

3-eyed Dream

I was pumping gas at a station. It was getting late and I was ready to head home after a long guard shift at the airbase. As I finished up at the pump, a police car cruised by in a leisurely manner. I gave them the standard old grin-and-nod as one usually does to repel unsolicited attention from the cops. They both smiled a little and one raised a hand in passing acknowledgement. I figured they were there for donuts or something so I headed in to pay the teller. To my mild surprise, the patrol car slid up beside me as I headed up to the door.

Through the lowered window one of the cops said, “Hey, is that your truck?” thumbing over his shoulder towards my old Ford F-100.

“Sure is,” came my reply, figuring the guy was just into old cars and the like.

The passenger cop turned to the driver and said something I couldn’t hear. They stopped the car, so, being a good citizen, I stopped too. For a moment, they seemed to disagree upon what course of action to take, judging by the brushing-off gestures of the driver, and the choppy let’s-do-something mannerisms of the other. I figured something was wrong, and I immediately figured it was my taillight. The wires were really old and always came loose while driving. I figured I’d at least get a ticket out of it.

“Hey, uh,” the cop said, looking back at my ride, “you know you got a little problem with your taillight?”

Shit. “Yah,” I acquiesced, “that thing is always doing that. It’s old, you know.”

They turned to talk to each other again, this time in more serious tones.

“You’ll have to follow us to the station and we’ll get this taken care of,” he said after a moment.

“?” said I.

“Look,” he said sternly, “we can’t just let you drive around like that.”

Okokokok. I paid, got back in the truck and followed them downtown. They escorted me inside a la convicted felon- just short of handcuffs and shackles. I was getting a little worried, but my faith in the system kept me from excessive internal questioning, though I did have a few doubts about the big deal they were making over a taillight. It’s hard to remember now, but once inside at the reception counter, I am almost positive that the man there looked in a book and said something to the effect of “that’s him”. Shit, again.

“We’re going to have to ask you a few questions,” said the cop on my left as he slid a hand around my bicep. Who was I to argue?

The other cop got my right arm and said to his partner, "Not here, though. He'll have to see the boss."

With that, someone who was standing behind me shoved a needle into my arm, purging the syringe into my veins. The two cops hurried me down a short hallway that led to a door. That door worried me a little. It was quite unremarkable in most respects, but I had seen it before. I had seen a photo of the door in a national magazine, and it was well known to conceal secret interrogations and surreptitious planning. Most people feared that door in much the same way they feared the USSR in the '80's- they know something went on there, but they didn't know what. I held my apprehension to a minimum as the rough metal bar was slid back from within and I entered the unknown.

To my surprise and relief I didn't see chains hanging from the ceiling or the rack or anything else of the like. Instead, it opened into an innocuous looking small conference room. The oval table took up almost the entirety of the floor, with barely enough room for the chairs to fit between it and the windowless walls. A few people sat around the table, but most of the chairs were empty. Across the room, pushed up against the opposite side of the table, was a small television on a roller stand. It looked to be tuned to a network station, but the program really didn't make any sense. My instincts told me to beware that device, but my mind was starting to wander probably due to the shot I had been given. It was hard not to look at the colors on the screen, and be absorbed in the endless babble. I remembered similar symptoms from an injection of sodium pentothal I had had once at a dentist's office.

The man to my immediate right was seated with his back to the door. He invited me to sit beside him in the chair he pulled out. He was very large of build, dressed in casual business attire (tweed sports coat, khaki pants, etc.) that hung crookedly from his body, and looked as though his middle-aged hair could use a good trim. He didn't look up from his stack of papers, haphazardly strewn across the table in front of him. The mess seemed to fit the general impression I was getting regarding this man's personality. A fuzzy eyebrow protruded from his gnome-like profile as he pored over his work. My attention drifted from him to the TV and back again in the long moments I waited for something to happen.

"Have you ever frisked anyone?" the man said in a smooth, low voice that resonated through the wood of the table.

"Well, uh, yes," I replied, more than somewhat taken aback by the strange question. In the next moment, I wondered if a 'yes' was the right answer, or would it just get me in more hot water.

Following on the heels of my response came an addendum to the question from one of the cops who stood behind me. "Men AND women?" he asked somewhat accusatively.

"Of course!" I replied, not bothering to conceal the defensive tone. "What the hell you trying to get at anyway?"

A low voice again came from my right. "Did you think they were beautiful?" he asked in an even, dispassionate tone.

Instead of going further into the defensive, I actually felt somewhat relaxed by the big man's presence. His question didn't seem accusative, as had the cop's, but earnest and necessary- for some reason. Perhaps it was the injection, or perhaps it wasn't, but I decided upon an open discourse with this individual, whatever the consequences.

“Well, in as much that both sexes are human beings, with all their form and grace, yes,” I replied without reservation, “I do think they are beautiful.”

A long moment followed. I looked over at the TV to disengage myself from the silence at hand, and found it very hard to look away. The tiny little voice I call *intuition* was telling me that it was dangerous to look. I became a bit paranoid about the sound and images and decided that they were not of normal origin. I figured that it must be some kind of interrogation tactic, like a type of hypnosis device, that they had strategically placed there to distract and disarm me. I decided at that moment to ignore it for the duration of my questioning and resist its siren allure. I turned to the seated man and fixed my attention upon him in concentration. To my astonishment, I found it easy, and the TV disappeared from my senses. This action seemed to arouse him from his work and, for the first time during the interrogation, he faced me.

It took me a moment to really notice, then another moment to interpret what I saw before me. The man’s gaze was an awesome gaze, emanating from his *three eyes*. Two were as normal as could be, and so was the third. It wasn’t like the pictures you see of Hindu gods or Buddhist concepts. There was no radiance or otherworldliness to it. It wasn’t surrounded by magical inscriptions or sacred geometry, and it wasn’t even located on his forehead. It was situated right between the other two eyes, and looked just as human and functional in the normal way. It even had its own bushy eyebrow, matching the other two. I thought for a brief second that I might have a hard time trying not to stare at the anomaly, but in the next second the whole thing felt as normal as normal can be. In fact, I was very at ease, as though I had expected to see it all along.

“That,” he began, “is the right answer.” His voice and appearance had the same transfixing qualities as the TV had had moments before. The rest of the room seemed to fade away. “Have you ever heard of this?” He slid a three-fold pamphlet, of the kind you’d see sticking out from under your windshield wiper, from within his mess and nodded for me to pick it up. I took it. “This is my company,” he said, pointing to the cover. “Have you heard of it?”

I looked at the plain white flyer, printed in cheap blue print, and read the name on the front. *Coondilini Security* was the name of the organization. That name sounded so familiar, but it was difficult to concentrate on trifles at the moment. The logo that accompanied the name was stranger still. It was a triangle, contained within a circle. The three spaces created by the interaction of the two shapes contained strange symbols that reminded me of Hebrew letters- one in each space. In a flash of inspiration and sneakiness I decided to thumb through the rest of the publication to find the man’s name, saving me from having to interrogate my interrogator. Midway through the second flap I found *Owner: Tjikili Mjfst*. Again, strange name, but it seemed right (even though hard to pronounce). I really got the impression that he was offering me a job.

