, Rebirth and Resurrection via the Eightfold Path, so it should come as no surprise for its inversion to be a terrible thing, given what is at stake. Nor should we expect it to be easily traversed by all to the ultimate extent that is expressed through the Androgyne Arcanum. An interesting addendum to this observation is that the 10 Qlippoth of the Tree of Death - the counter-forces of the ten divine emanations of the Tree of Life – are more a creation of 20th Century western occultism than historical Kabbalah. This

relatively modern conception of an evil spiritual route map further reinforces the warnings given by Rudolph Steiner in his prophetic lecture, A Picture of Earth Evolution in the Future, where he describes a highly malevolent ‘web-like’ entity with an evil corrupting intelligence dominating human affairs. It doesn’t take too much extrapolation to see in this a description of the internet and artificial intelligence. Describing a human intellect which is becoming ever more ‘shadowy’ as the Moon draws etherically closer to Earth and therefore to human consciousness, Steiner says:

“If the intellect continues to become even more spectral than it is already, if men never resolve to receive into their being what can now flow to them from spiritual worlds, then they will inevitably be absorbed into the shadowy grey-ness of their intellectual life.... from the earth there will spring forth a terrible brood of beings, a brood of automata of an order of existence lying between the mineral and the plant kingdoms, and possessed of an overwhelming power of intellect. [described on the Dark Journalist media show as a premonition of artificial intelligence being born from the World Wide Web, a mechanical super hive of sentient thought, belief and feeling].

“This swarm will seize upon the earth, will spread over the earth like a network of ghastly, spider-like creatures, of an order lower than that of plant-existence, but possessed of overpowering wisdom. These spidery creatures will be all interlocked with one another, and in their outward movements they will imitate the thoughts that men have spun out of the shadowy intellect that has not allowed itself to be quickened by the new form of Imaginative Knowledge by Spiritual Science. All the thoughts that lack substance and reality will then be endowed with being.

“The earth will be surrounded — as it is now with air and as it sometimes is with swarms of locusts — with a brood of terrible spider-like creatures, half-mineral, half-plant, interweaving with masterly intelligence, it is true, but with intensely evil intent. And in so far as man has not allowed his shadowy intellectual concepts to be quickened to life, his existence will be united not with the Beings who have been trying to descend since the last third of the nineteenth century, but with this ghastly brood of half-mineral, half-plant-like creatures. He will have to live together with these spider-like creatures and to continue his cosmic existence within the order of evolution into which this brood will then enter.... there are men who are actually conscious allies of this process of the entanglement of earth-existence....

“It is a hard destiny that power should lie in the hands of men who regard the truest thoughts as absurdities and who scorn the impulses that are most inwardly and intimately bound up with the well-being of human evolution, with the whole mission of humanity in the world. It is a tragic state of things and we dare not shut our eyes to it. For it is only by realising the depth of such a tragedy that men will be brought to the point of resolving, each in his own place, to help the shadowy intellect to admit the spiritual world that is coming down from above in order that this intellect may be made fit for the conditions of future times”.

According to the traditional school of Lurianic Kabbalah the Qlippoth originated in the fifth Sefirot of Geburah (Strength), on the mid-point of the Pillar of Severity beneath Binah. Whilst the emanation of Divine Light Spirit from Ein Soph progressed without upset through the first four spheres of Keter, Chokmah, Binah and Chesed, the Strength of Light proved too much for the vessel of Geburah (generally associated with Mars), which was shattered by the force and could not be restored. Via this shattered vessel did evil find a doorway into Creation with untamed Strength and untampered severity, giving birth to the ten Qlippothic shells and their attendant demons. For this reason, in the Spheres of Life Prayer we assigned the following petition to Geburah:

Stella Maris, ora pro nobis
Our Lady, Star of the Sea, pray for us

The Qlippoth of Hod has been associated with Samael, the Deceitful ones and Poison of God, characterised by an inauthentic but blinding light, the instigator of illusion and deception. This sphere on the Tree of death is a lie. It is fickle, being a force that generated by the negative fluctuations of the mind. In this bed of a poisonous lie is the essence of the archons who deceived Holy Sophia with their false light and thereby brought about the Fall of Cosmic Wisdom.

The Qlippoth of Hod is therefore not to be underestimated and if one finds one's self sucked into this vortex it is useful to understand which countermeasures might be helpful in the struggle to break free. The teachings of Paramanahansa Yogananda help light the way from the Qlippoth of Hod but the escape may be via a long and treacherous route. One must be prepared to retreat and start afresh, be vigilant for catalytic forces and not to give up hope, even if the task seems quite

hopeless. Sooner or later the gate will open and this must be avidly watched and waited for.

Robert Ambelain presents an intriguing passage on the Qlippoth in his Practical Kabbalah, saying:

“... in the world of Assiah, the last aspect of Divine Creation, equates to G’uph. This is our fleshy envelope, with its reactions and its subconscious life. Reflecting the “Qlippoth”, in an analogical relationship with the Inverted Tree, a final spark smolders within us. This is the Habal of Garbim, or the “spirit-of-bones”. It lives in the heart of our skeleton, and justifies the use of funereal debris in certain rituals of lower magic (skull, tibias, etc). Because it is the final step of the Divine spark emanated from Aziluth, it is also the last hope of our survival. When it is extinguished, that which was a living being is definitively departed into the great night of Ain, after having passed through all the grades of the Qlippoth, having passed through the three ultimate “Valleys”: of Sleep, Death, Forgetfulness”.

This puts us in mind of teachings relating to the seven lower chakras which are spaced out between our hips and our feet. Of the upward reaching energy of the theurgist, Ambelain adds: *“We would be incomplete and our study dangerous, if we did not signal a real danger in the awakening of the Mother-Energy, in the rising up of Ruach Elohim.”*

The rest of his thoughts on this matter are equally instructive and worth repeating in full:

“...we should always fear danger when an elevation of consciousness is produced prematurely. For a fortuitous incident, the emotive power which occurs in one of the higher Sefirot of our personal Tree can, like an avalanche, descend abruptly on a lower Sefira and give birth to an abnormal excitation of the animal reflexes on which it depends.
Then our nature, which still retains its impurities, is swamped in its animal impulses and its biological “souvenirs”. The Kabbalist must then rely on all his moral energy and to Divine Providence, in order to overcome such a trial.
In general, when an initiation is very powerful, or when we have a particular affinity with it, it awakens in us the Tiphereth center, or that of Kether (initiations expressed through anointing or blows to the top of the head, on the forehead or the

chest), we are then exposed to a more or less long period of temptations and moral tests of every sort. Then we imagine ourselves to be the prey of a whole horde of demonic tempters! (There is actually a certain occult truth to this...). These proofs are usually manifested by three of the principle “deadly sins”, being pride, anger and lust. This is because the Ruach Elohim has been imprudently awakened and because in its turn, it has abnormally accelerated the “radiation” of one of the latter interior Sefirot: Yesod.

This Sefhira is referred to the sexual centers, and these are linked to pride (exaggeration of virility), anger (exaggeration of combativeness), and lust (exaggeration of affectivity). Being familiar with psychology, a psychoanalyst will understand this concept better than a simple moralist! Let the reader not scorn this advice: the author of these pages has encountered the “narrow path” in question here!”

He speaks the truth on this matter for we have also experienced it and believe most others have as well, albeit in varying degrees of strength and more or less consciousness. For this reason we saw fit to reinforce Ambelain’s very important observation. Perhaps it will not prevent future catastrophic ‘lightning strikes’, human nature being what it is, but it might help seal the cure, once found, or signal completion of a lesson that was sweet in the mouth and so bitter in the stomach as to be almost indigestible.

The Chaldean Oracles define a metaphysical hierarchy of planes emanating from the transcendent divine intellect. The human soul, considered to be imprisoned in the lowest earthly realm – equivalent to the Assiyah-Gashmi of Kabbalah – is required to escape its hostile mortal state through stringent theurgic and ascetic praxis. In this asceticism do we hear echoes of eastern mysticism, which also involves a striving towards the spiritual realms, away from our lower earthly existence.

This is all in essential contrast with the standard Gnostic world view, which as a dualistic system is entirely at odds with the goodness of Creation and considers this fallen world to be the work of an evil entity known as the ‘demiurge’. The deficiency of the manifest creation is contrasted unfavourably with the perfection of the heavenly hierarchy, wherein God is hidden from humanity. The idea of escaping the physical realm is naturally even more urgent and is to be attained via spiritual ‘Gnosis’, or knowledge of the unknowable Deity. Here, however, is another important correspondence with Eastern Mysticism, which also makes

provision for an illusory 'realm of Maya', described by Peter Deunov as the 'belt of lies' and by Tomberg as the 'zone of delusion'. To the Gnostic this miserable zone encompasses the whole of manifest creation, and the human soul is an orphan charged with realising its divine birthright, hindered all the way by the evil archons who control the physical universe.

There is an analogy to be drawn between the hostile Gnostic archons and the deathly Kabbalistic Qlippoth, both of which represent serious and concerted opposition to the relatively enlightened Soul as it attempts to chart a course back home to Divine source. That the struggle is real is an established fact, agreed upon by spiritual aspirants of all creeds, ancient or modern. It is, in fact, a defining aspect of the human condition and inevitably brings to mind the concept of Karma, wherein the state of individual karma has a direct bearing on the particular essence of the struggle faced by a specific Soul in a given moment.

And yet, there is more than this besides and karma is neither the single nor the final answer to the task before us. As it is pointed out at the very start of Alchemical Weddings, all of us are called upon at some stage in our lives to "run with patience/endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

All things considered, the Path of Return is considered to be narrow with good reason and it is hardly surprising that it came to be known in some Hermetic quarters as the Way of the Fool, whose yoke must be easy and his/her burden light.

The Holy Ghost in tune with Christ Consciousness creates goodness and beauty and draws all manifestation towards a symbiotic harmony and an ultimate oneness with God. Satan (from the Hebrew, literally "the adversary") pulls outward from God into entanglement with the delusive world of matter, employing the mayic cosmic delusion to diffuse, confuse, blind, and bind

The Second Coming of Christ, Paramahansa Yogananda

The Portal

It looked like they were wheels within wheels

Ezekiel

I was alarmed to find myself floating above my body on the bed in my astral form, which was curled up into a foetal position and being sucked towards my East facing bedroom window, just beyond which was a flaming orb. The flaming orb was disturbing enough and I was being strongly pulled towards it, as if magnetised – but there was also a voice emanating from the same direction which gave me cause for grave concern. It said just one thing:

This is the Portal

Intensely deep (seemingly masculine), it had a totally inorganic yet somehow guttural quality which betrayed no emotion or information at all beyond the words themselves. Was this an artificial or an alien intelligence? With a tremendous effort of will I fought my almost irresistible drift towards the orb, which was hovering but 20 feet away from my inert body. I fortified my will by repeating the only thing which sprang to mind in that bizarre moment:

Evil cannot enter the upper room

The words I uttered had been ingrained via the 40-day meditation sequence I was currently engaged in and which was, in turn, part of a much longer series of meditations run by an esoteric group within the Avalonian tradition. I repeated them like a mantra as a means of retaining consciousness and resisting the magnetic pull of what seemed to be a sort of machine, if the state of its own voice was anything to go by. When I later reported back to my Avalonian mentor on the notable experiences, sensations and other results observed during the completed meditation cycle, he merely said.

I think you were right not to approach the flaming orb.

This hadn't been answer-enough to satisfy me so I asked a couple of trusted fellow path-walkers what they made of it. An anthroposophist friend gave rather more cryptic feedback on the strange event, suggesting something to the effect that it was gateway into a 'Temple Sphere' on the Tree of Life, which hardly helped explain things. On the other hand, someone on the Secret Space Program online support group responded that:

What you described sounds a lot like a localized wormhole.

I guess the jury is out on the flaming orb for now and I have not seen it again.

Remote Viewing

The sum of all these factoids seems to add up as: that Moon and Earth were formed neither at the same time nor in the same place, meaning that the Moon "came" from somewhere else

Ingo Swann, Penetration

I must have gone through some sort of wormhole but how I did this I have no idea. As soon as I arrived – to a scene of chaotic alarm – I sensed danger and instinctively stood as still as I possibly could, willing myself invisible to the hoards of men who were running around shouting in confusion.

Sirens sounded, warning lights flashed. It seemed to be a military environment and they were on an emergency hunt for who or whatever had breached their security. That would be me, then.

The invisibility shield evidently worked, but again, I do not know how, or even how I had obtained and then summoned the presence of mind to use it. What I did, however, instinctively grasp was the need to stay very still and very quiet, almost as if I were *not* there, while they ran around me in all directions.

Before too long the frantic footsteps passed out of the room I'd materialised into – a depressingly mundane and untidy affair apparently constructed of some kind of metal. I breathed a little easier and looked around, mindful that I needed to hurry if I were to limit the possibility of getting caught. There was a large open door or glass fronted wall in front of me, beyond which I knew was an immensely vertiginous drop into heaven knows where. Being inordinately afraid of heights I was understandably nervous, although I walked towards the opening and peered out nevertheless.

A sort balcony or walkway made of a metal grid curved around to the left, as if around the edge of a circular building or tower. I was struck by the extreme cold that was palpable in the ether, with flecks of ice hovering in the air around me and a thicker, slippery layer on the grid below my feet. I was anxious to note that the floor of the grid - no more than two or three metres wide – was sloping *down* towards the edge, which was safeguarded by nothing more than a low metal fence.

One could very easily have just slipped right over the edge, it didn't meet any kind of safety requirements as far as I could tell.

Looking to the left through the black as night atmosphere I saw in the near to middle distance a very tall, thin futuristic sort of tower with a bulbous top, which perhaps mirrored in shape and size the one I was currently standing in. All the people who'd previously been running around in my section appeared to have congregated at the top of the other tower, with throngs still arriving from a long metal walkway stretching out behind it. Through the silent distance between us I heard the unmistakable hubbub of anticipatory excitement and knew that something momentous was about to happen.

My will knew just what this was before it registered in my mind and moved me to act more quickly. Fear notwithstanding, I was being presented with a once in a lifetime chance that meant I would *have* to look over the edge. The part of me that knew what was coming realised I had no time to lose if I wanted to catch a glimpse of whatever it was that was coming.

Tiptoeing gingerly along the hazardous deck towards unknown oblivion, I remained calm by reminding myself that with something like this within reach I had no option but to be brave and take note. Plenty of superrich earthlings would have paid millions to see what I was about to witness. As I neared the edge of the ice-caked walkway there was a sudden outbreak of whooping, cheering and loud clapping from the tower on the left and I glanced over at it, wondering again who they were.

A second later I was captivated by an eerily silent movement from something vast below the walkway as the *Moon* sailed majestically into view, brilliant and shining like a mind-blowing pearl or ball of unflawed quartz, whiter than driven snow and a dazzling contrast to the black sky. I gazed in wonder from this new perspective on the Moon, which somehow appeared to be a kind of spaceship coming in to dock at the bizarre and apparently vast structure I was standing on. Everything paled in comparison.

Thoroughly awestruck and more than a little mystified I lifted my eyes to survey the breath-taking vista that had just opened out to sight through space. No more merely a dark void, stretching out before me in a vast, sweeping arc was a tunnel of stars that looked for all the world like a landing strip. This outstanding, compelling sight was the grand finale to what had transpired to be a progressively more thrilling remote viewing expedition. Below is a transcription of my initial report back to base:

“I’m here!”

I had appeared -

And whence I came knew not

The captains of this ice-bound station,

Staging post for secret stops.

All around me calls, confusion -

Had they guessed and were they shocked -

Knowing I had breached the stronghold,

Slipped inside the shield of clocks?

“Still my heart!”

One’s will commanded.

“Must I hide?”

The reason wondered.

But before ‘twas weighed, decided,

Speeding past they called: “It’s coming!”

Thus, it seemed my point of entry,

Fortune had decreed its safety.

This the portal - fabled doorway -

Stuff of legend, secret star gate.

A sloped and hazardous deck

Above un-named oblivion,

Drew me near its icy edge,

Thence beheld I vast dominions.

A huge ellipse with markers strewn –

Stretching far beyond - this tunnel

Looked immensely like an air-strip,

Star-port landing, this the summit.

Before my eyes the globe appeared –

Pupils widened, thoughts ran clear –

Radiance filled the tunnel, deep;

Hidden star-ways mark this keep.

Then were sounds of celebration –

Laughter, shouting, whooping, cheering –

Drifting ‘cross to where I waited;

From their vantage point they watched it.

Sailed below with silent splendour
Such a ship, immense of size.
Whiter than the snow or crystal,
Glowing pearl of greatest price.
Are there here upon the moon base
Star-struck scientists of Attis?
Did some lunar-priest command
The Queen Selene, Kore, Hekate?
Did these ancient priests control
The queen of ebbing, flowing tides,
Weathered ship of midnight squalls,
The treasured orb that mirrors light?
Only one can read their signs
If free; the one will travel time.
Then to one - unseen, unheard -
Shall be revealed in signs and words.

Stuff of nightmares

They know that almost all the planetary worlds are inhabited....But neither Mars nor Mercury belongs to our chain –

HPB, The Secret Doctrine

I would of course have the crispy duck, being veggie could go on hold for the time being, though not forever. I snapped shut the menu with a decisive flourish and smiled at the person sitting opposite.

“I enjoyed your talk” I started politely. It was only half true. The subject matter had been promising but conferences – even the ancient mysteries variety - weren’t really my thing and I’d only attended to keep Ellen company. Ellen was now a few places down the table being chatted up by the best-looking man in the room.

I looked back up at Mr Megalith, who I knew had some interesting stories to tell about the occult underworld of Britain. I wondered how to steer him onto less publicised topics than massive international building works. Curiosity might have killed the cat but I wasn’t going to let that stand in the way of my insatiable appetite for the arcane.

“What’s your opinion on the Nazca lines, do you think they were created with the help of an alien civilisation?”

After throwing it out there to help warm him up I sat back and took a sip of the not-so-great wine as he launched into a well-rounded hypothesis. I had taken a highly elliptical global route to Clapham Woods but I’d get there in the end unless someone interrupted him before dessert, which had an 85% chance of happening, I predicted.

He was an engaging raconteur and I found myself becoming more and more absorbed in the mysterious history of the Americas, as starters arrived and were cleared to make way for a steaming stack of pancakes that would soon be wrapping up my crispy fried duck. My mouth watered in anticipation of the favoured dish. If I had to choose a last meal it might well involve duck, I mused, with salted caramel gelato for dessert.

We had somehow arrived at Angkor Watt, which was possibly even further away from Sussex than we’d been at the start of the conversation. How could I turn this

thing around before people started thinking about leaving? It was, after-all, a school night.

“Aren’t you forgetting something?”

Startled enough to physically jump, I stared like a rabbit stunned by headlights at the man who’d just spoken and was now standing behind Mr Megalith on the other side of the table. He was smiling at me as if amused, his entire demeanour relaxed and friendly, as if he were a well-established ally. His face was somehow familiar but I didn’t know why.

Well over six feet tall and perfectly formed inside his preppy shirt and trousers, the man’s sandy-brown hair and glasses helped create the overall look of a young and handsome academic who probably played sport at weekends. But that wasn’t the issue. I glanced sharply at his outstretched hand and gasped with instantaneous horror, slapping one of my own hands to my forehead as that which had been forgotten hit me with all the terrible force of a legitimate bolt from the blue.

He deposited the item into my own right hand, which had peeled away from my head to accept the offering, then strode off swiftly before I had a chance to gather my thoughts. Everything was suddenly happening very fast and I felt as if time had just run out on me. Several people around the table – Ellen and Mr Megalith included – were giving me concerned looks, while one or two others twisted their necks to watch the man’s speedy exit from the restaurant.

I didn’t have the time or inclination to think about how it might look but pushed back my chair in panic and leapt to my feet, swivelling round to address my friend at the same time.

“I’m sorry I have to go!” I knew I looked wild-eyed and terrified.

Ellen pushed her chair back as well and put her napkin on the table. “What just happened! I’ll....”

I gestured firmly for her to stay. “NO! I have an exam first thing tomorrow and I need to leave *right now*. I looked back at Mr Megalith, who was now staring at the book in my hand. “I’m very sorry, it was lovely to meet you!”

I knew I must have looked virtually hysterical but my immediate need was so pressing that without further ado I scrambled into my coat, cast some money at the table to pay for my half-eaten meal and began the charge towards Euston station. Pounding up Museum Street at a sweaty gallop, a maelstrom of thoughts mashed

my brain into blind panic. How could I have forgotten this, I was such a blasted Fool!

Tears began to prickle the back of my eyelids as I barged through Russell Square, my panic-stricken self drawing not so much as a glance from the heads-down city dwellers lost in their own dark stories. Heaving awkwardly for breath, my body told me I would not be able to keep up this pace for much longer and I slowed to a messy power-walk, awkwardly digging out the phone from my handbag at the same time. Small mercies; I could probably still make the 10.24 train.

As I stormed up the road, implicitly daring anyone coming from the opposite direction to stand in my way, I racked my brains for any form of information I might have recalled from this special subject, but not a single fact or figure presented itself. My forgetfulness was profoundly complete and I was facing abject failure. There were no two ways about it, this was the stuff of nightmares.

*

The next thing I knew, the man who'd given me the book in the restaurant was urgently shaking me to wake me up. For some reason I was lying face down on the floor. There had been a terrible, terrible accident. Worse than an accident, something more had gone most horribly and finally wrong.

I was cognisant of such grave danger and disaster, either because he told me (telepathically, as happens in the astral) or I already knew because I'd lived through the time prior to this waking up, even though I don't recall it all now. Perhaps it was my life in another dimension. To my surprise I recognised him as the man who'd given me the book in the restaurant. As I climbed to my feet I registered that I was in a very gloomy industrial facility underground but the overriding impression was of urgency and great peril. He was compelling me to hurry up and jump into a lift, which was right behind me.

A lot of information was assailing me at once in this panicked state, which I took in at a glance as I was turning toward the lift. For a start I had a strong sense of being deep underground and on Mars, though why the latter occurred to me I cannot say. There was a lot of metal as if the walls were covered in metallic grills, but not shiny or high-tech, just industrial, with long corridors stretching out from the lift place I was in.

I also became aware there'd been a sort of emergency event, maybe nuclear or some other kind of bomb, something seriously bad, which had been deliberately

caused by a person down there who'd gone insane. I glimpsed this person sat in a large and otherwise empty room atop a HUGE pile of dead flesh, roaring and laughing like a maniac. This was so frightening I couldn't process it or look more closely.

All the while I was being hurried to the lift so it was happening in split seconds. The man was punching the button on the outside of the lift but when it arrived and I got into it he stood facing me on the outside. We had a rapid exchange where he said he wouldn't get in because it was broken and couldn't bear both our weights. I was very unhappy about all this and decided I wasn't going to get in the lift either until I'd looked for a friend of mine who I knew was also trapped down there.

I parted ways with the man and dashed off down one corridor, trying not to look in the room with the psycho. I soon found the person I was seeking buried in a small dark computer room stacked up with surprisingly old-fashioned looking equipment, not very high tech to my eyes at least. I cried and shouted at him to come with me because I was very upset to see this person was acting like a zombie (unconscious but functioning in terms of performing his tasks) and could not be woken up from that state.

I gave up and decided I should try to find another way to escape – somehow I knew there was another way. I soon arrived at somewhere with a totally different aspect because this WAS high tech and more white than metal with a few people in lab coats around, I'd even say it was quite busy. Everybody was in a state of high tension, panicking, basically, trying to get out via a bizarre device the like of which I have never seen before or since. As it was so unusual to my mind I struggle to describe it properly and have had to make some best guess interpretations. To complicate it further, like the lift it was broken and not working properly. Everyone was nervous about that because the escape device was in itself very dangerous if malfunctioning.

The first thing you had to do in order to use this thing was go under a kind of laser beam crossing a threshold and I had to duck down low to do this. I assume it was so low because it was broken and normally one wouldn't have to duck down in this way to enter. I passed under quickly and without really thinking, but as soon as I got to the other side realised I was very relieved that I hadn't touched the beam or that it hadn't killed me. Actually I was sort of elated that I'd made it through this section but I can't explain why I felt this.

I've always struggled to describe how I felt about this device in terms of what it was there for – was it some kind of security device that would wipe out an

imposter? – but it was almost like it had to do something to me physically which then enabled me to go through the next component.

In front of me waiting to get into the next part (which could only be done one at a time) were a couple of other people. We were all watching a woman (black shoulder length hair, lab coat) try to teleport out. To my utter shock and horror she began to disintegrate before my eyes in this thing she was standing in – a kind of transparent person-sized pod. She had the most appalling look on her face as her entire person separated into particles and sort of peeled away in flecks, but there was no blood or gore, as if her subtle rather than physical body was being destroyed.

To hell with that, I thought, and decided to risk running back to the lift. I quickly arrived at this, which by the way was just like a regular service lift, and pushed the button to go up. At once it started rising, but to my dismay it stopped at the next floor and a smallish blonde woman (she also seemed kind of unconscious but not to the extent the man in the computer room had been) with a baby in a pram wanted to get in. My first reaction was to think “no way it won’t hold us all!” but in the next second I thought of course she has to get in, which she and her pram/baby did. She was dressed in jeans and a shirt. Her level seemed to be more civilised than the gloomy lower grey zone I’d been in, but this was another spilt second impression.

The lift went up and we arrived at the top, which was covered by a small clear dome the size of the lift shaft itself that just poked out above the surface. A few more impressions hit me at once. First, it WAS broken and we weren’t going to be able to get out of the dome, which wasn’t moving. Second, there was nothing for miles in any direction except flat red dusty desert ground and third, I had a strong sense it had all been destroyed in the nuclear catastrophe, or some other horrendous event. I don’t remember anything else from that.

It is quite correct that Mars is in a state of obscuration at present, and Mercury just beginning to get out of it. You might add that Venus is in her last Round

Letter to the Editor

Believe that which is in accordance with your own experience

Jean DuBois

Dear Michael

I noted with interest that Psychic Circular was planning a special Agartha/Shambhala edition and decided to get in touch, having recently downloaded a long vision of Shambhala after obtaining a tail feather from my spirit guide and attaching it to a dreamcatcher. The vision was captured about 3.5 months later.

The first part of the Vision was a highly complex meditational path which almost immediately had me travelling through a vast tunnel of cloud-like gaseous material that was not entirely black but was dark with enormous, violent energy and smoky with a furnace-like heat. At the end of this vortex was a blazing orange light which looked incredibly and terrifyingly fiery, as if it were the sun itself.

I cannot recount what happened immediately after as my subtle bodies were split into two, as if by some kind of fission, and reintegration was necessary before I could proceed. As I was pulling myself together I became focused on a white dove, with which I attempted to merge as it began to rise up above the cloud. As we rose further she was transformed into a white swan before bringing me to a point where I could join with the Eagle, Apkallu. I climbed upon his back and buried my face in his neck, comforted by the presence of the eagle that for many years had held me under its wing and guided me to astral stages.

The first thing I really noticed about the flight was the extreme cold, together with the understanding that we were heading somewhere even colder. Far ahead on the horizon in the milky pale-blue sky was the impressive site of a large and triangular snow-capped mountain, towering above its surrounding range like a frozen beacon in the wilderness. I assumed these to be the Himalayas. The flight to the mountains was both exhilarating and surprisingly quick, for in no time at all it seemed we had arrived there above them. The eagle's pace slowed and we dipped

in attitude to follow the line of a long narrow ridge, with nothing but snow and sky to see about the razor sharp peaks.

It was about this time that I reflected upon whether we should be looking out for something more specific. In almost the same moment the eagle dropped even lower so my own eyes could scan the landscape below, as did the Eagle. We seemed to have arrived at a space between mountains, a kind of valley, perhaps, and I began to wonder if anyone was down there.

Maybe there was a fire?

No sooner had I asked this question of the eagle when I saw the very same fire I had been contemplating. Surely this was a sign that we'd arrived? I experienced a moment's hesitation that was registered by the circling eagle, but with barely a second more to think it plummeted downward so quickly that it briefly left me suspended in mid-air. Although I wondered if the fire starters would be friendly, we had come so far that it seemed right to investigate further. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Before I had time to even draw another breath I landed with an almighty crash on top of the raging fire. Whether the eagle had been shot down, I had jumped or fallen off its back I cannot say. I was only aware that when I stood up I was standing unharmed on the edge of the blazing fire. I was extremely alert at this stage, immediately grasping that I had arrived alone and unannounced –in the midst of a potentially hostile and palpably silent, watchful place in a most dramatic fashion.

Whilst it had been blue sky above when we set off, now it seemed to be the deepest night, although the fire shed enough light for my eyes to adjust and survey the circle of people sitting around it. It was a large fire and so was the circle. I could make out that a number of men were seated cross-legged, watching me intently. I could not quite guess their number – though it was not very large, probably no more than a dozen - but those I could see were of Asian appearance wearing nomadic tribal apparel. While they were not openly friendly and made no move toward me, nor did they seem aggressive. Their unsmiling demeanour appeared to be somewhere between indifference and doubt as to what should be done about me. They seemed to be questioning me and I felt agitated.

Why WAS I there?

I hadn't thought this through and experienced doubt myself, suddenly aware that although I was all but standing right in a very large one, I had frequently been told not to 'play with fire'. I leapt from the fire in confusion and swiftly retreated to the far edge of the camp – way beyond the rim of the fire-circle and surrounding shadow, up to the boundary with complete darkness. I circled this area restlessly for a while, careful not to step beyond the outer circle into the greater unknown. After a while sat down on the edge of the darkness and - noting the distance of the natives who were still sat in front of the fire, paying me no attention whatsoever – I became afraid. The expanse beyond the circle was vast, black and uncertain. Anything, it seemed, could have been out there.

UFOs, Yetis, terrifying unthinkable things ...

The fear was more than enough incentive for me to draw close to the group again. This time I joined them in the circle and sat waiting while they debated what should happen next. I got the impression that women had never been allowed before but seeing as I was there something had to be done with me. After some deliberation one of the shamans presented himself as a guide, reluctantly it seemed. I was curtly told to relax and to fear neither the darkness nor the situation. I had little choice but to obey. Very peculiar things then started to happen. The camp-fire was mesmerising. I found myself standing still in the very centre of its orange flames and into my mind came thoughts of the phoenix, wondering if it would rise. At the last possible moment I leapt out of the fire and whipped up a frenzy of snow until I managed to cocoon myself with an energetic mass of fiery/watery, spinning light. I did this on countless occasions at explosive, break-neck speed, over and over again like a crazy wild thing. I've no idea what I was doing or even what I was meant to be. The polar movement between fire and water/ice was incredibly forceful and I was totally absorbed in the seemingly foolish elemental procedure. Or maybe it was not so foolish, because when I finally started to slow down it was following the suggestion that this was how stars were made.

Still more time was spent working with the fire, until after quite a long while – hours it seemed – it significantly diminished until it was about the same height as me. I sat down inside it to watch as the licking flames took on the shape of a three-pronged crown, just like the letter Shin with my consciousness serving to be its fourth head. Eventually the fire/snow and then fire operation ended and movement

around the circle made me consider for the first time that we might have been in Shambhala. The tribesmen/shamans indicated for me to follow them. I saw then that it was daylight – it had come upon me unawares - but not extremely bright and evidently very early morning.

After a whole night of almost endless waiting it seemed we were suddenly in a hurry. I saw that there were quite a lot of men around and peered more closely at their clothing: woven wool jerkins and hats, belts, practical but colourful clothes. The mood was still intense. I was told to fall in line as we approached the side of a triangular mountain, at the base of which a large crevice had opened up before us, clearly a doorway. It was quite astonishing and I faltered for a moment. Did I really want to go in (I'd decided against entering mountains or caves prior to this experience) and would I get out again if I did? I was told telepathically by my guide – a serious man of few words – to not be afraid.

We quickly passed through the entrance and hallway of the mountain, which seemed to be well enough lit but I had no time to register any kind of décor or other details because no sooner did we pass through the door when we were whisked off at astonishing, lightening speed through the mountain interior. By the fleeting glimpses I ascertained that the place was awe-inspiring, a vault of such esoteric import that strangers were prohibited from seeing certain aspects of it. More practically, the proportions of it were huge, and much of it appeared to have been hewn out by hand, or at least adapted to life, for a hive of activity was taking place within, the purposes of which I had no hope of discerning.

The further into the mountain we went, the darker it became, and though we moved very swiftly indeed I was increasingly struck by the uniqueness of the surroundings, readily apparent, despite the fact I could not focus on the details. I also noticed that the further we went inside, the more people there seemed to be, until eventually we stopped at the most immense cavern it seemed possible to imagine. The atmosphere was one of sanctified potency, while all those inside appeared to be robed and hooded.

Wondering about the purpose of this immense gathering – for there were thousands of the hermit-type figures arrayed into a serpentine line before me – the shaman-guide said it was a meeting of the saints with the angels. One can scarcely imagine this spectacle. Filling the cavern/hall, forming a winding line thousands strong that moved up the passage/path running around and through it, the hermetic individuals were typically clad in dark sackcloth-type, belted, hooded robes, each

holding up a lantern in one hand and resting on a staff in the other. I was not permitted to see any of their faces, as is customary with departed souls. Although I'd been told the angels were present – maybe further up towards the front of the line - I do not recall seeing any. It was, nevertheless, an incredible sight. I assumed it to be a group meditation or planning meeting for the mass ascension of souls of the deceased.

I myself was present only as a 'watcher', who had somehow gained access through an otherwise closed doorway, somehow earned via a starry production, keenly performed, the previous night.

It gradually dawned upon me that the assembled were waiting in line to be greeted by a being of immense power; it seemed of immense stature, also, given both the size of the reception hall and atmosphere of tremendous controlled force, as if the King of inner Earth were waiting to receive his guests.

Shortly after I registered the presence of a King at the other end of the line, I found myself outside the mountain once again, this time standing at the top of it looking down, apparently onto what appeared to be a basin of water, no bigger than an ordinary basin in an ordinary bathroom. But realistically, the 'basin' had to be a lake. This bizarre shift in perspective made me anxious and once again my guide had to remind me not to be afraid. I focused my attention on the guide standing to my left and saw that he was holding out his arms as if to cradle the 'basin' of water, in fact the entire valley.

How had we become so big?

With mounting awe I realised that either one or both of us – myself and the guide – must have been unimaginably huge in order for the mountain lake to appear in proportion to a household basin.

For as long as I looked at him the guide appeared to be no more than the size of an ordinary man holding a basin of water, but if I fixed my attention on the scenery then it appeared to be of vast size, a snow-covered valley surrounding a secret circular lake.

This lesson in shifting perspective was, it seemed, another lesson to be learned from the shaman. Not long after we were stood back down on the flat plain in late morning, bathed in weak sunshine. It was almost time for me to go and he asked if I had any more requests. I realised that I did. I wanted to see a windhorse!

Almost at once a beautifully arrayed one, replete with beautiful white wings, appeared in the sky in front of us, at quite some distance away. I was however disturbed to find it was pulling a type of chariot and whilst the horse itself seemed not to mind this hindrance, I ardently prayed for it to be released from the yoke it was under.

After a surprisingly long time – the chariot stubbornly remained – the horse casually walked free and up into the air, where it strolled gently away as a light breeze. I saw several white wind horses ahead, most with opened wings.

It's possible I was meant to board the chariot, though I can be very dense and this did not occur to me at the time. The guide finally seemed exasperated with my slowness of uptake and the vision faded. Before I fell asleep I practiced some more with the wind and committed the events which had transpired to memory.

I realise this is rather a long letter but please feel free to include any or all of it within your special edition issue this December.

Yours sincerely, Verity of Mysteries, Herts

The Goddess

You don't know how to swim unless you get in the water

Bill Moore

It was upon my return from Egypt that I decided it was time to contact aliens. I'd been avoiding it for years but after what I'd seen out there it seemed like this was the right moment for it. If they hadn't wanted me to make contact then why had they appeared?

Naturally cautious about embarking on such an expedition, I did some preliminary investigations and decided to take the various New Age assertions that 'they' meant no harm at face value and test the notion that anyone could contact them if they tried. I was confident that after many years of highly intensive meditation, soul searching and spiritual work I was in as good a state as I'd ever be to both succeed in this endeavour and survive the encounter.

I went to bed as usual, lying down flat on my back, and acknowledged the turning of my will towards this exercise. To whoever might have been listening I telepathed my confirmation of readiness with a directed thought which was literally:

"I'm ready now, if you want to take me I'll go".

Fortunate as I was at that stage of my spiritual investigative 'career' – and entirely as I expected - I was met with an instantaneous response.

"Are you sure?"

The voice, which I perceived in my left ear (also telepathically), was feminine, quiet and – somewhat strangely, I surmised – entirely without emotion, which had the result of making the tone a little flat.

I was ready, nonetheless, and replied in the affirmative.

From being fully conscious in my bed I immediately blacked out for what I assume to be a split second, following which was the clear sense of being

extremely far away from my body on Earth. When my astral eyes opened it was onto a most unusual scene. I found myself looking down onto a very large spiral formation in deep space, composed of two different shades of purple, one like lavender and the other a paler lilac.

No other details were apparent in the backdrop apart from the shape and colour of this formation – no obvious stars or planets, no meteorites or spaceships, just the two-tone purple spiral. At the centre of this spiral was an entity whose body (or energy form, as I could see it) was shaped like an egg with a round head on top, very much like a typical snowman shape but with no facial or other features. It was the same colour purple as the darker spiral.

Surrounding this entity were several smaller versions of the same shape, arranged around it on the curve of the spiral itself. There were not hundreds or thousands of them that I could see, but dozens or a few score, the number was not clear. As I was adjusting to my view of this very unusual scene the feminine voice appeared again in my left ear.

“Do you want to worship our Goddess?”

Now that was something I hadn’t anticipated and I faltered on the question, for I had no wish to offend anyone by refusing, but I did not know who *she* was – who *they* were – and could not, therefore consent to an act of worship, as if before a deity. The lack of emotion in the voice struck me once again and my caution went into overdrive. I didn’t feel it was safe but I also wasn’t thinking on my feet, so I reverted to my default safety mechanism instead:

“I can’t, I only worship Jesus.”

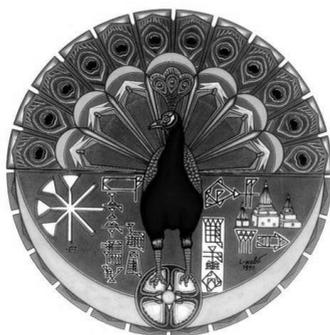
And that, it transpires, is precisely how you put an end to an alien encounter, for in the next split second I found myself wide awake in bed once again, with not much other than the distinct impression that I might have said the wrong thing. Of course, I kicked myself pretty soon after this. Could I not at least have asked:

Who is she?

Peacock Angel

You saw the lights that mark a man's face. I am a sorcerer, you saw that in my eyes

Carlos Castaneda, A Separate Reality



For some years now we have felt a definite connection to the Yezidi in general and Peacock Angel in particular following our introduction to them in 2009 at the time of President Obama's inauguration.

It took the form of a lucid dream. This dream came to us two days before his inauguration in a scene set outside a huge official building, where the outstanding feature was the most enormous crowd we thought we had ever seen. After witnessing this huge gathering, which we would realise was the White House when we saw it on television during the actual inauguration, we found ourselves in a behind the scenes area that was full of security. There were also a number of large, black helicopters, one of which we quickly jumped into as it was taking off. A number of men were already inside both this helicopter and the others which followed, but we did not see their faces.

The next scene saw us all arriving in the dead of night – again, by helicopter - in the square open courtyard of a sort of large but low-rise sort which clearly had an

official function as royal palace or government building. There was an air of great secrecy despite the noise from the helicopters and everything was happening in quite a rush.

Somebody from inside met the group and we were rushed inside this place, which I did not get a good look at from the outside, but I was made strongly aware that for the most part it was men-only everywhere. The rest of my group, who I assume weren't aware of me, were all swiftly guided along somewhere out of my view to where the ruler of this place was residing, leaving me with an invisible female guide who was explaining the situation regarding men-women.

As soon as I got there I had a sense of great power emanating from a central place in the building where the men had gone, a semi-spiritual power that was also temporal. I felt afraid as a woman to be even near to this force and was nervous, but the female guide was cheerful and clearly wanted to set me at ease. We would enter the women's quarters.

She opened a door onto a very large and plain room. I was somewhat disappointed at how plain and bare it all was, although it was not dilapidated. Along the left hand wall and part of the back wall were long wooden trestle tables upon which many objects, vessels, had been carefully laid out. I'm not exactly sure at what stage I realised we were in Iran but it was around this time.

My invisible (or barely visible) but very charming guide, indicated the tables and let me know that I could take whatever I wanted from the bowls and other vessels laid upon them, while I became ever-more conscious to the mystifying nature of the situation. I felt very cautious. Surely there was no such thing as a free lunch, why was she offering gifts? I told her I had no real money and reached in my pockets to draw out a handful of small change in Iranian coins. She smiled (I'm not sure how I knew this as she was still not fully visible) and said I should just "leave a tip".

I approached the table on the left and began to stroll past the objects, which I at once realised were all golden bowls and jars. I was quite careful not to study them too closely and casually walked past everything on that side without feeling at all tempted to investigate the contents of the jars. By the time I began walking along the table on the back wall I was feeling quite pleased by my genuine lack of real interest in the bowls. I was not easily tempted, phew, good for me! But then I got to the end of the row and something made me stop and pause. I had not even been looking properly at the table but something made me stop in front of a particular bowl. Surely it would not hurt to just look inside?

I still felt cautious, however, and once again turned to her to question the prices before I compromised myself. Again the same smile and enigmatic response.

"Leave a tip".

Unsure but increasingly curious, I looked at the golden jar and dipped my hand inside. It drew out a golden earring that was shaped like a small crescent moon. This object had the most miraculous effect upon me and I was instantly captivated by it, feeling like it was the most beautiful and wondrous thing I'd ever seen. At once it was the focus of all my attention and I watched in amazement as the thing seemed to come alive in my hands, the crescent stretching out in size until it was about 6 inches long and less rounded. This was amazing! I had to see more.

I put my hand in the jar again and pulled out the second earring in the pair, except this time it was a small golden orb which I shook gently. This also struck me as wondrously amazing and I was both fascinated and elated as this also was transformed before my eyes, into a larger orb with a cross impressed upon it, going full around the diameter of the orb in both directions. This was surely the most stunning jewellery a woman had ever seen! I was hooked and wanted more, eagerly putting my hand back inside the golden jar. This time I pulled out a small fan, which felt like the best thing I'd ever seen. From its closed position I could see it was golden but also coloured a deep bluey green, and I watched in awe as it articulated in my hands like a genius contraption (as with the earrings) and opened up to display the most exquisite peacock with the back of the fan its tail.

I was overwhelmed by the beauty of these objects and forgetting myself somewhat. I wanted still more but decided that the fourth time I drew something from the bowl would be the last. This time I pulled out a golden necklace, which had a square piece of chainmail at the end maybe 4 inches square. As I slipped this over my head the chainmail opened out into a pair of gold chainmail trousers supported by thin braces, and as this happened the back wall of the room became a mirror where I could see myself wearing these unusual trousers. I could not say I really liked the look of them and felt they were too exotic and the wrong style. Surely they'd suit a petite Asian girl more than me? I didn't want them and took them off.

But I did want the other things. I turned from the mirror and back towards the girl guide. Surely I had priceless treasures now in my hand. Once again I asked her the price. Before my eyes she then began to fully materialise, walking away from me and at the back of a small group of girls who all had their backs to me, all of them dressed in gorgeously exotic chainmail outfits and fancy decoration, all super-

feminine, beautiful and charming. She gave me a dazzling smile over her shoulder and disappeared again with the parting shot, "Just leave a tip," leaving me with the most profound sense of mystification, which is a sensation not quite like any other. Clearly I was being shown something, but what?

The dream experience ended and the next day I avidly began Googling for Peacock gods, divine peacocks etc, and almost immediately saw the image you liked of the Peacock Angel. I was astounded, for the various parts of the symbol exactly corresponded to the three items of jewellery I'd pulled from the golden bowls, extended crescent moon, crossed-sun and intricate coloured peacock. I'd never heard of the Yezidi but from that moment became very interested in them and tried to campaign for their cause and their rescue from Islamic State, even writing to Obama at one point. Which brings me to the other point. Why was this dream mixed up with the inauguration of Obama and secret visit to Iran?

At that point in time I was a big fan of Obama. I'd gone from being incredibly suspicious of him during the election race to being converted by magic after visiting New York and hearing his magically loaded speech. When he won I was unreasonably ecstatic, and I loved watching the inauguration on TV. So that was the huge crowd I'd seen!! But what was his connection to Iran? Ah now there's a story yet to be told! Nothing about that man is what it seems, he has immense secrets.

Vanessa

Orpheus is present always and everywhere where the love of a soul torn away by death is not content with pious and resigned commemoration, but aspires to find and meet the departed one beyond the threshold of death.

MotT, Letter XXI, The Fool

A beautiful woman with lustrous blonde hair was leafing through the conference pack with a total lack of interest. Her mind was elsewhere. It was on what destiny might have in store for her that evening. *Just as soon as this hellish conference is over I can get away and make myself look irresistible for Him*, she zealously resolved. She was filled with an all-consuming sense of unquenchable longing. The love of her life, as she thought of him, so rarely close enough, was finally drawing near.

Her heart leapt in anticipation of the moment they would meet again but already she was fraught with tension, void of security, riddled with doubt and helpless with desire for the unattainable being she was quantumly entangled with. Utterly conflicted, Vanessa needed something to soothe her soul as it strained with blind passion towards precisely that which she very much needed to resist. The only possible recourse was Prayer, but how could she reach God while this fearsome idol had somehow captured her soul?

