

Anthology Complex

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Volume 2 - Composition 2

(2:2 / 5 / V)

Part 5

SNOWY PASTURES

2:2:5:41

ACT I

SCENE I - A blizzard in the middle of winter during the night time and on a dark road

- ♪ And take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind
- ♪ Down the foggy ruins of time
- ♪ Far past the frozen leaves
- ♪ The haunted, frightened trees
- ♪ Out to the windy beach
- ♪ Far from the twisted reach
- ♪ Of crazy sorrow
- ♪ Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free
- ♪ Silhouetted by the sea
- ♪ Circled by the circus sands
- ♪ With all memory and fate
- ♪ Driven deep beneath the waves
- ♪ Let me forget about today
- ♪ Until tomorrow

Michelle was completely lost as she drove down a road she had never been on before. She could barely see in front of her, passing by signs until finally she came to a detour. The turn easily made her even more lost than she was already, and the snow just kept on falling down onto the land wet and heavy.

Michelle Erin: I can't see a thing! I have to get warm! I've got to find a town or something and get out of this crazy storm...

After driving for a few more miles, Michelle saw what she believed to be a sign to the entrance of a town, but the sign was buried in snow in the form of a mound.

SCENE II - Foster Residence

♪ Dear Erin
♪ I hope you're well and what you've done is right
♪ Oh it's been such hell
♪ I wish you well and hope you're safe tonight
♪ It's been a long day coming and long will it last
♪ When it's last day leaving, and I'm helping it pass
♪ By loving you more

Michelle Erin: Is that a house over there in the distance? Maybe someone is home and will give me assistance...

Michelle drove over to the home, standing all alone with only a gnome, and then knocked on its door. No one answered at first, but suddenly it peaked open a short and angry old man.

Michelle Erin: Hi. I am lost. I don't know where I am. My name is Michelle, can you help me Mr. Sam?

Old Man Sam: Look, girl! Get off my property! 'Fore I get my shotgun and saw you off properly!

Michelle became very afraid of the old man's demeanor and left abruptly, but the blizzard became stronger and she could not find her car. Instead, she continued to walk down the icy road, thinking about where she was and how she was going to get home.

SCENE III – Town Library

♪ He seemed impressed by the way you came in.
♪ "Tell us a story, I know you're not boring."
♪ I was afraid that you would not insist.
♪ "You sound so sleepy, just take this, now leave me."
♪ I said please don't slow me down.
♪ If I'm going too fast.
♪ You're in a strange part of our town...

Michelle Erin: This storm is relentless, I can't see anything but white. How do people

even live here? It gets so cold at night... I hope Scoot is well fed, and resting in bed, he was in so much pain when I left because he hurt his head while I read. I hope he didn't eat my new cookbook, I want to make that peach pie with that plump look! Mom and dad will be surprised when they see my new talents, surely, then, they will have to raise my allowance!

Just then, in the white distance, a building began to take form in the storm, maybe this was a place Michelle Erin could become warm. She walked into the library, and the place was filled with people, though in a moment or two they would all be leaving as the library was closing.

Lilith the Librarian: Howdy, if you're new, the bathroom is along this wall, it's perpendicular. Otherwise, are you looking for a book in particular?

Michelle Erin: No... I'm lost. Can you tell me where I am?

Lilith the Librarian: You don't know where you are? Why, you're in! ... Hmm, no, that's just too far.

The librarian went through stacks of papers as she was unsure of the town's location, and mysteriously, she could not find any papers with any addresses, and this was, indeed, a strange provocation.

Lilith the Librarian: I'm not sure what to do, the best I can offer is to call the police for you.

Deputy Krauser: Lilith, what was that you said? Does someone need assistance from Big Ted?

Lilith the Librarian: (laughing) Yes, silly, this girl is lost and all alone, can you take her to the police station so she can use a phone?

Deputy Krauser: You know I'd do anything for you, Lilith, apple of my eye in...

Ted Krauser's radio then signed off, his precinct alerting him of possible bandits in the town, but he was fearless in front of Lilith, so he shrugged it off without a sound. He put his arm around Michelle and walked her out to his vehicle, and as she left, she saw a sign on the ceiling she had not seen before.