Turns out that he was, indeed, offering me a job. I must have accepted because I woke up at a training camp sometime after the drug wore off. Both of my cars were there, one that reminded me of my Dad, the other that I had purchased off of my Mom. I couldn’t fathom how they had both gotten there, but it seemed a proper balance. The symbolism wasn’t lost on me. So, I began to train.

Dojo Dream

I had returned to the old martial arts school, as I had done so many times before

and under so many names. It was a many-chambered thing, with arcane passages and subterranean secrets. On this day, though, it was a much simpler and much brighter thing. I entered its central training area, white now, as a much older and much more tired student. It was my first visit in a long time, and I was unsure of my capabilities. I was out of shape, out of practice, and not really in the martial mind. The new instructor was a man much younger than me- the 'me' at the time, who was middle-aged. He was a 30-something jiu-jitsu practitioner who appeared Hawaiian or of similar heritage. He had an assistant who I knew was an old acquaintance of mine, but I also knew that he was a bit of an irritant. I couldn't remember his name.

I was there for an introductory lesson. I was trying to make blue belt in this system, and hoped that some of my experience and rank applied. The instructor wanted to spar me in order to see where I was at in my knowledge. I was seriously worried about being rusty and getting my ass kicked. More importantly, I was worried that I had lost my edge.

We began. The instructor seemed confident, as he well should have. He assumed a good fighting stance and attacked. I latched on and we went to the ground in a heap. I was hoping my jujitsu was still good enough to make a dent. He landed on top and had a momentary advantage, but I had a reversal that put us chest-to-chest, he on his back. He reeled and rocked to attempt an escape, but I rode well, using my hand to keep balance on the floor. He made the common mistake of giving his back. I whispered the words *mata leao* to myself and applied a sleeper hold. He tapped out and laughed. I won, much to my surprise.

The instructor seemed not at all surprised that I had bested him, and he didn't seem upset about his own loss at all. He smiled the whole way out to the parking lot out back. The three of us headed for our cars and we haggled over the time and date of our next lesson. The instructor seemed pleased, and so was I. I began to think about how I had remembered enough to beat a younger, stronger, and obviously more practiced individual. It was at that moment, reaching for my car door, that a vision- a memory- struck me and took over my consciousness. I knew it was some sort of memory.

It was all misty, as though viewed through piece of frosted glass. I could make out no walls, but there was no horizon either- only a pale and dim blue. It was a kendo dojo. I was on my knees, off to the side of the fighting area. Someone was holding my eyelids open from above and behind. I could see a few others across the way in the same position as myself, black robed and masked figures holding them to the sight in front of them. I, too, was masked, like all who were present, in a dark hood with only two eye-holes cut into the fabric. There were about a dozen of us, similarly clad, present. In the fighting area, surrounded by the masked audience, were two figures in dark kendo armor. The action was a dream-like slow motion. One fighter advanced as the other parried. Again. Again. Closer I looked, and understood. With each movement, and each repetition of technique, I understood. I knew how most could never hope to decipher the complicated body mechanics and energies involved in the conflict- but I understood it perfectly, simply. The fighter on the left spun and cut, parried by the one on the right, and again in the other direction- parried again. The one on the right shuffled forward and poked with a gentle thrust, deftly avoiding the blade of the other. Over and over I watched. It was simplicity. It was understanding at its deepest. It was knowing as

opposed to mere knowledge. All was One, to me.

What I knew at that moment, hanging somewhere between the vision of memory and a reality that I knew was yet only a dream, was that everything was TIME. It was not energy, it was not spirit, it was not atoms or sub-atoms, it was time. Time is the sight of the third-eye, and the underlying current beneath all things. Few can sense it, though all can measure it. It is Hubbard's X-factor which animates all, and IS all. It is One. More importantly to me, at that moment, was that it was the reason I was traveling these dreams.

Later, on the parade grounds of the military academy, the selections were made. I was assigned to a squad and was eager to start my training, taking my place among the others-my comrades. We were dismissed and I made it to my scheduled class, but I was expected back later for drills.

The class was Mr. Tom's literary analysis class. The classroom had that musty eraser dust smell common to all such places, along with that dreary color. Class was boring, and I drifted in and out of sleep. Concentration was difficult, almost to the point of absurdity, but it all seemed normal enough. Again, I was anxious to go and join my unit. I wanted to make a good first impression by being on-time for our first scheduled practice, but it was destined not to be. At the bell (but there was no bell) Mr. Tom handed out a pop quiz. There were a number of essay-type and multiple choice questions on the double-sided photocopy, but most had been marked out. There were only two left for us to complete, and, as far as I could tell, only two of us in the class to complete it.

I looked at the questions. They were strange even for this strange class. My concentration problem moved beyond absurdity as I read the paper. The paper, itself, seemed the source of my drowsiness. The more I read the incomprehensible problems, and their equally incongruent answer choices, the more scattered my thoughts became. My mind drifted as I struggled to put together the usual deductive train of thought innate and common to most *homo sapiens*. I read one question, thought a fragment of a thought, read choice A or B- glanced over at the girl in the next desk, repeated the process. I could feel the clock ticking away and wanted dearly to get to my unit, who were by now convinced that I was not worthy of being selected.

The girl in the next desk seemed to make only a few brief pen strokes and she was done. She had completed the test with an effortlessness akin to ignorance. Perhaps it was. Perhaps it was her ignorance that led her to believe any of the answers could be correct. Maybe it was I, who labored to remember when any of this had been covered in class, who was clever. The answers appeared to have nothing to do with the questions. Indeed, the questions were not even of this world. I flipped the sheet over to the front again and read, among the scribbles, the first question:

Read the following statement and circle the correct meaning: “The chaplain of the tower hath buried them; But how or in what place I do not know.” -Tyrell, King Richard III

- a) I know, but you do not know.
- b) I may, but you may not be.
- c) Maybe not I, but you.
- d) So may it be.

I mean really, what the hell is all that supposed to mean? And in my state of mental decadence...I could hardly focus my eyes on the proper place on the page to even begin to associate an answer with a thought. When the hell did we ever study translation of classical literature into abstract thoughts, anyway? Mr. Tom just sits and watches as if I should just know an answer. The girl is already gathering her books to leave, yet I remain to sweat and swear over something that I do not understand. Flipping over the page, the other question stared at me as though it were some fiendish demon, come to strip me of my remaining faculties:

Read the following statement and circle the correct translation: “Daareest ttho resaalve too kill aa friieend ov minne? King Richard, King Richard III

- a) That time of year thou mayest in me behold...
- b) Aspire to that which is naught to be had...
- c) The fruit is ripe for the taking...
- d) All of the above

All of the above? What kind of dumb-ass stuff is this? I could plainly see that the text was a corruption of an older form of English, but it was a fake- a hoax! Nobody ever wrote like that! There was no translation to be wrought from that garble of letters and words, spilled upon my paper as a naive person tells a bold-faced lie. My vision began to tunnel further as I read, thought, tried to think of what to do. I could only see small portions of the text, now...one word...one letter at a time. I had to do something, though.