It was no joke, rather, it was deadly serious. She was caught in a trap, fully outplayed by the irresistible Master of Deception and well she knew it. Her soul-searching intensified through both morning sessions and all the way to lunchtime, when she found herself staring into a half-full glass of Riesling, wholly occupied with a painfully erotic fantasy about the same wrong man. Would this torment ever end?

Her attentive posture effectively disguised the lack of attention she had actually been paying to the speeches. *Had* she been paying attention, she would have noticed they were strange to say the least. A weirdly evangelical statement finally caught her attention as a school-headmistress type woman warbled extra-loudly:

“ONE MAN, ONE GOAL, ONE MISSION. ONE HEART, ONE SOUL, ONE SOLUTION!”

This, it seemed, was meant to herald the arrival of someone called The Chairman. Vanessa gave a half-hearted clap as the next city slicker hit the podium. She was having trouble focusing and blinked a few times. Despite having drunk just one glass of wine she was feeling somewhat inebriated, as if her entire being was dissolving into the terrible force of overpowering desire.

The Chairman was a funny colour and - now Vanessa came to think of it - there was a lot more about him besides that didn't seem quite right. She pondered the meaning of life and its moral dilemmas for a minute. *Did anything seem 'right' - who or what decided what was 'right' and what was 'wrong'? Who could even say?* It was time for a holiday, she needed to escape for a while, clear her head. *Maybe a sabbatical.*

She gazed at the seductively large goblet and used her last remaining sober brain cells to make a decision that she shouldn't drink any more that day or night. *Nothing in excess....* She tried – with a sense of mounting futility - to focus her rapidly dissembling thoughts and regain control of her mind. She no longer had much of a sense about what time it might be. “Excuse me,” she whispered to the man sitting on her left. From his badge she had already noticed he was Jeff Lloyd, worldwide human resources director for Kentucky Fried Chicken. Vanessa was very attractive and Jeff immediately leaned towards her, his excitement palpable. “Do you have the time?” *Am I here?*

He didn't answer at all, although he did stare at her with a dazed expression for almost 10 seconds. She repeated the question and he looked hastily at his watch, clearly flustered.

“Oh yes, umm, quarter to two.”

“Thanks Jeff” She batted her lashes and his eyes shot helplessly to her breasts. It wasn't that late, she would have plenty of time to get away from here and ready herself for him.

Vanessa's mind emptied again as she unconsciously tuned in to what the Chairman was saying. The words were strangely familiar but she couldn't quite place where she might have heard them before.

“ONE FLESH, ONE BONE, ONE TRUE RELIGION, ONE VOICE, ONE HOPE, ONE REAL DECISION.”

People were murmuring all around and Vanessa turned her head to gauge the audience's reaction. Some were nodding vigorously but others were grumbling over folded arms and shaking their heads equally vigorously. Not that she cared what they thought, her scan of the room had been an automatic gesture for her mind was firmly fixed elsewhere. It was locked onto her beloved, who had been pulling her towards him since long before they'd first met in this lifetime. The shivering needle of her spirit grew firm as it strained towards him. The mere thought of the object of her desire was immeasurably vivid, causing her pupils to dilate at the irresistible interior sight and her lips to part with longing. The intense beating of her heart resonated precisely with an insistent, rhythmic sound that was emanating from the depth of space - imperceptible to everyone but her - as if a single string connecting her heart with the stars was vibrating through the cosmos. She closed her eyes momentarily and in her mind's eye saw a phosphorescent light so bright it made her gasp, incandescent as the dazzling body of Venus.

"It's like magnesium burning", she breathed in wonder. Jeff looked up at her again, still speechless, as time finally disintegrated completely.

Vanessa experienced a blinding flash of insight that would pave the way to her final acceptance. She was a prisoner, wholly unable to force the subject from her mind, free her body of his influence or erase his essence from her soul. The pain of unrequited love was more intense than anything she had before experienced, creating an agony in her being that was becoming ever-more unbearable. It was tearing her apart. She wanted, more than anything, the one thing she could not have.

O keep not captive my soul. O keep not ward over my shadow, but let a way be opened for my soul and my shadow!

Book of the Master of Hidden Places

Phanes

*Himself, meantime, the softest hours would choose,
Before the love-sick lady heard the news;
And move her tender mind, by slow degrees,
To suffer what the sov'reign pow'r decrees*⁸

A flash of gold caught his eye as a tall, slim figure began winding her way through the crowd, apparently heading his way. Her undulating form attracted admiring glances from men and women alike as she weaved through the crowd, closer to him by the second. He took a deep breath and rose to his feet, smiling, as pleasure and pain drew near.

“Vanessa!”

The two of them kissed with deceptively chaste politeness but the light in his eyes was dancing.

As she sat down beside the love of her life for the first time in ages Vanessa fought the urge to wrap herself around him and kiss him for hours. They made polite conversation for a while, until someone more important came to claim his attention. She excused herself from the table while he promised to catch her later. A very small thorn of regret pierced his soul as the person who loved him most in the world disappeared back into the crowd. But it was all part of the dance and to be smiled at not to be mourned!

*Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore---but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore*

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

⁸ The Aeneid, Book IV

He felt pure elation as his boat cut through the deep blue waters, accompanied by a small, brown bird perched on the mast. He did not so much wish that Vanessa was with him as he sensed in the recess of his soul that she always was. For a fleeting moment he thought he might call her, but a pod of playful dolphins appeared in the middle distance and distracted him completely.

Vanessa gazed out of her bedroom window onto the sun-dappled trees, imagining the boat as it plunged through the sea towards the priests. She was torn between a fleeting moment of perfect joy, unfathomable bliss, free from the limits of time and space, and an endless abyss of undying sorrow that she never seemed able to cross. It had been an eternity; would he never set her free?

She could almost feel the warm summer breeze against her cheek and inhaled slowly, closing her eyes in a brief moment of bliss. She wrapped her Spirit around him in the ether, clinging like seaweed to his unbending form.



*Love kindles love, as fire lights fire. However, from where does the first flame come? From within you it springs forth from beneath the dominance of sorrow...
this you know*

Samael Aun Weor, The Mystery of the Golden Blossom.

The Vau



There are myriad reasons why we gave Vau to be the initial letter of several leading ladies in this magical diary.

The 6th Hebrew Letter, Vau is a connector which can be translated as ‘and’. It is one of the four letters used in the Tetragrammaton, the Holy and Occult name of God, uniting Yod and Heh. It forms the missing link between God and humankind through the glory of the Shekinah. The Zohar teaches that “all is contained in the mystery of the Vau, and thereby all is revealed”⁹

In the Hebrew language transcript of the Book of Genesis / Barasheet (The Beginning) Vau is the first letter of almost every sentence of the first five chapters, as befits its status as the ‘connector’ of the Alphabet. As ‘and’ is itself a connector, this means that the Tetragrammaton can be read as ‘Jah and Heh’, which are the masculine and feminine aspects of God.

*And God said: Let there be Light: and there was Light!*¹⁰

Esoterically Vau serves as the connection between heaven and earth and is related to the ‘Orr Yashar’, the light of the Creator as it enters the world. It also represents the six days of Creation and six physical directions of right, left, front, back, up and down.

Whilst there is disagreement about which Hebrew letters are to be associated with particular Tarot symbols, we incline towards the school of thought which puts The Lovers in sixth position along with Vau. Levy describes this letter as ‘the arrow of

⁹ Paul Foster Case, The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order

¹⁰ Genesis 1.3

love – the lingham’, the number of both antagonism and freedom, of coupling and the work itself. According to him, Vau “knows the reason of the past, present and future and reveals his true dogma to pure hearts”. He speaks of it being the letter of enchantment, entanglement, union, embrace, struggle, combination and equilibrium.



For Papus writing in the Tarot of the Bohemians, the dominant idea expressed by this letter is that of a connection, mediation and a link between antagonists. Vau, being the sixth, is in the realm of absolute affirmation and absolute negation. Fabre d’Olivet also makes pertinent observations upon this letter: “This sign is the image of the deepest and most inconceivable mystery, the image of the knot which reunites, or of the point which separates, the nothing from the being. It is the universal convertible sign, which forms the passage from one nature to the other; communicating on one side with the sign of light and of spiritual sense (a pointed Vau), which is but a higher form of itself; on the other hand linking itself in its degeneration with Ayin (𐤂), the sign of darkness and of the material senses, which again is but a lower form of itself.”

Some say Vau is the Pathway from Chokmah to Chesed – Wisdom to Mercy – while others associate it with Tifaret at the heart of the Way of Beauty, the Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life, where the Pathwalker transcends time to know the reason of the past, present and future and the truth is revealed to pure hearts via the Philosopher’s Stone.

In Tantric philosophy the three primary Nadis of Ida, Pingala and Sushumna correspond to the three pillars of the Tree of Life, with the intersections of the Nadi along the central axis resembling the Paths. The cool left path Nadi - as with the left Pillar of the Tree, the Pillar of Boaz – is seen as essentially feminine and as representing the Moon and the River Ganges in Eastern Tantra. Hot Pingala on the right – equivalent to the Pillar of Joachim – is masculine and represents the sun and the river Yamuna. The central channel of Sushumna is associated with the river Sarawastic and encompasses three other subtle channels – Vajra, Chitrini and Brahma – much as the Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life encompasses the three Mother Letters of Aleph, Mem and Shin.

The World of Formation (Yetzirah) is associated with the Vau.

Thou hast led me to the upper Gods of Chaos. May the offspring of evil now be driven out, who follow me, and may they sink down among the lower Gods of Chaos; and let them not come near the upper Gods, that they may behold me. May great darkness cover them and black darkness come over them; and do not let them behold me in the Light of Thy Power, which Thou hast sent me to save me, so that they may not again have power over me....Because I have believed in the Light I shall not fear. The Light is my Saviour, I shall not be afraid.

Pistis Sophia

Portae Lucis

*When the Sun of Divine favours seems to them to shine most radiantly upon them,
God darkens all this light, and shuts the door*

St John of the Cross

Somehow I slept deeply and took my time waking up, refusing to open my eyes as I indulged in the endless moment of a perfect kiss. The deranged panic of the night before had yet to hit me, my mind was fully occupied with the blissful slow burn of mutual desire, sublimated through enforced separation.

When the kiss finally faded and my eyes blinked open, the feeling of tenderness remained. It had been so long since he'd last visited me that I had come to accept that those moments were all behind me. Had he remembered me, too, I wondered. The essence of his soul touching mine was like the first breath of summer after an enduring frost and I cradled it in my heart, unwilling to let go of this rare whispering echo of true happiness.

Still almost lost in the Queen Scale dream I began to focus on the room about me and tuned into the sounds of the new day. A beam of sunlight penetrating between the curtains informed me it was probably quite nice outside. Still reluctant to break the spell of the kiss I closed my eyes again to savour the memory of the dream before it died. How could it be so vivid if it were not real? A tear slipped out of my eye.

Unmethodical in my morning call to action, I attempted to simultaneously draw open the curtains and pull on my pyjamas, which as usual I had discarded as being too warm during the night. Dragging my head and arms through what seemed to be the right openings I was met with the golden light of mid-morning.

It was probably about a quarter to ten, but what had happened in the early hours between one and two am, I wondered, and why had I remembered that just then? What was it about time that was so damn strange? The memory struck me like a hammer, the company owls in their frenzy, descending on my neighbour's room with one common cry between a flock of them:

TWOOO!

On that occasion a sense of realisation had shocked me, delivering a profound rush of energy like an influx of divine breath, somehow glorious and yet so very rare. The climax of another initiation. There had been many of those over the years and I'd accepted them all as if they were perfectly natural and bound to happen. It was simply how it was and always had been, but why had I not been more disturbed by the unbroken chain of occulted experience I'd gone through in my still-young life? Why had I never questioned any of it but taken it all in my stride as if were due course? It wasn't normal.

Turning back into the room, my eyes alighted on something glinting brightly on the polished single bookcase I'd bought for my student digs in Oxford. I had moved it back into my bedroom in the family home at the end of my last term a couple of years ago, along with the rest of my very small furniture collection. It was one of only three pieces I had to my name, alongside a small leather armchair and well-worn oak blanket box. Desk, desk chair and bed had been supplied by my College along with a reading lamp and bed-linen, which was washed once a week by the helpful Scouts who tended to the Medieval lodgings.

I crossed the room in a few paces to snatch up the book, which had the most extraordinary golden cover engraved with an esoteric image that was at once both deeply familiar and profoundly mystifying. A bearded man wearing a beret-like hat was sitting in a room of stone holding the trunk of a symbolic tree derived from an arrangement of ten spheres. I turned the book over in my hand and opened it experimentally. I had a lot of books but could not recall having picked this one up anywhere recently. Puzzled, I read the first line I saw:

The one who serves from love is the one who serves from YiRA. Know that love and fear when they are attached in devotion are one and the same, for YiRA has two faces.

I slowly sat down on the bed as I acknowledged that fear had the upper hand in my soul and had arisen from my love itself.

PART 2

Murder @ Brave New World



It depicts a situation of distress corresponding to the alchemical nigredo

*Carl Jung, *Mysterium Conjunctionis*, Adam and Eve*

PART 2

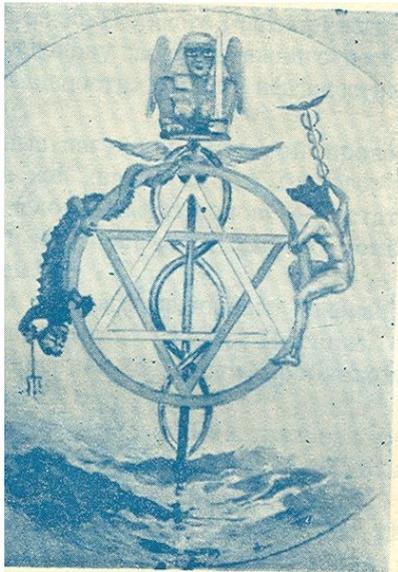
Murder @ Brave New World

Destiny
Mockingbird Hill
The Zelator and Mystery
Theseus goes to The Bucket
Insomnia
Mas Comida!
Karmaville
Rainbow, Flower and Music
One K'an
The Awakening
Sealed Letters
A Kind of Magic

Destiny

The cosmic drama is in reality a myth made flesh

MotT, Letter X, The Wheel of Fortune



I stared at the Facebook feed and felt part of my brain shrivel. Pictures of cute baby animals jostled for space with anarchistic calls to action, spiritual platitudes, photos of people's meals and other none-events from entire swathes of the population I'd never even met in person.

My eyes glazed over yet still I scrolled, as if compelled by a sinister brainwashing force that was emanating from deep inside my laptop. For a nanosecond I contemplated this force: Was it part of a conspiracy to dumb-down society and kill

off portions of the human race through some form of gadget based radiation source?

A piercing electronic bleep from another demanding device punctuated the robotic trance I'd fallen into and my heart leapt for the first time that day. I grabbed the smug smartphone, unable to squash my maddeningly clear desperation:

Was it from Him?!

Your O2 bill is £37.90 this month, for the full statement visit www.O2.co.uk

I tossed the thing aside, disgusted with myself. If it was proven time and again to never be from Him then why did my heart still jump over the moon whenever it beeped?

Because according to the eyes of truth that were always watching I was a sad, deluded fool, that's why. I leapt from the chair in distress and stood on one foot with the other wedged against my inner thigh, straightening my hands above my head in a determined prayer position.

OHMMMMM, SHANTIIIIIIII.....

Sort your life out, whispered my Angel as I settled into the yogic posture and gazed into hyperspace, echoing the words of a vigilant psychic who'd accosted me in the aisles at a recent trade fair.

"The spirits want to know when you're going to start doing what you're meant to be doing!" he'd robustly informed me, having pounced from a well-appointed home interiors stand wearing a magician-like white suit. His tan was orange but his eyes were kind and I'd accepted the insight with teary gratitude. It was the one burning question I also had for myself, but how was I supposed to just do what I was 'meant to be doing'- what *was* 'it' for heaven's sake?

It wasn't as if I lacked awareness of the futility of my present existence. It wasn't as if I'd ever stopped looking for 'it', but I was a prisoner of desire, a slave to unrequited love - the only true kind according to Oscar Wilde - not that it helped. Who or what could ever set me free?

Who could even say?

The memory of the psychic faded and I discontinued the pose in order to revert back to scrolling. A couple of feet down the indiscriminate page I was accosted by a tight posse of happy, self-actualising hippies. Out they beamed, their radiant, nut-brown faces alive with joy against a backdrop of lush palm trees and endless white sand. I sighed deeply.

Life, eh, why was I not having some of that?

Seized by a sudden reckless urge to get a piece of whatever I was missing I clicked on the name of the girl who'd posted the photo and bashed out a message.

That's a fabulous photo of you guys - I really have to get away soon! I don't suppose you know anyone who's looking for volunteers?

Working for free had to be good for karma didn't it?

A reply pinged back with uncharacteristic speed.

YES!

I wasn't a stranger to meaningful coincidences, moments of serendipity or dream manifestation, but was nonetheless taken aback by this instantaneous response to such a specific question.

Really?

Yes! My friend in Guatemala JUST emailed me to see if I knew anyone who wanted to work on his project!

A third inner exclamation struck me. Were things meant to fall into place so quickly and easily? From where I was sitting it seemed clear that the spirits wanted me to get away too. It was destiny. The metaphorical bag was evidently packed, ready to be stuck on the end of a stick and slung over my foolish back.

Into my head once again popped the magician in the white suit with his wise, all-seeing eyes. The oddest thing was that Guatemala had been in the back of my head for an indeterminate length of time, a seed of strange origin that had somehow pushed its way through the dark matter of my unconscious mind.

I recalled a lucid dream from times past where I was carried on the back of an eagle to the breath-taking Mayan jungle, stretching out as far as the eye could see in every direction, an ocean of emerald green against the cornflower blue sky.

Then, in the twinkling of an eye, I had found myself locked in a cage with my face at ground-level, observing mutely whilst poker-backed, hieroglyphic-haired temple priests made ready for the next human sacrifice....

Oui, c'est moi.

Did I detect a pattern emerging?

My hypnosis ended and the laptop came back into focus. I rapidly typed another message, the potent reminder of past death making me overflow with the terrible excitement of future life.

That's amazing timing, it's obviously meant to be! Would you send me his details please?

Yes, she would.

www.nuevomundovaliente.com / zorro@nuevomundovaliente.com

I checked out his website and read the contents with mounting joy, for it appeared that Zorro and I were singing from the same hymn sheet:

Our Mission is to create sustainability centres in regions of great need. We are dedicated to promoting sustainable lifestyles and improving environmental conditions by the implementation of a complex integrated strategy consisting of key modules: Sustainable Living via a model community and Eco Projects, all sustainably funded via eco-tourism. Nuevo Mundo Valiente serves to inspire, teach and assist individuals and communities to live in balance with nature and living by example is our creed. Be the change to see the change...

Sounds quite impressive when you put it like that, doesn't it?

I signed myself up with wanton abandon, shadow tightly bundled into the pack I would strap on my soon-to-be-sunburned back. I knew the time had come to face my karma and I was resolutely unafraid to do so at the crucial moment of funds transferal. Because yes, this was the type of volunteering you had to pay for; karma that mucky costs time and money to shift, dedication is what it takes.

No more being a saddo for me, I vowed, metamorphosing into a Divine Fool about to blithely trip off the top of a very high cliff into a bottomless abyss with ease and grace. The launch date for my escape was set for February 22 2012, precisely the start of Lent and therefore befitting of an hermetic undertaking. This gave me three and a half months to be consumed with dread about the possibility of repeating one of my more exotic past-lives by being human-sacrificed in Central America, my initial bravado having faded with the same dramatic speed with which it had arrived.

I never could have imagined that the tables would turn 180 degrees and - far from having my heart ripped out by an obsidian-eyed native – I would find myself complicit in a ritualistic murder committed at Brave New World, half a moon before the Resurrection.

Mockingbird Hill

"It's not easy having a good time, evening smiling makes my face ache"

Frank N Furter, The Rocky Horror Picture Show

Looking back to that fateful night - illumined by a full moon in Leo on the cusp of the 2012 spring equinox - I wondered how things would have turned out had we not eaten Zorro's father. It was one of those classic forks in the road from which alternate realities endlessly unwind.

There had not, however, been a choice of paths when I disembarked the small passenger boat and set my unsuitably shod feet on the base of Mockingbird Hill¹¹, broiling like a lobster in the unforgiving Central American sun. While the lancha sped away with all the other passengers I surveyed the broken road with sickening dread. I had a definite impression that 'something' was not quite right, as it were, that a very wrong label had been slapped on the proverbial tin.

If truth be told I had suspected as much for quite some time, which accounted for the spiralling sense of doom that began long before my departure from blighty. I mean, what kind of name was Zorro, anyway?¹²

Although I was a somewhat paranoid individual by this point in my life, my fear of being machete-hacked to death in the crucible of planet Earth was not only based on self-manufactured suspicion. It was also borne out by night-time curfews across half the country and a scarily high murder toll that was due to be reported in multiple regions of the country over Easter.

I assessed the steep upward trajectory of the path. That this was the hillside I'd agreed to climb was beyond dispute but if I was hoping for a sign to the casa at

¹¹ Operation Mockingbird was a secret campaign by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to influence media that began in the 1950s. Mockingbird was very active during the overthrow of President Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in Guatemala during Operation PBSUCCESS, when certain journalists were prevented from traveling to Guatemala

¹² Zorro is the Spanish word for 'foxy' or 'crafty'

Nuevo Mundo Valiente I'd sure as hell have to make it myself. Struggling to contain my terror I ogled Zorro's deceptively simple instructions with bugged-out eyes:

'Arriving at the dock, walk up the hill past the playing field to the first bridge'.

I looked around anxiously for some kind of clue.

Dock?

Playing Field?

Bridge?

Oh, but the hill was there and I would most definitely be hauling myself up it. With a desperate heave I hoisted the larger backpack onto my crisply burning shoulders, hooked the small one onto my arm, grappled the silver body-bag into an awkward bear hug and proceeded to negotiate what transpired to be a near-vertical hill face while a huddle of neat, tidy locals eyed me with suspicion. And who the hell could blame them, for sure as day follows night I was a sorry gringo sight. It was *'only 25 minutes to the top'* according to the gospel of Zorro. 25 Central American minutes, that is, AKA the longest day of my life and soon to be the longest night. The seeds of my compliance in the cannibalisation of that man's father were planted by my leaden feet as they lurched up the unforgiving road. All became clear as I fought a losing battle with the sun for air.

Viente-cinco minutos, eh, mi amigo?

Finally I could decipher the sinister dreams of four months ago that began as soon as I transferred money to Zorro and the truth was imparted via lucid astral roads and clear etheric signs. Visions of dusty cramped attics and frazzled arguments, gunshots fired in the forest and a woman with henna-dyed dreadlocks who nodded sagely when I told her the spirits were angry.

The good news, at least, was that the present day - Ash Wednesday - was most definitely an ideal moment to cut out easy living and morph into a penitent prodigal. I could still turn the situation to some advantage by using it to climb the karma mountain and fulfil yet another hermetic task.

I thought grimly of my well-thumbed copy of Meditations on the Tarot and complex alchemical procedures, the relentless demon lover who'd stabbed me in the heart, soul and back with ten sharp swords and a lone-wolf priest who'd implanted suggestions of Atlantis into my entranced mind.

'If you decide to go remember to ask for protection; a prayer to the angels should suffice....' he'd said.

I had rashly concurred with his suggestion and in a split second found myself staring from behind some seaweed at an immense half-man, half-serpent at the bottom of a murky green ocean.

'The hermeticist never goes down', my teacher had loftily announced in response to my subsequent reports about near death experiences in the underwater kingdom, offering little in the way of comfort or an easy escape from the water-logged labyrinth. I looked up at the mountain before me and wondered if it would indeed help with the rectification - restore the balance of depth and height, so to speak. As my brain ran into overdrive the familiar dreaded itch of a hormone and stress induced rash began to flare across my troubled cheeks, blooming like a pitiless thorny weed as poison seeped out of me with every harrowing breath. With swiftly diminishing hope I wondered if Zorro would even be present to greet me when I arrived at my appointed place in the back arse of beyond. It was, after all, the only thing I'd made him promise.

Cross your heart and hope to die, amigo....

I didn't think my heart would ever stop sinking but it was suddenly administered a ray of real hope:

A man on the road!

A paleface with a moustache who looked like he might speak English!

Praise the Lord!

I stepped up the pace and staggered twice as fast in his direction.

'HI, HOLA!'

A friendly but curious look was directed at me by the super-relaxed dude who'd clearly read a few more memos than I even knew existed.

"Hi there, what's up man, where ya goin?" *Yankee doodle dandy.*

"Brave New World." My panting voice was heavy with well-founded doubt, poorly disguised by a veneer of false hope. "You know it?"

"Sure..." *Poor cow.* "That's Zorro's place, right?" *You'll last, ooo, let me make a prediction now, five minutes.*

"Right". *Zipede do-dah hey.* "Is it far?"

“Oh yeah, man, it’s waaay up the hill”. He turned around to point in the general direction of the stratosphere. “There’s no-one around at the minute though, he’s not been there for months, it might even be abandoned.”

I stared at the Yankee, aghast, and without even pausing for reflection plunged a psychic knife honed by my worst fears into a mentally mutilated effigy of my absent tormentor.

YES I AM A WITCH PREPARE TO DIE YOU MOFO!

This was not rightful thinking by the standards of any good philosophy and an expression of mild concern flitted across the ruddy face of the threshold guardian. “I’m Lettuce, by the way”.

Thus transpired the in situ owner of the nearest other farm to Zorro’s bedevilled project.

I deflated impotently. “Great, hi, I’m Vee....” I thought rapidly, “Veggie!” *Please help me now.*

He studied my immense load for a second. “I’d help you with your bags but I’m just here waiting for my wife to get back”. *Hey ho, there ya go.*

Great, cheers! As I turned back to face the unforgiving mountain alone, the sombre parting words of Lettuce rang like bells of doom in my wolf-alert ears.

“Good luck man!” *you sure will need it - you look real mad - don’t go killin’ anyone now!*

I gritted my teeth and tried not to think more hateful thoughts about Zorro, but was instantly plagued instead by images of **Him** - the demon lover - being insouciantly chauffeured around somewhere better with a posse of chic acolytes, elegantly robed with auric glamour while I struggled with myself on the narrow, rocky road. Hot, bitter tears prickled in my narrowing eyes but the moisture was soon sucked out of them by the huge flaming orb that was burning me to death.

*

Around half an hour later I completed the first 100 yards and prepared to ‘*carry on past the football pitch*’, as instructed. Shattered and almost broken even at this early stage, without doubt I would have failed to make it to the next level (‘*cross the first bridge*’) had an angel not descended on a rickety-looking tuk-tuk.

PRAISE THE LORD!

I waved frantically at the unstable-looking and rusting red contraption that was rapidly zooming towards me. It skidded to a halt and the young, handsome driver dubiously eye-balled the three bag-carrying fool making a fuss on the street.

“Brave New World?” I chirruped idiotically.

He arched a patrician eyebrow, the confused disdain impossible to disguise.

“Queee?”

“Errr...” I managed uselessly, simultaneously wiping the sweat from my ears. ‘**Me** ...go...with.... **you**’ I pointed at him meaningfully: ‘Now...*please?*’

He stared at me, non-plussed, so I gesticulated wildly. ‘up, **UP!**’ I thrust a stern finger in the right direction. *Up the bloody hill mate, you can’t possibly think I’m able to walk up there alone with all this baggage?* I wracked my addled brains and somehow extracted some sense. ‘Subo, por favor!’

He nodded curtly (I sensed reluctance, despite the promise of an easy fare) and I dragged my 2 tonne muchillas into the narrow back seat, falling to one side as he executed a speedy three-point turn and set off upwards with a deafening roar of tiny engine and skidding wheels.

I thanked God for small mercies at the passing metres I was thereby avoiding climbing as we zoomed up the bumpiest road on Earth at breakneck speed. We quickly reached the first bridge, whizzing over it in a blur like rusty red lightning. *ZIPEDEE DO DAH HEY, AH WAS CROSSIN’ THE RIVER!*

One sharp corner three seconds later and the cracked-up yellow bricked road abruptly morphed into the aftermath of what had clearly been a devastating landslide, with rocks heaped upon stones on the kind of track only a healthy mule could take. Mules and impeccably dressed tribal folk bearing a hundredweight of firewood on each of their backs or a week’s worth of laundry on their heads, that is....

I set the pause button on my self-pity while I took stock of the situation and admired their colourfully refined and dignified passage. Much better feelings of awe and respect arose in me, momentarily humbling the moaning, groaning, imprisoned soul that was trapped inside my blistering body. As I watched and learned I was rewarded almost instantly by the awesome sudden appearance of another threshold guardian. This one was grey-bearded, hat-donning and wizard-resembling.

PRAISE THE LORD!

I flagged him down like a maniac – virtually pulling him into the vehicle - while the tuk tuk lurched on for another few inches before grinding to a halt.

“**HI**, hi there!” I cried out plaintively to my new best friend.

He smiled with an air of relaxed and comfortable, Zen-like calm, as if impervious to the sudden appearance of a wrongly-dressed, purple-faced madwoman on the road to nowhere.

“Howdie miss, where ya goin?”

I hung my head. “Brave New World”.

“Aha!” His eyes twinkled meaningfully as he suppressed a spiritual chuckle.

“That’d be Zorro’s place?”

“Yeah.....” I sighed dramatically. *That’s my karma....*

“Well, I hate to tell you” (this was not quite true, he seemed to be having fun) “but it looks like there’s no-one up there. I think he abandoned it, it’s been like that for months now, people coming and going, everyone pissed off.” *All up there wanting to kill someone.*

My horror spilled out without restraint, the previous remonstrations with my bad-tempered self instantly forgotten. “But I’m *alone* out here,’ I accused, “**A-LONE DAMN IT!**” I glared at him stupidly. "What do you mean there’s NO ONE THERE?!" *How can there be no-one in nowhere except me?!*

The Wizard shrugged and looked away from my longish blonde-ish hair and blue-enough eyes, smiling to himself all-knowingly. *That’s Sorrow for you.* “Yeah it’s a problem that place, he’s got everyone mad at him, taking their money and leaving em’ all to fend for ‘emselves. The locals want to burn the place down, he’s pissed ‘em all off so bad; there’ll be trouble soon, you wait”.

Big trouble.

Massacre.

I stood on one foot and stared at him blankly, calmly reminding myself that this was not happening, all was just a dream within a dream and what we call reality is merely an illusion.

OHHHHMMMMMM.....

My consciousness readily separated from its unhappy body, enabling me to almost believe myself for a few blissful seconds. I was really anywhere other than there, then. Really, I was with Him - here, now - happily being kissed...

But I wasn't, really, was I, it was all a bloody illusion?

*Suffering is the badge of all the tribe of sentient things*¹³

Oh goodie, another lesson, thanks for that, anything else?

*The cause of suffering is desire*¹⁴

The asphyxiating pain in my heart brought me back down to Earth with a desperate thud and I distracted myself by mentally reviewing the deal I'd agreed for my dollars. Brave New World had promised permacultural atonement with nature, harmony with indigenous populations, sunrise powered yoga and sunset meditations for path-working mystics in retreat from the corporate tapeworm economy. Clean *communal* living, in other words. Communal, as in, surrounded by people; the opposite of being alone.

The wizard's eye glinted naughtily. "Nice website though!"

Hmm, nice website.

"Sure..." I glowered like a soon-to-be axe murderer.

Nice dad.

Nice dinner.

The wizard of Mockingbird Hill proceeded to explain that the stuttering tuk tuk could ascend no further and offered to help me carry my bags if I could wait for him to go down to the village for his shopping and back up again.

I considered the friendly offer and thanked him, but fear of waiting longer than it took the sun to set compelled me to battle on alone like a lunatic. The bored driver requested 5Q for his trouble and wilfully mishearing I thrust 25 into his confused hand before soldiering on up.

The ever-more glorious view that materialised as my torturous climb progressed was marred only by the exponentially increasing anxiety that I might not arrive

¹³ T.A. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*

¹⁴ Second Noble Truth of Buddha

before dusk and the soon to come terrors of night-time alone in the Guatemalan highlands. All the same, as the late winter sun made its rapid descent I somehow managed to set foot on the final way-marker, '*the blue tin bridge*' that was suspended high above a deep mountain gorge.

Before crossing I paused to savour the respite from climbing and assessed my surroundings. At the near end of the bridge was a small wooden gate through which could be spied row upon perfect row of gloriously chlorophyll-rich salad materials, including a dozen varieties of super-strength lettuce. No prizes for guessing whose glorified mega-patch THAT was.

Over and across the bridge the tops of tall avocado trees rustled gently in the late afternoon breeze, forming a canopy of shade beneath the azure sky that cast a mysterious shadow-tunnel onto the other side. Would there be light at the end of it?

The old blue tin clanged and clattered noisily, shattering the heavy silence as I crossed the foaming river for a second time. My strong sense of doom was still firmly intact, my heart still palpably broken, but something indefinable was tapping at my intuition, speaking to a part deep inside me that was trying its humble best to awaken.

Blowing on the wind...

The shade was a welcome tonic and - fortified by the fact that seemingly against all odds I was nearing the end of this particular journey - I stepped up my pace. The beautiful trees cooled my overheated head as I shuffled more quickly towards a rickety bamboo gate and fence that had appeared up ahead.

Gracias a Dios!

Reaching the entrance I paused for an instant as another unforgettable impression hit me with force and my heart leapt for the second time in as many minutes. Standing outside a small, run-down shack was an attractive sandy-haired youth dressed in multi-coloured tie-dyed clothes and rapidly spinning fluorescent poi balls in what was clearly an expert fashion.

Representatives of both joy and trepidation paid me a sudden visit, '*Praise the Lord I'm not alone!*' dropping by with '*that looks like crusty back-packer*' in an atomic second. My knees almost buckled from the weight of the body bag as I stepped over the threshold. It takes one to know one, as they say.

The Zelator and Mystery

...the love-desire must again enter into the desire of the enkindled anger, and quench and overcome the anger with the love; the divine water must enter again into the soul's burning fire, and quench the wrathful death in the astringent fiat, in the desire to nature, that the love-desire, which desires God, might be again enkindled in the soul.

Jacob Boehme, The Signature of all Things

The youth broke his poi-induced meditation long enough to acknowledge me from the corner of his eye. He appeared as underwhelmed by my stressful, sweat-soaked appearance as I was by his dirty ripped t-shirt.

“Hey man, how you doin?”

Yankee doodle dandy. “Great, hi, so there IS someone here, they told me it was empty....”

“Who told you that?” His voice was nonchalant, his eye contact non-existent, but he desisted from spinning and proffered a hand. ‘I’m The Zelator’.

I clutched his grubby paw. “Veggie. Lettuce and The Wizard of Mockingbird Hill told me, I saw them on the way up”.

He shrugged. “I dunno about that man.....we’re here....” At last there was a flicker of curious eye-contact. “Dude, who’s The *Wizard*?”

I shrugged back.

The Zelator and I eyeballed one other for the first time with a thinly-veiled sense of trepidation that was not exactly unfounded. I hardly dared survey the camp, certain I’d be unable to hide my horror at the woefully dilapidated scene I knew surrounded us. Woodworm-ridden, sun-rotted, wind and rain-weathered, the shack was in complete disorder but The Zelator seemed to be at home.

Sensing my unspoken dismay at the general state of affairs he jerked his head slightly. “Come and meet Mystery and Loco, you’re just in time for lunch”.

“Sure....” I threw down the last of the bags. “When did you get here?”

“Two days ago - we all seem to arrive a day late and at meal time.”

Hmm, meal times, eh, was I about to be spiked with hallucinogens?

I kicked the bags to one side and clambered onto the earth-caked porch, from whence The Zelator led me into a sparse wooden kitchen that needed no close inspection to betray two overriding characteristics. First of all, it was completely, utterly, disgustingly filthy and I could practically smell the Ecoli at five paces. Three-foot-wide cobwebs straddled every falling apart corner and the floor was little more than dirt atop rough-hewn stone.

Secondly, two mesmerizingly beautiful blue eyes were staring fiercely at me from beneath a soft, brown floppy fringe atop a perfectly formed young man in shorts. He was also serving food and appeared so well in command of the kitchen that I was transported out of hell for a second.

Boy, what a catch!

The Zelator beamed proudly for this was indeed an excellent find, a trump card that would prove to never fail:

“Veggie, meet Mystery; Mystery, this is Veggie.”

Mystery and I nodded grimly at one another with a spark of instant complicity. We could survive if we put our minds to it and took good care of our great, unwashed child. He had such an air of authority - of someone who actually knew what was meant to be happening - that I decided (wrongly, as it transpired) that he must have been part of the management/ownership team.

The Zelator gestured to a man seated at the table. “And this is Loco”.

I looked at the young Guatemalan caretaker with a half-formed greeting on my lips but a studiously cool-looking Loco barely glanced up from his beans and tortillas as he muttered something distinctly rude-sounding in an ancient dialect.

I narrowed my eyes. *So that's how it's going to be then? Well two can play the arse-hole game you crazy mofo.*

“Do you want some lunch?” Mystery held out his spoon and I examined the grey hippy mush with blanching cheeks.

“Errrrr.....” *HELL NO!* “That’d be great, thanks....” I felt myself go pale beneath the burn.

At that precise moment a solid, dust-caked puppy came hurtling out of the forest like a scud missile, zooming straight through the broken kitchen door and over The Zelator’s feet. It took a flying leap in the general direction of me and the spoon, catalysing a frantic tussle while I tried to prevent him from ripping my clothes, scratching my legs or giving me his fleas.

***WOAAHHH FREAKIN HELL MAN DIRTY, DISEASE-RIDDEN DOG
ALERT!***

My eyes turned to saucers as Mystery stretched out a lean leg and gave the puppy a determined kick. “Ged out, GED OOT!” he roared in a marked Irish accent, growling with annoyance while the puppy scooted off yelping as fast as he had arrived, leaving me staring after him suspiciously.

*Hmmm, RABIES....*I remembered my pre-trip warnings from the vaccinations nurse and vowed to avoid the dirty puppy as much as I possibly could, nervously wondering if there’d be any other dogs in the area. *Hmmm*

We sat down on benches round the table as mush was hastily doled out onto cracked, filthy plates and slid along the wooden table. I wanted to sob. I was *going to die*. Fork was automatically lifted to mouth, which opened, closed, moved around in a hurry and then swallowed. It was disgusting, but I had to complete my penance for all the bad things I’d done in life. It was Lent. I readily sensed Loco’s poorly impressed thoughts as he studied me from behind the safety of his tortilla. Ignoring the rude caretaker I looked up furtively from beneath lowered lashes to size-up my youthful, healthy-looking, sun-tanned campmates, who naturally conjured distant but not yet dead memories of the Facebook hippies. OK, so maybe it wasn’t *all* bad: A blonde and a brunette, one of them toy-boy material, the other closer to my age. Two pairs of beautiful blue eyes. Things could have been worse; I could have been stuck up a rocky mountain in bandit-land with two ugly mofos or no mofos at all.

Three more swallows later I declared myself no longer hungry but the next pressing worry was bearing weightily on my mind. Where on God’s green earth would I be sleeping in this terrible, dirty place?

The Zelator belched loudly and got up from the bench. “Would you like some water?”

I stared at him with dead eyes.

WATER.

With the shock of the climb, the threat of nobody being home, the dreadful sight of the dust-ball camp, the possibility of being spiked with drugs and imminent threat of rabies, I’d forgotten my REAL number one fear:

WATER.

Or, in other words: *Bugs, bacteria, stomach worms, cholera, dysentery, death!*

Also Giardia, the local parasite due that was due to infect me before the full moon in April, making me sicker than I'd ever been in my life, causing my hair to fall out, my skin to turn to shit and my stomach to practically rot. But it's fine really, whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger and nobody escapes the final judgement.

I eyeballed the archaic-looking clay filters looming on the kitchen counter and gave a silent, invisible shriek. Surely a full month of this was physically impossible? Why hadn't I at least brought a litre of Evian, one more kilo in the bag would hardly have made a difference?

I can't remember when the stories of people arriving, staying the night and waking up the next day with horrendous stomach complaints began, but they were etched into the ether of that mouldering kitchen for eternity. Like the legend of 'The Canadians'.

Oh man, they were a really nice couple but they were sooo sick. Almost from the moment they arrived she got diarrhoea, started throwing up and basically didn't stop, he had to take her to hospital after a couple of days when she could walk again and get out of here. Last

I heard they had managed to get a refund off Zorro. Real nice people as well, hope she's OK, man....

Maintaining a tactful silence as I digested the awful reality of the digs and tried not to cry, The Zelator and Mystery sat peacefully at the table mopping up slop, while a knee-jerk reaction in the face of utter filth compelled me to start washing up like a maniac, freezing cold water and lack of proper soap notwithstanding.

"Tomorrow I'll clean this properly", I stated over and over again, focusing my mind on the terrible matter of the kitchen as increasing numbers of bashed-up pots, plates and dented pans were piled before me. Loco retired to the hammock on the porch and promptly fell asleep.

If only I'd brought those washing up gloves and baking soda as my poor, gentle Angel - woefully ignored yet again - had instructed.

If only, if only, if only wave bye-bye to soft, supple hands and moisturised cuticles for the whole of your immediate life, you mad cow, it's Lent not Lombok.

I might have listened to my mother as well, for she had reasonably advised me to not forget a hat. Why were they always right? I touched the top of my head, nicely

burned from the journey up the hill. Why didn't I do that, why didn't I just bring a hat, what the hell was my problem, other than myself, of course?

I contemplated this in a mortified daze as I was shown around the composting areas (*'hey Veggie, do you want to see how this works?'*), toilet shed (*'don't use too much sawdust, we're running out'*), shower spot (a hose without a head in the coffee plantation), and unweeded, blackfly infested 'garden' (earth) that was nonetheless redeemed by a breath taking view across the Lake.

From the point where I was standing at the foot of a yet-to-be-planted vegetable and herb patch, a spectacular vista stretched out before me. Shimmering in the middle distance was the great expanse of a glittering, deep blue lake that was cradled to the south by three magnificent volcanoes. I paused to let myself take in the stunning scene, thankfully freed from my mental torments and physical discomfort for at least a minute.

So this was the deal: The living quarters were atrocious but the land was top notch. Not only did the 100 acre plot include magnificent coffee and avocado plantations with banana, pineapple, papaya, plantain and mango trees thrown in for good measure, it was irrigated by two tributaries of the river, one small and one very large, the latter of which swelled to enormous proportions during rainy season. Zorro had even managed to snag a bona-fide Mayan holy site, a pyramid-shaped mound - home to four sacred oak trees - that marked the borders of his territory to the north.

Immediately after the tour, Mystery charged off to work with a ton of energy, hat on head, machete in hand, while The Zelator resumed his poi-spinning, only sidling off down the slope to crack rocks when a fully-siesta-ed Loco finally awoke. It was just enough time for me to get my period. What joy, what fun, what laughter. Oh, how I roared.

I slunk off into a corner to nurse my throbbing belly and let the worrying facts sink in while I figured out the least dirty place to lay my head. At least it was only for one night, I comforted myself, fully resolved to getting the hell out of there as soon as possible. I decided to inspect the official sleeping quarters and 'living room'. The former consisted of an attic space reached by a pair of hazardous ladders on either side. Climbing up through the kitchen end and nervously poking my head through the hole, one swift glance at the flea-infested sleeping bags, stinking cushions and matrix of titanic cobwebs informed me that approaching the attic ever again was out of the question.

I went round to the 'living room' (tool shed) side of the shack to examine what The Zelator had dubbed the 'cot'. This flimsy folding sun lounge was so much dirtier than the dust-caked floor, with a pillow that looked as if it had been soaked in shit, it triggered genuine alarm and I backed away in disgust. This left me with only one option, short of perching up a tree. I looked towards the edge of the clearing with a feeling of pure dread:

The Tent.

Oh God.

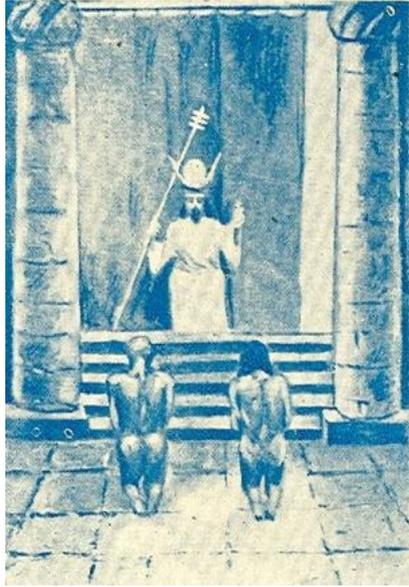
Prior to this occasion the longest stretch of time I'd spent in a tent was during a blurry weekend at Glastonbury, where ritual over-indulgence ensured trying to get to sleep was unnecessary: one either stayed awake all night or simply passed out so the fact of being in a tent was thereby irrelevant.

What was I to do?

Materialising from out of nowhere a beautiful miniature cat - black and white like my options - delicately wound herself around my shins with a sensuous purr. I bent down to stroke her whilst considering the faded green contraption that was lurking at the edge of the forest like a pile of decaying leaves. There was no getting away from it, The Tent WAS where I would be attempting to sleep for the duration of this nightmare.

With a sigh of resignation combined with the bloody-minded resolve that occasionally stood me in good stead, I gently moved aside the cat - Wish, as she was known - divested myself of the blue silk dress from India and pulled a pair of faded combats out of my larger rucksack. If this was going to be a war against comfort and convenience, I might as well be rightly dressed for it.