“Almost we are persuaded that there is something, after all, something essential, waiting for all of us in the dark areas of the world, and originally loathsome, immeasurable, and certainly, nameless.”

SCENE IV – A curved road with a cliff on its side, inside Big Ted's vehicle

♪ Each one with the money in their pocket
♪ Could go out and buy themselves a brand new car
♪ But they all held the money they had
♪ Money they hoped would take them very far
♪ The sky was bright, a traffic light, now and then a truck
♪ And they hadn't seen a cop around all day, what luck
♪ They brought everything they needed
♪ Bags and scales to weigh the stuff
♪ The driver said the border's just over the bluff

Deputy Krauser: You have two first names? Were your parents lames?

Michelle Erin: No...

Deputy Krauser: Do you prefer Erin or Michelle? Or is that a difference you cannot tell?

Michelle Erin: I much prefer Michelle over Erin, Michelle was my grandmother's name and she was from Bebaron.

Deputy Krauser: Okay, Michelle wins, you can call me Ted, wait, what... Is this where the road ends or where it begins?

The two had driven into an area of the town where the road came to a dead end, and immediately Michelle remembered that this was the exact place she was when she took the detour earlier in the night. Ted, confused, went to the trunk of his car to retrieve his map of the town, but returned even more puzzled, as he could not find it and for some reason could not remember the name of the town he policed. Sitting there, thinking hard for a moment, he reversed the car and suddenly the route to the police station took hold in his mind.

Deputy Krauser: Okay, okay, it's coming back to me now, I remember which way to go and I remember how.

As they drove towards the station, a slow driving black car almost brushed sides with them. Inside there were three men and a woman, covered in black from head to toe and then back to head again.

SCENE V – Town Police Station

♪ Home, home again
♪ I like to be here when I can
♪ When I come home cold and tired
♪ It's good to warm my bones beside the fire
♪ Far away, across the field
♪ The tolling of the iron bell
♪ Calls the faithful to their knees
♪ To hear the softly spoken magic spell

Deputy Krauser: We almost got lost! I almost hit a bin! Just ask the girl! Her name's Erin!

Michelle Erin: It's true, it's true. It's terrible out there. It's cold and dark and snowy, I'm just glad to be in here where there is warm air.

Sheriff Doug: Well, it's good to know that you are safe. Let's get you a form and some tea from the cafe.

Michelle filled out the form, providing her full identity. Michelle Erin, fourteen years of age, African-American, five foot five with a birthmark that was beige.

Sheriff Doug: Don't worry, we'll get you home before long, away from this blizzard storm. You'll be home again, where it's safe and warm.

Michelle Erin: ...I have a question, do you know Mr. Sam? He was the first person I ran into and he was mean like a bloodied clam.

Sheriff Doug: Mr. Sam? Oh, he's a real meanie. But don't mind him, he's harmless, it's the nice people you want to keep in your scenery.

After a moment, Douglas McCown could not find any information on Michelle Erin, and what's more, the database did not store any information on any town, not even his own. It was decided, after an hour of failure, that Michelle would temporarily be stored at a motel for the night and they would pick back up in the morning when hopefully the blizzard had subdued.

ACT II

SCENE I - Hunter's Moon Motel

♪ For too long now, there were secrets in my mind
♪ For too long now, there were things I should have said
♪ In the darkness, I was stumbling for the door
♪ To find a reason, to find the time, the place, the hour
♪ Waiting for the winter Sun and the cold light of day
♪ The misty ghosts of childhood fears
♪ The pressure is building and I can't stay away
♪ I throw myself into the sea
♪ Release the wave
♪ Let it wash over me
♪ To face the fear I once believed
♪ The tears of the prisoner for you and for me

The motel was owned by husband and wife, but the couple was strange, indeed, and both lived an ironic life. The husband liked men and wife liked women, but neither knew this fact of the other for they lied from the beginning. They fibbed and fabbed to seem socially normal, and though they fought constantly, in the presence of guests they always appeared to be formal.

Luis the Husband: Hello! Welcome to the Hunter's Moon motel!

Lois the Wife: We are so glad you're here! We treat everyone well!

Michelle Erin: Hi, I need to stay here if that's all right. Deputy Ted drove me here just for the night.

Deputy Ted: (walking in) That's right, that's right, the station will pay the bill. Give the girl your finest room with the least amount of chill.