The other questions, the ones marked out and therefore out of reach, seemed perfectly normal by comparison:

Read the following statement and circle the appropriate answer: “...Quoth the Raven,”

- a) ...go away.
- b) ...nevermore.
- c) ...sandcastle.
- d) ...tell-tale heart.

Was it a ruse? Was the girl tricked into thinking she had the answer to the impossible questions, answering only because, well, she *should know* the answer? Right? Well, I

was beginning to get the courage to look at Mr. Tom and admit that I didn't know the correct answers, if any were to actually exist in this world. I was getting angry, and I let it get the best of me. Perhaps it would cost me some points, or a grade, but I will not be forced into a situation by a question which predicates a certain answer. I raised from my desk and handed the un-marked quiz back to Mr. Tom, who was watching, Sphinx-like from only a few feet away.

"Here. None of these are the correct answer," I said as calmly as I could, holding the paper out to him.

"But," he began, knitting his brow and setting the thing back down in front of me, "look here. This one clearly indicates this answer." He indicated *aspire to which, etc.*, with his finger.

"Nope. I don't think so," I said, still calm in voice and angry in soul. My thoughts had begun to clear up considerably since handing the paper away.

He began to reply something, but I gathered my things and spun on my heel in one motion. As I headed for the door with quick strides I said to him, "Everyone knows answers are a matter of perspective. Your 'right' answer may not be my right one, of course, but my answer is to not choose one. I question the question- it isn't right in my perspective." Well, I *thought* it to him more than spoke it to him. I knew that he heard and understood. Perhaps the quiz was really for me, alone, to find out more about me and who I was. Maybe Mr. Tom knew how I would respond all along. I thought not, though. Maybe he will think on it.

I headed along the gymnasium catwalk that led me from the class out to the courtyard and parade grounds. Below, I could see flag-bearers and others practicing drills and formations. I knew that my unit was probably outside somewhere in their snappy uniforms, all marching about in neat ranks and files. I was late, so I simply decided not to go at all. There would be no use. Somehow, though, I felt very relieved at this prospect and continued about my merry way. My thoughts had become more contiguous to each other since leaving the classroom, and I felt good about what I had done. The tunnel vision and confusion went away, and I strolled down to a restaurant for lunch. Hell, I even held open the door for some cute girls on the way in!

I don't really remember eating, but I'm sure it was fast food, and I strolled down to the airport. I hadn't flown in a long time, so I decided to take an instructor with me- just in case. I quickly quizzed him on the proper take-off speed, stall speed, best climb speed, etc. We started out in the hangar in a Cessna 172. Out on the strip, during the run-up procedure, the instructor disappeared. No big deal. I hardly noticed.

Gauges green, green, green. Controls free and correct...

Along the line I noticed that the 172 had turned into an older, two-seater Cessna. I had seen one once before, but I really couldn't recall the model number.

Flaps: set. Mixture: full-rich. Toes off the brakes...

I shoved the throttle to the firewall. Oh, what a feeling! The engine roars, the props spin, and the seat presses against the back with a satisfying power. I rumble down the strip...quickly...faster! FASTER!!! Ha! I pull back a tiny bit on the yoke, just to put some weight on the main gear. That's because the plane had turned into an old Piper Cherokee I had once flown long ago. It always had a weird feeling in the mains as roll-out approached. The only remedy was to pull back a little and compress the struts. My old instructor, Bill, appeared for a moment to give me an inquisitive look. He had done this once before during the same maneuver, but I had learned it from him, so it was OK. He disappeared as quickly as he had come. His satisfied Cheshire grin was the last to go.

Roll out was great! I pulled the nose up just a little too shallow and came off the ground flat, but that was OK. I played the instant of takeoff over a few times until I got it just right...a little too fast on this one...a little too soon on that one...pull back...pull back...there! Perfect. My spirit climbed with the plane, which was the 172 again. (The 172 had a better climb than the others.) The seat cushion pressed against my rear, feeling as though I had sat down on an elevator floor- headed for the top. Hmmm. It could be better, though. I cranked in one more click on the flaps...

...flaps down, nose down...

Thanks, Bill. I fought the nose down as I reefed on the flap handle, switching that hand to roll in some 'nose-down' trim. The pressure came off the yoke and a perfect harmony of thrust, lift, weight, and drag had been achieved for my personal enjoyment. The plane rocketed up into the sky, my seat thrusting my body toward the awaiting clouds and blue! I felt myself smile a broad smile which I had not known in years. I loved this feeling!

I got to altitude and frolicked among the puffy white stuff in a three-dimensional sea. I moved the stick with both hands and my heart leapt at every beautiful response from the aircraft. Yes, it was a *stick* now, and not a yoke. More importantly, the yoke had become a *control* stick. Control. At that moment, in that plane, against that sky, I had real control. The stick only resisted gently at my touch, and I knew it wanted to do what I needed it to do. I didn't control anyone, only me. My plane took me as my desire wandered in any direction. I tilted the stick and the wings bowed to my commands. I smiled.



Bodyguard Dreams

It was somewhere in Japan, this was certain. I was assigned to protect the person of some very important lady. I am not at all certain who, however, she was. Regardless, she seemed to be some sort of emissary or other person of political value, so she must be kept from harm. Harm, I knew, was just around the corner. There was an assassin stalking her and I had already thwarted several of his more subtle plots. I had never seen his face, but that was about to change.

The lady was walking up the stairs in her heavy garments of winter. We were heading to her abode, which was on the second floor of a downtown structure of fine taste and detail. I preferred that she walk in front of me so that I may keep her in plain view the entire time. I was not worried about apartment entry because I knew there to be another detachment of bodyguards already within, securing the dwelling. This placed me between the lady and any potential stalker from the street below.

He struck when we rounded the red banister onto the landing leading to her flat. He sprang up the stairs at me with a short sword of the ninja-to variety, though I did not have time for a full appraisal. Apparently, his tactics had shifted from the subtle art of assassination to that of a direct attack in the open. Bold it was, but misguided. He would have to get through me in order to get to his victim. I think he knew this because he seemed pretty intent upon a sword duel at the moment.

It was bad for him to begin the attack with the disadvantage of having the low ground. I think he was relying upon the element of surprise, but it eluded him because of his clumsiness. It took only a moment's assessment to determine that he was not exactly a first-rate swordsman. He struck an *en guard* that prompted me to draw my katana from beneath my long overcoat. I faced him from the landing above as he lunged a tentative lunge from the stairs below. I parried and riposted with a short stabbing motion just to test his spirit. It was not strong and he stumbled a few more steps down. He regained his footing and scurried up the stairs to his original position just below the landing. I hardly had time to react as his right hand flicked a long dart from beneath his own clothing. It was aimed at the lady, who was still atop the landing to my rear. I dashed the dart to the ground with a deflecting cut of my sword. The assassin lunged into the opening that the movement left on my right side. I stepped back and parried that, as well, and began my own assault.