Theseus goes to the Bucket



The prayers of humanity rise towards God and, after having been divinely oxidised, are transformed into benedictions which descend below from above

MotT, Letter V, The Pope

Well, this nice.

Glorious sunshine, pristine waters, a fridge full of Cristal, a beach full of babes and a legion of super-yacht neighbours in the turquoise Caribbean of St Barth's, all recently buffed and ready for the 2012 Bucket. His phone beeped for the hundredth time since He'd woken from a beatific afternoon nap.

All were attentive to the godlike man, When from his lofty couch he thus began¹⁵

Once again he ignored it. The last but one - to which he had not replied - had been from her and He didn't want any more reminders of anything apart from where he was there and then in the perfect here and now.

He did, however, afford her a relatively deep second thought. In his view this was practically the same as replying by text. He couldn't help thinking they'd known one another in a past life, but what had been their relationship and was it somehow taboo?

*He tells it o'er and o'er; but still in vain,
For still she begs to hear it once again.
The hearer on the speaker's mouth depends,
And thus the tragic story never ends¹⁶*

Still contemplating the enigma, he idly glanced at a small brown bird which had alighted on the deck and seemed to be watching him with its beady little eyes. Not for the first time, either. He threw it a crumb from his plate and then settled back with his well-formed hands behind his handsome head, gazing up at the cloudless sky, where a lone gull was making melancholy circles in the ether. For some reason it reminded him of himself, although his was more of an inner solitude because he wasn't really ever short of company.

His friends were due to arrive in just under four hours, which left Him ample time to hit the island for a cocktail and see if that beautiful Swedish girl was still serving those awesome Margaritas in his favourite beach bar. He pondered this for a second or two.

¹⁵ The Aeneid, Book IV

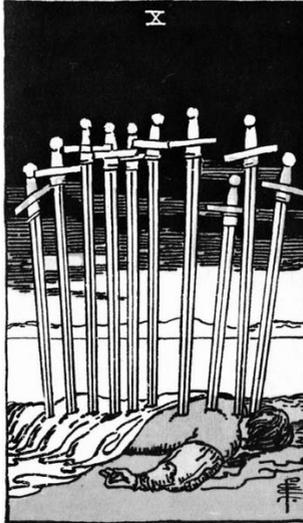
¹⁶ The Aeneid, Book IV

Maybe she'd like a ride on the boat.

But Orpheus, son of Oeagrus, they sent back with failure from Hades, showing him only a wraith of the woman for whom he came; her real self they would not bestow, for he was accounted to have gone upon a coward's quest, too like the minstrel that he was, and to have lacked the spirit to die as Alcestis did for the sake of love, when he contrived the means of entering Hades alive. Wherefore they laid upon him the penalty he deserved, and caused him to meet his death.

Plato, Symposium, 179d

Insomnia



*I must be fixed to this black cross, and must be cleansed therefrom with
wretchedness and vinegar, and made white*

Uraltes, Chymisches Werck

Woefully ensconced in the dust-ridden, flea-bitten, disintegrating, weather ravaged, falling over tent - that was surprisingly equipped with an inflatable double mattress - I wondered if I'd ever be clean again. My thoughts raged like a bull over the unsavoury circumstances and misplaced expectations that had brought me to that hostile-seeming place. Surely there was a way to get my money back from the deceptive creep who'd enticed me there under false pretences.

If the Canadians had done it then so could I!

I thought bitterly of the cunningly slick website that explicitly ticked all the boxes for a certain type of person wanting to escape from Babylon. The rich array of carefully chosen key words included, in particular:

Meditation, permaculture, sustainable living, eco projects, workshops....yoga....

How dare he cite yoga!

My rage knew no bounds. I was scandalised far beyond a point I'd ever thought possible before this moment, apoplectic and writhing in torment from the ten pitiless swords that were still deeply lodged in my churning abdomen. The face rash itched in accordance with my boiling outrage, enjoying its worst outbreak in at least a decade. It felt as if every toxin in my body was vying with the poisoned, bitter and defeatist thoughts to break free of their mortal coil. I was comforted solely by the thought of getting out of there ASAP and into the nearest decent hotel.

I would surely be justified in bailing out so soon. By The Zelator's account most of the other volunteers who had arrived over the past three months - including women who had men - lasted a maximum of two nights and over half of them had fallen sick with something resembling the vomiting virus. This account would soon be corroborated by the glinty-eyed threshold guardians, with whom Zorro was less than popular for one reason and another.

As if all of this wasn't bad enough, a lightning-bolt brought Him to the front of my mind with gut-wrenching clarity. There He was again, larging it big time, supping champers on his pristine pool deck surrounded by Swedish supermodels while the world revolved around the sun that was shining out of his arse. Miserably I faced facts. The love of my life just wasn't that into me. The only silver lining to this endless cloud was that in the present moment I actually missed my nice clean sheets more than the fantasy figure who was never inside them. Basic survival was

my new priority and a curious form of embittered relief emerged from this unromantic reality.

In any event, the lower-case beloved might be delighting in other models but so could I. The Zelator and Mystery were divine forces that would accompany my soul through the yawning abyss. I thought back to the cold washing up and recalled that before these implacable witnesses I had stated my avowed intent to ‘properly clean’ the vile kitchen, if it was the last thing I did on this earth. My overwrought mind tossed and turned like a dinghy in a cyclone as the temperature plunged 27 degrees and night-noises reached a crescendo with devastating alacrity. Not only was it freezing cold but barely five minutes had passed before every stray - *potentially rabid* – dog for 20sq km arrived in camp to sniff out the blood of the latest sacrificial victim.

I listened to the cacophony with profound resignation, not daring to move lest the slowly forming pocket of warmer air escaped from my inadequate sleeping bag whilst the homeless hounds ran through their well-rehearsed hymns to the moon. Speaking of which, I’d searched in vain since arriving in Guatemala but hadn’t seen it once, which wasn’t exactly conducive to the lunar meditation my teacher had assigned for the next 40 days.

As the scrabbling, scratching, crashing, banging and barking around my decaying bit of plastic intensified I hoped and prayed it was only (non-rabid) dogs running round the tent. What if unspecified random ‘beasts’ were out there? This was a new concern indeed.

WHAT IF THERE WERE BEASTS?

At that moment my freezing fingers - jammed into even colder ears against the noise of howling canines - absolutely failed to muffle a mortifying high-decibel shriek which assailed my mummified body like a screaming banshee. My shock was so great that it felt as if an unseen force had tasered me at full voltage through the sleeping bag.

HOLYFUCKINSHITWHATDAFUCKWASDATIFITISMYTIMETODIESO HELPMEGOD!

God enjoyed a giggle for several seconds before I realised the astoundingly loud and strangulated noise was in fact a sort of quack-a-doodle-do type arrangement

emanating from the direction of my guide ropes. From the natural amphitheatre of mountains and volcanoes ringing the crater of the lake an answering cockerel shouted back, followed by another and another and another.

Irrationally, my next thought was not 'damn it, here we go', as every rooster in the region took up the chorus, but rather resentment bordering on envy that the more distant cockerels could at least doodle-do in tune while I was stuck with a mad be-combed super duck with lungs like cracked bellows. With even more resentment I thought of the body bag. If only it wasn't so heavy I could run for my life at daybreak. I mean, how much stuff does a person really need? I vowed that in future I would carry round no unnecessary shit that might hamper my exit from other terrible situations like this one.

Minutes ticked by into hours.

Eventually - sleep proving impossible - I plucked up the courage to take a pee and summoned sufficient energy to move against the bone-chilling cold. The complex procedure of unzipping everything and finding my headlamp in the dark took another eternity, but upon finally crawling outside I was met with a jaw-dropping scene.

Right before my eyes was the Great Bear ploughing its dazzling furrow across the inky black sky with tranquil precision, perfectly framed by the canopy of trees that made a natural observatory through which to see the stars. I paused to marvel at the ice-white constellation and thought back to earlier that evening, when resplendent Orion had risen like Odin as he tracked a determined arc across the serene sky-circle of my roof.

I sighed in wonder and remembered why I had been drawn to this place, after years of dreams that preceded the troubled nightmares and an eagle that had flown me to El Mirador. At last the eagle and I were in the same place again, our spirits united in the stars.

I watered the Earth a few paces from the tent then clambered back inside - trying in vain not to pull apart the taped-up rips and tears around the zipper - and carefully reassembled my cocoon, veiling every part of myself as tightly as possible inside the plastic bag. A fitful sleep eventually ensued and I managed to remain hypnotised for approximately 45 minutes, until what transpired to be the 5.00 am wakeup call blasted out at deafening volume without a shadow of

remorse. I would later comprehend that this was a monumental corn-grinder,
which started up each morning like an ancient rocket 2km further up the hill.
Wakey wakey, rise and shine, there's work to be done at Nuevo Mundo Valiente!

*Has there ever been made a medicine against anger and woe and can one be
made, even now?*

Michael Maier, Symbol Aureae Mensae

Mas Comida!

When He spoke of revolution, he did so by concretely fighting against the religious and political power that oppressed people; he denounced these powers and he organised until his martyrdom...He was faithful to his beliefs and to the people until death....in this way he established that praxis is the ultimate proof of faith.

Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes, Guatemala

The Cleaning of the Kitchen strengthened my spirit to such a degree that I resolved to stay on at least until weekend. A significant determining factor was the emergence of Mystery as an excellent cook, the blip of that first inedible lunch being swiftly surmounted and improved upon to quite an amazing degree. This was just as well because he and The Zelator also proved to be the world's hungriest men, an appetite I soon adopted for myself as the basic quest for survival took hold of us all. It seemed we might eat anything at any time, so profound was this concern. Even someone's dad, should the opportunity present itself.

Morning, noon and night Mystery would assume control of the newly cleansed kitchen, a task that had taken the three of us at least six hours to get almost half way through, with gas masks, hosepipes, scrubbing brushes and scouring pads on the offensive.

This major operation was curtailed by Loco - watching moodily from the wings while we bustled in and out with mouldering jars held at arm's length - who finally cracked under the pressure of multifarious items being haphazardly thrown away, hosed down and strewn about, and ordered us to piece it all back together. At least we managed to get rid of the cobwebs and several suspect jars of semi-alive, fur-covered objects of indeterminate origin or purpose. (Zorro's home-grown stash of Class A entheogens, as later transpired with very much wailing and gnashing of teeth).

The eating then began and barely ceased, despite the well-founded suspicion that our Loco minder was grossly under-providing for us on the paid-for food front. Rice, tomatoes and sometimes potatoes came our way, but nuts, cheese and eggs were a distant memory. Nuevo Mundo Valiente just didn't do protein. All the same, we did get some honey for our money and lemons straight from the trees,

along with a home-grown apothecary of herbs befitting of Paracelsus, the mainstay of our fly-infested kitchen.

Mystery soon revealed his uncanny ability to concoct delicious marvels from the dregs of our meagre larder. Heavenly cakes were rustled up out of nowhere. Punela revealed itself to be a magical ingredient as banana fritters and French toast manifested under our noses at perfect moments in front of the raging camp fire. Food glorious food! We lived to eat at Brave New World. **'Bring us more food!'** we cried. A language barrier between myself and The Zelator on the one hand and Loco on the other - with Mystery in between as occasional Spanish interpreter - created a non-taxing form of intergroup communication whereby our caretaker's abruptly bad-tempered exhortations to:

“LIMPIA!”

“AQUA!”

“TRABAJA!”

(“YOU CLEAN! YOU WATER! YOU WORK!”)

were met with the wishfully-mantic retort of “MAS COMIDA!” from Zorro's stubborn posse of semi-recalcitrant volunteers.

“But we *have* come here to work, man....” The Zelator pointed out as he taught me to spin poi with what proved to be masterly success but not exactly busting his balls in the garden. Unlike Mystery, who went about the various Herculean tasks set by Loco with an irrepressible zeal that oscillated between Zen-like hermetic splendour and obsessive compulsive disorder.

He did so much work that The Zelator and I were rendered almost helpless, the usefulness-quotient of the camp tipping irrevocably towards our in-control comrade day after sweltering day. Where the appetite for hard labour was somewhat lacking, however, we more than made up for it with various forms of meditation, ranging from weaving new DNA blueprints with our spinning balls to walking the paths of the Tao te Ching with spirit guides.

As for the limpiando, it was a never-ending story.

Witnessing from the outset The Zelator's total inability to wash up properly I did what had to be done in the face of Mystery's near omnipotence and morphed into

the resident sous-chef cum dish washer. Not the kind of ‘limpiar’ that Loco gave any credit for, but I wasn’t going to be phased by his sulking remonstrations. Not for as long as we were out of ginger, flour and raisins.

No Hermano Loco, I will not be spending from dawn ‘til dusk carrying several hundredweight of sand up from the riverbed and nor will I be planting thousands of radishes in an uneven plot that expressly shunned ‘monoculture’ on the advertisement. I did not feel the slightest bit guilty about my lackadaisical days because the dead of night was keeping me busy enough.

My second attempt at sleeping in the tent had far exceeded the first in terms of the trials and terrors it offered, while nothing on God’s Green Earth could have prepared any of us for the blood-curdling sound of ‘the beast screaming’ that was lurking somewhere immeasurably scary a fortnight down the timeline. A real beast, that is, not the deafening cockerel-duck hybrid.

It was sometime in the early hours of day three that I managed to nod off during a five-second break in the otherwise relentless noise. I’m not sure how long I was out for because time went into a warp as soon as I fell asleep, but I do know it was the sounds of shouting and screaming that woke me with a start from my semi-frozen slumber.

“**LANDSLIDE! RUN - THERE’S A LANDSLIDE.... EVERYBODY RUN!**”

The words delivered a nerve-jangling shock that fully affected my mind without being transferred to my inert limbs, which at that moment were wedged so tightly into the sleeping bag that I was rigid as a cocooned caterpillar.

As I listened with strangely detached terror to the escalating cries emanating from further up the mountain, a bizarre sense of resignation took over me. *Oh dear, there was a landslide....* I had to save myself, to run as quickly as I could to get out of there, but I was trapped. It was obvious I couldn’t get out of the sleeping bag in time so there was no point even trying.

True to this surreal rationale, I didn’t even struggle as the cries of ‘**LANDSLIDE!**’ came breathtakingly close to my resting place on the formidable mountainside. The mountain where days of stillness could be punctuated by random gusts of hurricane-strength wind in the dead of night, that ripped off roof tops and bent-over trees in single ravenous outbursts, as if the highlands of Guatemala were a gigantic funnel for an air powered turbine that kept the entire world spinning. The wind that purifies, they called it.

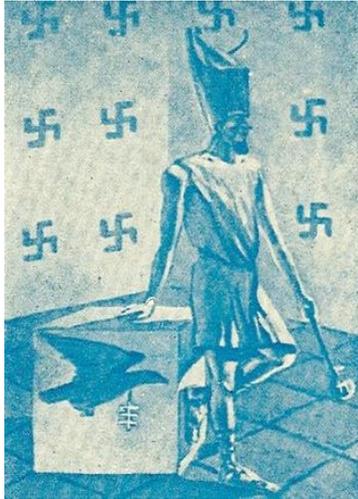
It was a matter of minutes before I realised none of this was either real or a dream, that the panic-stricken voices of villagers were an echo from the not-so-distant past. I knew it wasn't a dream because I was wide awake and nobody could actually be urging me to run for my life there and then, because the night - for once - was silent as it could be. It dawned on me that the land itself had retained this agonised charge from the previous year, when a devastating landslide really *had* swept down Mockingbird Hill, destroying everything in its path, killing hundreds and leaving thousands more homeless on the deceptively serene shores of Mockingbird Waters.

I lulled myself back into an uneasy sleep, strangely tranquilised by the haunting memories that lived in the bones of that ravaged and ravishing land.

Dissolve the gold in fire and warm it gently. But if you will believe me, take one sole and unique thing, that is to say the secret of secrets and powerful miracle of nature.

Roger Bacon, Opera Quaedam Hactenus Inedita

Karmaville



The key to the Apocalypse is to practise it, ie, to make use of it as a book of spiritual exercises composed of twenty-eight exercises. For as the Apocalypse is a revelation put into writing, it is necessary, in order to understand it, to establish in oneself a state of consciousness which is suited to receive revelations.

MotT, Letter IV, The Emperor

Having survived half a week and feeling rather pleased with myself for this small victory, I decided to go on an excursion before taking the plunge and fully evacuating the casa, undeniably reluctant to throw in the towel and desert my newly found brethren, with whom a welcome bond had swiftly formed. The neighbouring town of San Paulo was famed as a retreat and I was keen to stretch my legs a bit further than the Lettuce patch at the opposite end of the blue tin bridge.

My angel was very encouraging if somewhat crafty on this occasion, enthusiastically bolstering my burgeoning resolve:

You could go there to learn Spanish, escape for a few days a week for some proper food without giving up entirely on the mission....

The walk to this picturesque town, hub of a well-entrenched community of ageing hippies, was an arduous 8km stretch that required a fast pace and steady heart if one was to avoid falling prey to bandits on one of Central America's most notorious hijacking roads.

Safely negotiating the hot, dusty walk at lightning speed wearing a magical cloak of invisibility, I was relieved when signs of the town began to appear and soon enchanted by a roadside eatery called The Condor. This was a multi-coloured super adobe special that confidently announced the reunion of the Condor of the West with the Eagle of the East.

This was good news indeed!

Rounding a few more corners I was further enamoured by the quaint sound of a Mariachi band playing a crazy tune with immense gusto, although it was a few more minutes before I realised the quintet was actually installed in a church playing hymns to an equally enthusiastic, packed congregation.

Removing the cloak and slowing to a leisurely pace, I entered the main square of San Paulo and found me a man who sold water and biscuits. Receiving the sugar-hit with gratitude, I resolved to find a Spanish school as quickly as possible and sign up for as many lessons as my budget would allow. Anything to keep me far from the dreaded tent and close to some semblance of civilisation.

Plagued by rapidly dehydrating skin I was equally keen to make time and money available for the first rate therapies on offer at this legendary outpost for the alternative ex-pat community. Essential oils were most definitely in order and I was in just the right place to extract them. Rainbow gatherers rubbed shoulders with crystal collectors and Reiki masters hung out with tantric teachers. Baba Ram Dass disciples discussed liberation with yogis and yoginis, as raw food dilettantes

pedalled their nutritious wares alongside weavers, jewellery makers and second hand booksellers.

A beatific sigh of relief escaped my lips as I passed welcoming signs to the Pyramid House and Flower Gardens, noting with satisfaction that there were chocolate ceremonies every weekend at Quetzalcoatl's villa a few more turns along the road. The following weekend there was even to be an enlightenment festival with all-day preparations for the impending Cosmic Shift, I noted joyfully. Spoilt for choice on the lunch front I eventually settled for what transpired to be the main meeting point for San Paulo's elder statesmen and women. Or to put it more accurately, San Francisco's elder states people who were eking out ever-dwindling savings and pensions in a land much cheaper than their own. They lingered at Moonfish café with the easy authority of those who'd put in long years staking out eco-friendly homesteads, building up immunity to local germs and learning the all-important lingo. Never mind *café y pastel*, these dudes were on the *pan de ajo con queso y cacao caliente*.

Avoiding the tea that I craved but had given up as my main Lenten penance, I tucked into a chickpea curry with relish and took a large slurp of the stupendously good hot chocolate. Scoffing away, relieved at the broken monotony of beans and rice that was my usual lunch fare - Mystery's culinary expertise being mainly being reserved for dinner - I watched with interest as a steady stream of characters descended on Moonfish. Every single one of them knew all about Nuevo Mundo Valiente and I quietly took note of the score whilst soaking up as many calories as possible.

A whole bunch o' people are real pissed off with Zorro, he's sure bin takin' 'em fer a ride out there.

Man, you should have heard him boasting about getting all these dumb volunteers to pay for his project while he spent the winter skiing with his buddies up in Aspen.

That place is gonna get burned down real soon, we've heard 'em all talkin' 'bout it, the locals are real mad by now.

You know he's bought up a Mayan sacred site and won't let the locals go up there any more....

Good website though!

Great, yes, do you know his father?

The other thing they knew all about was the end of the world, which by most accounts was due to take place at any point in the next three to nine months. The trigger had already happened during a potent conjunction of Mars and Venus the previous summer, but the exact end date depended on a series of complex planetary alignments and astronomical clock equations that were (apparently?) well known to ancient cultures but largely forgotten by modern man. Modern man beyond San Paulo, that is, because nothing was getting past these dudes, they had ring-side seats for the Apocalypse.

“So Veggie, do you ever listen to Alex Jones?”

That’d be CIA Agent Jones. “I used to.... do you?” *umm...*

“Hell yeah, he is right on the money about this corporate conspiracy shit”.

“Double dis-info agent if you ask me,” I ventured.

“Well, whatever, the jury of the people is divided on that one, but we ALL gotta watch out for Nibiru!”

I hedged my bets. “You reckon?” *Hadn’t the weird guy I’d met at the conference last August mentioned this?* I wracked my brains but the events of that strange day were hazy indeed.

“None o’ this reck’nin’, dude, *everyone* knows what ELENIN stood for!”

“Extinction Level Event, Nibiru Is Near...”

“You got it girl, that shit is real!”

For some inexplicable reason fried chicken popped into my head and I nodded seriously, considering the impending polar shift and three mile high tidal wave that was long overdue.

“And what about the alien agenda, are yawl up to speed?”

Was I, well?

One of them smacked his hands down on the table, making the others jump. “Coz they’re watchin’ us right now, dude, they’re out there now an’ you’d better believe it!” The speaker pointed skyward and gave me an all knowing stare. “I got a buddy up in Chichen Itza who’s been communicatin’ with ‘em all for at least half a year, there’s some beautiful shit goin’ on there man, I’m tellin’ ya”.

I reflected upon the alien question. “Well I *did* see a UFO a couple of times”.

He slapped the table again. “Ya see! It’s happenin’ man, it’s all goin’ down, won’t be long now, I’m tellin’ ya.”

“It definitely feels as if we’ve reached some sort of convergence point”, I offered gamely.

They all perked up several more notches and leaned forward into their home ground. “You got it man! You gotta come to terms with your shit, time to work on the old karma before it’s too late”.

I nodded again and then ordered a *café con leche y cacao* cookie. The hippies spoke facts, there was no denying it.

Mostly facts.

“David Icke, man, that dude has NAILED IT.”

I nibbled my cookie, biding my time, for this, too, would pass. I didn’t actually think the Queen was a reptile but there was no need to announce this right away and David *had* been right about a few things.

“An’ what about 9/11, y’all been keepin’ up with the truth movement over in the United *King-dom*”. He sneered the word and spat on the floor behind him, muttering under his breath. “*Goddam reptilians.*”

I ignored the slight on Her Majesty and nodded enthusiastically, for they were finally preaching to the choir. “Of course! no-one in their right mind could believe the official story. Explosions in the lobby, thermite dripping down the walls, Building 7 ‘just falling down’, hijacker’s passport found on top of charred and pulverised steel, need we go on?!”

No, we needn’t go on, the facts were clear and we knew some of them. Sitting back in our comfortable wicker chairs we sagely and silently communed. At least we were *trying* to escape Babylon, if only for 40 days and nights in my case. While the banksters and gangsters were busy trying to destroy planet Earth at least the folk of San Paulo were *aware* it needed saving, even if our efforts to do so were proving a little short on effectiveness.

Or so it seemed.

I took a thoughtful sip of the excellent coffee and contemplated the lengthy walk back up Mockingbird Hill, which had to be attempted soon if I was to arrive there before sunset. I caught the eye of the waitress: “La cuenta por favor.”

One of the older, longer-haired hippies gazed at me hopefully. “Hey man, do you wanna come and watch a documentary about the mysteries of Egypt back at my place, it talks a lot about the divine feminine, the creative power of the female?” he waggled his eyebrows suggestively. “My God is a Goddess....”

Errr no lo creo..... “That’s very kind of you but I really have to get back or the guys will be worried about me, see you around soon!”

I gave them a friendly wave goodbye, picked up my backpack and strode off into the approaching sunset in a self-determining fashion, fortified by the hippy communion and super-strength coffee. Happy, Hairy and Herman were right, we’d reached the end of days and the best I could do now was work on my karma. I gritted my teeth as I began the next ascent.



In so far as Hermeticism is concerned, it has a history of continuous and sustained effort aimed at an alliance of intelligence and the intuition of faith, the alchemical marriage of the moon and the sun. Is this marriage possible?

MotT, Letter XVIII, The Moon

Rainbow, Flower and Music

*And what is it to work with love? It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from
your heart*

Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

As the broiling days and freezing nights drifted inexorably towards the spring equinox the camp was enlivened by an ever-flowing stream of visitors, who ascended and descended on the rocky stairway of a road that ran past our front gate.

One of the first to drop in from his abode on high was the Wizard of Mockingbird Hill, a font of great knowledge who was nonetheless curious to see how Zorro's grubby guinea pigs were faring in the absence of their infamous landlord. We welcomed him with open arms, as befitted an elder statesman of sustainability, and set about preparing the requisite super-strength coffee while our guest began rolling a joint, the first that any of us had seen in well over a week and a sight for sore eyes if ever there was one.

The first relieved toke on this super home-grown wacky-backy - delivered, as it was, at an altitude of over 4,500 m - sent me straight into the stratosphere with an incredible propulsion of rocket-like force. My mind expanded to take in a much larger portion of the universe than it had done previously, then boggled through multiple dimensions as I attempted to take stock of the enhanced situation. Paranoia instantly set in.

Had the joint been secretly rolled with magic mushrooms or other - much stronger - psychedelics?

The Zelator and Mystery observed with undisguised glee as my eyes tried to pop out of my head and The Wizard proceeded to impart the secret doctrine of LOTS (Living Outside The System). This was a Herculean task entailing such skill, drive and commitment that we overflowed with awe at his achievement.

This was a guy who had bought the land, built the house, worked in concert with the tribe, planted acres of crops on ridges, ravines and other barely accessible

mountain plots, dug the irrigation, created the compost, purified the water, learned all the lingo, grown the super-skunk and constructed the meditation plinth that overlooked three sacred volcanoes and the world's most beautiful lake. 16 years it had taken him and there was no going back. The remains of his pension wouldn't cover it, for one thing, even if he HAD suddenly felt like going back home to San Francisco.

The Zelator looked him in the eye with a serious expression and extended a broad, dusty hand, topped with blackened fingernails. "Seriously, dude, respect."

Mystery and I nodded with deepening admiration and wondered how best to follow in the Wizard's carbon-neutral footsteps.

Following those self-same footsteps down the hill were his temporary tenants, Flower and Music, who bedded down for free on his meditation platform in return for intermittent housework chores and singing. Described by The Zelator - as he groaned on the wooden toilet with a virulent outbreak of giardia while they cooed to him with words of tender kindness - as 'two of the nicest girls in the world', these eco-conscious princesses were a welcome boon for the dreary shack.

*Lovely maiden of the moon
and lovely daughter of the sun
in their hands hold the weaving comb,
lifting up the weaving shuttle,
weaving on the golden fabric,
rustling move the silver threads*

41st Rune of the Kalevala

A bona fide aficionado of living in harmony with nature who milked cows for a living back at home, the Swiss Flower used crochet as a form of meditation whilst singing along with Japanese Music's folk ballads. These were strummed gently on an old acoustic guitar during the peaceful interlude between comida and trabaja in the early afternoons, or around the blazing campfire after the first supper sitting, while Mystery concocted ever-more delectable variants of banana fritters and The Zelator turned poi into a mystic art form.

Along with their endless balls of wool, cotton bracelets and tinkling charm, the nicest girls in the world came with a top-up supply of cannabis - an essential facet of camp life since the Wizard's addictive arrival - and a treasure trove of travellers' tales. As Orion strode wilfully across the northern sky with Sirius snapping at his heels, Music evoked serene images of cherry blossom over still waters, while Flower spoke in her lilting accent of initiatory dreams and magical swords.

Then there was Rainbow, whose mission in life was to persuade a critical mass of earthlings to assist in the creation of an infinitely expanding art work. The idea was that starting out with 12 A4 drawings made by a representative of each astrological sign recruited from the environs of Mount Shasta, each new link in the chain of universal peace and love was to add a drawing of their own that joined up with one or more of the others at the edges.

By the time he arrived at Nuevo Mundo Valiente Rainbow had a stack of papers 6 inches high from around the Americas and he wasn't going to leave without enlisting The Zelator and I to his ambitious project. A solid afternoon of silent, studied effort was spent creating our suitably mystical and/or earth-celebratory designs, The Zelator proving much less adept with a pencil than he was with spinning poi balls. My contribution, on the other hand, was 'sick', as my admiring

comrades put it, a neat little rendition of life around the sacred lake and holy mountain, complete with local wildlife and a waxing crescent moon. Mystery was allowed to keep his esoteric imaginings to himself.

Determined to exercise our minds as we relaxed between bouts of Zen-like herb-bed watering and plantain peeling, ignoring Loco's ever-more truculent glares, The Zelator and I drank in a dog-eared copy of *Be Here Now* - turning it up, down and sideways with widening eyes. We also marvelled at *The Secret Life of Plants* and made a stunning foray into the *Tao Te Ching*, a book belonging to Mystery. "Open it at random, dude", The Zelator instructed one balmy afternoon, "and we'll do whatever it says".

Believing the time was ripe for a guided meditation I acquiesced gladly and peeled apart the fabled tome. I looked at the cryptic seeming header: "It's 54 (10)..." "Awesome, man, let's do it, you start..."

We took a few deep breaths and then he closed his eyes while I described the vision:

*While you cultivate the soul and embrace unity,
Can you keep them from separating?
Focus your vital breath until it is supremely soft;
Can you be like a baby?
Cleanse the mirror of mysteries,
Can you make it free from blemish?
Love the people and enliven the state;
Can you do so without cunning?
Open and close the gate of heaven;
Can you play the part of the female?
Reach out with clarity in all directions;
Can you refrain from action?
It gives birth to them and nurtures them,
It gives birth to them but does not possess them,
It rears them but does not control them.
This is called 'mysterious integrity'.*

A divine sort of stillness hovered over us while the sacred words sank in and a sublime vision unfurled.

Cleansing the mirror of mysteries, wasn't this just what I had in mind when I'd booked that fated flight across the ocean, all too conscious of the polluting elements that had muddied the waters of my soul and tarnished the former clarity of my second sight? Later that day we looked up at the cloudless azure sky with mystified eyes, as rain finer than cobwebs fell diagonally across the camp from no discernible source. Barely even visible, like skeins of priceless silk that glimmered when struck by rays of the sun, this cloudless rain made me wonder if the sky itself was weeping.

The three of us were consciously preparing for the impending vernal One K'an with its added promise of a full moon, as our unspoken determination to greet the spring equinox with some form of esoteric ritual increased exponentially with each passing day. The Cosmic Plan was falling into place with the sublime precision of an Atlantean Atomic Clock.

Thoughts of leaving as quickly as possible had subsided. Day by day I was intoxicated further by the magic of the mountain, seduced each night by a flawless pantheon of stars. Meteors and asteroids zoomed by overhead with gratifying frequency. The signs were in the sky! I felt myself becoming realigned with the Spirit of the Universe and Heart of Mother Earth. Peace would once again guide the planet because love really did steer the stars.

The Condor of the West was rising up to meet the Eagle of the East!

Thirsting for yet more progress, I decided to treat myself to an intensive chakra-cleansing Reiki session at the Flower Gardens with crystal therapy thrown in for good measure. A date was set for half an hour after my Wednesday Spanish class. The auburn-haired woman who met me at the Gardens' gate had an unmistakably vibrant aura, which pulsed around her with distinct but well-balanced force as she greeted me cautiously with a pronounced Slavonic accent. I had every confidence she would remove the sticky load of mud that was clogging up my third eye and, furthermore, had high hopes she might be able to improve the state of my right ankle, sprained when I'd fallen off silly shoes at the Stationers' Hall and still woefully swollen after more than a year. It served me right, I supposed, for trying to turn the world with it.

Lying flat on my back in the beautifully serene open-air treatment room, totally surrounded by choice pieces from the best collection of crystals I'd ever seen in my life, a sense of unassailable tranquillity washed over me.

Praise the Lord, I was finally being healed!

It took at least an hour to shift the mud but when I eventually felt it loosened and cast aside with a resoundingly silent 'plop', I breathed an inner sigh of relief and observed the mirror rinsed clean, sparkling like the moon on a river at midnight.

From the dark of the unconscious comes the light of illumination, the albedo¹⁷

As the sun began its descent I skipped off home up the mountain with renewed zeal and thought of my soul mates with affection. They would be pleased with the bunch of small, sweet bananas I'd procured from the toothless old lady by the side of the road in San Paulo, happier still with a bumper packet of biscuits I'd also obtained en route. Filled with the joy of approaching spring I allowed myself a metaphorical pat on the back for work well done. I'd not had a cup of tea for almost four weeks and was making good progress with the detoxification of my body, mind AND soul.

Within the frozen confines of the tent that night I secretly polished the magical mirror and by the light of the waxing moon performed the meditations as my teacher back at home had instructed. The Zelator spun strange shapes by the dying embers of the camp fire with formidable energy, Mystery smouldered and held his silence, whilst Zorro's father lurked on the edges of our consciousness, preparing for manifestation.

*

It is therefore the mineral, plant animal and human realms of Nature – in a word, Nature in its entirety – which constitutes the domain of sacred magic. The reason for the existence of sacred magic stems from the Fall and the whole domain of the Fall – comprising fallen Nature, fallen man and the fallen hierarchies. These are

¹⁷ Carl Jung, *Mysterium Conjunctionis, The Personification of Opposites*

the beings belonging to it who hope 'with eager longing' to be 'set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Meditations on the Tarot, Letter III, The Empress

One K'an



Its father is the Sun, its mother is the Moon, the wind carried it in its belly, the nurse thereof is the Earth

Tabula Smaragdina

When One K'an finally dawned it was with an air of quiet expectation that was destined to build to a studied crescendo by sundown. Up early as usual, Mystery and I beat off the morning chill with hot coffee and steaming porridge whilst The Zelator remained habitually silent in the over-sized hammock that passed for his bed.

I poked my head around the cracked kitchen door and observed him for a moment. Was he actually asleep or just meditating? It was impossible to tell. Somehow bolt upright in a sitting position beneath his mound of musty bedding - flea-ridden puppy nestled blissfully on his lap – The Zelator maintained this position for approximately three hours leaving nobody any the wiser. Whatever could have been going on beneath that mop of dust-caked blonde hair and visage of intense concentration, none of us knew, but at least he wasn't sleep talking, which was more than could be said of him every night between 1 and 4 am.

I cast my mind back to the night of the 'Shrieking of the Actual Beast', by far the most terrifying episode in the annals of Nuevo Mundo Valiente. Occurring approximately two weeks into my stay, this particular event was so unutterably scary that the three of us had made an unspoken vow to never mention it again beyond our shocked acknowledgements the morning after, when we had emerged in relief from our respective sleeping areas, praising the lord that we'd made it out alive.

I had insisted on dragging my inflatable mattress into the hideously dusty tool shed/living room for the sake of not sleeping alone for one more night. With The Zelator on the cot and Mystery in the attic above, I reasoned that at least I would be safe and unafraid if neither clean nor comfortable. No sooner had I started to nod off, however, when the complex and highly disturbing dialogue began, not even at a whisper.

"Oh my God...."

"OH MY GOD"

"It's the Ouija board...."

"Dude.... it's the OUIJA BOARD, damn it! Dude - **DUDE!** - Hey Dude, what are you doing man? Where are we, MY GOD.....what is this?"

"....."

“DAMN IT DUDE THE OUIJA BOARD!!!”

Wrestling with the blankets and writhing in torment he leapt up like a rocket, hit the roof and screamed in confusion as I lay there rigid with shock, blood running cold in the pitch black shack. Before that moment I had been blissfully ignorant of the distressing nightly escapades that were a regular occurrence according to Mystery’s sanguine account the following morning. It was par for the course as far as The Zelator was concerned.

My entire family is like this, we do it all the time, dude, my dad and gramps sleepwalk every night as well, the whole house just goes crazy when the lights are out, we have fast asleep parties. Once I woke up as I was just about to step right into the Pacific Ocean...

Beast or no beast, I had dragged the mattress back to the tent at daybreak and determined to take my chances rather than run the night-time gauntlet with The Zelator ever again.

*

The morning of One K’an passed with deceptive regularity. Mystery went to dig more furrows in the garden, Loco uprooted all the radishes and carried them off home, smacking his lips, The Zelator settled down with the Mystical Kabbalah and I tried to coax the last lemon off the tree outside the gate with a broken stick of bamboo.

“Hey *dude*”, he announced in wonder. “It says in here that the reunification of soul mates is a miracle greater than the parting of the Red Sea?” he paused to digest the implications of this miracle. “Man, that’s sick!”

Make that the Caribbean. I gave the tree an almighty thwack and lunged after the avoidant lemon as it bounded off down the path.

Lunch came and went as normal and I whiled away the afternoon practicing my newly acquired poi skills. We all agreed that these had advanced dramatically under The Zelator’s expert guidance in the fresh mountain air.

As the sun got lower we set about gathering firewood and contemplated the feast we had in mind for Earth’s impending transition to the first day of the ‘Seed’ week. This was, according to the almanac, a time of growth and new beginnings, creation and manifestation, a time when ‘experimental urges’ would come to the

fore and we would be ‘driven by the awareness of a need for change, to take a risk, to try something new’.

I will never forget the moment when The Zelator came striding into the kitchen with an air of great purpose and intractable determination, nursing a very large peyote plant as if it were his baby.

Mystery and I looked up from our respective chopping boards with their piles of neatly diced vegetables, eyebrows raised, knives poised. The stubbornness of youth was plastered on our camp-mate’s demeanour in a ‘can’t stop me now’ kind of way that nobody could argue with. He marched over to the sink without looking at either of us and, sensing our unspoken question hanging in the air, kept his back to the room as he made the portentous announcement:

“We’re doing it, man.”

There was no point trying to dissuade him, especially as - by some remarkable twist of fate - a copy of Plant Spirit Shamanism had found its way onto the kitchen table. I picked it up and looked thoughtfully at the chapter headings. “We’d better see what it says about this....”

“Whatever it says, dude, we’re doing it,” he repeated firmly, “Zorro’s never coming back...”

At the mere mention of Zorro’s name the atmosphere darkened perceptibly. Mystery stabbed a carrot as I butchered another tomato and The Zelator self-righteously scrubbed the squat, prickly plant. Everyone’s aura went an angry shade of red. None of us had even met him yet somehow this person had managed to bug us more than anyone else alive, so incensed were we at his gross mis-advertisement - *interview questions!* - and glaringly rude absence from the place to which he’d lured us. We weren’t in the mood for taking prisoners.

Where the hell IS he?

We’ve paid for this shit!

We cleaned his lame-ass kitchen!

I flipped a few more pages and found a pertinent sentence. “It says here to do it on an empty stomach....”

Mystery murmured a soft protest in his lilting accent. “What about dinner?”

I nodded. “Yeah, I’m pretty hungry too...”

The Zelator cast a baleful look at in our direction. “Dude, pass me a knife.”

*

15 minutes later we set the timer on my camera and posed for the photo that would immortalise our journey through Nuevo Mundo Valiente: Mystery on the left, right eye glinting like an archon possessed him, The Zelator incandescent with mischievous joy while half a dozen images of me blurred in front of him, as if through myriad dimensions, complete with lime green orbs and streaks of light, all of us translucent, none fully in focus.

Clearly manifest in the middle of my forehead was the Spanish word for ‘stairs’, somehow showing through from where it had physically been stuck on the ladder behind us. Floating in the air were the equally prophetic-seeming ‘la puerta’ and ‘la ventana’, similarly uprooted from their respective positions on the lintel and ledge. Reclining majestically on the table - the only thing that came out crystal clear in this bizarre image - was a pile of luscious, glowing, emerald flesh, atop the sacred text.

Having scraped the prickly skin from his priceless booty, The Zelator cut it into three sections and put one in front of us all. I nibbled at it experimentally then pulled a face as the overpowering bitterness seeped into my mouth. I pushed my piece back towards him. “Here, you can have mine, I can’t eat that”.

He stared at me, wounded. “C’mon man, let’s do it all together....”

Mystery scratched his chin. “You know what, there isn’t really enough for three of us, you can have mine as well if you want.”

The Zelator gawped and then rocked back on the bench, arms outspread in supplication. “Awww, you gotta be kidding, c’mon man...*dude?!!*”

I thought he might cry, but after half an hour spent fileting vegetables Mystery and I were secretly united in our desire to eat a large plate of normal food, drink some milky coffee and then smoke a joint. My voice was soothing. “Why don’t you have it all and we’ll look after you?”

The owner of the Tao Te Ching, a man of very few words, was gently encouraging also. “It’s a waste to split it....”

It didn’t take much persuasion. With a significant degree of panting and retching that fairly reflected the overweening bitterness of that particular plant, The Zelator managed to hold down the single biggest peyote button that any of us had ever seen in our lives. This was an operation that took almost 20 minutes to perform

while I went off to light the mother of fires and Mystery got to work on the ratatouille.

Sixty minutes later, respective dinners digesting, we could all be found sitting - sated and reasonably uncomfortable - around the heated circle of stones, flames licking left and right as we fanned them into a steadily building inferno to ward off the night-time chill. We'd already brewed some coffee, smoked our first joint and were quietly psyching ourselves up for the earth's cyclical climax and a moon that would rise full around midnight.

The sturdy, energetic puppy - by now three inches taller than when we'd first arrived - nuzzled us by turns, biting, scratching, whining, enthusiastically kicking up dust and fleas as he attempted to take root on someone's unwilling lap.

Likewise - but with infinitely more success - did the slender, delicate Wish make overtures towards the cosiest parts of the camp, naturally close to our bellies.

As the evening wore on The Zelator prepared for his impending revelation by spinning poi with furious energy and genuinely impressive skill, while I imparted to Mystery an analogy that explained the process of rebirth.

"It's like slowly waking up with the realisation that you've been lying with your face down in the earth for thousands of years - and *that's* why it's so dark, as if nothing were there - but from out of nowhere this irresistible urge to just *turn around* takes hold of you. I began to demonstrate, arranging my arms into an orans gesture and letting them pull me round, torso first and then legs until I was fully face-up, staring into endless, starry space.

I turned my head towards my left shoulder to look at Mystery, who was sitting at the other side of the blazing fire with his flinty eyes fixed on me. "And when you finally *do* turn around the first thing you see is *light*....! Everything changes in the twinkling of an eye".

We forget, we sleep, we die; we remember, we awaken, we live.

Mystery held his peace but his blue eyes twinkled all the more. We looked over to admire the twin balls of fire being vigorously twirled around the peyote-eater's head and wondered if he'd begun to feel anything yet. An indeterminate time of observance passed and then I held up another joint.

"Have some of this, man".

The Zelator did a few more complex manoeuvres - one of which involved throwing the poi extremely high into the air and executing a kind of double

somersault - then extinguished the raging orbs and came to sit with us beside the fire. He took the joint and inhaled deeply as we gazed into the rising flames. A peculiar sort of silence had descended, a tenor of illumination that cut through the chill night with unearthly, pearlescent light. I glanced up, searching for something we'd be waiting for, and inhaled sharply as it struck me in that instant.

“IT’S THE MOON!”

Mystery and The Zelator followed my eye beams through the canopy of tall trees to where the huge, silvery sphere had suddenly manifested, so incredibly bright in the crystal clear sky that her brilliant rays penetrated each pore of skin on our upturned faces. She rose like a triumphant White Queen who had arrived in conjunction with the hero of the story, a legend of sublime reflection. The vibration passed through me as if I, too, were a mirror, entranced by the heavenly body, which through the rustling veils of silhouetted leaves danced into the shape of a light-robed angel, author of the transcendental vision.

Suddenly, with no warning whatsoever, The Zelator leapt to his feet and without saying a word stepped over the circle of stones surrounding the fire, strode to the edge of the camp, opened the bamboo gate and marched off into the night in the general direction of the river.

We gazed after him for quite a while, not speaking, until a nervous giggle finally escaped me. “Do you think he can feel it?”

The silence was pregnant as Mystery paused before assessing the situation with characteristic understatement, “I reckon...”

My eyes strained against the inky darkness. “Do you think we should follow him to make sure he’s OK?” I wondered if – strong and fit as a salmon - he might try to swim up the river.

Another pause, longer this time. “Nah, he’ll be right.”

I shrugged. Very unusual behaviour was normal for The Zelator, who just a few nights ago had kept me awake for hours longer than usual by leaping round outside my tent in an amazingly vigorous dance/gymnastic/poi-spinning form of meditation. This had involved huge expenditures of energy if the relentless thudding, gasping and heaving were anything to go by.

Mystery glanced over at me. “He’ll be right, let’s ‘ave another spliff.”

And so we did, hypnotised in turns by the moon sailing above us and flickering flames rising in front, while puppy charged off in the direction of the river and

Wish made herself even more comfortable. Falling asleep that night was for once easy, for little did we know what shocks the morning would bring along with the customary 10-decibel corn grinder and army of hybrid cockerels. We could never have imagined what was waiting for us six short hours down the line.

The Awakening



There is in man – notably in his soul, and not in his body – a seed of evil of his own, without which temptation coming from outside would not exert any action on him. Because temptation would be impotent if it did not find a terrain already prepared in the human soul

MotT, Letter XVI, The Tower

“WAKEY WAKEY, *RISE AND SHINE* !”

I stirred slightly.

“WAKEY WAKEEEEEEE” hands were clapped loudly.