Musashi said that it must be appreciated that the spirit may become small or large as needed. I had always been a victim of the 'small spirit' when I needed it to be large. As of late, however, I had finally grasped what the Great Swordsman had meant. Instead of shrinking and dodging the assailant's sword, I grew my spirit to a dominating

size. I wrested the initiative from my opponent by sheer force of will and made several broad cuts to his high line. He parried over and over, stumbling backwards, until his reactions came a fraction too late to thwart my actions. I think he sensed this at just the right moment because he broke off and fled down the stairs just as I was about to finish him.

I decided not to follow him into the street while the lady still stood vulnerable outside her dwelling. Instead, I grabbed her by the forearm and guided her into the place, sword still drawn in the other hand. Much to my shock, I found no one inside. There were none of the other bodyguards, nothing, not even furniture inside. It was as though everything had been moved in a hurry, with only a few remnants of habitation remaining. A few things hung upon the wall, though. One was a round, metallic shield of western origin. It was mine, and I didn't remember leaving it there. In one of those strange instances of crystal foresight, I felt compelled to pick it up from its hook and place it upon my left arm.

It was at that moment the assassin returned from his short retreat, appearing in the open doorway of the apartment. In an instant, he was throwing a short spear at me. In the next moment it was bouncing off the handily-begotten shield. The assassin seemed stunned for a moment that I had been prepared for his attack, which he must have assumed would be beyond defending. I took his moment of inertia to lunge. Since my left side ended up closest to him, I swung the shield at his face. I heard a metallic 'thunk' as he haphazardly brought the flat of his sword into a blocking motion, being only half drawn from its scabbard at that moment. I pushed back hard and he stumbled a bit, allowing me to redouble the attack with the edge of my shield. I punched it at his nose, catching him just above the upper lip. The blood began to run as I brought a cut down with my right. The force of my shield-punch, however, was enough to knock him out of the way of my cut. Using that borrowed time, he dove for the door and succeeded in making his escape.

It was another time and another place, but I was still in the service of a very important woman. It was her wedding, a country wedding, somewhere in the American Midwest. I packed a 9mm just under the pocket of my double-breasted tux. There was a whole team of us, wired with communications and part of a pre-rehearsed procedure. My position was along the road, checking cars as they pulled up to the simple white

church that was surrounded by a cemetery- like most country churches. All the guests seemed normal enough, but something was afoot. I was not given an earpiece, and my fellow bodyguards, with whom I had only worked for a short time, seemed distant. My suggestions and observations were met with indifference. Nothing in particular, however, seemed especially sinister at that moment.

The bride and groom came out of the church at the head of a long procession which was to walk down to a nearby school. There the reception would be held. I watched the area as the procession reached the road. They would walk the short distance down the country road to the school, which was still in session for another hour or so. As the group milled about the parked cars that lined the road, I noticed the minister. I had seen him somewhere before, but I couldn't place where. My spider senses tingled, as they say, when I laid eyes upon him. Something was just not right about him. It may have been some subtle thing in his gait, or in his expression. Maybe he was a little too tense, or was exuding just a slightly out-of-place emotion for the occasion. Either way, I decided to alert another guard to keep an eye on him, since I was to be the point man for the procession and my back would be to him.

"Hey," I whispered loudly to a nearby guard who was dressed exactly like me, "keep an eye on the minister."

"Who?" the large, unshaven guy said as though distracted from something more important.

I gestured, "There, that minister fellow. Something's not right about him."

It was an odd reaction from my cohort. He seemed almost angry at the suggestion and dismissed me with a wave of his arm and a grunt. I could have chalked it all up to him thinking I was being sacrilegious, but my better judgment told me something else was behind his behavior. It took only a moment to surmise that his motives may lie in the same place as those of the minister. For that matter, his interests may lie in the same place. It mattered not, at the moment, what those were. It only mattered that they were different than my own interests, which were to protect our precious liability- the woman. I suddenly felt like an outsider- like someone who wasn't let in on the joke, whatever that was. I decided to be on my guard.

I led the procession down the country road, under a warm afternoon sun. I peered hard into every clump of trees and between every blade of grass. Nothing. I spent a good portion of my time looking over my shoulder. Four bodyguards formed an echelon at the front of the column, while the very pregnant bride laughed along behind, bridesmaids in trail. Everyone was happy and smiling, chatting away in carefree tones as people do after such an occasion- everyone except the minister. He had that same, slightly strained, slightly red expression on his face as he walked along. I thought it even odder that he was exchanging words with the bodyguard with whom I had spoken a few minutes earlier. They were both looking up at me, and this made me nervous.

We descended a steep hill to the little, though modern school near a river. We entered it without incident and all seemed well. The reception room, which I think was going to be the gym, still held a class for the time being, so we were directed to wait in a nearby empty classroom. The coordinator of the security attachment told me to head down the hallway a bit and check out the other rooms. Some of them would still be in session, but others would be empty. If I found an empty one, I was to occupy it until further notice. Ok, I thought, no problem. I poked my head into a few of the classes and, finding them full of teachers and grade school aged children, went along my merry way. The bride, et al, filed into a room at the other end of the hall. I found myself an empty classroom, lights off and eraser smell present, and entered. I secured all the windows and surveyed the area outside. Nothing but trees and cornfields.

I killed about five minutes in the silence of the room. It was like one of those old war movies where one guy says 'it's quiet' and the other guy says 'yah- too quiet'. There is some truth to that cliché. I couldn't help but think about the minister, the bodyguard, and the bride. I didn't want to leave them all in the same place together because I suspected that the two men were not going to act in her best interest. With that, I jumped off the teacher's desk and headed back down the hall with a cautious, but determined step. Something felt very wrong along the way. All the classrooms were now empty and dead silent. I didn't even hear the celebration that I expected to be happening with the wedding party. I came swiftly upon the door which they had entered earlier. Not a sound, but there was a strange, flickering white light from the crack at the threshold. It was like that of a TV set to an off station, but very bright and without the usual static sound. I swung open the door, pistol in hand.

The room was filled with the strange light, which seemed to emanate from a square patch of similar light on the far wall- about the size of a door. There seemed only to be a half-dozen or so people in the room, but the light was so bright I couldn't recognize any of them as being from the wedding party. I did notice a couple of double-breasted tuxedos, though. The room was set up much like a hospital emergency room, all cloaked in dancing shades of black and white. They stood around a hospital gurney upon which laid the bride, her pregnant belly sticking up into the strobe-lit room. It was then that I knew that the baby within was somehow the key to everything that had been going on, and why I was protecting her.

I overcame my initial shock at the surreal picture before me and swung my gun up to a ready position, taking a tactical stance. Nobody seemed to give me a second thought, though, and completely ignored me. All attention was focused on the woman. A very short man, whom I had never seen before, dressed in what appeared to be an old leather jacket was bent over her right hand. He raised a stylus of some sort in his own hand, and slowly pressed it to her wrist. The woman began to scream and flail about, but she was tied down. He screams of defiance seemed more of apprehension than of reaction, but I didn't know what that meant. I watched stunned as the short, hunched-over man began to inscribe a strange mark onto the woman's flesh. It was a strange triangle, with the lines overlapping at the corners so that they stuck out in a way that suggested sticks laid upon sticks. The symbol shone a brilliant gold light that seemed to

project from within her skin. A wailing, powerful sound akin to a turbine engine's, began to roar in the air all around. The light from the square on the wall, and that shining from the triangle on the woman's wrist, became unbearably bright, working into a sustained flood I could see through lidded eyes.

When I opened my eyes again in the next moment, all was calm. No sound, no lighted doorway- nothing but a strange twilight-gray glow. The men stood as statues in suspended animation. There was no movement from anyone. The bed upon which the still figure of the woman lay had slammed against the far wall that had held the strange glowing square only a second before. The onlookers stood where the bed had been, and the ceremony-like scribing of the woman's arm had taken place. One of them was the priest from the wedding ceremony. I moved my gun from one potential target to another, but no one moved an inch. It was as though they were frozen in time. I took a step towards the woman who I was supposed to protect. She no longer displayed the swollen stomach of pregnancy. At my second step, all the lifeless forms in the room crumbled to dust on the floor, as did the woman.

I arrived at the tire shop in response to a help wanted add. I wandered about the nearly deserted warehouses and machining areas trying to find the appropriate person. I didn't know his name, but I knew that I would recognize him when I saw him. I eventually found his office, tucked away in the corner of a manufacturing area. It was one of those "working" offices, having a dirty, well-used look.

"You said you can do the job?" asked the big, red-haired guy who I knew to be the right man. I had spoken to him before, I remembered.

"Yep. Just point me to it."

"Ok, come on," he said eagerly. He appeared very happy to have someone, anyone, who wanted the task. The job would be to make a delivery across the country to California. This would be no problem for me, since I had no previous commitments and loved to travel. I followed him out of the office to the front parking lot, while he explained the details of the assignment with an excited urgency. It seemed that he was already behind schedule for lack of people to complete the task.

Out front, I was amazed to find the largest truck I have ever laid eyes on! It was green, box-like, and was bigger than any eighteen-wheeler I'd ever seen. I could tell that the man could sense my apprehension, but he didn't seem surprised. I'm sure he tried to sell this job to someone a hundred times by now. I'm sure that he had been rebuffed each time, too. I wasn't sure how such a creature could be driven down the road, let alone how it could be fit between the telephone poles at the exit to the road. I began to

run down a list of excuses in my mind in order to disengage myself from this situation. Some of the excuses seemed, upon further consideration, quite valid.

“You know,” I began, “I don’t have a CDL or insurance to drive such a thing.”

“Oh, come on,” he goaded, but not vehemently, “you promised, remember?”

I didn’t remember *promising* anything, and promises can be broken if they had been evoked under false pretenses. “Well, you should’ve told me about the truck.”

“It’s OK, you can handle it,” he encouraged in a sing-song voice one uses to convince children that bicycles don’t need training wheels.

“Like I said, I don’t have the proper licensing or insurance to drive a rig.” I could imagine how scared I would be, trying to figure out how to operate the thing while on the road. I shivered at the thought of being pulled over in some foreign state without having any of the proper paperwork or training.

“Nonsense,” he persisted, “It’ll be alright. You shouldn’t have any problems.”

“I don’t even know how to keep a log book! You should have a bunch of OTR drivers available to you.” The last thing I wasn’t sure of, because there was such a high demand for drivers lately.

“You won’t need to. Come on! Have a look at the thing. This shipment of 1,000 units needs to get to our customer in California in two days, or we lose their business. Besides, you promised.”

I guessed that they had screwed up pretty heavily before, and were cutting corners to make things right. I really had no desire to drive such a truck, though. I was sure that I would be getting in over my head if I tried. I was, however, starting to feel a bit guilty for letting the poor guy down.

“Look,” I started, “I guess I saw my dad fill out logbooks before-”

“See!” he interjected.

“- but, I really don’t understand them at all.” I walked over and looked at the ugly vehicle. “Well, at least it doesn’t have a swivel-hitch, so it’s only a one-piece job.” I was starting to acquiesce.

“Yah. That’s more like it!” he seemed relieved. “I’ll go get the paperwork.”

When he went back to his office, and out of sight, I proceeded to climb aboard and start it up. I tried to move the thing about the parking lot, and performed a backing maneuver. The attempt was an utter failure, becoming hopelessly crooked in the exit. I

fought to straighten it out and to get the tail out of the road. I was already starting to block traffic. This was an impossible job, and I reversed venue once again.

“What the hell you doin’?” came the man’s voice as he jogged in my direction, hands full of papers. He had the same, sing-song voice, but he was trying hard to conceal his exasperation.

I jumped down. “I told you couldn’t do it. I told you.”

His shoulders slumped with defeat. “Ok, you were right. Come on. I’ll take you home.”

We took his truck and headed out. We traveled down the highway, and I was relieved that I didn’t have to wrestle that rig down the road. The man was quiet, probably contemplating his options to get the shipment in on-time. I was thinking to myself that, if worse came to worse, I could probably do the job tomorrow. I tried to calculate how much time that would leave me to get the thing there according to schedule. Ah, banish the thought!

“Hey,” he broke his silence, “you wanna see something cool that you would get to see on the road?” He almost had that sales pitch voice going again, but it seemed only half-hearted.

“Ok,” and we turned off onto a country road. The way forked and we took the right one for a little ways, back into the hills. The woods were thick, and soon we came upon a gap in the trees to the right. We pulled alongside it and got out. The gap was a brick and asphalt pathway leading down and into the woods. The leaves of autumn had covered the tire ruts in the wide lane, which looked to have not been in use for some time. The bricks were in good condition, though. Strangely, the lane had been constructed around the bases of some of the nearby trees, as though they were in the way but were not cut down. The trail disappeared in the undergrowth only a few yards distant, and the man had already wandered off that way, apparently deep in thought.

The place was cool and pleasant. The trees were lovely and the dry leaves gave off a wonderful musky smell. I looked to the side of the trail and examined a very large tree. As I watched, the size of the tree increased and adjusted itself. It was only my vision, though, adjusting itself to the true appearance of the thing. What I thought was a very large tree turned into the absolute largest one I had ever seen! It was huge. I thought that it must have been a redwood, but it didn’t look red to me. It looked a lot like a walnut tree, though. It was grand, and I was content to gaze upon it the entire time I was in the woods.

* * *

While I stared at the dull LCD screen of my laptop, I returned to my semi-lucid state that I had had while outside with my sword. It may have been the lingering effect of the drugs, or the late hour, or the monotonous play of the game, or a combination of any of the above. Regardless, I started to drift back in time. I drifted two years back, to a time when I was recovering from a breakdown that might well have been an enlightenment. It was a time when everything I thought I was had evaporated like dew on an August morning. I was trying to discover who I really was, without all the bullshit I'd been handed while growing up in the Midwest.