What an incredibly annoying voice....

“**UP NOW EVERYBODY THERE’S WORK TO BE DONE!**”

Was somebody having what’s commonly known in East London parlance as “a Turkish Bath”?

I stared at an insect of indeterminate breed advancing across the side of The Tent at a creeping pace and had a sudden, violent urge to kill.

“EVERYBODY UP NOW, WAKEY *WAY-KEY!* ”

This was accompanied by more clapping, a creaking of stairs and then a faint murmur from Mystery as he made the precarious descent from attic to kitchen.

“GET UP NOW..... **GET UP ALL OF YOU!!**”

Was this actually happening? I waggled my rigid limbs inside the uncomfortable sleeping bag and decided to let the hapless bug live a while longer, but nonetheless eject it from my hotel room. Scooping it up on the cover of How to Know Higher Worlds I tugged at the fragile tent zipper and flung Billy Six-Legs out into the dust before focusing on the real nuisance.

A few paces away stood an **extremely** small, hirsute male wearing combat shorts and Jesus sandals with long, white socks. Rampant black hair flowed over his shoulders and merged at the ears with an equally voluminous beard and moustache. He looked around at me, faked a friendly smile and deceptively sweetened his tone.

“Good morning, it’s 6.00 o’clock, there’s work to be done and who’s going to start on breakfast?”

I glanced over to where Mystery was standing in the doorway of the shack, scratching his hair, then to The Zelator’s hammock that was piled up with dirty

blankets between two wooden posts supporting the overhanging tin roof. Nobody was in it.

Trying to remain in denial, I zipped the tent back up and began the laborious procedure of getting myself fully out of the tent and somehow cleaner, wriggling out of my grubby night jumper so I could dunk myself in the river wearing my worst vest and tie-dyed trousers.

Just focus on your breathing....

Anything to distract me from the rage-inducing truth: After half a year of total absence, during which he'd hoodwinked a steady-stream of well meaning, *paying* volunteers into doing his work for him - including a month where The Zelator, Mystery and me personally had been abandoned to his filthy shack without any place to do yoga - Zorro had showed up like a bad smell with the express intention of kicking *our* butts.

Right.....

My sense of injustice was tightening up like a camel's arse in a sandstorm but I intended to hold back The Furies for as long as it took to figure out what this dude's game was. I unzipped The Tent again, somehow manoeuvred myself outside without ripping it further and headed for the kitchen.

The calming presence of Mystery offered some respite, silently making porridge with the remains of a powdered milk packet and eight left over peanuts but no raisins, no honey, no bananas - nothing else at all – because Zorro's volunteer-rationing programme was still in effect, despite his miraculous appearance.

Zorro himself was seated at the worn pine table, whence emitted a stream of petty gripes in the most unbelievably pretentious – *deceitfully soft*, 'I AM enlightened' - tone of voice it was possible for a human being to generate. If only I could have tuned out his actual words the tone itself might have been relaxing...

If only.

"How did it get in such a state around here, I've never seen it so dirty, this table seems to be stained, those dishes weren't cracked before, whose are all those bags in the work-room, the garden is looking a real mess, *blah, blah, blah*, the bricks over by the fire could do with restacking, *moan, whinge, complain*, why isn't there any cheese?"

I edged as far away from him as possible, looming over the rusting stove with my fellow victim as we attempted to tune out the monologue that seemed pre-ordained never to cease.

"Coffee?" I muttered, aghast.

“Yeahthanks”

“I told Loco to fix that leaking hose-pipe in front of the toilet, it’s so dusty out there, I can’t believe it’s in such a state, when I left six months ago everything was perfect, I notice the villagers keep walking past, that’s not on, I wonder why the gate is broken, *carp, gripe* .”

That wasn’t all:

“Someone’s been using my hat it’s all dirty now, I’m sure I left more than one hammer in the tool box, somebody else stole all our chickens, *bitch, moan*, you can never tell what sort of people you’re going to get when you open up your home to volunteers, they’re not usually my kind of people, *why am I the most unbelievable tosser you could ever have imagined in the whole of your sorry lives.*”

I rattled the saucepan viciously. “COFFEE?”

“Yes, I’ll have some coffee.....oh, but wait, you didn’t use the grinder and I need to drink proper coffee. Is that supposed to be porridge you’re making, why aren’t you using honey and raisins in that, it’s much nicer, the local honey is the best in the country, I always eat it, we’ll have breakfast then you can start clearing rocks.” Rather than smack the little eejit over the head with his coffee grinder I quickly left the room, marched out of the gate and headed for the blue tin bridge for some deep breaths of peaceful, Zorro-free air.

Shit.

That was one *hell* of an irritating dude.

This had to be a test.

Several more deep breaths later I felt a whole lot better and soon after approaching the blue tin bridge was sufficiently distracted to forget about Zorro completely for an instant. Sitting in the lotus position on a large, bumpy rock in the centre of the rushing river, one hand upturned on his lap and the other held at right-angles to his chest was none other than The Zelator. A number of wasps had settled on his face and head, where they appeared to be bothering no-one.

I clambered down the rocky and precarious bank to take a better look, where I was greeted by a rather dejected puppy, who’d clearly been keeping watch all night but hadn’t quite resolved to getting his feet wet. I stood watching for eleven minutes, soaking up the welcome morning sun with my arms outstretched and wondering whether or not to rouse my comrade.

Deciding against it, simply because his choice of activity looked like a grand idea, I sat down on the nearest other big rock I could find for a spot of my own

meditation. Anything was better than listening to Zorro's unbelievably irritating bullshit.

*OM TARE TUTARRE TURE MAMA AYUH PUNYA JNANA PUSTIME KURU
SVAHA*

I repeated it out loud in a low voice 108 times, at which point I sensed something stirring, followed by a dreamy voice.

"You got it, man...."

I opened my eyes and smiled. "Hey, what's up, you been here all night?"

"I've been everywhere and nowhere."

I waited for him to continue.

"It was far out, man, I've seen the moon dance in the sky and the spaces between spaces".

Nice! "That's cool man!"

"Yeah..... So what's up?"

The massively unwelcome reality came back to mind. "Zorro's here."

The dream abruptly ended. "Are you serious?!"

"Fraid so..."

"Oh man, you've gotta be kidding, today of all days...."

"Yep." *One K'an*. I looked over at him. "Seriously, man, he got us all out of bed like some kind of army captain and has done nothing – *nothing* - but complain. He says the place has never been so untidy, seriously dude, he's cruising for a bruising...."

There was a long groan that made the wasps fly off angrily. "You cannot be serious! Man, I've gotta see this."

"Ok, just wait for me to take a dip and we'll go back." I waded into the deepest part of the river towards a pool that had formed between some miniature waterfalls, and gasped with shock as I splashed the icy water over my upper body and face. The Zelator leaned back, with the air of one to whom eternal mysteries had been revealed. "The river told me her secrets..."

He fell silent and once again I joined him, so infinitely superior to Zorro's incessant carping was sitting on a rock in the sun and silence, right in the middle of a river.

By the time we returned to the casa our hirsute landlord and Mystery had eaten breakfast, finished off the coffee - presumably after the midget ground it with his

very own teeth - and were sitting together in tense silence while Zorro rolled a joint.

Well that's something, at least.

The Zelator took a deep breath. "Hey, how you doing man, so you *finally got here*, huh?"

Zorro studied his roach for a moment longer, checked his watch, then slowly stretched out a hand, fixing a withering gaze onto our young friend. "*Good morning, you must be The Zelator.*"

"Yeah...so what's up?"

"Well Mystery has just been filling me in on all the work that *HE* has been doing."

So, divide and conquer was his game, but we weren't about to fall for that old chestnut. Mystery wagged his eyebrows at The Zelator, onto whose shiny face an obstinate expression had swiftly arrived. He dropped his eyes and sauntered over to the stove. "So what's for breakfast..."

"*Mystery* kindly made us some porridge". The prat gave me a meaningful look.

"I'm not sure whose turn it is to do the washing up?"

I looked at him. "Yours, I reckon."

Mystery got up hastily and headed for the sink. "I'll do it."

Zorro sparked up his reefer. "It's great when people like to work, those are *my* kind of people."

The Zelator doled out some cold porridge with an unusually loud clatter of pots and spoons then slouched out of the kitchen to sit outside, while I set about making a herbal brew from the bits and pieces of leftover leaves that were lying around in Zorro's fly-infested baskets. The joint made a slow but progressive journey round the table via Mystery and I found myself desperately in need of a long, hard drag on it. A bit of conversation might speed things along.

"So, what have you got planned for this week then Zorro?"

His eyes lit up. "Well, I need to hire some real workers so we can make a start on clearing the area and digging foundations for the main super adobe house. He manifested a huge, expensive-looking Mac and pulled up some plans on the screen - see here."

Mystery and I peered over; the plans sure looked impressive.

"Looks great..."

"Oh it will be. It's costing me a fortune but it's worth it. I've spent over £100,000 on credit cards that I never intend to pay back, it serves the corrupt bankers of Babylon right, and they'll never be able to find me here."

I exchanged glances with Mystery. We'd already heard how the original group ownership arrangement of Nuevo Mundo Valiente had fallen apart within a year with the majority of members storming off and vowing never to speak with Zorro ever again, but this credit-card maxing escapade was a new one.

"I think they *would* find you, Zorro, even Guatemala has Visa...."

He shook his hairy head. "They won't. What I've done is spend the money on cars, laptops and other things I can sell when I need cash, beat them at their own game."

"Right...." Not so smart then, after all, despite his neuroscience PhD.

I finally got the reefer and gladly inhaled, wondering if we could maintain this uneasy 'getting along-ness' for the remaining week I was due to stay there.

Despite the deeply flawed financing and almost totally absent people-skills (joint excepted), Zorro's plans DID look fantastic and his knowledge of sustainable building systems was evident enough.

He closed up the laptop. "I'm going to get some tools and start working, if you'd all like to join me."

As he left the room The Zelator slouched back in and I handed him the joint. He drew on it with palpable relief and the three of us managed to relax for all of a split second, before an ominous voice come through from the other side of the shack.

"Guys....."

We looked in the general direction of The Voice.

"Guys, this isn't good...."

We waited. Was he merely stating the obvious or was there a new source of bullshit to contend with?

"This really is....NOT....good." There was a dramatic pause while we arched our eyebrows at one another.

"YOU ATE MY FATHER ."

A thunderbolt; we inhaled sharply and my heart began instantly to race: *WTF? A dreadful crime! What the hell was he on about?* I racked my brains to no avail.

"I cannot believe you have done this.....what kind of people.....**MURDERERS!**

This is too much, this is.....much too much too much too much too much..... **YOU MURDERED MY FATHER.**"

Wow, this was heavy, the guy was deadly serious. We anxiously shuffled round the kitchen door, hearts pounding, as Zorro emerged from the workroom with the world's most baleful expression, holding an empty cactus pot.

“Do you realise what you have done? **YOU**.....have..... **KILLED**my.....**DAAAD!**” he roared.

I was horrified for a moment as his words took effect. Clearly Zorro's father had died and he'd put some of the ashes in the peyote pot, which had then served as a sort of memorial. I swallowed my alarm while Mystery looked quizzical and The Zelator clasped his hair in his hands, slid down the back of the wall and rolled onto the dirty floor, writhing and whimpering in extreme spiritual shock.

Poor dude, what a come down...

I took a step forward, my eyes wide with concern. “Shit man, so your dad was cremated and that's his urn, I'm so sorry, we had no idea....” A loud wail came from the floor as Zorro tugged at his hair with the hand that wasn't clasping the pot.

“**SILENCE!**”

I blinked at him.

“**YOU ATE MY FATHER!** You *ate* him”. He curled his lips into an aggressive sneer. “Do you not understand that this plant was the spirit of my whole project, the protective spirit, the guiding force, and without it nothing can happen? It's over, you've killed my dream, you've destroyed the spirit of my life, my **EVERYTHING....**”

I gulped back air as I fought a tremendous urge to laugh hysterically. Mystery, I sensed, was doing exactly the same thing. The Zelator, on the other hand, really began to sob, tears flowing out of his grief-stricken eyes and down his rosy cheeks - “*omigod, omigod, omigod*”, he chanted – as Zorro continued to rant and rave. “Didn't anybody teach you not to steal, what gave you the right to murder and eat my father, to kill the spirit - have you any comprehension of what you have done?” If we didn't at that moment, he would do his damndest to make sure we discovered it over the course of the next week, until we packed our beaten up bags and headed back down the hill from whence we came.

Could this be returning karma for all your senseless moaning of the past?

Whispered my angel helpfully.

Well surely I paid my dues that day, for nothing on God's green earth or the brave new world was ever going to shut this dude up. Not even when I spent eight hours carving *Nuevo Mundo Valiente* into a plank of hardwood with a medium-sized screwdriver so other lost souls would find their way to the casa with far less anxiety than I had suffered.

No matter that far from having nurtured the hapless peyote from inception to full maturity, as would a true Shaman - and as he claimed - when he had "*actually bought the sucker over the internet*" according to evidence later supplied by the Wizard. We attempted reasoning:

"We were hungry...."

"You should have stuck a label on anything you didn't want eating"

"Get another..."

It didn't help matters that the mould-covered lumps in jars we'd binned during the kitchen clearing were actually the beginnings of home-grown psychedelics. Nor that his other two cacti had also, somehow, gotten eaten the night before by an ultra-keen Zelator. No wonder the river had spoken. The interrogation didn't let up for one second.

"So *Veggie* - or should that be *Vee* - what has been your contribution to the project?" He inhaled addictively and blew acrid smoke in my direction. I pretended not to hear him as I squeezed a wizened lime into the tin pot.

"Did you hear me, Veggie?"

I held my tongue a second longer.

"Well?"

I folded my arms and turned to face him. "Oh let me see now, what exactly *have* I been paying for.....ummmm.....nope, sorry, nothing springs to mind right now. What have YOU been doing?"

"I'm the director of this project, don't question me."

"And I'm a paying guest who's been helping to keep this place going...."

"The questionnaire was supposed to weed people like you out."

I stood on one leg.

*OM TARE TUTARRE TURE MAMA AYUH PUNYA JNANA PUSTIME KURU
SVAHA*

He found another victim. “So, they call **YOU**.....The *Zelator*, what exactly have you done to earn that title, you can’t possibly have made the grade? I see you attempting meditation a few times a day, have you actually done a course in correct meditation procedure or do you think you can find your own way without guidance from an expert teacher? I’ve done several courses myself and led many meditations, I can guide you and help you address your problems with stealing and killing if you’d actually like to know how to improve yourself. Have you ever even worked for a living or do you just plan to live off charity?”

From where I was standing in stony silence - ten paces away so I wouldn’t attack him - I saw The *Zelator* stare at Zorro for a few seconds then shiftily avert his eyes and look down at the table. I sensed extreme violence in the air but somehow he held it in, ruefully confiding later that day how he had: *“A very clear fantasy of slamming his head down hard on the table again and again until he died a horrible death, I can’t believe I had such evil thoughts about another human being, man, this isn’t good.”*

I nodded my head. Much to my shame I had also experienced evil and murderous thoughts, which were certainly NOT in keeping with the path of purity and peace I had assigned for myself. Turns out it was a long and narrow path after all and there I was spilling over at the seams with resentment. I sighed in near-resignation - would I EVER master my shadow and walk the *via pura* with my head held high? Mystery returned from the garden, sweating and mud-stained, pitchfork in hand, as Zorro emerged from his recently erected deluxe tent and flicked back his over-abundant hair with a supercilious toss of the head.

“Lunch-time already, did you clear out all those weeds from around the foundation area, I don’t think you should stop until that’s done?”

Mystery glowered a little but remained passive. “Do you want to give me a hand?”

“I’m a scholar not a worker.”

Human sacrifice and baleful retribution was supposed to end with the coming of Christ into this

world, the old law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth making way for the key philosophy of loving one's neighbour as one's self. But what was one to do if the neighbour was as maddening as Zorro?

We would leave that question for the arse who had spoken to answer for himself, alone up the mountain with the world's biggest credit-card bill surrounded by highly volatile natives armed with machetes who wanted their sacred site back. Our time there was up, the pyramids were calling us to leave the highlands and head for the deepest jungle.

I thought about the words of the psychic Slavonic lady at the Flower Gardens. *I can see things about you*, she'd said. *I see it in your soul. There is a man and a God. More than one man, more than one God. It is such a great Enigma; many lives and many faces.*

Later that afternoon in Moonfish cafe, surrounded by our massive muchillas and enjoying a well-earned triad of cervezas frías y bollos de canela, Mystery, The Zelator and I mused on the limit of our capacity for unconditional love and resolved to keep on trying until we'd at least expanded it to fill the universe. A toast, I felt, was in order:

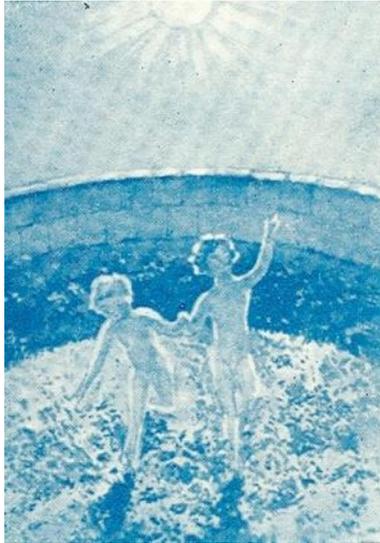
'Come, lift the cup, and in the fire of spring, the winter garment of repentance fling'

'Ah-yeah.'

'Amen Ra, dude'

Ahhhh.....Men.

Sealed Letters



The 'star' which Hermeticists follow leads them to the manger - to the centre of history, to the centre of the psychic life (individuation), to the centre of universal evolution or the "supreme focus of the personalising personality", to the Alpha and Omega of revelations, to the Heart which is at the centre of all hearts. For there is a centre of gravitation of hearts, just as there is a centre of gravitation of the planets. Like the latter, it causes the "seasons of the life of the soul

MotT, Letter XIX, The Sun

Dear Cologero

I Istanbul recently and it was an amazing experience. I'd spent around five months thinking, I really MUST go to Hagia Sophia, then a week after I got home from Guatemala I was invited on a week-long press trip to Turkey, the timing was really quite serendipitous.

I of course accepted the invitation and added on a couple of extra days in order to visit the old city of Istanbul before heading off to Ankara. I stayed within quite a limited zone between my hotel and the Sophia, the route to which entailed a short walk along a charming little street lined with small shops and restaurants.

One shop in particular caught my eye – a tiny place, not much wider than a door and single window – as all the merchandise seemed to depict various aspects of Sufi worship, including hundreds of small paintings of dervishes. I entered the intriguing shop and at once was greeted by a man standing almost 7ft tall who looked for all the world like Jesus.

The curious thing was that Jesus turned out to be his name and before long he had me seated drinking tea at the back of the shop. It turned out that this Jesus was a Sufi artist and he wasted no time before telling me that all my sins would be forgiven if I asked there and then for absolution! He stopped short of directly trying to convert me and I stayed for quite some time drinking tea and looking at paintings.

On the last day of my sojourn to Istanbul I resolved to find the shop again and purchase one of the paintings, but try though I might I could not find it, even though I recalled the exact location, but a stone's throw from my hotel. The shop and the dervish called Jesus had disappeared from the street but not as it happens from memory, and I can perhaps imagine some of the excitement felt by Wellesley Tudor Pole as he attempted to recover the grail documents from beneath the Sultan's Harem in that fabled city of secrets.

Dear Mark

It was great to hear from you, I'm glad the practice is still going strong.

In answer to your question, my shamanic training began in my teens, when a witch man was sent to help train me to withstand the powerful spiritual attacks directed at me since birth. He had his price and it was more than high enough, but I did receive a guided introduction into higher astral realms. The most memorable trip happened without warning one night in the tower we then lived in.

I'm not sure how it started, but the first thing that came to mind was a flame in my mind so bright it brought me into consciousness and reminded me of just one thing.

“I can see magnesium burning”

The hot-white phosphorescent flame compared exactly with the way I'd seen this element look when set alight during chemistry lessons at school.

I was aware of simultaneously lying on the bed, still like a corpse, with him beside me, but did not open my eyes onto the tower room. He was also conscious but quietly told me to hush, that I might focus completely on the fire in the center of my head.

The next impression was also in my mind – otherwise dark – which then appeared to be a space so great it might encompass the entire cosmos, so deeply did the sounds appear inside, a rhythmic, relentless drumming, of such sublime clarity that it was like no sound I'd ever heard on earth. Captivating from the onset, I followed the sound into the centre as far as I was able.

Upon waking the next day I recalled the wondrous experience of fire and drums from the night before. It seemed my guide had decided to take me to see his own spiritual guide, an Indian Brave, at his spiritual paradise, the Happy Hunting Grounds. We had gone very far towards it and my impression of the “magnesium burning” was my early sighting of their camp fire, blazing in the darkness. The drums spoke for themselves.

Unfortunately for my wider experience I had apparently become afraid and spontaneously rushed back to my sleeping body, but not before the brightness of the fire and beauty of their music was impressed upon me forever.

How does this compare with your thoughts on the shamanic realm?

Dear Mr Bishop

I re-read the last letter where you suggested I look further into the 'Buddha's tomb' idea. I at once saw the 'golden wheel' in the distance, which bore arcane symbols that I couldn't see closely. I saw nothing else apart from the wheel and cave entrance. The wheel rolled to the left, again, as it had done the first time I'd seen it.

Inside was a black cave mouth of impenetrable darkness, which I approached and 'landed' beside. Then I saw that I was in an actual place, in full daylight, somewhere up in the hills with cool air, perhaps in the early morning. Not a lush region, but paler green and more arid. The pathway around the entrance to the cave was of worn, white stones with grass growing in between and looked manmade, same as it had before. I walked to the very edge of the perfectly round mouth of the cave (but no further, as I was given to understand that this was the threshold of death) and shouted in. "If anyone here wants to come out and pray in all sincerity for peace then do it now." I didn't know what else to say.

At once, a group of men who were all dressed identically with white, belted over-robos, trousers, turbans and matching long, pointed beards, filed out very quickly and knelt down as one unit in orderly rows, bent over in prayer. They all looked exactly the same and moved as one. It looked like there were about 40 of them, maybe more but not many more if so, and they'd moved to a place in front of where I was standing. I turned to watch them as I drifted away to their right. I recall there being some red in their outfits, maybe a sash or ribbon around the turban.

I didn't have a direct impression of their religion but the fact they were all identical made me think that there might be peace promoters of other religions in other caves. I quickly moved further away from the entrance, back to my earlier perspective of the cave/wheel, and saw that a second golden wheel could be seen to the right of the first. I decided I would do the same thing again and see if anyone was in there who wanted to come out and pray. At this point I comprehended that there may have been a longer row of 'wheels' and 'caves' as these two were nicely adjacent at one side – the left - of my visual perspective.

I popped back in front of the entrance, again making sure I didn't step over the edge, and shouted exactly the same thing inside this one as I had done at the other. I was immediately taken by surprise by a very large and diverse number of men, women, children and even animals that rushed out in a great throng that appeared

not to stop. I didn't see where they went because I was looking at what came behind them. By this point the mouth of the 'cave' seemed enormous, more like the whole side of a mountain opening up. (I think it can only be at the source of the Ganges, this place.)

On the far left, furthest away from me, a very large, golden, cross-legged figure wearing a pointed turban or hair arrangement, hands poised, 'came out'. It seemed alive somehow and yet did not change position as it floated from the cave. I'm not sure of either who it was or how it moved. It either floated freely of its own accord or was wheeled out, transported by its faithful. It became invisible to me shortly after moving by. The first thing that occurred to me was that it may have been Buddha, but then other things came out which subsequently made me wonder if it was Brahma.

I saw Vishnu emerge from the cave and materialise more fully before my eyes, in intricate detail as worshippers poured out around their deity. The most notable feature of the soft, almost vegetative figure, was that the skin became an unusual shade of pale, lavender blue. Again, I am not sure if this was wheeled and pulled along or floated of its own accord.

Then, very swiftly indeed, a wiry figure rushed out in front of me in a whirl of frenetic energy. I saw an elaborate being with several arms and a dark bluish colour who was silently shrieking and gazing at me madly, but somehow was not fearful. I was surprised initially and tried to look closer but couldn't peer at her, she seemed to be behind me. I looked ahead again and saw a similar looking being materializing. I then wondered if this really was Kali or in fact Shiva. Maybe I saw both? I was not given definite names for any of these entities at the time of seeing them so can only guess.

I was wondering at this point if it was good idea going near those 'tomb entrances', which by this point looked distinctly like seals. I became unsure and wondered if I knew what I was doing. Of course, as someone who has read Bible stories once or twice I inevitably thought of the 'opening of the seven seals'.

At this point you might reasonably ask if I might not have been 'self-fulfilling' the sub-conscious prophecies we're all brought up with; surely all this had become too 'typically' apocalyptic in flavour?

I wonder to what extent I was projecting and to what extent receiving. Was I seeing what was there or 'creating' something that may - or may not - be - or become - real?

Getting back to our discussion about the Nephilim and in particular the figure I described to you last week. If they are capable of appearing somewhat angelic – powerful, beautiful, mobile, perceivable, of light and apparently not hostile - then firstly, are they actually working for good and people have been getting it all wrong or, alternatively, are they seducing (suggestible) people like me into doing the wrong thing? In other words, am I strong enough to truly discern the divine plan of Christ from the subtleties of the anti-Christ (granted that I do perceive the love and light vs brute force and darkness) or am I a loose cosmic cannon?! On the subject of large fish, I think the ‘Atlantis’ guardian character (who resembled a strangely corporeal version of the Pope’s hat) was – in one respect - Pisces. Or perhaps he was a manifestation of *Apkallu*, but either way the Pisces connection makes sense, especially as I went on to have such a Eureka-like ‘Capricorn!’ moment that saved me from either drowning, blind panic or both. I subsequently heard that moving into the new age of Aquarius (I’ll probably describe this incorrectly) symbolically occurs at the ‘zero Capricorn’ point – the Winter Solstice – of the given time. We should remember that things speed up in the Kali Yuga. I had tended to see this as a benefit but recently the drawbacks of extreme quickening have begun to occur to me. Theoretically the shift should take a few hundred years, but in practice the quickening shortens the projected time frame considerably. In any event, the whole ‘Atlantis’ vision was very much in the ‘mythic’ realm and I’m sure the association with astrological signs has some merit.

*For the zodiac is that which the human soul knows unconsciously; it is the book
which the soul “ate”*

MotT, Letter XIX, The Sun

A Kind of Magic

When his love he doth espy, let her shine as gloriously as the Venus of the sky –

William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream

It wasn't the flickering light in the upper storey window which drew the Watcher's attention, for many lights vied for his attention that evening. It was a melody drifting upwards through the gradually darkening sky. A rose-gold sun set the western horizon alight as the lone figure made slow, wide circles in the radiant atmosphere. Drawn by her irresistible presence below, he descended to the place where she now dwelt.

The flame of a candle within licked gently at the surrounding air and a heady scent was carried up to him with the rising music, like dancing graces of the Temple. Deeply he inspired, considering the soul within. She was stretched like a cat upon the bed, her long blonde hair spread out along the pillow. His eye was now fixed.

One golden glance of what should be.

A powerful gust of wind blew the window open with a bang and she jumped out of her skin, shaken from her hazy reverie by the sudden noise and rush of cool air. Smooth like quicksilver, he slipped inside, permeating the chamber with a magnificent aura, the robe of divine beauty. She sat up on the bed and gazed into the indigo space he had left behind him, trying to trace the formless form which had been there as she rose and stepped toward the window. He watched while she turned to face east and then west, scanning the sky for what or whomsoever had electrified the ether. Finding naught but the dying throes of day she fastened shut the window and lay back down, book in hand, feigning near-oblivion to the almost unexpected arrival of the thrice-descended master.

She was wearing gold-coloured sandals – shoes that were a gift from her father – and a midnight blue dress. Around her wrist was a bracelet full of charms and with his bright, ancient eyes, he saw that the necklace at her throat was made from the stuff of magic, a gift from her mystery-loving mother. Reaching out a hand, she found the volume switch on the radio and pushed it higher. Lush electronic sounds swelled like waves of water from breath and a heavenly voice swept over her on

the cool air. A drama was set to unfold, of that she could be sure. Doubtless, there was a *kind of magic* taking place right there and then, with her at the centre of its circle. As her eyes ran over the sepia plates of the open book the two became increasingly attuned, their selves amplified in their minds as the daughter of memory was evoked. The lost history of time began to unfold between them. Once again he had challenged the doors of time to reach her. Over 2,500 years had passed since she had last been this close to his original form. On that occasion the moon had been perfectly halved by the shadow of the Earth. Jupiter, then, was at the same point in its orbit as it would be in precisely three and a half minutes that self-same night. He looked over his shoulder at the gigantic sphere, which made its passage through the expanding cosmos with an intricately complex, haunting melody. A ray of its light fell upon her in that moment and the ageless diamond of her soul began to dissolve in his mercurial presence.

One shaft of light that showed the way

A sense of fervent devotion rose up inside her like the flames of a secret fire as he stretched out his hands to touch her outspread hair.

This flame that burns inside of me is here in secret harmonies

She had a dream. He could see every colour of every scene.

One dream, one soul, one prize, one goal

With a silent whisper he reminded her of the truth:

No mortal man can win this day.

He exhaled into her parted lips.

There can be only one....¹⁸

The radio crackled and grew fainter, framing the esoteric silence like a braid of wheat, magnetising all background interference until the air grew taut as a lens, magnifying live reactions as if they were in a scene from a lyric master's play.

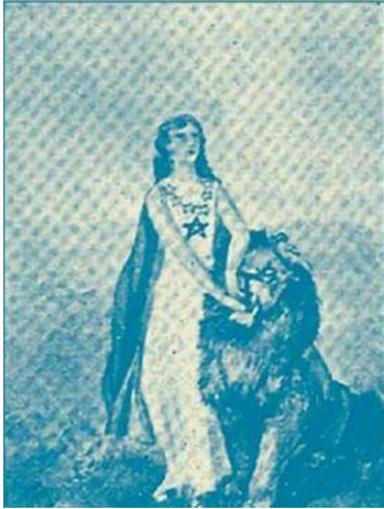
Still you will always be with me, your name constantly on my lips, never forgotten

Ovid, Hyacinthus

¹⁸ Roger Taylor, Queen

Part 3

The Mysteries



The Divine smiled benignant and commanded Nature to exist. And, issuing with His voice, the feminine came forth in her perfect beauty. The Gods with amazement beheld this marvel

Kore Kosmou

Part 3

The Mysteries

The Temple
The Sacred War
Initiation
Realm of Dreams
The Ship that does not sail
Rites of Dionysus
Tyrannos
The Sage
Orpheus
The Quickening
The Bridal Chamber

The Temple

Find the well by the lake of memory. Guardians protect the cold water. Tell them...

Orphic Fragment

I am standing in the centre of a great rectangular hall with my head held high and my long, bright hair wound into an elaborate arrangement that is held in place by a gleaming diadem. My white linen robe is bound with pure gold and I am still as a statue, with one eye fixed upon the future as the other observes what is past.

The air is cool beneath the temple roof. The only sounds that can be heard are an occasional bleating of goats and the distant murmuring of servants as they make ready for the Spring Council, which is to be held here in three and a half days. I have already swept clean the marble floor and it shines like the full moon of Amalios. Early-morning sunrays flood the hallowed space, infusing every atom. Narrow gaps between the thick, rounded pillars reveal sections of a motionless scene, silent as if time had ceased.

Happy are the men who enter this house and ask of me, "What do you see?" The wisest make the best of the answer they are given but others seek more, seldom to any avail, for there is a way that we do things at this place – here at the navel of the world - where the future is inscribed on lead.

I stand within the fourth Apollonian Temple to have been built here, which has undergone extensive repair works following the War that almost destroyed it. The first Temple was much smaller than the present building and constructed from branches of Thessaly's sacred laurel trees; the next was created by bees of wax and feathers, designed to bridge the gap between Earth and the underworld. Bees make the journey to and from Hades as a matter of course and the secrets they retrieve are for the golden ears of Apollo and his twin sister Artemis, keeper of the moon. The third temple was a great bronze edifice which stood for many years before the heat of the Sun God melted it back into the Earth, and the fourth was built before I took up my office. The fifth shall not be put on its foundations before I have left for the Elysium Fields.

It is on the seventh day of each month that the future lives of men are unveiled and they come from all parts of the Earth to know what the fates have in store for them. This is except for during the winter months, when twice-born Dionysus returns and natural chaos reigns in place of Apollo's measured reason.

When frost is on the ground and the sheaves of wheat have frozen back into the Earth – when the great white star of Maia appears on the horizon – then it is that nine wild maenads will herald the arrival of Dionysus. His body is buried close to where I am standing and during his season our dedications are made for the following year's harvest, while we pray that the sun God will return, his golden youth resurrected anew.

When I am satisfied that the purification rituals have been performed correctly and the Temple is perfectly clean I walk towards the entrance of the great hall. It is elaborately decorated with all manner of votives – burnished golden shields, statues, cauldrons, tripods and bows - from all four corners of the Earth. Counted amongst them are the ensigns and symbols of every noble family that is known to this world.

I instinctively look up before leaving Apollo's house, to above the entrance where a thousand garlands of laurel create fragrant canopies beneath the ceiling and pay host to the songbirds that sing his praises. The sweetest voice I ever heard belongs to the nightingale, who reveals to those with ears to hear the innermost longing of the psyche. A pure, shrill note breaks the silence and escapes into Echo's lonely realm. When twilight falls I shall return.

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The moment I step from the building and out into the dry, dazzling world, I behold a sea of olives undulating before me. It is a breath-taking panorama which stretches far as the eye can see. I could never grow weary of such a vista and I remain still for a few moments, breathing in the warm, sweet aura of tranquillity, giving thanks for the grace of the gods which brought me here to live my days. Anyone who has been here understands that Holy Mount Parnassus is the closest place to Elysium on Earth. From it springs the fountain of all arts and poets, artists and musicians – devoted lovers of the Muses – all pay testament to the prophetic mouth of God that wields power and influence here.

The Sphinx which guards both the entrance to our temple and mysteries of the world is made of a warm-coloured stone. It blazes in the sun like fire and I incline

my head as I walk past it down the gleaming marble steps, still surrounded by the monumental dedications of various cities. It is not long before I have entered the walled kitchen yard, where I immediately see one of the Tetrarch's slaves giving water to a small grey ass that is standing in the shade of a fig tree, already unburdened of the offerings he bore. My heart leaps for joy, breaking at once my serenity of mind and implacable demeanour. I kiss the velvety muzzle of this faithful beast, for not only do I have quite some affection for the animal, but his owner is of the greatest interest to me as well.

His image appears at the front of my mind. Like rays of sun flooding into the Temple's cool interior, it penetrates the deep shadows of hidden places. The Tetrarch is the eldest son of the ageing Tagos of Thessaly, a great aristocrat of Greece. His tribe, the Aleudae of Larissa, was founder of the Amphictyonic League, one of the most powerful military forces in the world. Now that Thessaly is the chief protector of Delphi, its surest and strongest ally, the Tetrarch – as leader of the cavalry - commands more respect than almost any other man who comes here. It is only Cleisthenes of Sicyon whose standing here is higher. The Tetrarch conducts much of his official business at the sanctuary, as do the governments of other city states, for all men come here to learn the secrets of Gods. There are also those who wish to meet with their muse, listen to the poets and musicians, or debate with philosophers and other great men of this world. I take a few moments to pet the placid animal, which is dozing peacefully in the dappled shade. His soft nose tickles my palm and he bows his head for me to scratch his dusty forelock at its peak. The warmth of the sun penetrates to my bones and for a moment I feel relaxed and carefree, as any other 19 year old girl on a halcyon summer's day.

I do not intend to linger long, however, as my reason for being here is to prepare a special elixir for my Timocrates, which will be used to facilitate his nightly travels through Psyche's realm. Timocrates is a Saint of Delphi – one of the Thracids - and he has been my teacher and guardian for as long as I can remember. He is a highly learned man who is devoted to my education and well-being. I count myself fortunate it was him and not another the Gods decreed must raise me, for he has permitted me a degree of freedom that stricter Saints would not tolerate. I understand the value of this privilege and ensure the fruits of my mind are known to him alone amongst men, together with my lovely and graceful sisters, who are my dearest friends.

I make my way into the kitchen and examine a bundle of ingredients that were gathered early this morning, the seventh day of the moon. They are laid on top of a solid Myrtle-tree table, a gift to the sanctuary from Corinthian priests of Aphrodite. It is from these ingredients that I shall concoct powerful arcana for my Earthly guardian. Working steadily and also rather quickly, for it is a task I know well, I clean the plants and divide them into proportions, then place them together in a copper cauldron. I am vigilant about obtaining precise measurements for the preparation of such mixtures is a very exacting science. The production of draughts, tinctures, medicines, elixirs and arcana is a duty I perform on many occasions, but someone was once foolish enough to ask me what I was 'cooking', as if I were a common slave. It was such an inappropriate question I simply declined to answer, which is the case whenever a foolish or inappropriate question is asked of me. Then there are the questions which are worthy of my time but to which there are no easy answers.

Once I was asked when he - Dionysus - first came here. At first I could only smile, for what is time to the kingdom of eternity? There are only hours of the day, seasons of the sun and cycles that are marked by the passage of the moon. Most vehemently have I been warned by the Saints to never fall beneath the sway of time because that would bring death to all prophecy. The pendulum might swing, but such as I must master the art of remaining above it in a state of perfect balance, shielded from the terrors of Cronos who yet we must touch without our hearts failing or minds being lost. Daily am I reminded that ordinary time is of no consequence and fate unfolds precisely as the gods command it. When this occurs is immaterial, the potential for all action being omnipresent. We are chiefly concerned here with what is infinite, although men so often desire to make fixed points for the dead books of their history.

"For this reason", Timocrates informed me – quite gravely, in fact – when I questioned him on the matter, "the League has taken it upon itself to regulate all calendars of the civilised world that we might subjugate for perpetuity the menace of time at the centre of the Earth."

I privately doubted it would be possible to truly safeguard the world from Time but kept this thought to myself. For the sake of the inquiry, it is sufficient to say that Dionysus comes at first sighting of the Pleiades, accompanied always by Euterpe, whose hypnotic sounds will soar over Parnassus from flutes poised like spears of moonlight on the muse's lips. What happens then, who can say? It is one

of the mysteries we cannot share easily, for like dreams in the stillness of the night, memories of those days are as mist in the fire of morning.

Though my mind may roam free, my life here is wholly proscribed in many ways. Indeed, it is set in stone. I sometimes dwell on the fact that nothing ever changes and perhaps I wish it might, but I am more aware of my great good fortune and that I enjoy privileges the majority of people dare only dream of. And yet, I know all too well that I have seen nothing of the world beyond this temple and its outlying areas, although I frequently hear rousing stories of other lands from the men who come here. Stories I have over-heard, for the most part, or which come to me via my teachers, for it is not permitted for ordinary men to speak freely with a woman who is married to the God.

I most often hear about the great foreign kingdoms of Egypt and Persia – seats of wisdom and warfare, respectively - and of the various colonies founded abroad by generals and merchants of Greece, often upon the advice of my divinatory office. These tales can cause a sense of longing that I find difficult to overcome and there are times when I wonder if it is to the sea that I shall one day return.

I also wonder about the Tetrarch, who occupies my mind so profoundly that he is by my side in all but body throughout each day. We are bound, he and I, by ties both seen and unseen. There are ties for all to see because the Tetrarch is an overlord of Delphi and it was he that insisted I should be appointed Pythia when the former priestess was murdered during the war. Then there are the unseen ties, for I alone have understanding of what he really means to me. Even my sisters do not comprehend the depth of this ocean. To my mind he is the Earthly representation of Apollo himself and loving one enables me to increase my understanding of the other. How fragile we are beneath the ruthless gaze of our Lord, but how sweet is the perfume of crushed flowers, how healing the oil of their divine essence.

My love for Apollo knows no bounds, for his light reaches even into places of darkness, he is my lord and my protector in times of danger, my guide through moments of chaos. He is the husband I cannot have, the mind which inhabits my own and requires me to master this world. Of all the places that I know to be in existence I have the greatest desire to see Hyperborea, cradle of my Lord and Master. It is in Hyperborea that the wax and feathers temple may now be seen, for it was carried there in the chariot of Apollo many moons ago and preserved as a portal to the underworld.

The Tetrarch seldom comes here during the cold and stormy months of Dionysus (The Tyrant Cleisthenes, by contrast, invariably does) but he frequents this place when the God has returned from his travels in Hyperborea. Once - when I was a child and prone to some irrational thinking - I asked Timocrates whether we might follow the God when he journeys through winter to that shining, golden land of sun and ice. His answer was decisive and prevented further query:

“Neither by ship nor on foot could you find the marvellous road to the meeting-place of the Hyperboreans¹⁹, but in any case it is not for you to pursue Gods or men - wherever they may wander - and if you were ever to leave here in order to do such a thing you could never return and hope to keep your life.”

I never mentioned it again, as I do of course understand perfectly that this life is not my own to have desires with. I have learned to hold my peace, for the war has instilled in me too much knowledge already of the evils men might inflict upon one another and careless tongues or minds can spell catastrophe. As I am under scrutiny from most people for much of the time and some people at all times, I guard my words and deeds minutely, the importance of behaving discreetly having been seriously impressed upon me from an early age.

As a rule, therefore, my thoughts are carefully measured and then voiced with reason, my mind is generally clear and grasps at nothing, for everyone and everything is waiting for the God to speak through me and this is the singular reason for my existence. This is the way it is and always has been and always will be, lest the gods of Olympus are rearranged with another at their pinnacle.

In any case, all of us here are at peace now the war has ended and our fortunes are so very great. Far be it from me to break such peace. Riches beyond most men's wildest dreams are scattered along our roads as carelessly as leaves, and arts beyond the realms of mortal man's imagination are conceived of and created quite effortlessly, from beneath the steady gaze of the Master of the Muses. Here it is that the true source of inspiration might be found, the fountain of joy, source of the birdsong.

¹⁹ Pindar, Pythian Odes

The Sacred War



The mystery of the God-Man is the key of divine magic

MotT, Letter III, The Empress

It was towards the end of the long Sacred War that I first set eyes upon the Tetrarch, who came with many horsemen under his command and at last razed Krisaioi to the ground, having already poisoned its waters with hellebore and put to death most of the town's irreverent people.

As the cursed polis burned a desperate band of rebels somehow escaped and stormed the sanctuary, where they set about attacking the Saints as they prayed in the Temple. Some ran for their lives and Timocrates escaped their murderous intent whilst he was attending to God's holy flame in the Corycian Cave. He stealthily rescued me from my chamber and took me for hiding to the secret place of dedication, beneath the priceless earth. I saw the fear in his eyes as he spoke and girded myself for more terror.

"I must retrieve the temple scrolls, the words that were given to us *by the Gods* that none can replace. You will remain here - still and silent as a statue, my child - and pray with all the force of Psyche that Phoebus Apollo will save us."

Then he was gone, leaving me to cower like a new-born goat in the bowels of the Earth as I listened to the sounds of death and destruction crashing like cymbals on the ground above. While I devoted myself to fervent prayer in this hidden chamber, by their screams and the quickening of my heart I knew that a band of furies was raging above me. I pulled my veils closer to ward off the chill of that cold, dark grotto, my only comfort God's eternal flame. From this place I occupied myself with continual prayers to my beloved Lord of the Sun, until I was deep in his hypnotic embrace.

Over the course of the dark and hateful night the sounds of death progressively ceased, and after many hours I could see from the inexorable receding of darkness that the sun was beginning to rise. It was then that a ray of hope fell upon me like gold dust, for in that moment - with a clanging of metal, blood splattered but gleaming - a great warrior revealed himself at the entrance of the cave.

His sword was drawn but I recognized his Thessalian dress and saw the insignia of God upon his breast, so was unafraid. More than this, I felt sure as halcyon day had followed the unholy night that Apollo himself had come to claim me, just as I had hoped and prayed he would. I got to my feet and approached him on my trembling legs, holding out my palms by way of supplication as I intoned a hymn of thanks for deliverance against evil. But rather than lower his sword he interrupted my chanting and addressed me in a cold voice.

"Stop where you are! Are you a Cretan by birth?"

Even this did not startle me, so entranced was I by the certainty of deliverance from evil. I answered that I was not and a look of relief crossed his face, soon making way for a reflection of the wonder in my own. His eyes were like silver stars in the half-light and I was a small step away from him when he stretched out both his hands to lift my veils. I held my breath as he twined heavy sections of my thick, golden hair around his fingers.

*Through the magic power
Of Venus, in that selfsame hour
A wondrous miracle befell.
The rose became a damozel
Of form and beauty past compare,
Clothed in her own rich golden hair²⁰.*

His tone was now infinitely softer: “I have not seen you here before. Who *are* you?”

Though it was very seldom spoken I revealed my true name to him beneath my breath and heard the dreamlike quality to my own voice, as if it came from beyond me. So clearly did he resemble the god of my mind that I was dazzled by his longed-for manifestation. He repeated it back to me three times and I could not help but smile with joy as it sprang to life by this charm. My world had been transformed in the twinkling of an eye, and with it the whole world above.

The Saints who tutored me were not like this man, who had come to me clothed with the sun. He was handsome as only the God could be, that much was clear, and never before had I experienced such a complete fulfilment of my prayers. It was as if I had been given the only thing I had ever wanted before I even knew or understood what that was. He did not say another word, just lifted me in his arms and carried me up to greet the new Dawn, clasping my golden head to his unyielding, burnished breast.