In the past two years I had put a lifetime between who I am and who I was. It was a meeting of a man and a road. The road I called the *Anabasis*. The man, well, I really didn't know what to call myself. I suppose anyone can take the *Anabasis*, as I'm sure many have, but I know that most people I have ever met have yet to set foot on it. Fear, I think, is probably the reason. It's the fear of pain. I've had my share of both.

Anabasis means 'a journey to the center' in ancient military terms. An army, marching in from the coast to the interior of the enemy nation, was said to be on an *anabasis*. My march started in Glasgow, Scotland, on April 10, 1999. I was a 26 year old man standing at the edge of his life looking in, trying to understand what went wrong. I was about to begin a long campaign into the center of the enemy nation that was myself.

There is *Cosmos*-

To many people, the idea that there is something more to life than meets the eye is obvious. It has been the basis for thousands of years of religious and philosophical teachings and institutions worldwide. The feeling that there is something "more to it all" has probably crept into all of us at one time or another. To some, the instinct may be just a nagging, barely-conscious impression that something is just a little off-kilter with their lives. To others, it takes the form of a burning desire for Truth and an answer to some of life's more impossible questions: What am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going after I die? The response to such feelings is as varied as the degree to which they may be felt in each person. One who seeks answers to those hard questions may devote his life entirely to searching, contemplation, and devotion to that end. By contrast, many people become so perplexed or aggravated by thinking about such esoteric things as to become calloused, shrugging off the notion of "something to it all" as absurd. By far the most common response to this intuitive knowledge is that of religion and belief. The faith in the validity of a systemized explanation for "it all" brings relief and comfort to the majority of us who, now having something to fill in the "God-shaped vessel", can go about our daily lives in relative security. No matter what name you give it, or how strongly you feel it, or what you do about it, it is undeniable that there seems to be something more true, more real, more complete, and more "to it all" hidden just beyond the reach of our feeble senses and finite mental faculties. This brings us great unease and IS the human condition.

I pulled the compass out of my pocket to find my way. I didn't know exactly where I was going, but I thought maybe it would help to at least find north. I was standing in the parking lot of Glasgow International Airport on a drizzly day which I had heard was typical of Scotland. The compass was a cheap plastic knockoff of the more quality military lensatic types, but the needle swiveled to north just the same. I thought about that for a long moment, the magnetic needle, and realized I didn't know what made it swing north. Actually, nobody knew. They could measure it, predict its behavior, create theories of how it did it, but the facts were that scientists really didn't know what actually turned the needle. They dubbed the force "magnetism" and called it one of the Forces of Nature- that was that. Nobody ever found a particle, wave, or magic invisible hand that actually touched the needle to turn it. It just seemed to work on a level we are not able to perceive. I looked up from the compass and watched the spattering of rain fall from the low clouds. They, too, obeyed a Force of Nature, gravity, that was easy enough to know was there, but yet existed somewhere just out of reach. I could see what it did to things, but I could not see IT. The rain and my compass needle were at the mercy of great forces which inhabited a world that was invisible to me. Somehow, though, it was not another world- it was still this world.

I really had no idea what I was doing in Scotland. I had never been out of the United States before. In fact, it had only been the previous summer when I had even left Indiana for any great distance- that is, any distance that carried me completely out of the Midwest. The circumstances which had brought me to that airport parking lot on that day in April of 1999 were easy enough to trace. That just answers the "how" of it, though. The "why" would come later. I knew I was searching for something, but I knew it was not anything that could be found outside of me- nowhere I could travel to. I was at least wise enough at the time to know that. At that particular stage in my life, I needed a drastic change of setting. Not just a change of location would do, but an entire change of culture was the medicine I sought. (And I use the word "medicine" in the Native American sense here.) I had decided months before that we, all of us, are to some extent reflections of the things around us. I followed the compass northwest towards the Highlands.

I walked along and thought about the raindrops, the wind, the smell of diesel busses, the compass needle, and all the strange newness of my current surroundings. I was trying to find my way out of the city and onto an ancient cattle trail called the West Highland Way. I took in the sights, learned the new money in order to buy a sandwich, tried to decipher strange graffiti, and dealt with the varying degrees of rudeness and kindness of passing strangers. All the while, though, my mind was focused inward. Perhaps "focused" is not exactly the right word. My mind was definitely turned inward, upon itself, staring hard at something that was certainly there but just out of focus. It all had to do with the invisibility of everything. According to atomic theory, I thought as I walked along, I was mostly composed of space. So was all matter, to include the Chicago-like buildings around me and the very Earth upon which I tread. I didn't know how much thought most people gave to such a notion, but to me it was awe-inspiring to be a being made mostly of nothing! The thing upon which my mind was focused was

not, however, theoretical physics or atomic theory. It was the idea that my own solidity was an illusion to me, and so was the solidity of everything else. Hinduism suggests that the nature of things, as I knew them to be, was fundamentally unreal. However, I decided that it is certain that the world is “real” enough, I just couldn’t perceive its true nature. But I had known it once, for a brief moment, and that was the out-of-focus thing I was searching for.

A few months earlier I had had a career, a wife, children, two-car garage, and all the other stuff that any man could want. There on that road leading into the mountains, though, I had only a backpack and the compass. The gradual erosion of my marriage had quickened into a landslide the previous summer when I finally filed for divorce. My ex then took the kids to live with her parents in Kentucky, 350 miles away. Up to that point, I thought that I had some control over life, and that I was living the American Dream by having my life arranged just as it was supposed to be. Compounding the trauma, I had also lost both my father and a close friend to illness in rapid succession just prior to the divorce. I had experienced loss before, and grief, but these events were all connected in some way that went beyond simple closeness in time and space. My divorce, Dad’s terrible passing, and the tragedy that was the end of my friend’s life all seemed to point a trinity of accusing and awful fingers at me. When I found myself alone I quit my job, sold the house and most of my possessions, and got on a plane to the United Kingdom.

I continued to walk out of the city to the northwest, up and away from the traffic noise and the smell of stale beer and industry. The cold wind became a series of ocean-smelling gusts and the skyline took on a grand, rugged look off in the distance. I had never walked through mountains before. I was anxious and knew that I did not know this idea called “mountains”. I did not know what it would take to traverse them, and I did not know what hardships may lie ahead. It was simply the unknown. It was a strange sensation to be able to see the mountains, but not really *know* them. I could not conceptualize how broad they were at the base, or really how high they were, or what their texture may be like, or maybe how they flowed and rolled together- were they separate chunks of Earth, or did they meet in saddles? Who lived there, and what would it be like once I reached them? It reminded me of how, it is said, that the Native Americans who were first contacted by Columbus could not see the European sailing ships just off shore. They literally could not see the vessels because they had no basis for comparison in their minds from which they could fabricate an image. This is what is meant by the often abused word *paradigm*. Their state of understanding simply did not include great, masted sailing vessels which appeared from over the horizon. They could, however, see some strange disturbances in the water just off shore. The chief, being the wisest of the Natives, stood at the shore for long hours over several days contemplating this odd wave formation and its relationship with the arrival of the strange visitors. Eventually, after much meditation, the chief became able to see the ships. This described my relationship with the mountains of Scotland.