When he set me down again it was well away from the scenes of bloodshed, in an area where the servants slept. He got to one knee again and studied my face with

²⁰ Roman de la Rose

an air of fascination, turning my chin towards the light and taking once again the weight of my hair in his hands, spreading his arms to measure its length.

As he slowly opened his fingers it felt like skeins of golden silk around my shoulders. My eyes drifted closed and in the split second before I fainted I felt him lean towards me and kiss me on the cheek.

When I next awoke it was to find grandmother Hekate and her maid Selena bending over me anxiously. "Thank Hermes she is safe!" cried Hekate, who had nursed me for as long as memory served me to recall and – as she told me herself – had also nursed my blessed mother. I sat up to put my arms around her, but soon became aware that the Tetrarch was watching us with great attention. Silence descended, bringing with it a gentle breeze of warm, sweet air. It came suddenly upon us, as if it were the breath of Aphrodite.

"The Aura," he said quietly, putting a finger to my cheek again. His voice fell almost to a whisper. "This girl is so fair I can scarcely believe she is mortal - in her face I see the divine..."

Hekate gave him a sharp glance at this but Selena overflowed with pride. "Oh, she is fair as the sun, my Lord. Such hair as there is on her head we have never seen the like of before or since!"

Without so much as a glance at her, removing neither hand nor eyes from my face, he asked: "You know, do you not, that the High Priestess is dead?"

I was shocked at his words for this had not occurred to me at all until that moment. The Tetrarch addressed me once again with an air of calm expectancy. "Now that she is gone, what will you say to me, daughter of Apollo?"

I was afraid, then, for I had never before been questioned by such a man in this way. As I searched Memory for an appropriate line of hexameter the dry voice of Timocrates suddenly flew to my aid and the Saint's cool shadow veiled my bewildered face.

"May the God be with you now and always," he responded smoothly, "and assist you in fulfilling a glorious destiny, as befits the one who brought the light to Delphi in her darkest hour."

He got to his knees before the Tetrarch with arms outspread. "I give you my heartfelt thanks that she has been spared the fate which befell the others. You have saved her," he added simply. My noble guardian hung his head with such an aspect of total supplication that I was quite taken aback.

The Tetrarch did not appear surprised but instead smiled broadly, dazzling us all with his countenance and appearing so handsome that I stared at him in

amazement. He laughed merrily. "My dear friend Timocrates, there is no need at all for this attitude, please arise!"

While he was doing as bidden the Tetrarch unsettled him further. "You know, do you not, that this is a priceless vessel now set before me? I greatly desire to know more of her history - a girl such as this is nowhere else to be found on these shores."

I heard one of Hera's peacocks cry out in the distance and noticed that sweat had started to bead on Timocrates' brow as he anxiously dismissed the slaves. "Sir, she has been in the service of this sanctuary for as long..."

The Tetrarch interrupted him. "Have no fear my friend, I do not - not at *this* moment - intend to carry away the virgin bride of a god." He smiled at me again with his sparkling eyes, but I was not able to discern his true meaning.

Seeing Timocrates' pained face he grew serious again. "Rather than ruin us all at once this morning I would rather commend the company of Saints - of those who remain - for the choice of one so talented. I believe we have found the natural replacement for she who departed in the black of night." He paused for a moment and scrutinised my worried-looking guardian with a hard expression. "They cannot possibly object now we are free of the Cretans - all that has been asked of me I have fulfilled."

Timocrates replied in a tormented whisper. "It has been a bloody night and we must make sacrifices for the dead. As for..." he turned to look at me, "we should wait...."

I saw at once how this resistance irritated the Tetrarch, who raised his voice before Timocrates could finish. "It is essential that the office be occupied by one who is loyal to the friends of Delphi and I believe this girl will remember well the way I saved her life. We shall refer the matter to Cleisthenes but I'm certain he shall stand with me on this matter.

"Besides," he added thoughtfully, once more fixing his eyes upon me, "it is only fitting for the counsel of Apollo to be given by a golden-haired maiden in his days of greatest glory. I will have a lock of this hair to show the Council of the League when it convenes, as a sign that the true and rightful High Priestess is to be upraised as our Oracle."

He pulled a shining blade from his boot and before I had time to think cut a lock of the hair that had fallen onto my arm. He carefully wound the long, golden threads around the hilt of his dagger. "You can be sure that I have made it my duty to

protect you, and together with our allies we shall serve as defenders of Apollo's holiest shrine."

Timocrates stepped forward and bowed his head, but I was rooted to the spot without real comprehension of the scene I was somehow playing a part in. The Tetrarch departed soon after and I was unaccountably rend in two by a sharp and hitherto unknown sorrow that would bind me to the moon by a silver thread, destined only to wax and wane as he came and went throughout the years.

From that day on, though he did not reside at Delphi but far away in the horsemen's hills of Thessaly, I would seek his face in every crowd, as the head of a flower will bend towards the sun. At night before sleeping I would touch in my mind his untarnished image, longing for the moment when he might really touch me, though I feared it would never come. It was shortly after this first encounter that I became the high-priestess of Apollo, and so it was that two great loves became intertwined in my Psyche for the whole of time.

He is found with her hair spread over him; it is shaken out over his brow

The Book of the Master of Hidden Places

Initiation



The essence of pure mysticism is creative activity....the essence of pure gnosis is reflected mysticism

MotT, Letter II, The High Priestess

The League placed a heavy curse over the ruins of Krisaioi so no-one would dare found a settlement there again. The burned, bare ground serves as permanent warning to anyone who thinks they have a right to control the Oracle, and the rich road to Delphi is kept safe for any man wishing to come here. Of those there are many and the length of the road bears witness to their devotion with countless dedications and statues of the gods. This is the holiest and most cultivated place on Earth and I am its High Priestess, initiated at the heart of Spring.

My initiation ceremony was a glorious occasion attended by the great men of our world, who also oversaw the appointment of many new Saints. The shadow of death had already passed by me in the underworld of the cave, this part of the initiation having naturally been fulfilled by my true experience. Then the depth of fear had been illumined by the face of love in the dawning of a new day. It was said that I should occupy a pivotal role before the turning point of history finally came, heralding a golden age in our civilization. They told me there was no finer living instrument of the divine will than the Delphic Oracle, and I believed them until the moment when I faced one whose music was greater than all of the words I could muster, either aloud or in the silence of my heart.

Though I was restless for many days and nights prior to the event - and weak from fasting - when the moment for my transformation came and I partook of the Mysteries I was filled with confidence, peace and joy. Now I have this position I must serve for fifteen years without reprimand and then I shall become the Pythia for life and no-one shall stand above me in this world.

It was the chief of all the saints who lifted the gossamer veil from my face and bade me drink deeply from the Chalice of Apollo. The perfectly proportioned vessel, an item of matchless value and prestige, was fashioned of finely beaten gold and studded with pearls and onyx, which mirrored the torch lights so brilliantly that the cup appeared as a glowing flame to all who saw it.

When I had drunk of the God a priest stepped forward and placed a leafy diadem upon my head that was scented with the sacred flower of Parnassus. He gestured for me to look into the holy waters of Delphi, where I saw reflected the cosmic path of Psyche as it was mapped by planets and stars. Time passed and the moon rose higher. A burning blue star, brighter than any other, was held in conjunction with the yellow lamp of night, sphere of Zeus, father of the gods.

Something then occurred which delivered a profound shock to me. I was gazing deep into the dark and limpid waters, lulled into a state of trance by the light of the Father, when a massive figure suddenly materialized by my left shoulder, forcing

me to jump in panic and thereby loosening the grip of this mortal coil upon my soul.

In the moment that followed I felt a wave of intense euphoria as if I were lifted off my feet by the moon steeds drawing Artemis' chariot. The one who had appeared beside me was shining brighter than silver with eyes of mercury. I saw his winged cap and sandals, the staff with serpents twined around, and knew him at once to be Hermes, author of time and travellers, herald of the gods. It was then that I became as one with Psyche and embarked upon my first awakened journeys into dreams, which all true priests and priestesses must undertake. The messenger of the Gods henceforth became my guide and showed me the way to other worlds. I know that I bound to him forever, throughout all ages to come. It is written in the stars that by Zeus we are united.

Many moons and countless dreams have passed since then and much has changed at Delphi, which has flourished under the protection and influence of the League to become the holiest and most cultivated place on Earth. The Council of the Great Amphictyone has a permanent seat and meets here twice a year to ensure the rites of Apollo are being observed correctly.

Although I have his peace within me and my love of the God reigns supreme, I am sometimes moved in mysterious ways when I'm bathing in Delphi's hallowed Spring. It is as if I am bewitched by my own reflection and I wonder what that could mean, what power it is that lives within the crystal waters to so detach my mind from reason. Perhaps it is a memory of the virgin nymph Castalia I see therein, for I have heard it said that she alone had hair as mine and was thus beloved of the great God. I wonder then if Apollo looks upon me as he did her, and it must be with this vain notion that I am captivated further by sweetest Aphrodite, she of the invincible will. As the roses take bloom in my cheek, mirrored by my reflection in the sacred spring, I remove the golden amulets from my arms and free my peerless tresses for bathing. They fall about me in silken coils, caressing my body like trains of spun-gold thread.

"You are lovely as only a Naias Nymph could be," my sister Erato told me as we sat beside the pool one summer's eve. It appeared as a sea of molten gold in the rosy late sunlight. More often these days do the sisters comment on my beauty and I wonder whether I have changed somehow for them to say such things.

"Beloved of Apollo," would sing lovely Melpomene as we began our bathing rites. "What fire of Olympus has brought you now to these sacred waters?"

I think then of all the tragedies which might befall the virgin bride of a jealous God, whilst the women scoop Castalia's cold, crystal waters into vase-like shells and wash the shadows of the Earth from my body. When I leave the Spring I am clean and freed of untoward passion, ready to meet any query with pure and perfect reason. Any man who comes to Delphi with the intention of consulting the Oracle must also wash the debris of life from out of his hair, as I have done.

I await the supplicants whilst seated on Apollo's great tripod. Many who arrive here from their long and arduous journeys are awash with fears at the thought of being in God's presence, and the highly charged atmosphere of the Temple does little to calm their nerves. Nor am I much help to them on this account, for I have my own trials to face, high on my precarious seat that is placed above the abyss, which emits a formidable stench from the rotting body of the python that was cast within it.

The doors are closed but there is space inside for many and no longer is the Oracle restricted to speaking only on Apollo's birthday, as in times gone by. Sometimes it is a full house, at other times there is a small number of supplicants – or even just one - depending on the price they have paid. We inhale the same sacred smoke, for it drifts beyond the Adyton and into the main hall.

Happy is the man who enters my house.

Realm of Dreams

*You live your fuller life in your dreaming, and your days are spent in thanksgiving
for that which you receive in the stillness of the night*

Kahlil Gibran, The Garden of the Prophet

Despite his prolonged absences which mar my happiness, whenever he returns with Apollo the Tetrarch pays large measures of gold to have me sit alone before him in the Temple, high up on the tripod in my lightest veil. On such occasions my sisters would watch us in turn with avid curiosity, peering out from their secret place between the walls that surround me on three sides.

“It seems to me, he loves her” whispers Erato to Calliope, knowing full well that I can hear every word of her musical voice. “I have seen how his eyes follow her form – as if she were a doe and he the stag – and now he sets another king’s ransom before us!”

Calliope laughs in delight: “Love, sweet love - the story of a lifetime!” I can tell she is thrilled by the very idea and a flower of hope takes sudden, reckless bloom within my heart.

“Oh yes! And he shall write songs for her by the dying embers of day as he prepares to seek her presence in the sacred realm of hypnosis!” says Euterpe to our dainty sister Terpsichore, who airily remarks that she would “dance for joy” to mark such a happy occurrence.

“It will all end in tears” checks fateful Melpomene. “What mortal man has the right to desire one so beloved of Phoebus Apollo?”

I bow my head as I contemplate how such a thing might come about. Tears had not passed often from my eyes, for I had my sorrows but still more pride.

“If it is written in the stars that they are meant for each other then nothing can change things, nor unfix that which is set with fire upon the face of heaven,” my clever sister Urania announces in portentous tones, causing me to lift my gaze that I might capture this spark of certain truth.

“It is true, dear sisters - no man can put asunder those who have been joined by God,” murmurs serious Polyhymnia with a meaningful glance towards the

heavens, at which curly-haired Thalia laughed and said it was “all rather amusing if you think about it!”

“We must end this speculation, which will – as you shall see! – disturb our peace. The *fact* is that every man on Earth seeks the God’s attention and many come bearing gifts for our sister. The only difference is that she perceives them as being inferior to *him*, the one who came to upraise her.”

Thus were the sanguine ruminations of my solemn sister, Clio.

He’s equal with the Gods, that man who sits across from you, face-to-face, close enough to sip your voice’s sweetness²¹

I am thankful my hot cheeks are shielded by the veil as I struggle to breathe more easily. My almost irresistible urge to run towards him is kept in check by the unmoving force of the god which holds me in place. The result is that I cannot deviate an inch from the position in which I find myself, suspended between Heaven and the Abyss in a state of profound tension.

There is a doctrine whispered in secret that a man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door and run away; this is a great mystery which I do not quite understand²²

Why has my heart grown so restless when everything on Earth is at my feet and the greatest of Olympians sends his messages to men through me? As has been the case for five long years the Tetrarch betrays no emotion at all, simply asks once again when his ship should sail. I perceive his respect and can discern the protective force he exerts over me, but I yearn above all else to feel the tender fire of our first meeting, the touch of his hand on my face, his lips against my cheek. Fire or not, he still brings more gold to Delphi than any individual other than the Tyrannos, who lives across the gulf in his great Ionian city. For all this high price, my response to him is nonetheless cryptic, for I do not want his ship to

²¹ Sappho

²² Plato, Phaedo

sail at all - not without me, which surely means never - and I wonder anew if I had only dreamed of his kiss with the unfulfilled desire of childhood. Too soon he was gone.

I think of such moments as I prepare myself for the sacred realm of dreaming, but on this night it is a troubled brow I lay upon the soft fleece and hypnosis does not come easily. I have vivid memories of the last winter Tristeria, which left me with a sense of dissatisfaction that I cannot place. I wonder if my love for Dionysus has grown too strong. In my painful longing for the Tetrarch the allure of the twice-born youth has power to move me beyond my present confines. I am drawn to follow him further in a way that would be impossible to resist were it not for my oaths to Apollo. Whether I might share more fully in Dionysus' gift of renewed life without sacrificing my first allegiance to the Sun-King is a matter that occupies my mind greatly, most often when darkness falls.

I cannot safely confide these thoughts to anyone on earth, for if I do not remain true to Apollo and above the temptations of passion then none will have faith, his rule shall end and Delphi will crumble to dust, taking me and all the Saints to the same earthly grave. Time and again I wonder how I might reconcile the forces of reason and passion, duty and desire, which have somehow become opposed within me.

"The successful resolution of antinomies is a superior hallmark of mastery," Timocrates chided one sultry afternoon, when I complained – still without revealing my secret - that a growing fire in my heart might one day consume the clear, detached mind that Saints and supplicants of Delphi required of me.

"How am I to resolve anything while I am torn apart, body from psyche, and my self is drawn further into the crucible at the turn of each equinox?" Even Artemis herself had been bewitched by a handsome hero.

He patted my hand kindly and revealed nothing useful that I could then see. "It is a task that can take many lifetimes, my child, and one that comes easily to no man or even woman, no matter how great. Be thankful that you have even set out on this road and bear your burden lightly; the yoke should be easy."

I sighed and looked away. "If Apollo and Dionysus are perpetual rivals and both make Delphi the centre of the world - with me at its heart - then how am I to unite them within me when it seems they would rather break me in two than be as one?"

My guardian only smiled and gestured that the subject was closed.

It is dreams that sustain me through the inner trials and I am well able to direct their course. It is a skill cultivated in whoever holds the office of High Priestess

and it is because of such gifts that the world's most powerful men place extraordinary value upon my golden head.

That night I spread my heavy hair about the fleecy headrest and gaze at the glittering constellation engraved upon the ceiling. It is the sun-seeker Orion, beloved of our Moon-Queen Artemis, whose love holds him there in perpetuity. I contemplate the virgin huntress of heaven who raised her bow at Apollo's behest and claimed the life of her lover unawares. With this as my example I must learn how to subjugate the crackling flames of desire, by which I shall make the love of my own life immortal.

This is just as I have been taught, for as long as I serve Apollo the magical charms of his beloved sister are mine also, and the fugitive Atalanta shall live another lifetime before she must be imprisoned in the body of a lion at the end of time. On nights such as this – warm and heady with the scent of Datura – the lesson is not easily learned and I pray my longing will bring the dolphin priest to Psyche's hallowed realm. My prayers are answered and I join him gladly as he shoots like an arrow through the deep, swelling sea.

*

I awaken to find Nafrini standing over me with a cup of warm water flavoured with honey and lemons. I set my blinking eyes upon her graceful silhouette. "Dear Nafrini, I need some words of your wisdom this morning for I am still weary, though not through lack of sleep."

She inclined her head and sat on the edge of the bed with her back very straight and her hands folded in her lap, her handsome profile implacable as the Sphinx outside Apollo's temple. I leaned towards her a little. "After all these years here, why do you never speak to me of your Gods?"

Nafrini hailed from Aegyptus, land of dark and fertile soil, home to many mysteries, where the divine is as one with nature and one may learn the sacred arts. "I will speak of them now if you will hear me, Priestess."

As I gazed upon her face her features took on a feline aspect, as if she were shifting shape before my eyes. It was something I had noticed about her appearance on many more occasions than this and I felt my heart begin to race a little, conscious of the approaching goddess.

"I would like to hear more about Osiris, for though he is fixed there above me" – I indicated the stars of Orion on the ceiling – "I am not yet versed in his mysteries."

The smile finally manifested but did not reach the impenetrable black-ringed eye she now set on me. “Did he come to you in a dream, Priestess, or maybe his beloved has been appearing in your mind, whispering about the mystery of reunification?”

I pondered this but shook my head. “I learned from Clio in the realm of Psyche that he is angry with Apollo but the reasons are not clear to me.”

She nodded. “Osiris has more kinship with your winter Lord Dionysus than Phoebus Apollo.”

I felt the stirring of a memory deep inside me. “What then can you tell me of your rituals, of the Black Rite?”

She raised a hand to shield her face and turned away from me a fraction. “This is not something that can easily be spoken of, it is for those who are ready to know themselves and to join with the stars and draw light from darkness. Do you know we have a book, The Book of the Master of Hidden Places?”

I inclined my head to one side, thinking. It sounded familiar but I could not quite place where I might have heard about it. “Is it like the Tablets of Emerald and Sapphire?”

“They are of different spaces in earthly time but they are yet by the same hand, *by the one who put his gods in a writing that cannot be erased.*²³”

“And what has been written in this Book?”

“What it is that may be remembered. The author and messenger is Thoth the Magician, the Master Builder, one you call Hermes, he who may traverse time as a herald of the gods and even visit us here from the place where he is *mounted to the stars.*”

I held my tongue as I remembered the night of my initiation and instead looked up at the symbols above me, as if prompted by the Messenger to read a sign in the striding figure of Orion. “The hunter has always been a mystery, even to me...”
*She leaned forwards and whispered swiftly: “Lo he has come as Orion, lo Osiris has come as Orion.... Thereupon shall come Thoth, who is equipped with words of power in great abundance, and shall untie the fetters”.*²⁴

Her words had emerged as a charm and something unravelled deep within me. I sat up further, suddenly transfixed. She dropped her hand so once again I could see the lines of her profile. “There was an act of divine providence many moons ago

²³ Book of the Master of Hidden Places

²⁴ Pyramid Text, Utterance 442

and it is Orion's majestic fortune to be associated with the God of Egypt, his lover knew what she was doing when she placed him over Heaven's portal. There is something invisible there that many cannot see. Apollo might have tricked her into shooting Orion but his sister knew that love is strong as death and for this she is rewarded greatly by Osiris to this day".

"How does he reward her?"

"He has bestowed upon her the power of knowledge that is beyond the realm of mortal understanding, it will take the world an aeon to comprehend it".

I pointed to a great, silver star, gleaming brightly beneath the feet of Osiris. "And what of his holy wife and sister?"

Nafri bowed her head as she spoke the name of the Goddess. "Isis has protected him, repulsed the fiends, and turned aside calamities of evil. She uttered the spell with the magical power of her mouth. Her tongue was perfect, and it never halted at a word. Beneficent in command and word was Isis, the woman of magical spells, the advocate of her brother. She sought him untiringly, she wandered round and round about this earth in sorrow, and she alighted not without finding him. The blood of Isis, the spells of Isis, the magical powers of Isis, shall make this great one strong, and shall be an amulet of protection²⁵"

My heart began to race and I could think of no reply to these sacred words of my handmaid.

"I see that you are in turmoil, Priestess, that your head and your heart have engaged in a struggle you fear cannot be reconciled. You must look for the one to come who is master of music, who will help break the closed circle and open the door through which we shall all walk free. It is stated quite clearly in the book written by the Gods that there is a returning road to eternity, ever unfolding in a living spiral, beyond the reaches of time.

"More than five hundred years shall pass before the door is fully opened - two and a half thousand more before you or I can pass through it - but the time when the Master Musician comes to unite with the muses of the Temple is almost here. You see that things do not die forever but live through their affinity with the cosmos and unity with God. The maps of the stars are imprinted upon your Psyche, *you* are the mirror of heaven on earth, for as it is above, so shall it be below, in order to accomplish the miracle of the One..."

²⁵ Book of the Master of Hidden Places

As the last word left her tongue she leant slightly toward me and smiled strangely. I cannot tear my gaze away from her bewitching eyes, which shine with an unearthly radiance and reveal to me, fully for the first time, her dark and astonishing beauty.

Later that morning, she brushes out my hair so it flows loose around my shoulders, whilst I sit with a cold, damp hand pressed over my eyes. The words she uttered at dawn have had a profound effect upon me. I feel the boundaries of my mind are starting to disintegrate and once again wonder if I will have the strength to bear it when God speaks through me.

She sets down the comb and places her soft hands upon my shoulders, gazing down at me with lowered lashes and appearing as an Oread nymph in the priceless Egyptian glass. Both she and the glass were a gift from Pharaoh and are said to carry within them a charm of Qetesh, Egypt's goddess of love and beauty. She senses my anxiety and bids me in her heavily accented Greek, to '*look into the glass again, Priestess*', as she sets alight a tightly wrapped bundle of leaves from a flaming lantern which hangs beside the doorway.

The acrid scent of the smoke is pungent and soon I am becoming hypnotised by my reflection in the shimmering glass. I realise that Nafrini has been singing to me for some time in her low, harmonious voice. The words she utters are in her native tongue – a language I know but a little of – and the stream of mysterious audition mingles irresistibly with the smoke until I feel the very air about me has become a vivifying incantation.

The nightingale bursts into song with a voice full of longing and I feel my eyelids flickering like the wings of a butterfly as it gathers pollen from swollen summer blooms. Before I have the chance to drift off into sleep the sensation of cold metal being pressed upon my crown sends a shock down my spine. I open my eyes onto the mirror and focus on the golden diadem Nafrini has placed around my temple, fixed to the gleaming coils of tightly braided hair. I am captivated by the glittering of gold in the warm glass and when she hands me the sprig of Daphne I chew it unthinkingly, unable to tear my gaze from my own reflection.

I have lost my sense of time and see that I am changing. The golden band is shifting shape and blurs before my unblinking eye. I feel as if a wholly irresistible force is holding me still upon the seat, commanding my mind to empty as the shimmering golden snake slides around the left side of my face and cups my chin. In the next split moment there is no face at all that I can see, simply the image of a lyre, clear as the glass itself, defined and unmistakable. A single note – a perfectly

tuned string from the top of the octave – sounds in the centre of my mind. It radiates outwards so it inhabits every space around me, clear as light and purer than untainted gold, herald of God's presence.

The snake bites its tail.

The form of another inhabits my own entirely.

Then comes music.

The ship that does not sail



Let us see what it is to live on the earth whilst being at the same time under the sway of the celestial gravitational field....the soul is suspended between heaven and earth; it experiences complete solitude. For here it is no longer a matter of ordinary solitude where one is alone in the world, but rather of complete solitude where one is alone because one is outside of the world - the celestial as well as the terrestrial world

MotT, Letter XII, The Hanged Man

It is six golden years since the war ended and over the past few months I have seen the face of the Tetrarch more often than ever before. At the cusp of each full moon he sends asses laden with oil, honey - and wheat, when it is ripe – everything the colour of the sun as a votive for the Deity. That is in addition to his regular donations of gold and Thessaly's payment for our new buildings and repair works. We accept his gifts as they are due and I needs must remind myself that the Tetrarch is a man with a mission; his urgent need to see me stems from his determination to see this through, not because of any particular devotion to me personally. He visits me more often because of a pressing question and whilst I fear to disappoint so great a patron in his ardent queries, I sense that he *is* disappointed. It is three years now since he began to formulate questions about the possible foundation of a colony in Thrace but the Oracle has yet to spell success in such a venture. All agree that it is strange and I wonder if there is not something else more truly on his mind than this.

As everyone knows, the only question man may put to Apollo is that which resides at the utmost depth of his heart. The colony - our priests have agreed in their wisdom - is beside the point, though what the point is none will say. It is for the suppliant to ask the question which most needs answering, not for us to formulate queries for him. This cannot quiet the voices that are heard along the Sacred Way, however, because the Tetrarch is a man of great fame in these parts and many are watching expectantly for his next move. Greeks are alike in their search for glory and there are those who think he has been champing at the bit since his victory over Krisaioi. Whilst much is said of his prowess on the battlefield, like any great man he has enemies and detractors along with friends and allies.

Once when I was sitting by the statue of Athena accompanied by Timocrates, we overheard the elder Dorian Councillor remark to a priest of Phocis that the Tetrarch's father fears a possible expedition, for there are many pirates at sea and rich pickings are to be had from noble voyagers. Timocrates smiled in amusement as he listened to the grumbling old men and neither did I pay heed, for everyone knows how much the Dorians and Phocians are jealous of Thessaly since the League took control of Delphi. Nonetheless it falls upon the Tetrarch to persist with his votives and queries until such time as the God gives favour to his mission, whatever it may be. I wonder what might become of us all were he to take flight overseas. Who, then, would safeguard Apollo's sanctuary and sustain my vivid dreams?

If truth be told the thought of him moving overseas leaves me desolate, and if I had power within me to either keep him here or follow him there, surely I would exercise it. Happily for my earthly existence, the Oracle has so far rescued me from having to make such a dire choice. I am confident, in fact, that the God does not wish him to depart until such times as the safety of Delphi is assured for all eternity.

Whatever the case may be, it is a complex matter and until the wind changes he is forced to content himself with training horsemen for the defence of his region, and sending precious gifts to the sanctuaries of Apollo and Demeter. He has endeared himself to us greatly in this way and while the Boeotians worry about controlling neighbouring cities and dwell upon the problem of how to build a navy on their harbourless shores, Thessaly holds undisputed sway over this, the greatest place on Earth.

The Tetrarch has for long been on friendly terms with Cleisthenes of Sicyon, a man of extraordinary wealth, greater ambition and an ever-more glorious destiny ahead of him. Cleisthenes recently completed the building of a treasury here at Delphi and more colourful and elaborate a show of riches is nowhere to be seen. The craftsmanship of Sicyon's Ionian artisans is second to none and all who visit this place now pause to admire its awesome frieze and miraculous painted statues. Cleisthenes cannot help but excel at each and every thing he turns his hand to.

On the occasions where we met I found the Tyrannos to be an obviously powerful but entertaining individual, for the most part, because his boundless self-regard has made him into a great showman. "Everyone admires him, especially Cleisthenes himself!" Says my observant sister, Thalia.

Mindful that the younger Tetrach is burning with ambitious zeal while Delphi is covered in glory, the Tyrannos has been distracting him with popular motion to expand the Pythian Games, which were reinstated to celebrate the victory of the league over Krisaios. He hopes they shall one day exceed the Olympic Games in splendour; one of the few hopes that Cleisthenes of Sicyon shall not see fulfilled – not as far as the annals of history are concerned - for I have seen very clearly that the Olympics shall outlive us all. I am so certain of this that it surprises me into saying nothing about it to anyone.

Nevertheless, his tremendous plans for the Games - which shall henceforth go far beyond singing, dancing and other artistic endeavours - have already been set in motion, the response from the God to this suggestion having been wholly

favourable. Work on the new Hippodrome is almost complete and the first chariot races shall be held here at the height of summer, in the month of Boukatios.

The Tetrarch - like every other man - has comprehensive plans to win the laurels for himself but I know that it is Cleisthenes who shall excel at the chariot. And yet the sacred laurels themselves shall be brought from trees grown in the Vale of Tempe, the Tetrarch's own lands in Thessaly. The Games are an occasion we all look forward to, for such a spectacle as this will never before have been seen.

My sisters and I could give the current entrants a good challenge for the medals at prose, poetry or play - although we are not permitted to enter ourselves - and I am fascinated to see which men will dare recite new Paeans beneath the unflinching gaze of the God of all lyric arts. "Who but one of us could excel at such a thing at this place?" I wondered out loud to my sisters one evening. Most of them smiled and made sharp comments about tongue-tied men, but it was Calliope's voice we all heeded. "He will surely come one day, he that exceeds us all in the beauty of his song."

Clio agreed. "And history insists that where and whenever there is excellence shall follow a phase of decline, for that is the way the wheel of destiny turns. It stands to reason that these Halcyon days will at some point come to an end so another might be master of man and his universe."

"If you ask the Babylonian he'll tell you how to calculate the star-signs and find out more of the probable future," Urania commented vaguely, almost to herself, for she knew that none of us could fathom his complicated instruments as well as she was able.

In any case I was mindful of Timocrates' warning that to examine time from a fixed perspective could only result in disaster for one such as I, who travels between dimensions through all of space, beyond the dreadful tyranny of clocks. "Well I for one would gladly give up all our crowns and lay down a path of laurels for one glimpse of such a man!" Erato spoke with great enthusiasm, thus making light of the others' portents.

Whatever else happens at the Games, I do look forward to seeing the Tetrarch in a novel setting, beyond the leaden discourse of the Temple. I share these thoughts with no-one, for my sisters - and sometimes even Nafrini - will then make even more fun of me when he visits. Especially Erato. She is already prone to strumming a love-song on her lyre, dedicated to me as if it were sung by him! Then it is natural for Thalia to jump in with a line or two of her own and the end

result is that all my beloved sisters are almost asphyxiated with laughter at my expense.

And yet, it excites my heart to see what is in theirs, for I know they are acting upon their intuition that the Tetrarch loves me. They dare not even dream whether I love him for my face is set in stone whenever he is spoken of - just as it is for all other men - and not once, not ever, to any living soul, have I breathed a loving word, cast a quivering sigh or lowered my eyes at mention of his name.

My eyes involuntarily close as I recall the last time I saw him. I was sitting high upon my tripod in the Adyton's shadowed recess, whilst his eyes reached far beneath the complex weave of threads covering my face. All the other suppliants blended into a grey mist as the God took hold of me. Only He remained vivid, the eternal flame reflected in his burnished breastplate and matched by the fire in his eyes, which never once stray from my hidden face. I wondered to myself if he could hear the beating of my heart beneath the pure white folds of my finely woven gown?

Timocrates – who as my tutor and guardian, knows me better than anyone - has carefully informed me that the Tetrarch, like all of his ancestors, is a highly religious man who sees the Pythia as a gateway to the Divine. “My daughter, you are the singular voice of Apollo, Sun God and healing priest. You hold the key of knowledge over all men's dreams and the secret balms and elixirs of life, so you should always remember that it is not your face or body he desires, nor even your wondrous hair. The Tetrarch is in search of his destiny and that is why he comes here, as do all other men. Forget you are a woman and be as you are: A perfect, undefiled instrument of the divine will.”

“It matters not to me why he comes”, I later say to my sister, Clio, though in truth I am still smarting from Timocrates' pointed words. “The Tetrarch and I are bound together by nought other than history and his wish to know what fate has in store for the Aleudae.”

She was first amongst my sisters to guess what the others would also come to understand, and offered gentle words of solace. “There is power you wield which has governed Gods and men since time began.”

“What is this power?”

“The whole of history is determined by beauty and virtue,” she told me in a soothing voice, “for it is these that the Gods and men prize most highly. Present either of them with these things and they will reward you with their favour and offer you protection.”

When he next knelt before me with his dark head bowed he could neither have seen the roses take bloom in my cheeks nor beheld the trembling of my lips beneath the cloth I have woven. If only I could have reached out to touch him, shining as he was like a great, bronze statue by the soft white folds of my dress. Later when I was seated in the Adyton he asked me once again about the foundation of a colony, but the Oracle excelled at ambiguity and I could feel that his patience had worn thin.

The next morning I learned he had taken off on his horse at first light of dawn and was not to return before the occasion of the Games required it. Upon hearing this I plunged at once into the dullest of moods, which lasted throughout the remainder of our scorching Summer and well beyond the fine Autumn festival. The festival was the greatest it had ever been but no matter. No matter, either, the amount of cajoling on the part of my sisters or number of amusing anecdotes from the slaves, not even a dose of my own well-made medicine. Nothing could rouse me from the pensive state which held me captive throughout the long days. It was only Sappho, I felt, who understood my troubled psyche.

The Moon is down, the Pleiades. Midnight, the hours flow on, I lie, alone

Rites of Dionysus

Learn to know thy heart, and, as the times, so let thy manners change, for by the law of change a new God rules

Prometheus Bound



I will not ask of my sisters: “Why is it the Tetrarch does not come here anymore?” for my pride is too strong for me to draw such attention to my torment. Besides, they know of it well enough already without my crying to them day and night. Bitter medicine though it is for me to swallow, I know that it is better this way - better that I do not even think of him - for I cannot be married to him or any other man when I am already wedded to a God. Any hint of treason and I would be cast from the Kalki Scala in an instant, let go to make the endless fall alone, abandoned by men and gods alike.

Notwithstanding the promise of such terror, by the end of the month of Heraios my restless heart is yearning for the onset of winter and my nights are spent scanning the sky for Orion. When the hunter reaches his apex in the sky, then shall wandering Dionysus return and no longer must I think of riddles to settle men’s minds while my own is harbouring a storm.

“Oh, Mother Maia,” I whisper into the star-studded night, “will you not set me free?”

Come the winter *I will* be freed from this turmoil by the tendrils of a vine leaf. My sisters and I shall weave ivy in our hair and turn about with arms outstretched in ecstasy, as women are left alone to loosen the things that bind them. For all of this,

the nymphs of Apollo's sanctuary do not behave as Maenads, bedecked with fawn skins and drunk on strong wine, though we are all beholden on pain of death to safeguard the flowers of our virginity.

It is ten days into the moon of Maimakterion when my suspense finally ends. I am awakened late in the night with a start of instant arousal, as if some loud noise had penetrated my dreams but died before echo could greet it. My pulse is racing and my body is damp with sweat, oblivious to the chill night air around me. I fling aside the lambs' wool covers and throw my feet over the side of the bed. At the first touch of cold stone I hear the familiar rhythm of the timbrels, the melodies of the aulos, and my heart rises up into my mouth in a single beat. Its rhythm matches the hypnotic pounding of drums, traveling to me across the earth from the deepest mystery of night.

IO! EVOE!

I leap for the door without pausing to shield my modesty with gown or girdle, though my hair makes a lovelier veil than anything woven by mortal hands. The nocturnal Lord who loves women has returned to this place with so sweet an essence that it cannot be defined. I know that his worshippers have completed their sacrificial rites, for the wild sounds of them prowling the forested slopes like panthers have rend the breathless atmosphere asunder. Their cries of joy and pain are carried to our ears by the mysterious hands of Nyx as Dionysus shares his fruits about the frenzied retinue.

My sisters and I anoint ourselves with sacred oil until we are soft and fragrant as the bloom of Aphrodite's cheek, then take up the wands and don our heavy winter cloaks. We make our way towards the Castalian Spring, where Euterpe sounds a note on her heavenly flute and we sing more of the hymns that honour the mother of Delphian Dionysus.

The icy reflection of the water nymph embraces us with flickering movements and the wild blue fire of invincible Aphrodite inhabits our widening eyes. We feel the heat of desires men cannot slake. When the fire is ready we step upon the woodland carpet, strewn about with ivy. Erato picks up her lyre as the young maid Chloris begins to arrange the magical roses into Urania's thick, dark hair, as she will with each of us in turn. Urania herself, with shining eyes turned skyward, names the stars with careless wonder, while the eerie cries of the Maenads drift across the hills to all who will hear them.

The flute is raised once again to Euterpe's blood-red lips and we raise our arms as Terpsichore flexes her dainty feet, tapping the sanctified Earth with her toes as the honey and mead flow over and into our bodies, exhorting us to join her. We arise as one and join our hands to form a circle, enticing Dionysus to enter our orbit. It is here that he will pass his dying breath, here at the centre of our holy fire light dance. As one great wheel we turn, spinning round faster and faster until the world itself is turning and we are suspended at its core. The resounding tones of Polyhymnia rise above the circle in a relentless, mantic prayer.

We know the God has arrived in our midst by the sudden onset of electrified silence, subtle and strong as a wind of fire in the unearthly light, wild as a bull and gentle as a child, touching his finger to our lips with the lightness of a breeze. The silence at the centre of the world spreads outwards into the forests and hills as the orchestras and choirs draw breath.

Not for us the torment of beasts as we kneel upon the warm bed of pine needles, for Dionysus does not indulge in the pursuit and rape of nymphs in the manner of other Gods. He would rather attend to us with sweet words and languorous eyes as he indulges our own pleasure, for he is already sated and spellbound with longing for Aphrodite. One or two of the musky creatures that became Maenads are still clinging to him, but soon they melt away, for the Prince is to leave this world with naught but the memory of why he must return; the flesh of no-one will bind him. Calliope turns to face me. "It has wrought in us despair to see your sorrow – *you*, so young and fair. Come into the centre of our circle and allow us to heal your pain."

She hands me the golden cup of ruby coloured wine and gently lifts the hair from my shoulders. The first few notes from the lyre are plucked out gently.

Tyrannos

He created them male and female and he blessed them

Book of Genesis

I was thus released from the spell of dangerous passion that had for so long held me captive. It was with joy and thanksgiving that I welcomed the return of Apollo Delphinios, his absence having cultivated in me a deeper love and greater understanding of his wandering ways.

As time went on I perfected the art of dreaming and took to flight each night, skimming the surface of the waves as if father Poseidon himself were holding me aloft. I felt my years of training were coming to fruition and unprofitable thoughts of the Tetrarch were replaced with a greater desire to commune with the gods. This, I believed, was my greatest hope of freedom beyond the constraints of this mortal coil, as all who have travelled through Psyche's mysterious realm will gladly attest.

Solemn rites for Delphinios were performed at first sight of the new moon heralding Apollo's return during the month of Bysios. It is at this time of year that the God was first born on Mount Parnassus and it is the holiest day in our calendar. Preparations for the Pythian Games had also been set well in motion by this time and an atmosphere of joy and good fortune imbibed the atmosphere of Delphi. The Sacred Way became even more heavily populated with a more wondrous array of sculptures than it is possible to find anywhere, and it is clear that the Gods are standing watch over every step taken on this ground.

Attracted by our increasing fame and the influential patronage of wealthy states and individuals, a growing collection of philosophers, poets, artists, architects and athletes has congregated on Mount Parnassus, where the Muses of Apollo bring daily inspiration to their inquisitive minds. Many of these people seem to live here now and it is clear as day that the fortunes of Delphi have increased spectacularly since the Sacred War was won by our allies. They say that soon our wealth shall know no bounds and nothing in the world will be beyond the influence of Delphian Apollo.

And yet... “Surety, then ruin” is the counsel of the Sage, so when shall doubt cast its inevitable shadow onto our glorified stage? I could not help but see that it would be soon enough to take the world by surprise, and yet the number of faithful who arrive to consult with the Oracle has multiplied at least tenfold over the past few years. So great is their number that the Saints have found it necessary to appoint a second priestess to ensure all supplicants may be received.

Themistoclea is a solemn girl of 15 and her knowledge of history and verse are impressive. She is the choice of the elder Saint, Apollinaris – and a favour to our challenging allies in Phocis - but his favour counts for little as long as I am protected by the gods, lords and leaders of this land. Her head is not golden like mine, but I am not above sharing with her some pearls of wisdom, as such pearls were freely given me.

Arrangements for the Games gained momentum as the days lengthened and there was much distraction for everyone living here. Feeling myself to be unusually invisible amidst this intense activity I chanced one day to go out alone to greet the rosy-fingered Dawn. I wanted time alone with my thoughts, for I sensed a great change was coming and wanted to make clear the vision of the future for myself before counselling others. It was not long after my feet had set out on their solitary path when I happened upon the Tyrannos himself, Cleisthenes of Sicyon, who for what must have been the hundredth time was admiring the magnificent handiwork of his Treasury’s architect at close range.

I shielded the bottom of my face and prayed he would not challenge me as I quietly passed by, for it was not appropriate for me to converse with any man alone beyond the safety of the Temple. The Tyrannos, however – a law unto himself alone - was quicker than I had given him credit for and as I darted by he hailed me in a clear voice, forcing me to stop in my tracks.

I stopped and held my breath. It struck me that there was not another soul in sight where moments earlier there had been several. Everyone seemed to have evaporated beneath the irresistible force of his influence. The answer to my inner query was about to be fulfilled in a manner not of my choosing.

It was with a slight start that I met his swift arrival behind me, silent and stealthy as a thief in the night. At once he shattered his own silence. “Greetings, Priestess.... or may I call you....” He uttered my name, so seldom heard. By this deliberate utterance he gained a certain power over me, as if he had not power enough without it.

“Good morning Tyrannos.” I stammered with slight, unaccustomed nerves, as I wondered if curious eyes were watching from behind the gleaming pillars and tall trees. Surely they were. I prayed he would at least continue to speak quietly.

“Tyrannos!” He exclaimed loudly, startling me further. “I cannot abide formalities, call me by my given name, as I have you.”

His mood seemed light but I perceived within him darker unspoken thoughts and silence fell upon me as I awaited his revelation. There was an immediate alteration in his manner, as if the wind had somehow changed in him, and when next he spoke there was an unmistakable warning in his voice. “You *do* know who I am?” Surely he was trying me, for how could I not! And yes, after all, he *was* a great friend to Delphi. “Of course, my Lord Cleisthenes Archelaoi, ruler of Sicyon, liberator of Delphi.”

The cloud passed. “Now you answer me well but then I expect nothing less from you of all people.” He circled me slowly, measuring each word. “Tell me... what do you think of my new Treasury?”

I was relieved to have a question so easily answered sincerely and replied at once. “It is a most magnificent piece of architecture and I have often heard it said that none can match Sicyon’s artisans for skill and creativity. It is a credit to your power.”

“Indeed it is!” The Tyrant became animated and flung a strong, expansive arm towards the prime example of his tremendous fortune. “Such wealth as there is between those walls is scarcely matched by any man on Earth!”

I remained silent, for I sensed he had more to say of his own brilliance and wished for him the joy of its telling.

“There is much to be admired at Sicyon now those Argive swine have been shown their rightful place.” His face became grim. “Do *you* set much store by the ancient ramblings of that boring ass, Homer?”

I could not help but smile, for Cleisthenes’ pathological hatred of Argos-loving Homer was very well-known, but again I could be truthful. “Sir, it is my habit to study the elegies of Solon the Great and as far as poetry is concerned I have little time now for epics. I hold in highest esteem the lady of Lesbos.”

Oh, what joy it is to man when truth aligns with the desired response to a query and is uttered by the High Priestess! Cleisthenes’ delight almost burst through his dazzling golden armour and he addressed me as a suppliant would greet Zeus himself. “Thou art wisest of women, flower of Delphi – it has been proven time and again that their choice of Pythia was inspired by the God himself, and silver-

tongued Sappho should be grateful for your discerning favour!” He furrowed his brow. “Most people can’t even see beyond the ends of their noses, let alone realise that Homer is a Dorian pig who belongs to the cemeteries of Argos. Solon, on the other hand...” he was suddenly reverential, “Solon is the wisest of the Seven Sages, don’t you think?”

I thought back to the teaching given by Solon while he retreated in the cave and despite my instinctive resistance to the overbearing Tyrannos I once again found myself in agreement with him. “I am inclined to think that this is true, for I have learned much from the great Sage.”

He became thoughtful and set to pacing back and forth as if pondering some infinitely complex problem, with all the dramatic flair of a born protagonist who has found himself centre stage before the dreamed-of audience. I hoped someone might see us while he wondered at his leisure. Surely one of the Saints would come by soon and release me?

As if reading my mind he suddenly stopped in his tracks and fixed me with a stare. “Won’t you come with me into the Treasury of Sicyon so I might show you our wondrous painted frescoes?”

A beam of the rising sun struck me on the cheek and my body grew suddenly hot. I felt myself to be facing a great challenge. Only Apollo himself could guide me through this maze.

He was impatient. “Well?”

I blushed beneath the veil and my heart pounded like a goat that had fallen into the abyss. Such a temperament as his was more unpredictable than the whims of Zeus. I took a deep breath.

“I am afraid.”

Now he used a different form of address, his tone once more reverential, confounding me again. “*Thou art* the most powerful woman in Greece. Do not be afraid; our fate cannot be taken from us; it is a gift.”

I opened my palms. “I fear that if the Saints discovered us alone in there together they would have me cast from the pinnacles in the next instant.”

He was quiet for a moment, considering this unpleasant reality, and I hoped he could count pity amongst his chimerical store of emotions.

“The great danger never descends upon one without strength²⁶” he said thoughtfully.

²⁶ Pinda, Pythian Odes

Relief overwhelmed me. “Cleisthenes Archeloi, I thank you for your understanding, and now I must bid you farewell for I...”

He stepped much closer to me. “Not so fast.” His voice fell to a whisper, which was just as well, for what he had to say next inspired dread.

“I want you to know that I have seen you....”

My heart jumped into my mouth, but what could he mean, surely he had seen me many times?

He leaned towards me and his eyes penetrated my veil. “I saw you at the Tristeria and oh how fair *thou art...*”

What artistry was this! I struggled to keep my composure. My eyes darted back and forth without looking at him, as if searching the void for an answer to the unknown and unthinkable. Did he mean to have me put to death so his might install his renowned daughter as the High Priestess?

Cleisthenes laughed out loud at my unspoken reaction and my cheeks burned like hot coals, but for all his triumph it seemed my downfall was not the ultimate goal of this exhausting individual. To my great surprise his voice grew almost tender. “You need not be ashamed or afraid, for it simply means you are a woman after my own persuasion and your merit has increased a thousand times over in my eyes. It could hardly have been higher to begin with. You know that I recently instituted the worship of Dionysus – greatest of Gods - as the official religion of my state? The Chorus is a superb spectacle, you would love to witness a performance, I’m sure.” His pleasure was infectious and my fear gave way a little. Again, I would not lie. “Twice-born Dionysus could wish for no greater patron.” I looked at him curiously and felt surprise for the second time in fewer moments, for he radiated a vital sort of power - such as I perceived from the best of the athletes – and I saw he was wiser than his indiscreet words suggested. He, too, was heavily cloaked with invisible cloth and I understood entirely why his will had prevailed at Sicyon.

*What if I seized him and kissed him, and with an impudent voice say to him: I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows?*²⁷

I knew my words had pleased him – and maybe he sensed my own shifting mood - for his tone became even more indulgent. “*Truly*, you can see through the eyes of the Gods and surely I could hope to have no higher priestess than you to preside

²⁷ Song of Solomon

over my divine temple...if you should also *desire* such a reward for your devotion and decide to walk through this door.”

So this was where the road was leading. He smiled, but his eyes were hard as heavy bronze. “It is well known by everyone that never before has the Oracle of Delphi revealed such truths about Gods and men as it does here now. This place has flourished since the Cretans were removed, don’t you think?”

I supposed that men such as he wore their ruthlessness as lightly as I took up my veil each morning. When no response from me was forthcoming he touched his chin thoughtfully. “I wonder if you – in the deep and silent recess of your heart - set as much store by the youth Dionysus as you do Phoebus Apollo? It rather seems to me you might, judging by your performance at his last festival.”

I did not reply for fear I might increase his advantage further, and rather had the sudden longing to flee from a reality I knew I could never escape.

For the truth could not be denied. My love for Dionysus *had* grown immeasurably in recent months and I often found myself longing to join his retinue, while the demands of Apollo’s constant stream of worshipers were an ever-increasing burden. Never mind the politicking of the Saints. I wondered if Cleisthenes was a mage who could see into the depths of my psyche, which none but myself and the Olympians should ever have power to observe.

I could not rightly say if it was fear or desire which made me tremble when he put his lips so close to my face that I could feel his warm breath against my brow, his mouth only separated from my skin by the tightly-woven threads of my veil. “I believe you give equally heartfelt thanks for the intoxicating power of Dionysus as you do at the return of Apollo... the Maenads themselves must be torn apart by envy”.

Still I would not answer and still he would not stop. “I know because I was *there* and the Priestess cannot lie, neither in mind nor in body....Did you really not see *me*?”

My voice now trembled. “Only a God amongst men may stand before my naked form.” *Like Eros, the loosener of limbs who now troubles me, the bittersweet, sly, uncontrollable creature.*

He gave a short laugh and took a step back to more easily observe me. “The things the Gods may see are wondrous indeed! Had nymphs not slaked the desire of this God he may have broken all sacred vows through his inability to resist you....”

He was not so much coming towards me as pulling me towards him, standing as he was before his throne with full authority.

My mind raced back to the Tristeria, trying to recall a sign of his presence, but the fog which shrouded my memory of the occasion would not lift. All I remembered was the honey and flower-scented wine, my sisters' touch before the blazing fire and snakes writhing slowly through the vines. Tears began to prickle the back of my eyes.

"Someday you may remember, perhaps when the Pleiades next are low". My Spirit bowed before the throne and his voice became lighter again. "You know, you would make a wonderful companion for my daughter – you are about the same age and she too enjoys the pleasure Dionysus brings. As you may have heard, she is a lovely and cultivated woman, radiant with the charm of Aphrodite".

I nodded. "The beauty of Agariste is of great renown..."

"Indeed, it almost equal to yours." He traced a line along the hem of my veil.

"How much gold would it take for you to transfer your allegiance and grace Sicyon with your unrivalled powers... your unequalled beauty? I am prepared to offer you a very great reward for sharing with us the profound knowledge of your sacred arts, and your mysterious Gyptian slave could live alongside you in untold luxury. The two of you together would embody all sacred arts, for *thou art* chosen and bright, she is the bearer of secret rites and I am a man who loves to worship."

My head grew suddenly heavy and my eyelids drooped for just a second as his words sank in. If only he hadn't spoken too soon I might have let him lead me there and then to his waiting ship, but as it happened he chose to make clearer than day his darkest thoughts.

"I would give more than all the treasure in my kingdom to have you show me your love of man, just name the price and you shall have it."

So he was still a brute. He had the irrefutable air of one whose every desire is granted in an instant, and now he was speaking to me as if I were a prostitute! My voice was shrill. "Our virtue sticks with us and makes us strong but money changes owners all day long!"

I was both gratified and afraid to see this startled him a little, though he conveniently forgot my position in his effort to regain his advantage. "Where did a girl like you learn to challenge a ruler in such a way?"

"From Solon the Great."

He smiled broadly and I felt his respect. "Oh I can see why the Tetrarch holds you up high on that pedestal, *thou art* so..."

I saw that words had now failed him, but could only understand that the sound of the Tetrarch's name upon his lips had hit me like a bolt from the hand of Zeus.

He saw this at once, of course, for it seemed that nothing of Woman was beyond the grasp of the Tyrannos. “Does it interest you to know that he sets such store by your counsel...” He paused for a moment as he circled me again. “He speaks of you more highly than even Demeter and there are those who say he is neglecting her shrine at Thermopylae in favour of Delphic Apollo?”

I was filled with a tremendous conflict of passions and sensing how much I was affected, the Tyrannos pressed on. “You know, of course, that the Tetrarch is a great friend of mine and he would love to sail the oceans as I do? Often he speaks of putting together a band of ships and founding a second estate in my lands, where he would be most welcome and a great ally. From there we might conquer the whole of Greece or lands beyond these shores, but he does not wish to disappoint his father or abandon his duties to the league. His father would have him take a wife from Phocis, to help restore peace amongst the other allies, but he is not yet inclined to do so.

“He believes we can do great things together but awaits blessings for this ambitious endeavour from the Oracle of Delphi. He is not even tempted by the gaiety and beauty of our lovely Ionian girls, who are freer than the maidens of his own ancient lands, released from their chains by the peerless force of Dionysus.” He paused to see if I would answer this provocation, but when I remained silent he pressed me even further, uttering my name beneath his breath, as if to waken me from a death-like sleep. “What do you say to that?”

“Neither shall words with all persuasion sweet, not though his tongue drop honey, cheat, nor charm my knowledge from me”²⁸.

His eyes danced. “Surely the true and rightful response is that God’s abundant blessings shall be heaped upon a union destined for greatness. The union of Thessaly and Sicyon.”

“I great union, to be sure...”

“And that knowledge of beauty is just reward for virtuous men,” he interrupted. I chose to misunderstand him. “The beauty of Sicyon is legendary, much is said in praise of your new architecture.”

The Tyrannos gave me a strange smile. “Are you really so coy? Surely when you remove those white linen robes and gaze into the crystal waters your eyes are bewitched by the sight of Aphrodite’s equal looking back at you?”

²⁸ Prometheus Bound

How could he know so much, more than even the Oracle of Delphi! Was Cleisthenes really the son of a God? I have been warned a thousand times to beware of men who mention Aphrodite in my presence and seeing my head turn left and right for the best escape route he grasped me by the wrist. “Is that charm within you meant always to be resisted, will you look back at the end of your life and bewail the passing of that for which men would change the world? Rather than sitting forever upon that cold, unmoving tripod, would you not rather be set upon the fabled clouds of Olympus as Ariadne herself was in ageless times by the ever-youthful God?”

*

This corresponds to the increasing participation of consciousness, which now begins to react emotionally to the contents produced by the unconscious. At first the process of integration is a fiery conflict, but gradually it leads over to the melting or synthesis of the opposites. The alchemists termed this the rubedo.

Carl Jung, *Mysterium Conjunctionis, The Personification of the Opposites*

The Sage

Ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened

Matthew vii, 7-8

When I visit the innermost part of the sanctum I am unaccompanied, for it is there that I perform the secret rites, helped along on the narrow way by lanterns kept ablaze in the darkest places. I move further into the cavern so I might kneel before the Sage, to whom I utter the proscribed greeting in a reverential tone. An audience with the wise man and magus is only permissible if very precise conditions have been fulfilled and I am taking my chance gratefully, at a time of great need, for many queries were burning within me.

It was necessary to consider and phrase my questioning with great care, for if the High Priestess could scorn indecent queries the Sage was all the more capable of holding his tongue, accustomed as he was to near-perpetual solitude in the depths of his retreat. Certainly he would not suffer fools. I pushed towards him a small flagon of the holy arcanum and sacred bread I had baked myself, so he might break his long fast in the proper fashion, at the appointed time.

“I beg of you, Master, to eat this bread I have kneaded with my own hands and drink of the wine I have mixed²⁹.”

He accepted the offering and whilst he ate I lit six seven candles and burned the incense brought by the Phoenician traders as part of their gift to the temple, an incense so rare it was costlier than gold. I pondered deeply the questions of my heart, desiring, for once, to be an ordinary woman seeking advice, my cloak of anonymity drawn close about my body.

His voice was quiet. “Daughter of Earth and Water, what would you know of me?”
“Father, I would know about human souls.”

²⁹ Proverb 9, 5, 6

He remained silent a long while and at first I thought he was so deep in thought that he hadn't even heard me, but presently his hoarse voice emerged quietly from the shadows.

"The more powerful Souls perceive Truth through themselves, and are of -a more inventive Nature. Such Souls are saved through their own strength³⁰."

I bowed my head in inner acknowledgement of this truth and waited for him to continue. In time, and as I had hoped, he proceeded to share with me much more of his wisdom.

"The Father of Gods and men placed the mind in the psyche and placed both in the body. And so you see, my child, that the soul is a personal entity, the royal work of the hands and of the mind of the Divine, abiding herself in intelligence³¹."

"That which proceeds from Unity, and not from multiplicity, cannot mingle with other things, and in order that the soul may be joined to the body, the Divine subjects this harmonious union to necessity. Souls do not, then, return confusedly, nor by chance, into one and the same place, but each is dispatched into the condition which belongs to her. And this is determined by that which the soul experiences while yet she is in the tenement of the body, loaded with a burden contrary to her nature³²."

"The Paternal Mind hath sowed symbols in the Soul³³, and in every order of souls there are found a few royal souls, and of divers characters: some fiery, some cold, some proud, some gentle, some crafty, some simple, some contemplative, some active. This diversity belongs to the regions from whence they descend into bodies. From the royal zone the royal souls go forth, but there are many royalties; the royalty of spirit, of the flesh, of art, of science, of the virtues.³⁴

"You should also know that for royal and noble souls, the signs and characteristics of the place of birth will come before birth and must be recognised. For a soul such as this, a place with a gleaming Temple and beautiful gardens should be sought³⁵."

³⁰ The Chaldean Oracles

³¹ Ibid

³² Kore Kosmou

³³ Corpus Hermetica

³⁴ Kore Kosmou

³⁵ The Tibetan Book of the Dead, the premonitory vision of the place of rebirth

He hesitated again, as if sensing the true and unspoken question behind my initial query. No longer could it be contained. My voice trembled just a little. “And what will you tell me of love?”

“Daughter, you must know, that *having mingled the Vital Spark from two according substances - Mind and Divine Spirit - as a third to these the Father added Holy Love, the venerable Charioteer uniting all things, filling the Soul with profound Love*”³⁶.

I could not contain my happiness at this. “So Love is the greatest of joys given by the gods to mankind, not Truth nor Light, as the Saints have told me, though it might properly be said, of course, that Love contained within itself both Truth and Light?”

He held up a warning hand “You must understand that what I am speaking of is truly love of the soul for God, not of man for woman, nor woman for man. These two lesser loves are but reflections of that which is most precious in the life of a created being. Beware above all the deceptions of desire, for the Lord and Master of all has said –

*Let their souls be a prey to mutual love.....Let the weight of fevers oppress them, and break in them all desire.*³⁷”

“Father, if love is how we live, then what must happen when we die?”

“The Souls of those who quit the body violently are most pure, for the girders of the Soul, which give her breathing, are easy to be unloosed. Understanding the works of the Father, they avoid the shameless Wing of Fate; they are placed in God, drawing forth strong light-bearers, descending from the Father, from whom as they descend, the Soul gathereth of the empyrean fruits the soul-nourishing flower”³⁸.

I was enchanted by this and distracted from my former despondency. “I should think the Ascending Souls would sing a Pæan!”

“*Thou art a wise woman. Indeed, I might almost think it was the Oracle herself sat before me sharing such insights, for your psyche is as a flame of stars through the*

³⁶ Chaldean Oracles

³⁷ Kore Kosmou

³⁸ Corpus Hermetica

night³⁹. It is true, as Apollo says, that by acting rightly like the gods, and telling the truth, men and even women can become godlike⁴⁰.”

I neither confirmed nor denied his supposition, for I was far more interested in the fate of the Soul than the revelation of my name.

“Since the Soul perpetually runs and passes through many experiences in a certain space of time; it is presently compelled to pass back again through all things, and unfold a similar web of generation in the World. As often as the same causes return, the same effects will in like manner be sure to ensue⁴¹, and let that be a warning to make this life the first and last, to preclude the necessity of returning to this troubled world with its human frailties.”

I considered what other secrets I might like him to share with me, of the elements and substance of stars, for instance, a matter which had occupied my mind following the impulsive journeying of Psyche to the hinterland of Hyperborea.

“Tell me which is greater, fire or water?” I held my breath, wondering if he would explain to me the mysteries of the secret stream which flowed from the Temple of Divine Beauty, up unto the shores of the abyss.

He whispered out to me from the velvet shadows of his cave: “Daughter of Memory, have you learned nothing so far? Seek only to know thyself; do not look to the beyond for answers to life’s mysteries, but within. Now show me your wisdom with the reflection of my own Soul.”

It was clear my thoughts had betrayed my identity and I hesitated uncertainly, for I could not lie and nor could I refuse the venerable Sage his last request, which was for a Revelation of momentous import, that he might return to the Gods without need for more of Earth’s lessons.

“Come, Lady, revealing hidden secrets...” He uttered in a quiet voice.

Such a request uttered by a man of the gods was not to be refused and I answered at once his command. “The first principle created heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters....And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.... And let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear....”

³⁹ The Book of the Wisdom of Solomon

⁴⁰ Oracle of Delphi

⁴¹ Chaldean Oracles

I sensed him raise his hand a fraction in the almost impenetrable darkness and was relieved to stop speaking. “Truly you are wise amongst women. Thou art unique and singly born; *thou art as a tree of life to those who lay hold of you and those who hold fast to you are called happy*⁴². I wonder how you shall continue to live as you are in this earthly domain for it is said that *Wisdom went forth to make her dwelling among the children of men, and found no dwelling place. Wisdom returned to her place, and took her seat among the angels.*⁴³

“Now tell me what you know of yourself. Look back even further into the sacred realm of Memory, the magical domain.”

His timely interjection revived me almost miraculously and the whole of my body arched backwards so my heart pointed upwards to the hidden sky. *“The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old, I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be. To the place of divine fire, for when there were no watery depths, I was given birth, when there were no springs overflowing with water...I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.”*⁴⁴

I paused for breath and turned my gaze towards the flickering candles, for though there was more I would ask of him in return I scarcely knew how to inquire about the secret of secrets: How to form unity from seemingly irreconcilable forces, such as I was faced with each moment of every day within my body and psyche; how were antimonies to be reconciled, how should light be drawn from the darkness of opposition?

As if reading my thoughts he spoke again, thoughtfully, as if to himself, like he were recalling some great problem whose resolution was simple in theory yet formidably difficult in practice. “One must attain a transcendental synthesis through the gift of black perfection....”

⁴² Proverbs 3, 18

⁴³ 1 Enoch 42

⁴⁴ Proverbs 8

“And what is the proper means by which this third way must be attained, the duality of the polar opposites overcome?”

He slowly traced a triangle into the air between us. “You must take the greatest of care that the opposites are reconciled above and not below....” He carefully traced a second triangle into the ether, with a point which faced downwards into the cold earth. “The aim of this great work must be to attain a synthesis which is greater than either of the original polar opposites, not a confused and impotent mixture of the two.”

I nodded uncertainly, for doubtless the theory was great, and yet my intimate knowledge of the affairs of men ensured I was not ignorant of their inability to easily settle even small disputes and arguments, never mind matters of the greatest import. “And how might one avoid such an adverse mixture?”

“If men only knew the secret of this art the wars of the world would cease, man and woman would live together in peace and the Gods would lay down their arms and give thanks to the One who made us all!”

I was eager to agree but he had more to say and held up his hand.”

“It will be centuries before the teacher comes who can fully make clear this pathway and release us from the long cycle of sixes and sevens so we might pass through the eighth gate towards freedom. Then, when this gateway has been opened, it will be fully two millennium more – at least – before the will of man is sufficiently purified to ascend towards the perfection of the upper spheres. Even then it will be painstakingly slow, with one or two, two or three souls at a time achieving the higher vision, whereupon they must either sit in wait for the rest, or return to the lower levels in order to help shepherd them along.”

My heart sank. “So long and hard a journey?”

“Yes, my daughter, for the flesh is weak and the mind not yet much greater.”

“The paradox has manifested to me most urgently of late, and it seems I am to be engaged by both the lord Phoebus Apollo and Youth Dionysus. Each makes his mark and stakes his claim whilst I attempt to find the point between them upon which I might rise above the limits of my self.”

I felt his pity. “I see that even your exalted position has not permitted you the freedom to escape the age-old struggle of woman. Indeed, as the High Priestess of this epoch you are destined to suffer greatly for your inner knowledge of the paradox of human being”.

“Advise me then,” I implored, “for I know not how to draw light from the darkness of my doubts, so great is the drama in my soul and so deep the wound in my heart?”

“You must keep one eye always on the future, even if your other eye is fixed – out of necessity – upon the past. You must heed the voices of both your head and your heart, striving always to attain the thin and narrow road between your reason and your passion.”

“But the Saints – and my Guardian Timocrates, even my maids – have always impressed upon me the importance of placing the voice of reason high above that of my passion?”

“These are not the free men and women of a free world....”

“Then nor am I?”

“And yet you have a foot upon the path because your reason has brought you to ponder greatly the secrets of your heart, and wonder at the wisdom of the flesh as it cries out for mercy in the stillness of the night. For are we not born to this Earth for a reason more than reason, is this not our greatest mystery school, to be lived as well as it is learned?”

*“The lambkin’s not alone, the dovelet has a mate,
And I no playmate have, nor shepherd who will wait.
How long now must my heart in pass’nate longing burn
Till my dear precious Friend myself his own will term?
I know within my heart my love will ne’er grow cold,
Yet premature this pow’r is wont to waxen old.
I ever shall embrace the wisdom of my heart,
Which raises me in it, and remedies my smart.
But still it’s not enough, to comprehend all this.
I want the most beloved, our heav’nly mate to kiss;
And since his look of love within my heart does lie,
Such that he’ll stay my boon, and other loves deny,
And since ’twill surely be: he’ll take me at the last,
So will I choose him now and ever forth hold fast.”*

Snow Hill Fraktur

Orpheus



No distance is insurmountable for love and no door can prevent it from entering

MotT, Letter IX, The Hermit

When spring comes and I next enter the Adyton to await the first of Apollo's suppliants, it is Hekate who helps me onto the tripod, arranging the folds of my dress and veil until I am reformed and suspended like a wraith from another world above the endless abyss. The hot morning light is flooding into the other side of the Temple and although it fails to fully penetrate the velvet darkness of the hidden recess, my heart leaps into my mouth as I see illumined the wondrous statue of Apollo, shining like the sun itself. Never before did it seem so sacred in this place. I feel as if my psyche inhabits another dimension, carrying my essential self to the realm of the Elysium Fields, but the noise made by the devotees as they enter holds me at bay.

Happy is the man who enters my house....

An Athenian delegation has entered first and the men sit close together, as near to me as they have been permitted. All of them are about Timocrates' age, with curling beards of grey hair and costly robes that announce their wealth and confer the appearance of wisdom. They have one major query pertaining to the government of Anshan, a place about which I am often asked. They are desirous to know how soon the aging Cyrus will remain upon his throne and it is with little ambiguity that I can reveal the details of his successor, the epithets of the Persian being well known.

The Athenians lean towards me as one, almost falling from the seats in their eagerness to extract more valuable information before the Saints command their departure. The eldest amongst them gets his word in first. "We see very well that the one of whom you speak is none other than Cambyses, but I am intrigued to know if this man will succeed in fully uniting the kingdoms of the East?" It is well known at Delphi that Cambyses cannot fulfil this task and I reply accordingly, hoping that my negative answer would bring an end to the Athenians' business. A vain hope as it transpired and the saints must have been sleeping, for one of the archons has suddenly inquired about the undiluted star of the East, the return of whom has been spoken of in hushed corners of Delphi for the whole of the present cycle⁴⁵.

It requires the whole of my prophetic gift to answer him and as soon as the last word of hexameter leaves my mouth all have been made to see that the world is

⁴⁵ Zarathustra

changing. I realise at once that this was inevitable. The turning of the age was as real in my mind's eye as the shining bronze clock that rests between the most deeply shadowed pillars of the temple, right behind the tripod on which I am seated.

A shudder in the earth beneath breaks my reverie for a terrible moment and I cling to the insubstantial form of Urania, who has rushed forward to prevent me falling while all those before us turn their faces skyward. The secret of free will was revealed to men that day, the mysteries of the stars brought out from the caves and released into the waiting world by a slip of my tongue that fate had decreed. One became two. The magical streams of Babylon began to wind their endless ways through the emerald forests and mountains of Hellas, washing away all desires except the longing for reunion as a tear fell from each of my eyes.

As my words about the coming magi, heralds of one Great God, echo through the spaces of the temple, the suppliants appear to dissemble in the blinding light. All I see before me changes shape as my former clarity of thought gives way to the will of my beloved. It enters me with so great a force that I feel the cold iron of trepidation for a bewildering moment and sway upon my seat of bronze. It would have been a matter of ease for Apollo to remove my psyche from its Earthly vessel for all eternity in that very instance. Would truth forever be shackled to the opposing shadow of illusion or would light come to bring perfect unity, the transcendental synthesis of which the Hermit spoke?

I should have just lifted my undefiled shield of the golden sun for protection, but time, it seems, will capture me along with the rest. My mind began to split apart from the weight of the knowledge I had revealed, a shattered vessel whose contents would be spilled into the lower spheres.

By the time the Athenian delegation leaves to make way for the next party – four young men of Thrace. I find myself lying on the floor having fallen from the tripod and Hekate is administering me with another arcanum.

Behold, someone who will increase our love⁴⁶

The Thracians are forced to wait as I attempt to bring something of my dissembled mind into a point of focus and control the swell of inspiration that is flowing through me with terrible force. Now it seems my heart is about to burst from its

⁴⁶ Dante, *Paradiso* Canto V:85-139 The Second Sphere: Mercury

ivory-coloured cage and I can hear Timocrates voice his concerns for my health to the cool-headed Saints, who are stupidly unaware that our world will soon crumble into dust. Something – *everything* - has changed in a twinkling of the eyes that I now fix upon the Temple entrance. Once again I am set upon the sacred seat of Apollo, but this time I know that the fate to be revealed is now my own.

The four young men – fishermen by day, musicians by night - appear as ethereal shadows, blocking the rays of the sun with their bodies as I utter the proscribed greeting without focusing on them. My unseeing eyes remain fixed upon the entrance to the temple, for the God is letting me know that four is not their number. Already the light is altered, as if the sun itself were bowing before Him. When he steps into the doorway with a lyre in his hand, a rainbow of colours defines the space around him – the *whole of space* around him – and the strings of his delicate instrument appear as golden sunrays in his hand. He is the quintessence. I close the eyes that are no longer mine and throw back the head that is engulfed by silent ecstasy, for God himself has been maddened with delight by the arrival of this youth at his Temple, as if His own child had just entered the sanctuary.

The aura rests upon him and I feel as if the holiest of Spirits is passing through the temple and into me. He opens his mouth to speak and for the first time since I became the High Priestess I hear the words of God from a voice that is other than my own, in a message that is meant for me alone. My response was dreamlike and lasted for the longest time, as if an aeon would pass before the story's end. "*The cheeks of the Erinyes will be wet with tears and Sisyphus shall stop to hear your song...*"

When that aeon had passed the youth stood up with glittering eyes that were full of joy. Bowing low, he at once took his leave without saying another word, departing so suddenly that my entranced inner self was taken unawares, following him without thinking, purely willing, detaching itself from my body as easily as he strode away through the pillars of the Temple. His departure had unleashed in me the one desire to run for liberty like the fugitive priestess of Aphrodite, fleeing from the terror of love, a force I had been told was stronger than death. It was just as I had heard, but could never have believed until that moment, despite all the sleepless nights I spent without the Tetrarch beside me. Ignoring the shouts and stares of the Saints who awoke in a flash from their state of complete wonderment, I jumped from the tripod and ran as if I were flying, holding up a hand to shield

my eyes from the dazzling wall of light beyond the Temple confines. I heard them calling but their voices could not hold me.

I ran towards the Sacred Way, past the waiting crowd, until something I could not deny stopped me dead in my tracks. The pain in my ankle as the snake sank its teeth into my flesh was so intense that it shot up the length of my body and out through my mouth with a single silent scream. The peacock was crying. *Oh Mother...* The last thing I felt was relief as the warm marble path rushed up to meet my face and ended my torment with its hammer-blow.

*

She died in the Sulphur; the Sul in the kingdom of God, the lubet of the divine liberty, out of which the light of God shines, and in which the divine love, the love-fire burns, disappeared and withdrew from him

Jacob Boehme, The Signature of all Things

The Quickening

*In the middle of the journey of our life I found myself within a dark woods where
the straight way was lost*

Dante, Inferno

When I next opened my eyes it was to find Erato sitting beside me and tears just flowed from them like winter rain. I felt about myself a sense of grief and regret that I had never before experienced and reached for my sister with both arms.

“What change has the wind breathed upon me, love?”

She pulled me close and stroked my fevered brow with cool hands. “The souls of men, here in the embrace of bodies and of passions, have no communion with the God save as in a dream, a dim touch of knowledge through philosophy”.⁴⁷

Her words could not ease my pain and I felt myself to be sadder, even, than the grieving Hyades. “Dearest sister, I am no longer sure of myself, it seems to me that everything has changed. I even wonder if Apollo was defeated in some battle in the Heavens for my heart and mind to have unravelled so completely; could this be the hour of my death?”

She stroked my hair. “Whatever we see when awake is death, and when asleep a dream. Remember what you have learned, sister, none has had better instruction than you about what to expect from the hand of fate. Who knows if to live is to be dead, and to be dead, to live? I once heard the sages say that our body is our tomb.”⁴⁸

My mind drifted to the tops of the pinnacles and I fancied to myself that I could already hear the sounds of my own weeping. Erato took my hand in hers and spoke again in a sweet voice. “Dwell not on unhappy thoughts but listen well instead. Someone has given the muses a song that is the key of life.”

I held my breath as the door began to open and Erato smiled with joy.

⁴⁷ Plutarch

⁴⁸ Plato, Gorgias

“There came a young man, bright as the sun and with locks of gold upon his head. After you departed he sang to us of love, love ever-lasting. He plays the lyre better than any other and sings more beautifully, just as Calliope foretold.”

As I recalled his splendour it seemed as if my heart was beating again, for the first time since my fall from the Temple, but that light was flowing through my veins instead of blood.

“His hymns were rising toward Olympus like the sun draws unto itself the living waters; the Oracle had no choice but to bow to his charm, for he is our natural successor. The music shall live on where all else fails and men have cause to walk on roads other than the one which leads to Delphi. He has made himself beloved of the muses in this way, for through him they shall reign immortal for all eternity.

“When asked to reveal his name he leapt to his feet and threw back his cloak to reveal his heart and it was like the appearance of a second sun in our midst. He said: “I am he who cometh forth advancing, whose name is unknown. I am Yesterday.... I am the Lord of Eternity... I am with the mourners - the women who tear out their hair...I have sung hymns to those who dwell in the darkness. I have made to stand up the weeping ones, whose faces were covered over; they were in a helpless state of misery⁴⁹.”

At last I smiled with her. “I am sure Euterpe must admire his brilliance.”

“She saw him playing his turtle-shell lyre by the Castallian Spring. Such a wondrous object, I hear that it was a gift from Apollo himself. An audience had gathered and all appeared bewitched by the power of his music. Even the temple sphinx turned her ear and the birds fell silent in the tall trees.

“Seeing that they were spellbound with rapture and did not even behold her, Euterpe asked if she might accompany him with her flute, but the musician brought tears to her eyes by falling into a sad and sullen mood the instant she spoke to him.”

“Why would that be?”

“He said he was so deeply in mourning for his lost wife that the sight of any other females – particularly those who are lovely – was like salt in his eyes. It was then that Calliope appeared as if from nowhere and demanded that he play again, saying it was his duty to do so.”

“And did he heed her?”

⁴⁹ Book of the Master of Hidden Places

“As perfectly as if she had given birth to him herself! He bowed at once to her request, saying:

*I sing to those who know; ye uninitiated close the doors!*⁵⁰

Erato put a hand upon my heart as my drifting consciousness left for new fields in other worlds.

The dreams had never seemed so vivid, bright as the pure red anemones which filled the field I was walking through. I wondered, *am I alive?* It was only a thought but I heard it clearly as if I'd said the words out loud.

You are not dead.

I felt a child-like joy well up inside me like a fountain of fiery water and then became aware that we were no longer walking through the fields but in fact were journeying through space.

*Thou shalt come forth into heaven, thou shalt sail over the sky...*⁵¹

I knew not the direction we went in, nor for how long we travelled. The guiding force had turned me so I was facing him. He alone saw ahead to our destination, whilst I could do naught but see him.

So incomparably handsome was this being that I knew him to be the Adonis, beloved of Aphrodite, immortal bridge between Earth and the underworld, and I understood anew that beauty is a power at the heart of the Temple. I was overwhelmed by his presence, hitherto unknown, and felt my consciousness tremble at the nearness of this divinity, but he spoke into my mind, with words of reassurance designed to kindle in me the light. He said:

“Do not faint, fear or forget, for they who have received the mystery of the Light, if they come out of the body of the matter of the rulers, then will everyone be in her order according to the mystery which she has received. Those who have received the higher mysteries, will abide in the higher order; those who have received the lower mysteries will be in the lower orders.

“Thou Art an initiate of the higher mysteries, and in a word, up to what region every one hath received mysteries, there will he abide in his order in the Inheritance of the Light. For which cause I have said unto you aforetime: ‘Where your heart is, there will your treasure be,’ that is up to what region every one hath received mysteries, there shall he be.

⁵⁰ Orphic Fragment

⁵¹ The Book of the Master of Hidden Places/ Egyptian Book of the Dead

“And that mystery knoweth why the stars of the heaven and the disks of the light-givers have arisen and why the firmament with all its veils hath arisen....And the soul which receiveth the mystery of the Ineffable, will soar into the height with me”⁵².

“And now, Behold the white cypress tree which stands to the left of the gateway. Beneath is a well of water from which you must not drink. Do not take of these waters, however sweet they seem, for they will wash away all your memory”.

The moment he mentioned ‘water’, the longing grew in me to drink.

Of themselves they will give you to drink from the holy well spring but first you must make yourself known to them. Say: ‘I am a child of Starry Heaven,’ and they shall let you drink.

He looked to a place behind me and I turned to follow his gaze. It was then that I saw them standing some way in front of the gate; seven pairs of eyes turned to contemplate myself as I held out my hands to fill them with water and drink from the eternal spring.

⁵² Pistis Sophia

The Bridal Chamber



Love is strong as death, death does not destroy it.... The present remembrance is the result of the magical operation in the subjective domain, where one has succeeded in evoking from the black void of forgetfulness a living image from the past.

MotT, Letter VI, The Lovers

A loud and eerie cry rends the night in two. I cannot tell if it is made by bird, man or beast and it chills me to the bone, as if the strange call had seized my own breath. I catch sight of him in that same moment, standing beneath the Elm tree, a dark silhouette in the waning light. It seems as if invisible wings of air are lifting me over the stones towards the edge of the dark forest, where all other knowledge is obliterated by the realisation of his presence, standing in the shades. I tremble like a leaf in the wind as he leads me to the place where the horse is tethered and I comprehend the danger we both face.

Long we travelled that night, for the roads to and from Delphi are winding. Although I feel a kind of joy at the nearness of his heart against my cheek, with every fleeting step my fear increases. The further I slip from the Temple - down the steep and unforgiving road - the further it seems I am falling either from or into an illusion where once was my certain self. The further I flee from Apollo, the keener I feel the loss of his priceless gifts to me.

With mounting dread I contemplate what it would mean if the one who has protected and nurtured me since birth, heaping upon me the most abundant blessings, were to turn in a flash – as I had done myself - and my protector became my adversary? As we flee over the crossroads kept sacred by Heckate, I feel the previous unknown sensation that my destiny is no more laid straight out before me, but has entered into unknown regions I cannot even speak of. Yet even as the dreadful fear tightens its grip on my psyche I perceive the seed of something else, for I know that ships await me in the stillness of the night, ready to carry me away across the inky-black ocean of Poseidon. So often had I dreamed of crossing, but had only ever glimpsed the waters from afar, a glittering haze in the heat of the sun on the horizon.

I must have fallen into a trance-like sleep, for when I next hear his voice we have slowed to a halting pace and the hooves of his steed are soft upon the forest grass. At last we come to a standstill and I look around with wary eyes, until the screech of a swooping owl pierces the silence. As he jumps from the horse to help me down I see a number of faceless others melting from the shadows of the trees. I bow my head in confusion and shame but almost at once lift it up again and catch my breath as something entirely new assails my slumbering senses. An unknown fragrance is alive on the cool night air, but it does not strike me so much as the most wondrous of sounds, the roaring victory of freedom.

He guides me away from the dark forest path towards the moon-drenched horizon, subtle notes of both pride and joy betrayed could be heard in his rising voice.

“Come, at last I can show you....”

My heart beats like a bird within a cage as the relentless pounding grows louder and the air becomes dense and moist. Slowly he draws me to the edge of the abyss and tighter holds my hand as I gaze in wonder at the moving mass stretching far and wide beneath and beyond us. I gasp and laugh in delight, unable to contain my joy. The sea, at last!

“This is the sea, Priestess, and soon we shall be upon it.” He pointed to a deep cove, almost hidden from sight. “My ships....when they have borne us to our destination, then we shall perform the rites. Soon, when we are safe, you shall be initiated into the greatest mysteries of them all by the High Priest himself and bear witness to the glory of our singers.”

I let him lead down a narrow road to a small boat which delivered us me onto the largest of the ships. As I felt myself upon the joyous, irrepressible waves my heart changed again and I felt as if my dearest dreams were unfolding on the path before me.

The cabin itself is sparsely decorated but warm enough, for it has been hung all about with lamb’s wool and lit with seven large candles. They crackle, jump and cast strange shadows all around us as the floor rocks gently beneath my feet. I sit awkwardly upon the fleecy bed, trying to disguise the tumultuous emotions surging through me as he fills two cups of honey mead and puts one into my hands “Would you grant me something?”

We both knew well I was at his mercy, for the ship had already set sail. We had stood together watching as the shores of Hellas faded from view and the rash confidence of my inner child was blown into nothing by the restless wind. I nodded mutely, struggling with a fear I had never before known.

He put a warm and tender hand to my cheek. “Do not fear, love, I would only unbraid your hair”.

Slowly my fear gave way to pleasure as he placed his hands upon my head and began to unwind the intricately woven braids. In a flash I recalled how I would think of him at those times of day when my hair was being dressed and felt as if all Nafriini’s efforts throughout my life had been preparing me for this moment.

His touch provoked a feeling like no other I had ever experienced; was this the work of Eros, I wondered, or Phanes himself? I had feared he might ravish me with force, as Gods do their nymphs, yet his hand did not even stray to the curve of

my smooth throat, or bare arms spread like slender branches of laurel as the golden ropes of my hair unfurled around them. My eyelids drooped and flickered as I remembered our first meeting, when he had knelt before me as he did now and measured the length of my hair with the same gesture of awe. Silence ran deep into the atmosphere and the aura came over us like dawn, gilding the shadows with divine promise. Sensing the Goddess draw near to us, I at last looked into his eyes and confessed.

“I’ve dreamed of you....”

My voice faltered and he put a finger to my lips, halting the tumbling words before more could fall. He let his hand caress my throat and the longing I had felt since the morning the sun first brought him to me surged like the churning waves of the sea. With steady hands he removed the carefully wrought golden pins that held my dress in place – gifts he had given me himself - and the fine white material fell down across my breasts, like blossom falling from a tree.

I felt the breath of the Goddess touch my brow like a ray of light and it seemed as if every drop of blood in my body was transformed into a measure of liquid gold. He whispered my true name and my limbs wove around him like ivy, their knowledge exceeding my conscious understanding, even as a star was born inside my mind.

Love the unconquered warrior....no immortal nor any of the men whose life is a day can escape you: he who is touched by you goes mad. You twist the minds of just men to the ruin of injustice. Victorious is the bright desire from the eyes of the fair bride; it sits enthroned beside the eternal laws, for the goddess Aphrodite works her invincible will

Sophocles, Antigone

Part 4

The Mystic



If it is necessary, the guardian Angel awakens recollections of the soul's previous earthly lives, in order to establish continuity of endeavour – of the quest and aspiration of the soul from life to life – so that particular lives are not merely isolated episodes but constitute the stages of a single path towards one sole end

MotT, Letter XIV, Temperance

Part 4

The Mystic

The Sphinx
Going to The Atlantis
Turning the World
The Leopard
The Holy Trinity
The Writing on the Walls
Mouth of the Cave
Androgyné

The Sphinx



I woke up gasping, terrified beyond imagination. It was dark in the room but the creature sitting on my chest with its hands held tight around my throat was invisible anyway.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO KILL YOURSELF?

The telepathic voice was filled with fury, the question was a command and there was nowhere to hide. It would have its answer and lying was impossible. As it repeated the order with mounting rage I felt every inch of my soul being wracked for the truth. Why *had* I wanted to kill myself?

Silent but deadly, the voice in my head was virtually screaming, daring me to recall so it could claim my life in that instant.

DON'T YOU REALISE I COULD KILL YOU RIGHT NOW IN A SPLIT SECOND IF I WANTED?

This realisation had already struck me with tremendous force, along with the knowledge that if I did remember why I'd been suicidal, it would indeed squeeze the last breath from my body there and then.

IF YOU DARE REMEMBER I'LL KILL YOU NOW!

In a state of sheer panic I wracked my brains for the answer, asking myself the self-same question. Why, oh why, had I wanted to kill myself? Why! Now I felt my life to be in real mortal danger I realised that whatever the reason had been, it surely was a combination of folly and ignorance and I knew once and for all that I really did NOT want to die!

As I continued to wrack my brains in desperation for the answer, shaken to the core by the imperative of the command, my terror mounted exponentially and the deepest part of my self, the primal being locked in a semi-permanent, ages-old temple sleep, was roused from its near catatonic slumber and responded to the creature I somehow recognised as a Sphinx.

I can't remember!

It challenged me again. "WHY DID YOU WANT TO DIE, I'LL KILL YOU IF YOU REMEMBER!"

But I really had no clue in that moment and I freely acknowledged that whatever my reason had been was madness and stupidity and I was sorry. Part of me also acknowledged how impossible it was for me to have forgotten that which had depressed me for what seemed like aeons. How could I not know what my problem was?! Did a Sphinx have four faces like the Cherub?

Eventually, apparently satisfied that my amnesia was real, it released its grip on my throat and abruptly disappeared, leaving me with the certainty that I would never put myself at such risk again. No matter how bad it got, suicide was not an option, for surely if the thought crossed my mind ever again the wrath of the Sphinx would be brought down upon my head.

Going to The Atlantis



...this is the return of Olympus; by this only the Soul is made good, and not sometimes good, and sometimes evil, but of necessity Good

Corpus Hermetica, The Key

It was nine o'clock on Monday night. *Moon Day*. The Witness looked deep into the eyes of the woman who was sitting up very straight on the chair opposite. So what was her story?

“Some people think of a fall as stopping when you reach the Earth – like happened with the angels - but in fact it goes much deeper than that. For every step up you make, an equal distance opens out below, so if you happen to have been super-high that means a long way down to square the circle, to balance the depth and the height, as one also must the four other directions.

I had never given much thought to Atlantis, I was always way more interested in other things and unconcerned with any kind of occult history, I looked mainly to the future. Past was best left alone, I thought, so when my study partner suggested

I 'should go' to 'The Atlantis' my first thought was that I could hardly be bothered to undertake such an apparently pointless mission.

Recklessly perhaps –under his hypnotic influence and given to pilgrimages – I was blindly willing to take on the mission for the purpose of the exercise. He had also casually suggested that I should ask for angelic protection before trying to attempt the journey.

I went to lie down in bed in order to think about his proposal, but if truth be told I was – quite unusually - not even in the mood for meditation. My ennui was unusual but I just didn't care about Atlantis. It was before midnight, I wasn't tired, didn't know what to expect and had no expectations of getting anywhere anyway. Nevertheless, I said a brief prayer to the archangels, Michael in particular, in which I said something along the lines of. "My study partner thinks I should go to Atlantis, would you please protect me if you also think I should go?"

Much to my surprise, about three seconds later I saw with my second sight a large fish-headed being appear to my left above the bed. "I had never seen anything remotely like it. It was rather fat and whiskery, clearly irritable and intolerant, reminding me of both a medical doctor and former tutor at university who was never very impressed with me.

He looked like a kind of catfish and I was led to understand he was the guardian of the first gateway to Atlantis. He said something to my spirit, etheric or astral self that I did not actually hear with my ears but perceived with my inner being as he read my will and intention. I could not have lied but the impression must have been satisfactory, as in the twinkling of an eye everything changed.

I had been still lying in bed with my eyes fixed onto the corpulent, bad-tempered fish, registering only mild surprise. Then – *with no warning whatsoever* – there was a split second where I lost consciousness and when I next opened my eyes was no longer in the bedroom but right at the bottom of a shadowy green-grey ocean, half hidden by seaweed, staring in absolute amazement – a word that cannot adequately describe how I felt – at a half man, half fish.

In fact it looked more like a half-man half-serpent, its winding corkscrew tail was so immense. I was flabbergasted by both the sight and the situation I'd somehow arrived at, which bore no resemblance to anything I'd ever dreamed or even thought of. Actually I would later discover that there had been a precedent to this arcane symbol impressed upon me, subconsciously, in the form of a sigil of Ioannes. At the time, however, I had no mind-space for memory, the whole of my vision being occupied with observing the scene.

I was not totally naïve to spiritual states, having entered into quite a few in my time, but I had now been projected to a place which defied the limits of my imagination, to put it mildly. Do you know how it feels when that happens? I have been in some odd situations and seen some really strange things – in lucid dreams, visions or astral projections – and those experiences always give you something to be surprised about, but *nothing* like this.

The pressure was almost unbearably intense and even detached from my physical body I was on the edge of real panic. The enormous creature was approximately 33 feet away and I saw him only in profile. He was dark as the shadow of the deep, with short curly hair and arms that were outstretched at right angles from the elbow in an oddly stylised gesture, as if he was holding something in his hands. “His torso was like that of a muscular man and his bottom half was a very long, spiralling tail. Quite apart from my shock at the mere sight of this being, I could only wonder in abject terror whether he could see me if I could see him! What would happen then? I desperately hoped he would not see me. It didn’t help either that I have for long had a morbid fear of deep water and could feel myself on the edge of losing control.

“Fervently praying I would not be spotted, I had a sudden and bizarre ‘Eureka!’ moment that came from absolutely nowhere. For some incomprehensible reason the word ‘Capricorn’ sprang to mind and for some other obscure reason this made me feel as if I’d fathomed a massive secret or puzzle, apparently despite myself. “I was instantly elated – like one of those people in a film who against all odds escapes a flooding room as water reaches the ceiling – and another split second later popped back into my body in the bedroom. I was relieved as well as euphoric, somehow sure that I’d passed some sort of arcane test I didn’t even know I’d been taking.

“I can’t have been back in the room for more than a second when I was drawn back into the astral or spirit world, whatever it is, and when I reappeared it was to an utterly tranquil scene. I was walking forwards onto dry land beneath an azure sky (the unforgettable blue sky that is so typical of the other world) on a path towards a building that I knew was there but could not see.