Let There Be Light Dream

I was part of a research team investigating the crash site of a particularly strange vehicle. It was still officially classified as a UFO, but who knows what was really inside. It may have been military. Either way, though, we were the first team on the scene and took over the area from the local authorities. We walked through the inner cordon with boxes of instruments and sampling equipment in hand, stopping just short of what appeared to be an open door in the side of the silver wreckage. I could barely see into the dark interior. I turned to my partner and asked some technical question. In the next second, he had positioned himself between me and the door. The feeling and setting changed immediately to one of extreme concentration on him. My surroundings focused out of existence with only the half-familiar face of an Asian-Indian man looking back at me. He spoke and I understood with extreme clarity:

*Many try to complete the experiment.
Some never finish the experiment.
Others let the experiment finish itself.*

I experienced the words rather than simply hearing them, and instantly comprehended what he was saying about my experiment. The sensation of the words grew in intensity, eclipsing all else, until a swell of energy surged through my head. It was quite an experience, beyond anything I had known in dream or waking. It was as though a tidal wave of blinding, liquid light was crashing through my mind. It emanated from everywhere at once and bridged the distance between my sleep and consciousness as I became aware that I had been in bed. The light, energy, and sound was almost painfully irresistible. I felt as One with it and its source. All the apparitions who surrounded me in my dream became aware of it as well, this I knew, and I was launched from their company into my bedroom at 3:00am, June 1st, 2005.

It is here I must add a second, similar dream to this story. It is also worthy to note that these two dreams have been of a unique kind when compared to all the dreams I have recorded previously. They are not only unique in the kind of dream-wake bridging that occurs, and the sense of Oneness that I feel during their culmination, but in that both have occurred since joining the Craft.

Sergeant W. slid into the driver's seat that night and said cheerfully, "I can drive- no problem!" I was ok with that, except I sometimes found him a little more confident in his abilities than he should. (I can't remember why we were going, or to where, but it was one of those dream beginnings that crammed against the tail of the previous one.) My initial unease rocketed into a sensation of utter fear as W. slammed the car into reverse and floored it. In moments, the vehicle was screaming backwards down the wooded country road, breaking branches along the way and swaying wildly side to side. I perceived that we were near the edge of the road most of the time, which I knew to drop

steeply and significantly into the darkness. “Slow the fuck down!” I screamed over and over. He just smiled confidently and said, “I got it! Don’t worry!” I was terrified, not only because of the speed, but because I knew that something otherworldly was going on. The backwards race became so fast that I knew it was an impossibility under normal laws of physics. The night became a blue-gray blur in the window as my guts tightened against the acceleration.

It was then that the supernatural was confirmed. The voice in my head became the voice of that which I had always called God- but I knew him to be the voice in my head and the voice was my own. It rode on the crest of that light-filled wave which I had known before in another dream, and I suddenly knew the reality of my circumstances. I was asleep, and the wave was spilling between both the night and awake worlds once again. I was able to dream and simultaneously experience my conscious mind. I was at once reminded that, earlier that night before bed, I had been scribbling down arcane symbols of the Craft as part of my research. I knew that this dream, and the energy that was at hand, had something to do with that research and my previous dream experience.

The God Voice was there, but said nothing. It listened. I screamed out for the fear to stop. It said simply, “No.” And I felt a change within me. I resolved to do what I had known academically to do- I braced against the fear. I embraced the fear, much as one would do on a roller coaster ride. I admitted fully my own mortality to my God and placed my trust in him. Not trust that he would grant me something, or salvation from my mortal peril, but trust that my mortality was absolutely real and normal. My fear was unfounded. I thought to myself how ridiculous it was that I could not do this in my waking life, but had to pronounce it in a dream. Then it became less ridiculous as the voice spoke a satisfied, “Yes.” and the flood of light, that was One, flooded through me once again and I remembered the power and majesty of the thing that was the voiceless God behind the voice. I awoke bent and tired, but wiser, in the early morning of August 31, 2005.

Return of the Shape Shifter

The dreams of the shape shifter return, later in life, on January 15, 2011.

I was a child, perhaps seven years old, and with the same naiveté and myopic worldview. At times I wasn’t the child, but more like a director watching a child actor in a scene. The scene was taking place in an old, large country house. The place was a bit crowded because of some kind of party being hosted by me parents- who, by the way, were not my actual parents in waking life, but people portraying my parents for the sake of the film I guess. Oh, and it was a horror movie.

Something was alive in the basement, something supernatural or otherworld- we didn’t know which. But, it was deadly whatever it was. Somehow, our exit was

blocked or otherwise not an option from the house, I think because the attack began so suddenly. The thing in the basement would shoot a piercing, hollow tentacle through the floor to this purpose. The appendages were all we could see of the creature, several at a time, fast as lightning, strong. They were each about the size of a drinking straw and seemed to have the sinewy consistency of rigid wire. They, however, were not the deadly part. These straws would shoot through the floor and quickly track down a victim, one at a time or several, and discharge from its hollow interior an arrow-like projectile that would leave the target pierced through and bleeding to death. The first such onslaught took place in the crowded living room, leaving several guests in various forms of contorted demise, several arrows protruding from each one.

In the panic, my parents swept me away to a nearby bedroom, followed by several of the survivors. The attacks from beneath the floor had not reached that room yet, but we all feared that it would only be a matter of time. I was placed on the bed, which seemed to be the safest place, putting at least an extra few feet between me and the floor. Those few moments passed, though, and we heard the now-familiar bang of one of the tentacles punching through the hardwood floor. We couldn't immediately see it, but it was only the passage of another moment before the vicious straw pushed its way up through the mattress beside me. It bent down in my direction, seemed to regard me for a heartbeat. The attack did not come. Instead, there was an awful voice, deep, pervasive.

"I'm so sorry," it said from somewhere below the bed, the tentacle still looking about. "I have done these bad things."

It actually sounded sincerely remorseful when it said those words. A horrendous cracking of wood beams followed, as it somehow forced crack to appear between the wall and the floorboards, creating about a six inch gap through which the darkness of the basement could be seen. I could also see many, many of the straw-tentacles in the light cast from the room into the crack. They writhed and flexed, but still no attack. Instead it went on.

"I admit that it was I who killed all those people. It was me. I admit to doing all the bad things in the world. It was me. It is all my fault." Then, "Do you want to see me? I'll show myself if you like."

I did not know what to say to this sudden admission of guilt and apparent gesture of surrender. It was a change as abrupt as the start of the attack that night. I surely wanted to see the thing, if for no other reason than that it was scarier not knowing where it was beneath our feet. I said, "Yes."