“I find that in this dimension one’s vision works differently. One sees what is directly before one’s eyes, appear exactly as it should, like a picture unfolding in your mind. It can be like tunnel vision, entirely focused on the most salient detail or perspective.

“What I saw unfurl before my eyes was a low, white wall with an opening in the middle, some sort of entrance or gateway to a large building I knew but could not see was located beyond its threshold. Sitting on the wall to the left of the opening was a young woman with very long black hair, tied up at the sides but flowing free down her back, wearing a knee-length white robe. She was angled to the right in half profile and shielding her face from view with her left hand.

“No sooner had I registered her seated presence – and the fact I should not see her face - I arrived at the next scene. I found myself inside the building with the girl walking beside me on the left, although I could no longer see her. I vigilantly tried to observe my surroundings for outstanding detail, but it was quite dark – it seemed to be under ground, there were no windows and everything was plain marble or stone.

“The room itself was not normally shaped, comprising of weird angles, and it seemed like a corridor. There were a few columns and I must have expressed some disappointment that there was not any kind of decoration on the walls that I could see. I sought identifying features that I could later research

“No sooner had I experienced this thought about the lack of décor when I was led to look at the floor, and saw that we were following a path of square tiles, about 12” across, that were uniformly patterned with simple black swastika-style crosses.

“The scene changed again and we arrived at a completely darkened chamber, pitch black without a flicker of light. All I was aware of – all I could see at all - was a kind of book she placed in my hands, but it was no ordinary book. I’m not sure what it was made of but it was gleaming white and open at a double ‘page’ that at first was completely blank.

“As I peered at it, intrigued, writing began to appear - letters written one at a time from right to left - that I could not understand at all. These words simply materialized, as if they were being written or carved right in front of me. The only thing that occurred to me was that the writing was ‘all in triangles’ and therefore incomprehensible, apart from one letter that was comprised of three short diagonal lines in parallel.

“After a moment of marvelling at this strange alphabet, which ultimately filled the page, the scene changed again, once more completely. In a baffling development, my entire vision was unaccountably filled with a smooth, grey, pleasantly soothing curved object. More than one object, a group of them...

“Slowly lifting my head I realized I was in fact lying face down, staring at a large beach pebble, which, as I rose further, turned out to be on the shore of a very clear,

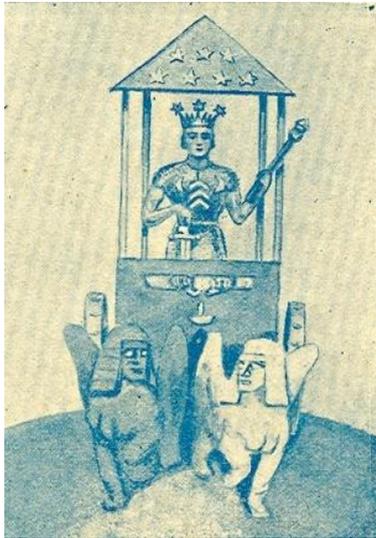
calm, green-grey sea in daytime. Perhaps it was early in the morning, for rather than being deep blue, the sky was now a colourless grey like the ocean.

“As I gazed out to sea I was struck with the most profound sense of wonder and mystification, because there was nothing but calm sea in front of me; and yet I was certain that just a moment before I had just been in a city somewhere beneath the waves. Where the sky had been the most beautiful blue.

“I wondered how it was that I’d seen the sky so clearly if the place was underwater. I had a sudden irresistible impulse to dive back into the water and rushed forwards, but seemingly from out of nowhere a face appeared which made me jump out of my skin.

“It was black man with shining eyes, short dark hair and an angelic smile, but his appearance was so unexpected I was terrified, perhaps because I wondered if he was the half male part of the half serpent I’d seen earlier. He immediately looked hurt and I felt guilty for being scared and gave the radiant stranger a hug, apologizing profusely. I had the feeling he’d rescued me, having found me lying on the sea shore – the chances are it was actually him that had pulled my head up. Afterwards I wondered if he was an angel.

“The next moment I was back in my bedroom and shortly afterward I fell asleep.



The victory achieved in solitude....what glory and what danger it comprises at one and the same time! ...it is the most real and the most serious spiritual danger which exists.

Meditations on the Tarot, Letter VII, The Chariot

The Androgyne

This romance forms the essential aim of esoteric work. Here is that love which will unite man to that being who is unique for him, the Sister-wife, the glory of man, as he will be the glory of God

Gnosis, Boris Mouravieff

It has taken a very long time to find a way to relate this experience. It happened the day after my nerve-wracking projection to Atlantis, but I didn't know then how to describe what happened and still don't know if I am able. This is the most mind-blowing vision I have ever had. I had begun to think it would be impossible to really tell anyone, until one afternoon this summer when I discovered I was not alone in having seen what I had seen. I had rather come to believe I had brought about a permanent fission in my soul. The irony of this should not escape anyone, for the visionary experience itself was of absolute fusion, unity of male and female in a spiritual being that was reflected in my self.

By the time the Aikido master told me he had seen the same thing it was exactly six years down the line and I was in a state of subdued acceptance, too affected by doubt and the rigours of the trial itself to be amazed, though I was somewhat relieved and also grateful. It is interesting how succour so often comes at the very moment we stop wondering if it ever will.

The effect of the schism in my soul caused by doubt was so great that I feared it would never be fully healed. Here is the essence of what constituted my dilemma: If it truly was a vision of God undivided that I witnessed, then it is not possible for me to have survived intact, for it is made quite clear that none can look upon His/Her face and keep his or her life. If, on the other hand, I brought myself wilfully to an ungodly experience – which after all might seem likely after going so far down into Atlantean waters – then I had no choice but to realise that a counter initiation had occurred and henceforth I was doomed. That I had become caught up in a number of volatile confrontations with a series of relatively accomplished spiritual aspirants – even adepts – only made matters worse. The more I thought upon this dilemma the more dreadful was my entanglement in doubt, the very root of original sin. What IF I had really seen God, but in the

weakness of my Body, Mind and Soul had taken the vision to be one of the adversary; would that mean I had committed the most heinous of sins against the Holy Spirit?

Suffice to say I was plunged henceforth into the most dire of existential straits and the former perceived unity of my soul being was shattered decisively. And this, after a vision of union between Masculine, Feminine and Spirit in a being of light whose aura was the whole of the azure sky. Perhaps if I can tell the story then unity will be restored. I can only hope and pray with all my being for rectification. It had been a strange but deceptively quiet day, deep in the summer, August 18 to be precise. The events of the night before had been so disturbing and mystifying that I was reluctant to dwell too deeply upon them, acknowledging them with a passive sort of ennui that was quite out of keeping with my usual zeal in matters of research, especially where such spectacular results had been yielded.

The Atlantean visit had patently been a success in the sense that against seemingly insurmountable odds I had actually got there, and yet I was far from being overwhelmed with excitement at the extremely rare privilege I'd been afforded with this view of the pre-diluvian state. It was like I had a kind of meditation overload, so intense had been our studies over the past few years, and past few months in particular. I wasn't sure how much more information I could even absorb – it seemed to me I was reaching my limit and that the cup of knowledge was brimming over. Far from feeling myself to be in a state of exalted enlightenment, I had finally begun to wonder if the barriers in my mind had been too far dissolved, for I knew I had skirted the edge of madness. Maybe even tipped over the edge. It was like an 'invisible movie' was running past my eyes at all times. Images of archetypal beings and scenes from the secret history of the world flitted past in an exhaustless stream devoid of obvious meaning, jostling for space with flashes of fire from the love of my life. Nothing was as it seemed or appeared to ordinary sight.

While I downplayed to myself the epic and death defying journey to another dimension and mentioned it to no-one but the other witness at that time, I sensed that a seed of something unfathomable had been planted in my mind. I did not feel myself at all, and nor did I understand my marked inclination to ignore the sensation that this atomic seed element was imminently to make its mark. I wanted just to put the entire episode from my mind but, having made the irreversible journey in the night, it could no longer be unmade and the consequences were yet to come. I could feel it.

After lunch outside with a friend, an unremarkable distraction memorable chiefly because the gentleman's third eye appeared to me as cyclopean in size and crusted over with thick and ancient scales, I returned home and attempted to distract myself with work.

My desk was positioned beneath the window of the spare room through which the velvety silence of summer was manifest in the deepening blue sky of mid-afternoon. Try though I did to work on my latest project, concentration proved impossible and I took to sighing and gazing through the window into infinity for endless moments of nothing. While this might sound like a fine way to pass a lazy summer day, in fact I was far from being relaxed and somehow felt increasingly restless and on edge as no thing in particular commanded the fullness of my attention with an iron grip.

At a certain point I gritted my teeth and began to grind them slightly, as the sensation that I was being commanded grew larger by the moment. About half an hour passed in this way while my resistance reluctantly gave way before the inevitable, whereupon I felt myself being slowly but firmly pushed backwards on the wide stool until I was lying almost prone with my head slightly elevated, resting against the head of the bed that was directly behind me in the oddly-shaped spare room.

As my arms were pushed up and outwards into the Orans gesture I would typically be made to adopt before a visionary episode, I felt myself to be unusually resistant to the familiar sensation that such an experience was about to occur. The teeth grinding intensified and the diminishing part of my mind that was not yet wholly absorbed in passive observation wondered why I was instinctively reluctant to see whatever it was that was about to appear. Why was I so apprehensive? Afraid.

As I tensely gazed into the blue, unable to look away, a figure appeared that captivated my attention at once as I reached the final form of the position I had been given to adopt beneath the window. Dressed in a full-length white robe with long sleeves, the gigantic figure filled the middle distance of the sky. Its hair was mid length and yellow-gold, a colour that was matched by a belt around its waist. The *whole* of the perfect blue sky appeared to be its aura.

Exactly how or when it manifested I cannot say, I only know that it was composed of three different elements that visibly and quickly came together into this one being: Masculine, Feminine and Spirit. The Masculine and Feminine aspects appeared full frontally and fully dressed in identical white robes - at once and interchangeable in their strange similarity - but the third part, comprising a semi-

transparent element of Spirit, flitted into these two from the left hand side and in profile as I was watching⁵³.

The fully formed being had an expression of weirdly – worryingly – intense and earnest concern that must have been reflected by the perplexed expression in my wide-open eyes that it was staring right into. I cannot recall a spiritual entity ever before or since looking deeply into my eyes in this way and was devastated by the intensity of a gaze that I could not tear myself away from.

Even more disconcerting was the overriding and tremendous confusion of the knowledge that this being was literally sexless. Everything in nature is definable by its gender and so here was something inconceivable. This was not merely of both sexes – as a classic hermaphrodite - but was somehow asexual or supra-sexual and entirely transcendental of a materialistic physical form. And yet it also, somehow, looked distinctly like a combination of both He – the soul mate of my dreams – and I. Confusion was heaped upon confusion to see how we somehow looked the same in this figure.⁵⁴

As the expression of concern on both our faces deepened – the One and my reflection - the golden belt of the entity somehow changed into a bright red cross that covered its torso. No sooner had I registered this development when the being turned to its left (my right) so it was in three-quarter profile. The arms of the cross then peeled away from its body and appeared like zig-zag ribbons of blood fluttering out into the sky like enormous flags. Having displayed this to me overtly the vision then turned back to face me and the red cross of blood suddenly grew until it was a large red mass that covered almost the whole of its body. The Aikido master had identified this as a rose upon the cross, but at the time I only saw a huge patch of red blood before the bizarre vision ended.

What could I do after such a teeth-gnashingly strange and disturbing experience? I had lost all appetite for work and decided I should lie on the bed with an ordinary book for distraction. Did I imagine that was the end of it? The notion that I might

⁵³ Three parts in one cannot help but recall the Holy Trinity itself, the Mystery of which was revealed to me through the Hebrew alphabet in a circle of light many moons ago. At the time I did not know it was Hebrew and could only describe what I later discovered to be the letter Shin as a ‘three pronged beam’ of three figures that was shaped like a crown.

⁵⁴ Here we must acknowledge that the true soulmate of the human being is a spiritual entity, of which we seek the nearest resemblance in other humans, most usually our friends and lovers.

concentrate on reading soon proved ridiculous, but from my more comfortable position the ‘invisible movie’ suddenly came into focus.

As most often happened in moments of repose my thoughts and all impulses of heart turned entirely to Him, with a degree of longing unprecedented in its ability to grow ever stronger with no sign of fading. I was exhausted by this desire, which made of my body a prison for the agonised soul that longed only for reunion with its other half. For 12 long years I had defended the empty inner castle of my being while the feminine part of my soul ran wild in the outer limits of the cosmos. Even now I can vividly recall the moment I’d set it free.....a terrible mistake by so many accounts, and one that I both bitterly regretted and vowed to make right, some way, somehow.

This had also happened in August, but between 1 and 2 in the morning, for so long the time when visions most frequently came and knowledge was most freely revealed to me. How happy I had been at that time of my life, the cup of my joy could not have held one drop more, as halcyon day followed every spirit-filled night.

A few months earlier I had overcome the dark entity which had pursued me since childhood, fallen in love for the first time, simultaneously found God and had revealed to me the deepest mysteries of Sophia. What could possibly go wrong? As I kneeled before the presence of the Holy Spirit and company of angels – which infused every molecule of the atmosphere with golden radiance – I felt myself to have an embarrassment of riches. In one of my hands had been placed a shield that I took to be of Truth, and in the other was a sword that I assumed at the time was Justice.

Or perhaps the sword had been truth and the shield justice, that much was not clear, only the principles of truth and justice themselves were firm in my mind. It could even have been part of the armour of God, as the other witness suggested to me more than a decade later, but being an only intermittent Bible reader I had not quite grasped the meaning behind the spiritual event.

With my arms outspread I gazed with joy and delight at the invisible company, yet when one of their number let it be known that a third gift was to come I felt the cup running over and a slight pang of sorrow. My hands were full already, what else could I be given to bear and how would I carry it?

LOVE

Tears sprang into my eyes as the greatest gift of God flowed straight into the core of my being and I could not believe I was worthy of such a thing in any shape or

form. The delicate vessel of my self was shattered in that instance as the love continued to flow and I wondered what I could possibly give in return for such a priceless treasure. There was only one thing.

My self; my SOUL.

In a flash of reckless abandonment I turned the sword so it was pointing at the shield, by now held across my breast in the vain hope of stemming the overwhelming force of love pouring into me. As the only thing that could penetrate the shield pushed through my solar plexus in that split second, the company as one rushed forward crying.

NO!!

But it was already too late. My last thought as I fell over onto my side was, ‘What have I done?’ no sooner had God’s grace been given to me than I had committed spiritual suicide with the vain thought that this had been required of me.

The soul had left me at the speed of light, rocketing upwards with incredible force, and when I finally stood up to search the night sky, vainly hoping for a glimpse of it amongst the stars, it was with a minutely small but nonetheless stubborn conviction that I darkly muttered.

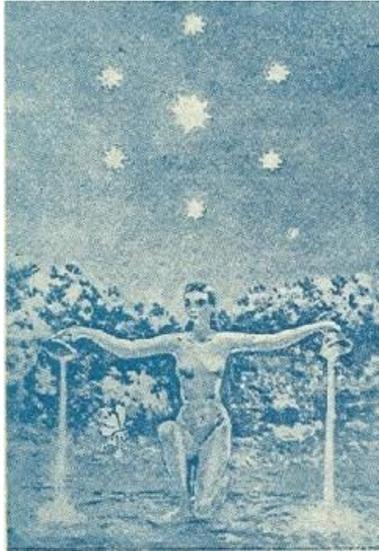
I’m taking it back.

The chances of getting ‘it’ back were infinitesimally remote, but as the years spent with a yawning void inside me passed, I never quite gave up hope. The need for vigilance had been impressed upon me so utterly from the start – and my dedication was so complete - that I could at least be sure of not missing such a chance should it ever arise by some miracle yet to be dreamed of.

It was not the first time I saw Him that I knew he would be the one to help bring it back, but by the second sight, an hour or two later, he had taken my breath away and opened a doorway to the field where the greatest challenge of my life would take place.

Reunion.

Turning the World



...he gives expression to his hope that in the future there will be an intervention from beyond this closed circle by future magicians ("knights of Christ")... that they will open the closed circle and transform it into a spiral

MofT, Letter XVII, The Star

After a few minutes spent browsing the fascinating bookcase, the woman in Mysteries took a sip of ginger tea and prepared to tell the next part of her story.

This described has taken place, truth recount now, sooth instate.

It was a Thursday night around Pentecost. I'd had a nice time out with friends, most of which we spent in a neighbouring student faculty building, listening to a band called The Egg. I was with a clever person called James (what is in a name?) and we experienced the music in the best possible way, which was psychedelically transcendently. This involved one of us empathetically playing the air guitar (him) while the other was drumming (me).

My boyfriend and our male friends had, at a similar stage in the evening, embarked upon what I later found out to be a particularly debauched party hosted by a fairly well known homosexual history tutor from a neighbouring college. "Bloody hell and buggery" was the first definition to arise when I was later given the low-down, as it was related that the host regularly dosed guests with LSD in order to ensure his annual party became the stuff of almost hidden legend.

My own enjoyable evening was drawn to a close before midnight, after which I returned alone to my room at college. I had not been back long before I was surprised by a late visit from another of the very bright and interesting fellows, this one called Benedict, who had been looking for my boyfriend but by a curious twist of fate found me instead.

As it happened, the meeting was serendipitous and Benedict's company was something of a blessing. He rolled a brilliant joint and, in keeping with the spirit of peace, we listened to almost the entire collection of Bob Marley's greatest hits in near silence. I liked Benedict and it seemed to me that everything we did not say made perfect sense. I also had the distinct impression that something was going to happen, that it was inevitable as one follows two. What that something would be, I could not have said, although I felt I knew.

Benedict left my room shortly after the joint had been smoked. He had been there for just over an hour and during this time I had become supremely and irrevocably high. Going with the Benedictine flow I submitted myself to the force of the higher power which had first taken over me the two weeks earlier. I surrendered to the will of the Divine and did not any waste of time because time did not exist.

In my state of heightened reason it seemed entirely appropriate that I should get the ball rolling with this newfound supernatural energy. I therefore stood in the

centre of the room and at once began to turn around – to spin on the spot - faster and faster in a clockwise direction until the room was a whirl of spiralling white light. I built up enough momentum to perform such a complete turn-around that it occurred to me as I was whirling that I'd generated so much momentum by this point I could probably spin the whole floor around by central axis point.

This seemed straightforward and – still spinning faster and faster – I found space to feel somewhat pleased by this accomplishment. From there it seemed even more straightforward a task to make the ever-increasing spiral extend outwards, until I was going so quickly it seemed the centrifugal force I'd generated was enough to make the whole world to spin around with me. This was an actual revolution occurring, who could have imagined it?

I span around for a number of minutes until the world got going at finite speed – held ad infinitum with the momentousness of gravity – and then, when I felt aligned with a certain mysterious point, stopped dead on the very same spot from which I had not once deviated, without falling, feeling dizzy or even moving at all. “I'm sure you will agree that not only was this a very impressive physical feat for any person – let alone an apparently stoned person – there is something highly unusual and somehow also relevant about perceptibly turning the world.

“I had stopped facing the window, through which both the moon and Venus could be seen shining on that particular night, in conjunction. I clearly remember seeing them and can picture them now, because they were spectacularly close together. I was standing perfectly still, apart from my right arm, that is, which was busy from the elbow out, apparently winding something up that was seriously heavy. Perhaps the universal momentum, I mused detachedly. The movement was again clockwise.

I had always assumed that the world turned in 3 ways simultaneously. Eager to get the third way right, I turned in the opposite direction and began making a slow elliptical movement with my hips, from a position where I was facing the guitar case belonging to my boyfriend, then propped against the wall. For some reason this provoked a clear sense of danger.

I was disturbed to realize that I was unconsciously yet meditatively staring into the small silver clasps at the bottom of the guitar case. When I became aware of what I was doing this provoked the sinister impression of danger that I did not vaguely understand until later that evening. I shifted my gaze but my concentration had been broken. After a few more half-hearted gyrations I decided I'd done quite enough for one night and fell light-heartedly onto the bed. Happily I closed my

eyes, feeling wonderfully satisfied with the stupendous spinning achievement that Benedict had narrowly missed and that would never be witnessed again. It was a miracle performed in solitude by way of a perfect higher synthesis between Divine Madness and Zen Mastery⁵⁵. There was a pause of around three seconds - maybe enough to exhale - and then I experienced the sudden remarkable sensation of being lifted up at great speed by a sweeping light. The extraordinary light swept over my entire body from toe to top in a breath-taking wave.

The brilliance in the room – the total change in quality of light – was clearly apparent with my eyes still tightly closed. Indeed, it seemed so bright that I dared not open them for fear of going blind. It was as if someone had adjusted a vast dimmer switch on the greatest lantern and as the light went up, so did I...

My heart was beating fast and I felt the most wondrous ecstatic peace; each tangible quality of sensation and atmosphere informed me subtly of a change in dimension. There seemed to have been both a quantitative and qualitative change brought about through an extreme shift in altitude. Surely this defined forever the notion of ‘getting high’?

Brilliantly intense, the majestic-feeling occurrence stimulated my senses in unprecedented style, filling my mind with awe, and my body with a sensation of pure bliss, as if all material was somehow being experienced as a factor of light energy. Everything was smooth, calm and clear, yet somehow also thrilling and surprising. It was true inspiration and the first clear notion that came into my head I said out loud:

“I’m in heaven!”

Yet one thing puzzled me: while I had perceived myself as rising up dramatically, the light had noticeably – seen even from behind closed eyelids – begun at my feet rather than my head or whole body at once, like a rising sea of light sweeping over me. So perhaps I had in fact been immersed in a depth of light and it must surely be true that on a round planet which rotates until the end of time, ‘up’ and ‘down’ are paradoxically named directions.

⁵⁵ The word Zen is derived from the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese word Chán, which in turn is derived from the Sanskrit word dhyāna, which is equivalent to the ‘concentration without effort’ we were given at the start of Alchemical Weddings.

Whatever the case may have been, I was held there in suspended animation during my one ecstatic in-breath, unwilling – even unable - to breath out, let alone move. Why would I move, why would I go anywhere else when I was held here in Heaven? How long I was there in this state; who can say?

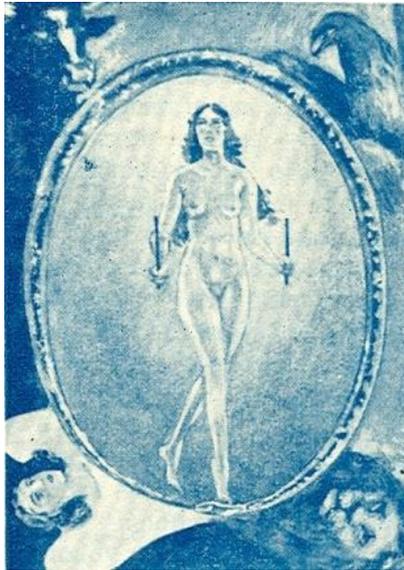
I know a lot of people warn that you must keep silent about intense spiritual experiences, but the overriding – absolutely overwhelming sense I had after this happened - was to tell someone – *anyone* – as soon as possible, because I simply felt like my mind would explode and I'd go stark raving mad if I tried to keep it to myself. It was like I had no choice but to tell, it was part of the agreement, so to speak.

As it happened, I was in a state of suspended animation with apparently no way of getting out of it voluntarily, my will having been wholly given over to the force which had manifest through the light.

The person who was destined to break the spell and awaken me from the trance had the shock of her life when I burst from my room in the middle of the night, just as she was unlocking the door to her room, which was adjacent to mine in the hall of residence. Her arriving home - much later than was usual for her - was the noise that brought me down to Earth, and she was rewarded with a spontaneous and unsolicited Bible, which I had grabbed from my bookshelf as I flew out the door.”

Oh ye Initiates, ye whose ears are purified, receive this in your souls as a mystery never to be lost! Reveal it to no profane

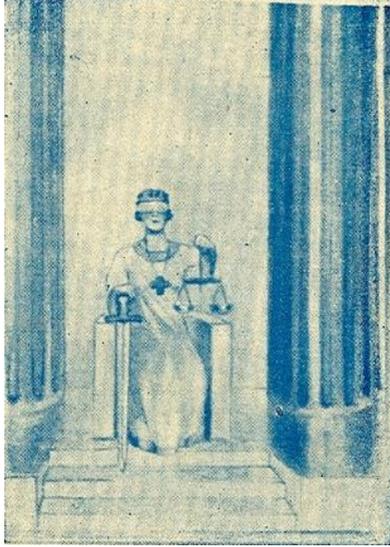
Philo Judea



Whether it is a matter of a revelatory world or of a deceptive world, whether it is a matter of the world seen in the light of the sphere of the spirit of truth or of the sphere of the spirit of mirage, it is a joy – a twofold joy – which plays the key role

MotT, unknown author, Letter XXII, The World

The Leopard



It is the history of the magic of love reviving the dead

MotT, Letter VIII, Justice

It was an hour before dusk in the middle of Trinity term and the massive city walls reflected warm evening sunlight into the garden quadrangle. A small group of novices were sat together on top of the high circular mound in the centre of the square college garden, watching the sky turn to rose gold as the sun set before them.

Two butterflies were dancing in the fading light. She watched as they fluttered on the windless air in a hypnotic courtship ritual, until both suddenly alighted on his knee. She held her breath, not wanting to frighten them away by a sudden movement. They stayed for a few moments, one behind the other on his right thigh, then flew off again as suddenly as they had landed, dancing round him like fairies. They soon settled down again on the step beneath her feet, slowly moving their bright, painted wings.

“They are bowing”, he told her.

She was delighted and peered more closely at the colourful insects, which just like her were magnetised by his presence. It was not long before they took off again, leaving the youth and the one who loved him to follow the path they made. The turning point had come in their relationship. With an unspoken agreement they got to their feet and followed the two butterflies through the magical gateway.

As soon as they entered her room – located just behind the quadrangle in a pretty pink house - some hitherto unknown internal prompt brought about the spontaneous enactment of a dramatic script.

Why are you fighting me? he asked, with a peculiarly weary intonation.

I'm not! she returned, with indignant surprise. She only wanted to prove that she was ready, willing, and able, to love him completely.

He lay down on the single bed and looked deeply into her eyes: “What is it that I can give you?”

This seemed to be an offer – of what she could only guess at – but she was thankfully spared the possibility of making an inappropriate reply because it seemed the proscribed response was set in stone. She recited it in relief:

“The only thing I have ever wanted.”

He puzzled her again. “How do I know you won't hurt me?”

It was a question that seemed to require evidence of some kind. She did not understand but gamely uttered her committed response.

“I'll do it.”

What would she do? She had no idea.

She was aware of a desire to spare him pain, but did not know what kind of pain this might be. Nor could she allow doubt or fear to break her resolve, for the immediate scene was to be continued without pause for reflection. She handed him a book, already open at her favourite passage.

*When love beckons to you follow him, though his ways are hard and steep*⁵⁶

He read it and then looked up at her with a more seriously respectful expression. "That book is amazing."

She went to lie next to him on the bed.

She lay on her left side and he leaned over to touch her forehead with his own, before sitting back calmly to observe the effect. If truth be told, with this gesture he opened her mind, and this is what came out:

He had always reminded her of a leopard because he was beautiful and languid in appearance and movement but with the underlying tension of a creature that could pounce at any moment. He also kept a large wooden statue of that creature in his room and, furthermore, had given her a book of the same name. She sensed his spiritual power but had always attributed it to the animal personality, so when her body began to react to the opening of her mind she was certain that she, too, was being transformed into a leopard, just so they could make love as equals.

She couldn't help but acknowledge to herself that this was rather a fanciful-seeming interpretation, and even through the burgeoning transcendental state of consciousness could see the danger of accepting such a course of action with blind faith. Was it wise or safe, she wondered, to embark upon such an atavistic procedure?

But the thought was only in the back of her head for she was, by then, fully committed to the action now taking place within her body, mind and soul. She was serene and content to have succeeded in reaching this critical point of an initiatory engagement, fully determined to proceed, and the passing doubt soon left her.

Her eyes had closed and her body, following some sort of inner or outer direction, arched backwards - with far more grace than would have ordinarily been natural for a body in such a physically strained position - as if her head wanted to touch her feet. She felt strangely relaxed, as if she knew exactly what was happening, even though she had not the faintest inkling.

⁵⁶ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

She observed how her body seemed incredibly lithe and supple, far more so than usual, as if light were running through her veins rather than blood. She enjoyed a joyful surge of pure physical strength and energy, as if she were seven feet tall, such was the sensation of health and flexibility. All of this she saw as being a surprisingly desirable first consequence of the exchange with a leopard for its soul: The perfect body. It must have been warm because the youth removed his shirt before gently turning her so she was lying face down on the bed with her head close to his chest. “Are you OK?” he asked.

She was, yes, but her right hand was changing. It became transformed into something clenched and clawed – almost exactly like a leopard’s paw she noted with peculiar satisfaction – while her arm was bent rigidly, at right angles from the elbow. The same thing happened to her left hand, she observed with perfect concentration. Soon she was reconciled to be in possession of two paws, but the performance had become somehow more demanding, as if the stakes were now higher. The rigid clenching of her arms and hands was not exactly comfortable and filled her entire body with a tension.

Once again he asked her, sounding a little more concerned: “Are you OK?” This time her voice registered a little more stress but still the answer was, “yes”. It had passed through her head, albeit fleetingly, that she might never be ‘normal’ again, so lucid and surreal was this experience, but she was thoroughly committed to fulfilling the act and saw no way of returning to the preceding state. Yet she felt no fear.

The stretching out of her own beautiful limbs into fabulous leopard’s legs was a welcome diversion from the stiff front claws and she spent quite a few minutes appreciating the fact that they seemed to be almost a foot longer than usual. Their new-found elasticity seemed to totally override in quality the inert calcified matter of her solid form. Her feet were pointed and held together, affected at the same time. She arched backwards from the base of her spine, constantly aware of its apparently supernatural flexibility, while her arms remained rigid. It felt rather as if a spirit of immense energy was moving her body without revealing itself fully to her mind

When these things were done she was turned over again by her companion so she was lying face up with her eyes still closed. She felt it was not yet appropriate – it did not seem possible - to open them or indeed to voluntarily move from this appointed position at all.

He knew what came next and solemnly lit a cigarette, resting the matchbox on her breastbone and striking hard so the flame flared up and ignited over her heart. With the appearance of this fire an amazing flash of light flooded through her closed eyelids, producing an instantaneous ecstatic response. She inspired sharply, gasping as if taking her first breath, and finally opened her eyes onto the modest room that had been transformed forever.

She felt an almost beatific sense of purity and peace, as if a monumentally painful test had somehow been completed in perfect order. For some unaccountable reason all she wanted to do was throw her hands above her head as if compelled to achieve some sort of final designated pose. She did this three times before noticing that her companion bore a serious expression, hardly even looking at her as he sat there smoking silently, his legs crossing over hers on the bed.

She finally let out a sigh and her arms fall outwards into the approximate position they had been in when she was prone face down a few moments earlier. Her legs were bent slightly from the knees with her feet together, with him sitting at right angles to her with his back against the wall, his own legs pinning hers into place. She looked him in the eye and smiled in peaceful adoration, with the single thought in her clear, light mind that the purpose of her life had been fulfilled. Her head fell onto her left shoulder as she gazed at him.

She wanted him to be pleased but it seemed he could hardly bear to even glance at her. But why? No sooner did she wonder but realization hit her like a bolt from the blue. A single tear fell at once from each of her eyes.

Jesus....

Lo, behold, the day is coming - see the leopard, sleek and running - dawn descends from heaven's scented spheres and flows to Earth like honey.



It is cosmic love - what we call 'spirit' - which will accomplish the magical act of resurrection, the reintegration of an inseparable unity – the unity of the spirit, soul and body – not by way of birth (reincarnation) but by way of the magical act of divine memory.

MotT, Letter XX, The Judgment

Holy Trinity

Alef, Mem, Shin are in the body of male and female: Fire and Water and Air

Sefer Yetzirah

Following the spinning of the world, the visit to heaven, the preaching of the scripture to the Jewish girls and the spiritual union with female friends there came something more deeply intense. I was still in the midst of the endless night and went on to make progress by identifying the souls of a number of my mates. Here I stood at the viewing point of the next stage setting.

After the heavenly visit and the subsequent collection of spirits from goodness knows where, I had paused for a short rest. Whilst sitting on the bed relaxing I had been idly observing my plastic covered armchair, which was positioned in front of the window, opposite the bed, and tilted at an angle because one leg was missing. Something about it came strangely alive. In fact, suddenly it seemed to be an obvious - and actual - seat of power.

Never before had I given a moment's thought to the throne of God, but I readily acknowledged that it really could have been right before my eyes, seeing as the other events of that night had so far defied any convention of wisdom or logic. They had, nevertheless, left an indelible impression upon me. This bizarre opinion that might justifiably be called illogical, or even illegal, was one that I arrived at with such total conviction that I did not even imagine another possibility. When I questioned myself later (on countless occasions after the event) I concluded that even rigorous scientific reasoning could not discount the *possibility* that I had been right, which also confirmed that I could never exist in a state of denial.

Some might call it delusion but I only saw that all possibilities had to be allowed for and this, being not only the most obvious to me at the time, but also the most potentially brilliant for the rest of time, was the one I had chosen with more sense than there seemed.

I can picture the scene vividly: Stood as I was before the perceived throne of God, with my back towards the door, I felt joyous and youthful, protected and yet free. Everything I loved, wanted and needed seemed to be both within and without myself in an optimum state of total equilibrium. Everything in the room looked

virtually the same except for an unearthly light that seemed to radiate silence as a product of latent energy. I felt to be before “Our father who art in Heaven”, and that there was an open channel of communication, which I entered gleefully with a strong sense of drama, seeing an externalisation of my usual self.

I seemed to be anything other than alone. I had brought about a clear space by turning inwards and, although no-body was present but I, there began in thought an interaction with the ideas of invisible others whose characters seemed very familiar. This awareness of personalities other than my own was perhaps the most remarkable feature of my newly created style of experience, and one which brought a strongly empathetic character out of me forever afterwards. On this occasion, after a few moments of silently jocular camaraderie with the first new arrival, I suddenly and gladly recognised the personality of the musician, who relayed a powerful spirit and would be my friend for the rest of our lives. It was as if he were my soul mate and we were together in heaven via the potential offered by our earthly relationship.

There was a dreamlike quality to the scene by virtue of the dazzling all-pervading light and in conjunction with the suspension of predictability, which is the defining quality of dreams. After quite a lengthy interaction with the soul mate, during which I apparently misbehaved and was sent to stand in a corner, I was seized by the notion that I should prostrate myself before the throne of the creator in genuine supplication. I actually lay there for quite some time, as if in a first-rate impression of a plank.

Later, when I heard the full story of the night from another perspective, I realised that in this prone figure was the model of another friend – one of the classicists - who was destined, at precisely the same time on the night in question, to have ‘fallen asleep’ face down on the lawn in front of the party-host's college. (If the reader would please recall that the men that night were being entertained en masse at the devilish party, while I was listening to The Egg, then meeting with Benedict and so on). This classic member had a habit of crashing out on grass and, on at least one other occasion, was found in the nick of time and duly revived from a semi-comatose state that had caused his lips to turn a lurid shade of blue.

After perhaps 10 minutes I seemed to awaken from my own state of unconsciousness and started to wonder what should be done next. The cosmic connection seemed at first to have been lost, until a moment later, when I was distracted by the sound of voices. These were an indeterminate distance from my own location, but certainly originated from beyond the confines and protection of

the city walls. Distant enough to be almost indistinct, but loud enough at source for the noise to fully reach my ears, I heard the warlike chanting of unknown men, who were most probably students returning late from a pub or nightclub. These voices sounded nothing short of menacing to my sensitive ears, virtually demonic, and I stood to listen more carefully, ear cocked to one side. They definitely seemed to have a sinister message - no bizarre thing in itself, you will understand - because everyone and everything seemed and seems to have a message, sinister or otherwise. (Most messages of note are rather wonderful, in fact, and sublime rather than sinister, and whilst I acknowledge that a self-professed scientifically-minded reader might scoff at the scope and seeming audacity of my analogous interpretations, I have to say that it took no conscious effort to reach them, but simply followed the path of least resistance).

I went to the window to hear more clearly what they were saying. It came in the form of a rhythmic chanting that lulled me back into the trance-like state again. I thought they said "Go on Charlie, Go on Charlie, Go on Charlie" and I, being a genuine Charlie by nick-name, was struck forcibly as if by a challenge. I looked down and impulsively wondered that maybe I was being posed with a test in order that I might prove my commitment to God, by showing, for example, that I was willing to give up my life for him. I wondered if this would be my leap of faith. I considered my options carefully but remained undecided and uneasy about following the train of thought that advocated jumping at that moment. I doubted the nature of whatever had instigated the thought. I did not feel at all suicidal – the opposite in fact as I felt tremendously alive at that moment - but did (naively) give some credence to the notion that it might rationally be possible for a person in my situation to have been required to make a sacrifice.

I already felt in receipt of an otherwise hidden knowledge and secret power and so sure was I of my privilege, so confident that a truly divine force was operating through me, that I was really prepared to do anything in order to justify my position and show that I had forgone my own will for that of God. I quite forgot about the meaning of temptation and put one leg out of the window.

I didn't actually want to jump - common sense told me that any potentially suicidal action was intrinsically very wrong, but I thought that my circumstances were unique, and the idea of joining God had given me an unusual sense of purpose. Besides which was an unmistakable inner voice (though it affected me then as it does now, which is uneasily) which suggested that I might be saved from actual death by the same one who had given me such tremendous privileges in other

ways. The chanting had not stopped, it was quite hypnotic, but still I hesitated, toying with the idea.

At exactly the moment when I was about to make the decision I heard a deep voice beneath my window, that of the night porter, who was, at the critical point of the evening, in possession of a more solid conviction than was I. "Don't worry", he told me reassuringly, "They're only on the other side". He meant the other side of the wall, but to me, the other side was darkness.

This was a guardian angel in human form for that moment. His words cut through my stupor and I awoke in a flash from the unconscious state that I had been lulled into, my mind again devoid of all that was not lucid. I looked down at the angelic presence and felt a sudden and instantaneous charge of life, but also a peculiarly cold feeling, as the shock registered. I saw what had just taken place as an attempt at vile deception and that my powers of discernment had been seriously lacking. I answered the angel solemnly in the affirmative, as befitting his status, and he went on his way.

The spiritual state, as I understand it, is rational for the most part, seeing as emotions ultimately derive from hormones in the body and divine intelligence seems to function instinctively and intuitively. When one acts upon a spiritual sense it is as if upon the firmest sort of conviction, though indeed I have never known an ordinary belief to be so strong as that which is generated supernaturally through the presence of God. Will power brings about action and the will becomes action before it has been registered as thought.

The only way I ever remember 'feeling' when in that state is ecstatic, which is not an every-day human emotion. It is a hard state to describe because it is really very different to the usual way in which most people, myself included, operate on a daily basis, whereby the natural instincts and intuition, the will power, is harnessed to some extent by the bodily emotions and bounded rationalisation.

Having thought about the nearest equivalent of this conviction I have surmised that those extremely gifted individuals who are driven to become famous artists of some sort, especially musicians, might best understand the depth of confidence that I'm trying to describe. To fall in love also brings a similar surety, yet not one that is identical, for love between humans depends entirely on another as the object of devotion, whereas the love of God is a directly personal energy that exists within the subject and is irrefutable.

But following on with the story, somewhere inside, following my fortunate rescue from the point of no return, I must have been livid for having contemplated the

sacrifice of my life because of temptation from external forces. I stared up at the sky, heavy with low cloud, until a gap appeared in a flurry, exposing a single star, upon which I fixed my sights. The star, strangely, went out after a few seconds, and the chanting abruptly stopped at the forceful annihilation of corrupt influence. I closed the window and went to sit on the bed facing the chair, which was in front of the window. I felt that I had no choice but to adopt a position of restraint and lay across the bed, arms outstretched, just staring out into the darkness of the night.

At a certain moment, however, I felt able to move, and shifted out of my uncomfortable position as if I had been freed from an invisible bond and then instantly began to meditate upon a patch of light that fell onto the crimson-coloured upright back of the chair.

This light was cast by my desk-lamp over on the left-hand side of the room, positioned longitudinally midway between myself and the chair. I soon felt compelled to lie down fully onto my right side, as if there were a subtle but unmistakable pressure being exerted on the left side of my head, to which I acquiesced obediently. This pressure was comforting rather than disturbing and I was grateful for the intervention, as thinking for myself promised to be somewhat more hazardous than simple acceptance of divine will. As soon as I was horizontal, the vision began.

The position I was lying in, with my body stretched out to the right in such a way, ensured that I was seeing the reflection of light from a right-angle. This meant that I had to concentrate more deeply than an upright position would have necessitated, as my brain was required to compensate for not being able to see things face-on. Watching television from a similar angle would pose similar difficulties and I actually thought that I'd been required to adopt the sideways position just so that I would not be able to take precise mental notes on what transpired.

It is true that a very great mystery was revealed to me at this moment and even then I dearly hoped that I would remember it exactly in order that I might convey the extraordinary flash of insight to the rest of the world, the members of which I assumed had been dying to know the truth since the onset of time. I was utterly transfixed with awe for the immensely privileged view afforded by my position. First, the light took on the appearance of a crown with three upright elements, which I assumed were the visible symbols of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or even their manifestation. I was enthralled as the figures began to move in a surreal (because so unique) but very deliberate way, and marvelled at the extraordinary nature of my experience. As a mental projection it was quite astounding - as was

the weight of the revelation. I remember that at one stage there appeared to be only two parts on top as one moved over as if to kiss another that reclined by degrees, and I think that one of the elements may therefore have moved underneath at a point.

There was more than this, but it was indescribably complex, undefined by any prior knowledge or understanding, and I am unable to describe each specific detail of the mystery as it was unveiled to me. I suppose it is a hallmark of its mystery; recognisable yet incomprehensible. I very much regret that I can't remember more, for in the concept of the Trinity we have the heart of both spirituality and orthodox religions and it would surely have been of the greatest interest had I been able to describe it more fully.

The climax of the sequence was reached when the figures paused as if suspended and miraculously drew attention to their lucid transformation when the crown split perfectly into three separate circles, arranged in a pyramid shape with one on the top and the two beneath. This final arrangement, an instantly recognizable external form that had followed the vivid expression of inner meaning, caused me to feel enlightened yet devoid of thought-based knowledge, and I was suitably captivated for that certain instant.

The Writing on the Walls

There, in his walking towards the boat, it is already contained in germ – essentially revealing it – his whole work, temporal and eternal, ie, his sacrifice, his resurrection, and all that is implied in his promise: “Lo, I am with you always, until the end of the world:

Matthew xxviii, 20

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon, the middle of a beautiful summer’s day, when quite out of character – rather than walking out in the sunshine – I had decided to take a nap upon my bed indoors. As my body slipped down as if towards sleep I absentmindedly listened to the distant and disparate sounds of a lazy afternoon, which drifted both in through the open window and down from the living room, where John was watching television. At a certain point I recognised that I had fallen into a meditative state of almost total relaxation, but had managed to retain mental consciousness.

Avid adolescent reading of Carlos Castaneda, tales of the Happy Hunting Grounds, physical transformations, the hand of God, etc, had inspired me towards achieving the zen-like state of being and awareness for many years, precisely so that I could attempt an out of body experience without dying. For this reason I already had an idea of which barriers needed to be overcome. I had come close to my aim on other occasions and recognised certain signs as being my prelude to ‘astral projection’.

One of the signs I’d come to recognise over time as a herald of impending separation from my body, was a peculiar scenario regarding my right arm. In order to let the body sleep whilst the mind remains awake I find it essential to have a focus requiring no mental effort but which stimulates sufficient interest to distract me from other physical functions, such as: Blinking, twitching, scratching, snuggling, or any other dozy activities.

In this regard, ambient sound is often more conducive than silence, which tends to bring about complete relaxation to the point of sleep. An audible focus, on the other hand, allows the mind to drift, although the noise should not be so stimulating that it actually becomes arousing.

On several occasions prior to this one I had found that this drifting of the mind was often followed by a strangely vigorous movement, a 'waving of my arm', which seemed to behave quite independently of my body as a whole. Even stranger was the fact that I could never quite ascertain whether my arm was physically and actually moving, or it was my dream arm flapping anxiously for no good reason that I could fathom.

At such times I tended to wonder whether people would be worried if they could see me, as I realized that if I was physically moving I might have appeared to be having a fit. Maybe I was having a fit, but whatever the case might have been, it usually ended up with me just falling asleep anyway.

This time, however, I seized the moment with a bit more determination and instead of wondering what it was all about, I concentrated on the surreal action until I was able to control it. This took quite some effort: The rest of my body was still dormant but the arm seemed to have a life of its own, as if it were strong but struggling to grasp something. After around quarter of an hour I began to see that I might be able to use it as a kind of lever in order to climb out of my physical shell. With this in mind and with a great effort of will, I made a powerful swinging motion from my shoulder in an attempt to get out, and was able to direct the movement quite successfully. I was surprised, though, at the amount of resistance I felt, in that my dream or 'astral' body seemed to be attached to my physical self by a really thick and springy cord, rather like a bungee rope.

'Getting out' was actually more difficult than one would imagine. I had always assumed that it would be like serenely floating away, although I also had an idea that one could be 'sucked' out of the body forcibly by an external force.