The crevice in the floor groaned to several feet and a being arose from the depths—a being combining the hideous proportions of an alien-demon with the glory and majesty of the most radiant light. It rose slowly and straight, hovering into the room. Its head was a bulging thing, with two large eyes, and a snout for a mouth which was divided in two by what appeared to be a hinged palate, rows of teeth for both the upper and lower mouth spaces, and a tongue for each. It was speaking, but I was too fixated on the

oscillation of the mouth parts to hear the words. The tentacles stood straight out from its body, perfectly horizontal, in bunches and bundles of perhaps a dozen or more, like some sort of worn out and weird carwash brush. The most surprising part was that from every space between the bundles shot a bright ray of light, which streamed out and away from the being in the same direction as the now stick-straight appendages. It was stunning and beautiful, and it regarded me. It said, "This is what I have to do."

That's when the most brutal of the killings began. Not only were there arrows, but the tentacles themselves plowed into the guts of the cringing houseguests in fist-sized bundles that seemed to stir their insides. The guests seemed frozen in their horrified poses, as if spellbound, awaiting their turn to be drilled and skewered. Bundles of tentacles reached past me and I instinctively pushed them away, feeling their strength as they passed, but none were headed for me. Everyone was dead on the floor beside the bed, except for my parents at the foot of the bed, who were spared. It regarded them and they did not move or make a sound. It turned to me once again.

"Do you know why I did this?" it asked me.

Somehow I knew. I could feel something subtle at work in my mind. I somehow could feel a connection to this creature, a sympathy, a kind of an unnatural understanding. I said, "Because they were scared."

"Yes," is said quietly, "and why else?" He gestured towards my parents.

I thought for a moment, then, "Because they hate you, and would kill you if they could."

"Yes," was all it said.

"Am I coming with you?" I found myself articulating some thought that seemed to come from nowhere rational.

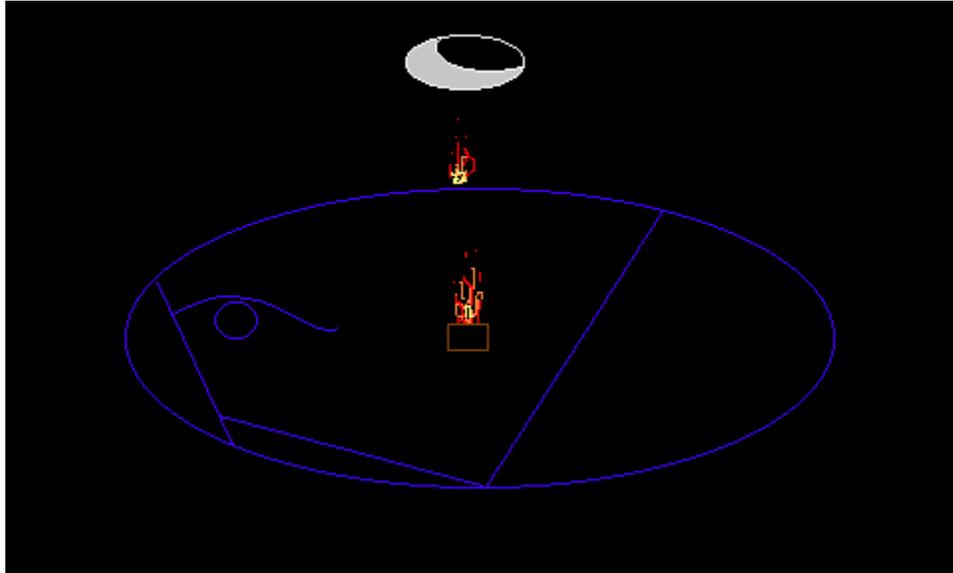
"Yes," was all it said once again.

It reached out with two of its tentacle bundles, and I reached for his repulsive body, which seemed to be encased in some sort of clear amniotic sack. I was not repelled as I should have been, though. I was not scared either. I could feel my parents' desire to pull me back, and to keep me safe. But, they didn't know that they were not really saving me from anything. I knew, as the creature embraced me gently and began to carry me into the darkness which I knew to go much farther than the basement, that this was about my being and my life. Something powerful came over me, and I spoke another thought that should not have been in my head, but was and was right to say.

"I feel that I am not a virgin," I said, but knowing I did not mean sexually.

“That is why you are good,” it replied.

The darkness was closing in as we descended through the hole in the floor. Rather than be scared, I resolved to learn a new life in that darkness.



Native Dance Dream

I found myself in a frantic dance, but not like other times I had danced. I felt this one. There were emotions attached to every limb, and meaning to every movement. Subtle forms of thought were hanging in the air around by body in the cool night. I was outside, in front of the circle of lakeside cottages where I lived. It was a misty night, and I faced the general direction of the lake as I moved. Every combination of steps and gestures seemed to act as a spell, bringing forth another fear from the dark fields surrounding my magic circle. I had not immediately noticed the circle, but the fine blue tracings became clearer as my mind became focused on what I was doing. I didn't even know what kind of dance I was doing at first, but soon recognized it as Native American—a spirit dance. My body seemed to spin the blue lines of the circle as a spider spins the silk of a web. There was more geometry in the circle, spun from my body: a line from the north of the circle to the southwest. There were more glowing tracings, but I was unsure of their exact location within the circle. There were small fires and other lights at certain points along the perimeter of the circle, with a transparent floating altar at the center bearing a cup of flaming coals. I held a small fire in my hands as I moved in my frantic dance along the interior edge of the circle, which may have been about 50 feet across and touched the corners of two of the cottages. The lines of the circle and other geometry hovered a few feet off the ground.

The sensation was that I was spelling out some subtle language or spell with each part of the dance. The dance was connected to the darkness that lay outside the protective circle by these tendrils of thought and energy. They conjured new demons every moment, which I feared greatly, but confronted at the edge of the circle. I was relying on my knowledge of something underlying the whole ceremony that I know would insulate me from attack. I also know that the attackers were only apparitions that I, myself, had conjured rather than summoned.

The dance went on, exhaustingly. I sweated even in the cool, damp night air, shirtless as I was. I was surprised that I was not at all armed, which would usually be the case when I undertook such an intentionally scary enterprise. The only “real” objects in the whole affair were the cottages, me, and the buckskin pants I was wearing. I knew the geometry, fires, and apparitions to be something otherworldly and symbolic- though I could sense them. I fought off the last wraith with the same dance that had conjured them, and made a broad sweeping motion with my body, arms outstretched, along the inside of the circle. I felt the presence of Time and knew that it was time to bring this ritual to a climax. My grand motion blew out all the fires in the circle except one, in the south, towards the lake. It was just to the left of the strong line that ran from behind me, in the north, past my right side to the southwest. I checked the alignment of this fire with the one I held in my hand- all was right. I stepped behind the altar, still facing south, to sight along the flaming coals there to the one remaining perimeter flame. Just as I made the step to the left that brought the two fires into alignment, the moon slipped in the sky to my right, low in the sky, perfectly in alignment with both flames. This was the completion of the ceremony, I knew intuitively. I had turned another key in yet another door.