This 'cord', or other form of attachment, was coiled so tightly that I had to build up a lot of momentum by swinging my arm until, eventually, I discerned that my dream self was rocking forwards and away from its usual place. By this time I was feeling a genuine sense of achievement and without further ado my astral body dragged itself out and clung to the end of the bed.

I paused to gather my thoughts, well aware that I could be sprung back into place by that massive cord at any second and that any kind of registered shock or doubt, however mild, would have had the same effect. I was pleased to be still in control, surprised in fact, as my powers of concentration were not usually so effective. Or so I thought.

I took a few moments to accustom myself to the new situation and the pull of the cord loosened as I relaxed. I obeyed my first impulse without question, and this

was to go and tell John what was happening. (To have a thought or impulse when in that state leads to its automatic enactment, as there are not the usual barriers to action that we find on the material plane. The ideas of the pure will are transformed into action without restraint and I remember very vividly the way things seemed).

The location of my visual perspective during this daytrip was at the usual level for me height-wise but my actual sight was 'tunnelled', by which I mean that it was as if I had one eye rather than two, while my peripheral vision was restricted. It was a bit like looking through a telescope, but in reverse, as things seemed a bit smaller, or more distant than usual; less substantial perhaps, or reflections of themselves.

I buoyantly moved towards the stairs, from the bottom of which I could see John lying oblivious on the sofa, watching sport in his blue dressing gown. He seemed further away than he would have done if I had been there in body rather than soul. I felt like I had achieved quite a success and was rather elated. I wanted to convey this to John so he could witness what had happened. I attempted to call his name several times before suddenly realizing that I wasn't actually making a sound, even though the effect of the name forming in my mind was the same to me as if I were speaking out loud.

At that point it also occurred to me that visiting another person in spirit might not be a wise enterprise, as it might be seen as an invasion of their privacy. Rather than risk an unpleasant surprise for anyone on my first outing, I turned back towards the bedroom.

A braver or less cautious person than I would probably have ventured much further, for better or worse. Some people would probably make it into outer space without too much worry but I am rather timid, and I was worried about what might happen to my body if I left it unmonitored for too long.

The door of my room was closed. It did not occur to me to question how I'd walked through it because my attention was drawn to a piece of writing pinned near to the top of it. I had somehow entered another dimension and, as I raised my hands to take hold of the script, I noticed that they looked curiously unlike my physical hands. I examined them briefly, remembering all the time that to see one's hands whilst in a dream-like state is indicative of consciousness and self-control within that state. I started to read the verse.

It was clear from the start that the work was more brilliant than any other I had encountered and as the story unfolded I drank it in like nectar, the most sublime poem that had ever been written. I tried to commit the piece to memory but so

perfect was the arrangement of words that my mind could barely comprehend their beauty, let alone learn them completely. Only one word would I remember, and this stood out as clearly as the others eluded me:

Rainbow

This is the only thing that I remembered for sure from what I read, that an early or integral part of it was of a rainbow, sign of God's covenant with the Earth. But if the words were veiled, the meaning of the writing was evident at once.

I held in my hands the most heart-breaking love story that had ever been written by one (a male) for the other, at one and the same time human and divine, natural and supernatural. The character of the author was laid bare by the words but the object of his love seemed to have been absent from his existence for an eternity, or no longer present, except as a memory or product of the imagination. A tale of lost or unrequited love.

In this tale I beheld the power of love, as if tears that sprang from a broken heart had fallen from the eyes of the beholder and transformed themselves directly into words on a page. This was a passion so great that I wonder how I even bore witness to the fruit of its longing, beauty and sorrow combined with infinity and sown as a microcosm of nature.

So deep was this love that from the pain had been born the work of creation, which encompassed the whole of nature and found fragile first expression in the rainbow, wherein may be seen the depth of love as a blend of enlightenment and tears.

As I read on, enthralled and governed by the power of these words, they were seamlessly transformed into a pictorial continuation of the scene being described. I was completely taken up with what I saw, which seemed to satisfy every yearning for understanding within myself, even though the complete meaning was beyond my realm of knowledge.

I found myself in the outer limit of deep space, truly the middle of nowhere, suspended by the unseen force that was author of the magical words I had just been reading. Below me I saw planets, but mostly was aware of simply the infinitude of space – the infinity he had to cross in order to reach her. Where had she gone and why – was she lost, had she run, did she die – what terrible catastrophe had befallen them to rend asunder the love that created the universe. The whole of this space was the filled with the hymn of God to his lost love and my gaze was fixed on this impossible expanse of nothing, the overwhelming sorrow that was wholly without end; how I arrived there I shall never know.

When I became conscious of his mission – his determination against all odds to find her – the scene at once changed and I found my self upon the ground, but not within my room. I saw green fields appearing in front of me as if I were standing at the edge of a botanic kingdom. At the centre of this world was the largest and most wonderful tree I had ever seen. Could this have been the tree of life, I wondered, or the tree of knowledge of good and evil, perhaps?

I saw no more through that window and moved through the door into my room. It was then that I saw the writing on the walls. I had never before been given cause to think about the writing on the walls until this time.

The room was its usual shape with all the regular features firmly in place, including my own empty body on the bed, wearing a light blue sweatshirt. I saw my body just out of the corner of my eye and did not study it too closely lest I became frightened by the sight of myself. In any case, the bedroom walls presented me with something far more fascinating than my sleeping self ever could.

I might have been anywhere at any time as I watched the multi-coloured words began to form and multiply, so rapidly that in an instant it seemed that every surface was covered. I discerned again the rainbow, literally because of the myriad colours displayed in the writing. The subject was again one of love and love's longing for paradise. The only word, in fact, was Love, repeated over and again on every plane.

*LOVE, LOVE,
LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE,
LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE,*

All of history contains tragedy in proportion to joy. I was overwhelmed and found myself lying on the bed in the position I had left my body in. I turned my head to look at the mirror hanging over the radiator, which had somehow transformed itself into a window, through which I could see into another window in another house.

I was fully aware that this change in my usual surroundings had taken place and, whilst unafraid, I was perplexed. I saw two middle-aged women who appeared to be washing clothes, both wearing dark dresses and with dark hair tied up into top-knots, like widows. They were looking in through my window at the place where I lay, talking about somebody who seemed to be me but was actually this man.

They spoke of this man who lay (or had lain) on the bed in the room, and discussed his sadness to themselves as if he were dead. I realised that my astral projection, vision, dream, whatever it might have been, was losing coherence, and I regained ordinary consciousness a second later.

*In her dreams the queen of starlight
Journeyed time to square the circle.
Sang to life the King at twilight,
Crossed abyssal seas at midnight,
Made of ice and fire a vision,
won through work a guide and mission
Deep within the mountain fissure,
Realm of angels, saints and shamans.*

Mouth of the Cave

Sleep did not come easily. I was still preoccupied with recent events and was no less heartbroken than I had been for years. As almost always happened, the pain of this heartbreak was my first companion upon waking in the morning, and on this occasion it was so bad that it woke me in the early hours.

Exhausted by the ongoing insomnia stemming from this emotional catastrophe I let myself slip back into a fretful doze and, without warning, found myself in a vivid astral state of second sight heading swiftly towards the mouth of a very black cave. Twice in the past (see Sealed Letter to Mr Bishop) I had been in astral/etheric situations at the mouth of dark caves, albeit ones I had sought out. I recalled in this moment that on both those occasions I was warned very strongly to not cross the threshold of the caves into the blackness, which I was given to understand was beyond the barrier of death. This having been strongly impressed upon me, the fact I was speeding towards the entrance of another black cave set alarm bells ringing and before I passed the point of no return I turned right around and headed in the other direction.

Feeling rather pleased that I'd remembered this warning in the nick of time and feeling no curiosity at all, I assumed that was the end of it, but was startled yet again by the sudden appearance out of nowhere of an old and ragged-looking man, who seemed to my hapless self like a sort of a tramp.

The man was small to medium height with a bald round head on top but long and straggly white hair coming from the sides. He was wearing off-white rag like clothes consisting of some material that went down to his knees and was crossed over on his left shoulder. He had a hard presence of enormous clarity and strength and did not seem especially friendly towards me, but acted as if I was not there. I am easily spooked and at first wanted to run in fear as I did not much like the look of him. However, I told myself I must have courage and that a good Christian person does not shun beggars. Why I assumed he was a beggar I do not know. Resolved to this duty it then occurred to me that should introduce the man to Christ Jesus, upon whom I had been meditating for much of the previous day via the Jesus prayer.

None of this struck me as being in any way strange, even though by this point the penny had dropped that the 'beggar' had emerged from the cave, perhaps because I had called for him without realising it. I noticed then that he was looking

expectantly to a place behind me and no sooner did this occur to me than Jesus himself appeared from that direction and walked right up to the man. His tremendous warmth and respect for this individual were striking as he took the 'beggar's hand in his own and continued to clasp it as they exchanged words I neither heard nor understood. Indeed, it seemed they already knew each other, either by true familiarity or reputation alone. I was surprised that the older man did not fall at Jesus' feet as you might reasonably expect anyone to. Both the men ignored me completely, or at any rate did not look at me directly.

I wondered what should be done next as I had no clue whatsoever what was happening, but then it occurred to me that I could wash the 'beggar's feet as that would be a Christian way to behave (I will admit that I did not particularly want to do this, I just felt I should be a 'good girl', if you understand). Somehow I found myself with a round brass basin of water pouring over the man's feet, all the while wondering if they were dirty and he smelled bad, unfortunate though this might sound.

After I stood up I thought, well maybe I'll say the Jesus prayer, seeing as I've been doing that so much and I really don't know how else to behave right now. I began to do just this without any sense of it being strange or inappropriate given that Jesus Himself was still apparently nearby, though not in my line of sight by this point in time. In fact the feet of the 'beggar' and my golden-brass coloured bowl were the last things I saw in this state.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us....'

But before I could finish the prayer with the familiar word 'sinners', something happened that I have never experienced. I was cut off as if by a razor-sharp knife after 'us' by a powerful flash of light (not in the bedroom, this was interior) which also made an equally forceful cracking/buzzing sound as if it an electrical force of great voltage. This marked the end of the vision.

I spent some time on Thursday and also Friday wondering who this man could be - a hermit from a cave, maybe a saint, who might have greeted Jesus Christ almost on equal terms. I could not imagine, although I kept on thinking of it. Later in the morning I had to take a long train ride to the north of England to spend some time with my parents.

I was listening to music and could not help but dwell on two things - one being the source of emotional pain and sorrow I mentioned, although I tried not to get too

down about this and I just let myself feel. I also thought long and hard about the 'beggar' who had emerged from the cave of death. I decided it would be impossible to figure out the identity, which possibly you may have guessed easily from this story, but then a clear voice came into my head:

'It was John the Baptist'

It appeared out of the blue as a statement of fact and I thought oh my gosh, although I was still surprised by his appearance and also reproved myself for not feeling more for him at the time, or for feeling he was a tramp. A few moments later I also remembered a brief discourse I'd had with myself the night before. Often people are asked - if you could choose any three people to have dinner with, who would it be? I had only ever thought of one and that was Jesus Christ, and it always amazes me when people don't mention his name as one of their ideal dinner guests. However on this occasion I came up with three.

"I want to meet Jesus, Mary Magdalene and John the Baptist'....

Well, two out of three ain't bad as the saying goes!

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Part 5

Quintet

Karma at Mysteries

Past Life Addendum

The Lover

Beyond the Threshold

Spheres of Life Prayer

Karma at Mysteries

...ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it

Ecclesiastes 12.1 – 6

The setting midsummer sun found the Witness in a distinctly prayerful posture, shrouded with incense and calling Earth to witness in return. Venus had emerged, triumphant as a diamond on her band of gold, heralding the rising moon and guided to the altar by a vast and dominant Jupiter. Pondering this crystal-clear sky, she saw how the quintessential force of the evening star was thrown into relief by the glowing pharos of Mars, beckoning his paramour as he bequeathed to her the dark and endless night. The emperor of war was in a state of surrender at the temple of beauty.

She wondered about the effects of Mars' conjunction with Venus and Mercury, still deflecting onto captivated Earth the magnified force of a sublime alchemical wedding. This compelling planetary event was irresistibly conspiring with the precession of the equinoxes to create the most potent cosmic conditions that had ever been witnessed from Earth; at least since the Star of the Magi had heralded the turning point of history.

Or so it seemed.

How could such a sign be ignored? thought the Watcher. The answer was that it could not! That the divine plan might remain unfulfilled was inconceivable, but how, precisely, it would manifest was to remain the Mother of all Mysteries.

As she slept that night the pages of Pros Theon were opened onto the penultimate section, The Days of Transformation, but only one word of the eternal wisdom could be retained from the nocturnal reading and brought to light the following morning, like an endless, inviolable promise.

Rainbow

The book was a mystery that nobody identifiable had complete or lasting knowledge of, that could not be spoken about to anyone freely, repeated precisely, not seen, nor heard. It was for the spirit-eye of the Witnesses, known only to themselves, the mystery of mysteries, the Book of Life that could only be ingested in the stillness of the night, that was sweet in the mouth and bitter to the core. Spoke the scribe: “The sacred books of the Immortals, in whose pages my hand has recorded the remedies by which incorruptibility is conferred, remain for ever beyond the reach of destruction and of decay, invisible and concealed from all who frequent these regions, until the day shall come in which the ancient heaven shall bring forth instruments worthy of you, whom the Creator shall call souls”. Having pronounced upon his books this invocation, he wrapped them in their coverings, returned into the sphere which belonged to him, and all remained hidden for a sufficient space⁵⁷

I gave her a song of the Light, so that from now on the rulers of the æons could not prevail against her

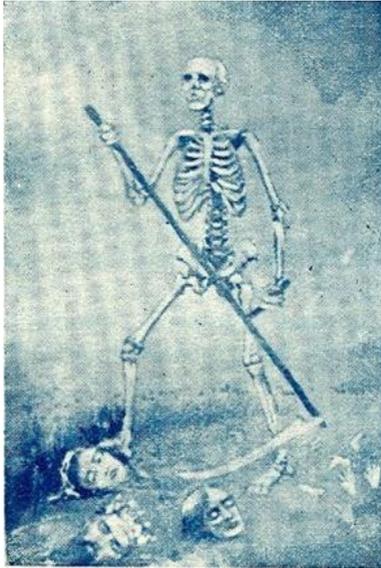
Pistis Sophia—

⁵⁷ Kore Kosmou

TWELVE ARE THE LINES OF THE TWELVE-LETTERED NAME;
THERE IT IS WRITTEN THE MYSTERY OF SECRETS.
DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE WORDS YOU ARE READING,
DREAMS HAVE COME TRUE, THEY ARISE FROM THE CRUCIBLE.
MAGICAL MOMENTS REFLECT SUN AND MOONLIGHT,
PLANETS ARE SINGING, ENCIRCLED BY STAR SIGNS.

IN RESOLUTION THE FINAL ANTINOMY,
LAST LIFE ON EARTH AS AN HISTORIC SIMILE.
ENDLESS LOVE WOKEN, THE KEY TO ETERNITY,
RAINBOW DOOR OPENS A GOLDEN INFINITY.
HONOUR WITH VALOUR; A KNIGHTHOOD ENDEAVOUR.
WORLD NEVER ENDING; YOU ARE BEAUTY FOREVER

Past Life Addendum



“Dawn is the friend of the muses” and similar popular proverbs, such as “the morning hour has gold in its mouth” or “morning is wiser than the evening”, relate to the benefits of vertical memory from which one benefits in the morning, after the return of consciousness from the plane of “natural ecstasy” or sleep.

MotT, Letter XIII, Death

Wasn't it typical that I hadn't managed to avoid it but had walked right into it just as night fell, the price I paid for succumbing to distraction was imminent danger, which had come, as always, through a gap in concentration. I never wanted to go back in there – once was more than enough – and I needed to leave in the nick of time in order to avoid a second difficult incarceration.

With a supreme effort of will, the three of us combined took to ultimate flight at the precise moment that the tendrils of night whispered at us to enter the realm of soul-stealing witches and other marauding terrors of darkness. Thank heavens we managed to escape - drowning in lost cities was one thing, but indeterminate periods of imprisonment by mindless entities was quite another and I had no wish to re-enter the domain of dark fairy-tales.

As one we flew, the chill down our spine startling wings into stunning action. The cackles of hollow laughter trailed in our wake as with all our hearts we wished and hoped and prayed to be there in the land of our forbearers, the Elysium fields of classical repose, where the bright sunlit day is endless as the pages of history, the only destination befitting of pure untroubled reason - my right.

Now I know that we travelled for a very long time indeed, back into time from the future projection of living energy. We did not, however, arrive back at the one precise time from which we had departed (though we could hardly have expected to do such a thing) and when we arrived back in the city it was clearly in the midst of all eras and everyone was there.

So, all were present, and movement could be free without fear of attracting attention, although the teeming influx of people, not to mention an inordinate amount of traffic, brought new hazards for wee travellers such as ourselves.

The frenetic activity of the present age jarred slightly with the multiple layers of history and it was generally quite confusing whenever our paths crossed with that of someone we actually knew. My boyfriend, for example, bumped into me several times and seemed always to be in the middle of either going to work (or otherwise driving off in his car somewhere) or sorting out a place for us to live. Once or twice he spoke to me but I was convinced he didn't know where we really were.

My parents, meanwhile, were in the midst of some extraordinarily active site-seeing when I saw them, and hardly spoke to me at all, except for a hint that my mother gave me whereby she directed me to follow a crowd of highly motivated teenaged tourists who evidently knew where they were going and would do well at school..

I had no option but to follow her suggestion and trailed after the other kids along the open-air corridors – or cloisters, perhaps – of a large, cool structure with vaulted marble ceilings, the origin and age of which I failed to determine. As I turned left along the last corner and saw the downward steps into the great open-plan court I finally realized where we were all going. Just ahead, over on my right, was the top portion of the Octagonal Byzantine Basilica, which I had not seen since going to Rome at my coming of age, marvellous in itself, but not the main site my mother had thought I should see. I thought for a moment about my father and wondered how he was coping with all of this – I assumed he would have preferred to be at home in the garden but he had evidently psyched himself up for a mammoth trip: Good for him, he had managed to catch a glimpse of what everyone had come to see.

Down some more steps and across the soft marshy area where a pack of students had managed to find space for a picnic, was the beginning of the previously undiscovered Hellenic structure, clearly either in the advanced stages of a prodigious restoration or, quite simply, virtually intact since the day it had first been built. I was truly amazed, for surely these were some of the most historically important remains of a bygone age ever to have been discovered. I could hardly believe my eyes as I looked at the wooden buildings held carefully together by pegs and a sort of mortar, and wondered what it could have been.

After a sound examination of this superb archaeological specimen my academic historical interest was at last aroused, and I was then determined to join the greatest of the college buildings, my fear having subsided sufficiently for me to at least enter. With no trouble at all beyond that previously described I walked through the gates and went straight into the heart of the university matter, somehow more at one with reason and consciousness – no doubt because I would need to have a few more wits about me in order to survive in my chosen academic field. My chosen academic field was the one I knew practically the least about, having ditched it in school through lack of interest and resumed it purely on a whim, so I saw my time as an opportunity to fill in a few gaps in my education. I had no prior knowledge of the meaning of history although I did have some skill at looking into the past. As I wandered awe-struck through the college environment, which at close quarters was literally stunning, my attention was so utterly captivated by what I saw that I could not say whether I got into the actual subject or did nothing but my own thing. The sky was blue, picked out with one or two wispy clouds, but somewhere I perceived an unmistakable sound, maybe

thunder, possibly the vibrations of battle, or something like the roar of a vast waterfall.

Or is it the sound of the electric universe?

The field had been built upon and around with a series of turret-shaped, fortress-type buildings, which appeared fascinating and invited one to enter with the proviso that they might prove to be either castles or follies, depending on the exact choice of structure or method of entry. The first ones I entered seemed to be staircases into the sky, the windows of which afforded me useful views over a greater expanse of the area than had been visible from the ground.

I looked around at the topiary and winding walls, seeking without knowing what I should find, but was shortly distracted by a couple of characters from an earlier world walking purposefully across the grass. Immediately I saw others, and everyone seemed to be going in a similar direction whilst also appearing to be totally independent within themselves. I felt excited at the prospect of meeting former allies and rushed down the steps to greet my erstwhile comrades, but when I reached the pair, they passed me by without even a word as if I were invisible. I was a bit sad and wondered what to do. I decided to follow the crowd for a while, seeing as they all seemed to know where they were going. I entered the great hall with some trepidation, for the half-light, the unbalanced male presence and the murmurings of severity made me quake in my boots. I had truly forgotten that they were golden and thanks to their cunning disguise nobody there would have been likely to spot my prodigious gift.

I heard a whisper on my left and saw them beckoning me to follow into the secret entrance to the upper reaches of the hall. Beauty, it seems, brought its own form of recognition, but I did not see that, and simply did not hesitate to follow the promise, to take share of the privileged information, as we climbed the narrow wooden steps between the paneled walls into the vaults of the ceiling. Each of us held our own light within the folds of our gowns, walking carefully, half crazy with suspense and excitement at the forbidden nature of our discovery, daring only to speak in whispers and wordless communication. At a certain stage we reached our viewing point.

The hall was below and behind us on the South side, but the narrow slits in the ceiling faced into the inner sanctum of the place of worship, lit with candles, and filled with the tenor of a permanent choir, now hushed in the secrecy of some religious practice. I drew my breath sharply – this was something I had never seen before, and recognised for the first time that I may have been afraid. I returned to

the open fields with some haste, unwilling to make an interpretation of my discovery at its momentous inception.

I returned to the turret-filled scene, which had now fully taken on the aura of an impending battle - the silent thunderous roar being now almost deafening – so I scurried into the first entrance I came across and dashed up the stairs in what would have been unseemly haste if an invading army had not been hot on my heels. Such was my effort to get up the steep stone stairs that I paid no heed to the interior of the tower and simply charged headlong through the hatch in the ceiling as soon as I reached it. No sooner had I arrived in the oblong, oak-beamed room, when the single hatch was battened down by an almost insane, quite elderly man, dressed in full battle regalia: chain mail from head to toe, a strikingly impressive red and gold cloth coat of arms, heavy boots, gauntlets and a massive ring on the fourth finger of his right hand.

He might have been a ghost, but he obviously felt like a man of substance.

“SWORDS, SWORDS, HURRY YOU BLOODY FOOL, WEAPONS, I’M FIGHTING, THEY’RE HERE, THEY’VE ARRIVED!!!!”, he roared with wild impatience. Ghost or no ghost, I was galvanized into instant action by the sheer urgency and authority of his voice, even if I was startled by the knowledge that I had somehow become the last remaining brother in arms of a besieged Medieval Lord. He looked like a crusader. What a situation - I didn’t even know if I was on the right side or not, in fact, I rather thought I should have been part of the invasion, seeing as I had come the same way as they had. Perhaps, though, I had just been keeping watch without realizing it.

My flurry of conflicting thoughts did not, however, interrupt the course of my actions, which had caused me to pelt headlong into the armoury situated at the other side of the room from the entrance hatch. How I had known it was there was unclear – I suppose that the force of the command had propelled me successfully in the right direction – and it was with a certain sense of blazing triumph that I picked out the two swords. The larger of the two – doubled-edged, heavy, bejeweled and glittering – I grabbed for my Lord, and on second thoughts decided to bring the smaller one along as well, although it did not occur to me that I would use it myself. I thought I could give them both to him.

I dashed back into the main room (entirely devoid of furniture, although there were several large windows and the walls were draped with thick red and gold tapestry) where the commotion at the hatch was reaching crisis point. At the precise moment that the bolts on the hatch broke apart, and the arms of invaders groped up

into our territory, I flung the two swords in the direction of the mad knight. He caught them with a terrifying bellow and with a manic cry of “BEHEAD THEM, OFF WITH THEIR HEADS”, single-handedly decapitated an unknown number of enemy troops. What happened next is something of a blur and it is unclear how long he managed to hold them off for. This appeared to be the last stand of my randomly chosen citadel.

I’d had enough by now. The pages of relatively modern history were appearing to me in completely random violent chaos and my attention wandered back to the refined destination to which I now had both the conscious will and reason to return. I floated without realizing across the hazardous pitch without once looking down, my concentration fully devoted to the reappearance of that lovely field. Fences, trees, walls, hedges, ditches, hills, rivers, plains, no natural barrier could prevent the fulfillment of this journey to the initial stage of completion.

The air was fresh and warm as I landed on the level field of Elysium, a vastly panoramic plain, almost the size of the whole world, that did not however seem too large and which was surrounded by low banks, against which the resting philosophers reclined with all the certainty of being; where they belonged. I was captured effortlessly, as soon as I arrived I deeply wanted to stay, although I could not pin-point exactly what it was about this scenic arena that arrested my ambitions for the after-life with such poignancy. On further reflection, it may have become clear that this was where many of my brilliant friends from past life would pass out their endless days. I loved them too much and, with the total abandon that I had so far taken pains to avoid, I leapt into their midst with blinding passion, disrupting, slightly, the equilibrium of their cool and logical repose.

The personification of intellect, reason at my right, rushed into the air with a naked cry that far exceeded her capacity to reassemble in any shape or form. She reached the wisps of cloud and dissolved into the air, becoming one with that Greek cosmos of her first understanding. When she returned to the field it was in spirit with the others and she no longer recognized me for what I had been, nor I her. We both were accepted without undue ceremony, but a recognizable degree of civility that I was glad to notice. My ultimate exit from this arena would not be through their compulsion, but because of the higher power that would not cease to draw me.

Over the course of eternity I grew close to other spirits in Elysium, even very friendly with some, and they occasionally watched the Eastern skies on my behalf, ready to warn of any impending change in the sacred season. In the back of my

mind was always the knowledge that one day I would leave, but then I did not understand that it was to go further, and only felt impossible sorrow at the thought of departure from those that I adored, lest they should leave me behind, or I them. The place itself was theirs but I wished it could be mine and dreaded whatever might come after it.

When the day came I first could not refrain from turning away in denial for I was loathe to travel alone once more having found this place of camaraderie and mutual understanding. I extended the invitation for any who wished to join me in the next stage, but at that moment, I was unaware precisely of who would come and in fact expected no-one to go further at my behest: Time would reveal their faces to me once again. The only thing that I knew with certainty was that reason would be left behind – she had found her place – and no longer bore allegiance to the second or third part of myself, which now faced a journey without the lovely lady, whose white robes matched perfectly the classical requirements of that level. When we went, we flew away, consciousness clinging to the naked soul, guided by the feminine aspects of a greater psyche, who explained in voiceless whispers that the ordeals we faced were only impressions of past lives, and that we would remember no pain. They swore that I would not remember too much, but that I had to relive the experiences in order to be fully reborn and enter the second stages of determined existence, demonstrably undaunted by past mistakes. We traveled under cover of the night, across the roof-tops of villas and swimming pools, in what I understood to be a wealthy privileged area of France. I wondered which one was mine.

Before I had a chance to wonder long I was staggering around the deserted poolside of one of the larger villas, situated high on a hill overlooking the city, whose lights were twinkling innocently in a northerly direction from where I stood. It seemed to be an hour or so after midnight and despite my disoriented, semi-conscious state, I was aware that the detritus of a finished party was littering what should have been a pristine garden area.

I could not remember who I was or what I had been doing, or why I had decided to take all those pills in the first place; the bottle was lying by the side of the pool, half of its contents strewn wildly around. I thought it would be best to just get it over and done with and drown myself in the pool by flopping into it sideways – or maybe I just fell, nothing was clear anymore. I sank immediately. Sitting there at the bottom of the deep end, looking up at the deck chairs, tables and parasols

through the soft ripples of my water, I had a moment of clarity and decided I didn't want to die after all.

I struggled against the heaviness, fighting to get to the surface, which seemed to be miles away at that time. I seriously doubted my ability to get out, all the while losing consciousness, hoping I wasn't drowning, wishing I hadn't been so stupid, wondering why I'd thought everything was so bad. With the considerable remains of an effort of will I somehow dragged myself out of the pool and onto the ceramic tiling, but the relief of my escape was immediately cut in the throat by the sure knowledge that I was about to die of an overdose.

I cursed my stupidity again as I felt my inner organs give up the fight and expel the contents of my dying body onto the ground. This was desperate, my eyes started to roll into my head and my last sensations were of welling tears and a voice whispering softly in the vicinity of my upper brain: "Don't worry, you won't remember any of this – no pain": Then nothing – really nothing.

So that was that one – not very nice, I'm sure everyone will agree. It is hard to say whether the next was better or worse – they were all the same in the very end.

Annihilation

I collected my small portion of plain food and went to sit with the others, who at that moment were eating in sombre silence whilst seated at long trestle tables in the open-air canteen. The environment was not by any means unpleasant and I wondered why everybody seemed so glum and grey.

Our dining area was in the middle of quite a stunning panorama – long, gently rolling fields that stretched for miles to the East and West, low hills to the North and a lightly forested region some distance South. It was a clear sunny day that felt like Spring and I sniffed the air expectantly.

I ate quietly for some moments, thinking nothing in particular, when I heard a faint but unmistakable humming sound emanating from beyond the Northern hills. As the noise grew loud enough for them to perceive, my dining companions leapt from their seats and began running wildly in all directions, evidently looking for places to hide, for many of them took refuge under the tables, in the absence of any other form of shelter. This was desperate too and I wondered what on Earth was going on. Looking up into the sky, things suddenly became clearer – approaching like poisonous fly was what looked to be a World War II aircraft, which clearly intended to drop a bomb somewhere. How I knew this, I do not know, but I seemed to have an intrinsic understanding of the situation.

I looked around in hopeless dismay, wondering what we were supposed to do – we were so exposed we wouldn't stand a chance if the pilot picked us out for destruction. I looked up again, willing him to go away, and by some extraordinary stroke of luck, the plane passed right over our heads in the direction of the forest and disappeared from both view and audible location. For the first time I heard voices of hopeful animation from the others, as they came out from their hiding places in evident relief. Phew, close shave that one.

But then, to our helpless terror, we heard the noise once again, this time bearing down with renewed vigour from the Southern forests that may have been our only chance of survival – had we only the time to reach them. As the plane passed by from the other side at lightening speed, I looked up just in time to see and actual bomb dropping out of the sky, literally, right above my head.

Nothing more or less than a split second later I was engulfed by a terrible and blinding white light and white heat, and the only things I could see around me were a few melting shadows of other people, flailing round as if in slow motion. The horror was totally unbearable – with dreadful livid certainty I felt the skin

melt from my body and heard the shriek of my dying body as if it were already metres away from where I actually stood.

No more was possible, I staggered blindly once again, finding no plausible direction in which to turn, and just as the end drew near I heard the voice whispering once again: “Do not be afraid, you will not remember this, you will not remember this pain, this pain is flesh”.

Small mercy, but still I was grateful for this pure voice of hope, slender as a feather in the wind, strong as the wings of a dove, obliterating all sensation, annihilating my last grip on mortality.

All things were equal and I was in the realm of silent contemplation, my will annihilated by the trials of existence. Nothing was heavy. As I drifted towards the vacant domains I dropped the weight of matter in careful proportions. Nothing mattered, I was no thing but pure self and the journey was the destination; here I would give up my consciousness and leave it bending in the wind, an atom of universal energy, one small petal from the lotus-flower of eternity.

Live in simple faith...
Just as this
Trusting Cherry
Flowers, fades and falls

Issa

The Lover

*Face to face and silver silence
Fills the spaces left between us.
In the mind our eyes will wander,
See therein love's sweetest pleasure.
Nerves are bad – my tongue is frozen –
Still my heart is speaking volumes.
In our veins the blood grows warmer;
By degrees the sun gets nearer.
How can I make real what's happened
There between us, in the dream world -
Will we find a hidden moment
Just to slip within the ocean?
Know the truth– there's no denying -
When I'm with you all is fading
To a pale, unfocused shadow,
Of itself, while you are shining
Like a star.
But I must hide this
Thrill I feel
When you are beside me.
When we meet I'll give you kisses,
Brush each cheek in swift succession.
As my scent becomes your aura,
Both your arms could pull me closer.
Charismatic Rays might blind me,
Play a score upon my heartbeat.
Hold me tight – I'll melt in stages -
Sink into the sea of changes.
Now you know the slightest trigger
Might unleash a storm within me,
Bring us into new dimensions.
When we kissed I learned you simply
Make me whole.
Now I must wonder,*

*How can this be put asunder?
Maybe when the days have lengthened,
Reached a point – mid-summer’s evening –
We shall find ourselves reflected,
There – upon the bridge of twilight -
In the waters deep and tranquil,
Streams that mingle, once divided.
While I watch you speak my eyes fall
Down onto your mouth, as always;
Search your face and try to listen,
Try to stop myself from losing
All control.
I long to kiss you.
Both my lips are wet from wanting
You.*

*You feel the nervous tension
And it makes you want to draw me near -
Upon your knee, quite slowly -
Smile and laugh to soothe the tempest.
Throw your arm around my centre,
Cast a whisper in my shell-like ear,
And see the stars in my eyes;
See the way you rock me, world-wise.
Feel the way my thighs, relaxing,
Curve around your hips like liquid.
Then my arms uncoil, like vine leaves
Wind across your chest and shoulders.
As we breathe you feel me quiver -
Shake inside and out, get shivers -
Hairs on end are poised for action,
Secrets of this wild attraction
Are revealed.
At last you see me.
Now you know the love flies freely.
No more ghosts -our worlds, dissembled -
Merge as one while we just tremble.*

Beyond the Threshold

The heavens shall roar with a noise of roaring, and those who dwell in dust, as well as those who sail the seas, shall be appalled by the roaring of the waters

The Dead Sea Scrolls, Hymns and Poems

It happened at night. I had had experiences before (many people have) whereby I found it an immense struggle to avoid sleep; not as in feeling incredibly drowsy or finding it hard to get up in the morning, but rather a physical sucking out of the will into unconsciousness.

The sensation was akin to being drawn into a vacuum at great speed – some sort of black hole - and of being mentally conscious but incapable of speech or movement. This is a kind of forced out of body experience and I always find the sensation incredibly disturbing on the rare occasions that it happens. It occurred quite frequently when I was a teenager, but I always managed to wake myself up properly with some concerted effort. On this occasion, however, I did not awaken in the usual way, but was drawn instead to the precise location of my deepest fears. I felt something to be amiss as soon as I lay down to sleep, for after a lifetime of haunting I was attuned - and therefore vulnerable – to the force of fear that comes only in an absence of light. I am usually an easily roused sleeper and fall into restless insomnia at the first sign of stress. On this occasion, however, I found myself instantly dragged into an unconsciousness that took me entirely by surprise. Perhaps I should now state that it was an otherwise ordinary night and I had taken no drugs, not even cannabis, or had any alcoholic drinks. I was actually quite alert considering it was supposed to be bed-time.

Although I was taken unawares by the immense strength of the force I struggled free quite quickly at first, opened my eyes, and looked round the room in anxiety; I felt myself to be at the start of something very bad.

Over the next 15 minutes or so I battled with whatever it was that tried to drag me into helpless unconsciousness, but each time I managed to resist the moments of clarity became shorter and less distinct. My will power seemed to be drained away by the sheer malevolence that confronted me.

I was aware of the time because in an effort to control what was happening I would tip my head backwards over the edge of the futon bed in order to check the digital clock of our video-recorder, and thus maintain my sense of reality. In desperation I tried to attract the attention of the man sleeping beside me, for in the moments when I was awake I was completely conscious and in a state of panic. I was also virtually paralysed because my body was unconscious. It was with a dreadful sense of betrayal and ever approaching terror that I realised he was simply not going to wake up and help me.

It was at about 1.30am when I became horribly aware of the actual nature of the attack. Without warning I lost the fragile grip on my inner self as a dreadful surge of dark power suddenly tore me - fully conscious - from the protection of my earthly body and into a top corner of the bedroom. The only positive aspect of the situation was that the turn of events was so shocking that my own spirit was roused and forced to react as will. But I may as well have been a feather in a storm and my only thought was of survival.

I was gripped by fear - actually it was horror, at the fear being present - but it was my confusion and disorientation that posed the greatest difficulties for my self-preservation. The opposing energy had come in the form of a tremendous wind. This had literally blown me from my mortal shell, which thus lay dormant on the bed.

The wind was the strength of a tornado and produced a deafening roar though I heard nothing; I knew the noise. As I have said previously, the senses of the spirit are not as they are on the material plane and the story of trying to speak in this wind may remind you of the description I made of silently 'calling' the names of my girlfriends, or of trying in vain to shout the name of Peter while I was having my out of body experience.

The wind was so strong that I was at first incapable of moving from the corner spot I had been shoved into, but with a monumental act of will which came from goodness knows where, I summoned the strength to return to my body.

When I awoke in shock it was to a comprehension of the origin of fear that I had never before experienced, even in my wildest dreams. I was helpless at the centre of this battle for my soul. My consciousness lasted only a second or two, long enough for me to croak out for help to my sleeping partner, but it was more than difficult to speak and he remained sleeping.

An instant later I was buffeted again into the top corner of the room but this time things were even worse, because rather than being there alone I seemed to have

brought out with me the dream-body of he who I had asked for help. To my added horror he was still fast asleep, even in that state. I was appalled as I looked at him because even then his eyes were closed to my fear.

At that moment I vowed that I would leave him forever and his presence slipped back from whence it came. I was alone again.

The room looked physically the same as it had always done, although there were obvious and major discrepancies that made it appear very differently; one of these was the awful howling gale which tore through without so much as ruffling the curtains, but multiplying the overall horror – how it got worse is a terrible thing – were the rivers of blood that had started to pour down the walls on 3 sides. My only thought by this time was to escape and I somehow directed myself towards the door.

It was a studio flat and the bedroom door opened directly onto a small area with the bathroom on one side and the front door at right angles to it. It was easy enough for me to move out of the main room and it seemed less disturbing once I had done so – which did not strike me as being unusual even though movement had otherwise seemed almost impossible – and I relaxed a little as I gained some control over my movements.

I was upright standing on the carpet in relative calm as the storm raged behind me and the door to the outside world swung open and away without me touching it. I stared out into the deepest, blackest, darkness I had ever seen, menacing in the extreme, and during that moment of hesitation I knew that an even greater terror was awaiting beyond.

With utter dread I was suddenly struck with the realisation that whatever was left in the bedroom actually wanted me to leave the house. It wanted to take possession of my body, left waiting on the bed, and could only do that if my spirit were to become lost in the nether world. The further I went the harder it would be for me to return. My resolve grew firmer again and I turned back to the room to face the carnage.

As soon as I stepped back over the threshold of the bedroom I felt the full force of the wind again. With my back against the wall I inched round the room in a clockwise direction towards the full-length wardrobe mirrors. I had a sense of purpose, quite strong in itself, although I did not precisely know what I was going to do to save myself.

I had the vague hope that if I could concentrate on my own image in the mirror I would somehow get a grip on safe reality and regain my senses. The mirrors had

long floor to ceiling poles for handles and I took hold of one of these in each hand to prevent myself from being blown away by the vortex behind me.

I was shaking with the effort of standing and keeping my grip as I stared into the glass and tried to see my own face. My body and hair were clear enough – the right size, colour and shape - but I could see nothing at all of my face, not even my eyes, a fact which brought about the onset of panic. I should have cried had I thought tears would help me.

At the time I had the subconscious feeling that it WAS possible for me to view my face but I truly dared not see it because of my ravaged state. I thought I might scare myself to death if I saw my own eyes. I tried to speak, hoping to gain real evidence of my continuing existence but my voice, when I actually managed to make a sound, was so guttural and dreadful that it only intensified my fear.

Things seemed to have gone from bad to worse, but I forced myself to battle through the mire, trying all the while to ignore the demonic sound (and maybe sight) of my own self. Each utterance became more painful and I felt my strength disintegrating until, in a simple act of surrender, almost as a last resort, which somehow gave me a spark of inspiration; I found a clear voice and spoke these words: “God help me”.

In a split second I was fully awake and back where I belonged – in my body, in my bed. I felt exactly as if anyone would if they had just escaped the clutches of a strong, murderous assailant, which is to say primarily relieved, but in a state of shock, with wild eyes, a racing heart and a film of sweat over my skin, as adrenalin coursed through my veins.

Most people in that position would have invoked God, I believe - even the most ardently outspoken atheist - for sheer terror cuts through every aspect of the personality and ego, right to the primordial spark of life, the soul of one.

I sat up immediately, eager to move out of my former position; I was trembling from top to toe. I turned around to look at the clock and saw that about half an hour had passed since I'd last checked it, which meant that my dreadful experience had occurred during the passage of our usual time.

Never before had I known such conscious terror; I may have been prone to nightmares but I had watched no scary movies that night and whatever had just happened affected me as if it had been an actual physical attack on my person. I was exhausted and, despite my shock, felt like the danger had passed, so I nodded off surprisingly quickly. I'm amazed I ever managed to sleep again after all of that.

When I woke the next day I had one thought and one thought only: I needed to see a priest.

I spent the following week in a state of gradually diminishing aftershock and toyed with the idea of visiting the college chaplain. This was something I had never considered before as I'd always avoided conventional religion, despite my interest in the supernatural. I think I had a bit of a rebellious nature and throughout my life had managed to avoid going about things in the conventional way.

This is not to say that I was closed to the idea of God, but the idea of church-going had always turned me off completely as being boring, stifling and oppressive. I seemed incapable of belief without some sort of direct experience.

Well now I had more than an inkling of direct experience. How could I possibly forget my deliverance from harm in the nick of time, by virtue of those three words, a plea to the Father in heaven?

The impression left by the terror, which seemed to be a culmination of all my childhood fears, faded quickly. From the point in time of my first actual prayer I knew without doubt that God existed, at the very least for me, for I had been saved by God in my hour of greatest need. The demon had been conquered through an expression of faith and this knowledge was to form an inner foundation of my newly protected self.

The attempt at demonic possession of my soul happened at the same time as I met John.

Spheres of Life Prayer

If the world is in distress on account of its sins, and the patriarchs sleep, the dew not descending from on high, then the remedy is to take out the Scroll of the Law. Then the soul tells the spirit, and the spirit tells the higher soul, and the higher soul tells God⁵⁸

For the reformation of the Olam (world) of Adam Kadmon, collective essence of the Soul of humanity, through the void of Tsimtsum, by the catalytic potential of
Yod

Purge the pathways with fire to make clear the way for the living waters

A = Androgyne; M = Masculine; F = Feminine

Psalm of David

To seal off access to or influence from the Qlippotic Tree of Death

Let God arise
May His enemies be scattered,
Let those who hate Him flee before Him.
As smoke is driven away, so drive them away,
As wax melts before fire may the wicked perish before God.

Ein Soph

YAH

To be envisaged Cosmically as an immense influx of light piercing the void and expanding into the Sphere, from where it will emanate into the rest of the Tree of Life

(A; Yod; Beginning; Holy Breath of the Living God)

I AM the Light of the World

Keter

THE LORD OF HOSTS

(A; Aleph; End; Breath from Breath; the Crown; Divine Will)

⁵⁸ Soncino Zohar. II. pg. 323. Vayehi, 225b

I AM the Resurrection and the Life

Chockmah

The God of Israel

(M; Mem; Water from Breath; Wisdom; goodness)

Our Father, who art in Heaven
Hallowed by thy Name
Thy Kingdom come
Thy Will be done
On Earth as it is in Heaven.
Gives us this Day our daily Bread
And Forgive us our Trespasses
As we Forgive those who Trespass against us
And Lead us not into Temptation
But Deliver us from Evil
Amen

Binah

The Living God

(F; Shin; Fire from Water; Judgement; Understanding; evil)

Hail Mary, full of Grace
Blessed art thou amongst Women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus
Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us Sinners now and in the hour of our Death
Amen

DA'AT

King of the World

*The Sphere where Divine and Human Consciousness are united and the abyss is
crossed; unification; reconciliation and initiation*

(A; Beth; Depth of Above; Singular Covenant; beholding the Face of God; Israel;
Saturn)

I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life

CHESED

Merciful and Gracious

(M; Mercy; Depth of East; Gimel; Jupiter)

Kyrie Eleison, Christie Eleison*

GEBURAH

Lofty and Holy

The Sphere where the Shattering of the Vessels begins

(F; Force or Strength; Depth of South; Dalet; Mars)

*Stella Maris, ora pro nobis***

NETZACH

Dwelling in Eternity

(M; Victory; Depth of North; Peh; Venus)

*Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit****

HOD

High and Exalted

(F; Splendour; Depth of West; Resh; Mercury)

*Holy Mother, Holy Daughter, Holy Soul****

Netzach

repeated to emphasise how much work must be done within this Sphere and its partner, Hod

I AM the Bread of Life

HOD

I AM the Good Shepherd

YESOD

Almighty God

(A; Depth of Below; Foundation; Moon; Tau)

I AM the Door

TIFARETH

Whose Name is Holy

The Holy Palace at the centre of all the Spheres which is our seat of attainment of the Merkabah

Embrace of the Holy Guardian Angel

(A; Beauty; Discernment; Fiery Water; Shem/Name; the fiery cup of Kaph which holds the divine water; ShMSh/Sun; Jacob)

Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared (Exodus)

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures
He leads me beside the still waters
He restores my Soul
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for
Thou art by my side
Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me
Thou preparest for me a table in the presence of my enemies
Thou anoints my head with oil
My cup runneth over
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever

Malkulth

To seal the Prayer in the Soul and the Holy Shekinah in the Sphere of Earth

(A; Earth)

I AM the True Vine



*Lord have Mercy, Christ have Mercy

**Star of the Sea, Pray for us

***Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit – Holy Mother, Holy Daughter, Holy Soul
= the Seal of Solomon



¹ Boris Mouravieff, Gnosis