For the next ten minutes arrangements were made for Michelle, and she thought to herself, "What a fine motel." She was brought and shown to her warm room, and the heater was already on, and soon after she was left alone in the room, everyone else was gone.

Not too long after, she went to the bathroom to wash her face, but in the corner she saw a sort of map, and it looked like it had a name to this place. At the top of the map was the

name “Snowy Pastures,” and it had a view of the entire town, and its motto was “Terra Incognita.”

The strange map seemed to have a gray light on it, and everywhere she moved, the gray light followed. This told her that the map had a sort of censor, and wherever it was, it would know.

Intrigued, Michelle sat on the bed and looked all over the map, seeing a library, a beauty salon, a school, a cabin and much more. The location that stuck out most to her was named “Cardice,” and this was only a few yards from the Hunter's Moon Motel. For an unknown reason, Michelle could not fall asleep, and growing ever curious, she left the motel to visit Cardice.

SCENE II - Cardice Cemetery

- ♪ The dogs are howling at the midnight moon.
- ♪ I'm on my way to where the black rose blooms.
- ♪ The mountain's high, the night is cold.
- ♪ I feel the sunshine; a black rose grows.
- ♪ Together again, we're as common as sin, they say.
- ♪ We just walk around the stones they throw.
- ♪ Night after night, we steal away to where.
- ♪ Love don't see no colors in the shadows.

Michelle Erin: What a bitter cold wind, the worst I've ever experienced! It's a good thing I'm close though, only a few more yards until I'm there!

Suddenly, Michelle saw a grate, and she suspected the way to Cardice was just under this plate. She lifted it up, and a smell of death came from below, and though she was scared, her curiosity would only grow.

She climbed down the ladder into the darkness it carried, and finally touching down, there was no more snow, there were only things buried. She walked down the long way, brick walls on either side, to a place of mourning, for all those who have died.

Egor the Undertaker: Halt! Who has given you permission to enter this tomb? This is a place of peace for many to call home!

Michelle Erin: I'm sorry, I'm lost, I didn't know where I was going. I'll leave immediately, surely I stumbled upon here only without knowing.

Egor the Undertaker: (examining Michelle) ...It's okay, you are just a girl. The dead will forgive you for intruding their world.

The living stood above the dead, and to each other many words were said, and at some unmistakable hour the undertaker was rid of his dread. He had not seen a soul in years, but now someone had played the role of wiping away his invisible tears.

Egor the Undertaker: Haha! Let me guess, he threatened to saw you off properly?

Michelle Erin: Haha! Yes! Then I ran off his property!

Egor the Undertaker: That's Old Man Sam for you, always angry and gory.

Michelle Erin: Why is that? Does he have a story?

Egor the Undertaker: Girlfriend, sit down, make yourself right. I am going to tell you a tale of Sam's plight. Sam Foster was born without a penis, but at a young age he was deemed a genius. While all the other boys were poking the girls, he was all by his lonesome in a world of chocolaty vanilla swirls. His father owned the ice cream shop just down the way, and his mother, a criminal woman, was held in Ganigen Bay. So I guess you could say, raised primarily surrounded by ice, this cold town was a good fit for a person who wasn't very nice. After his father died, and his mother still locked away, he attempted to break her out of prison just before execution day. He failed, miserably, comically, but escaped authorities with artistic delusion, and today we guard his past as he lives with us in his own seclusion.

Michelle Erin: He has no penis? That's awful, I guess. They say the Lord works in mysterious ways, but sometimes it seems like it's just a mess!

Egor the Undertaker: ...Only those he loves does he bless...

Michelle Erin: Hey Egor, would you be so kind as to tell me the time?

Egor the Undertaker: It's just past midnight, when the town's border lights begin to shine.

SCENE III - Hunter's Moon Motel

♪ Plato's cave is full of freaks
♪ Demanding refunds for the things they've seen
♪ I wish they could believe
♪ In all the things that never made the screen
♪ And just slow down everyone

♪ You're moving too fast
♪ Frames can't catch you when
♪ You're moving like that

After Michelle had left Cardice, she felt hungry and wondered about rice. She was entering the motel now, and at the front desk she saw the two sons of Luis and Lois, she greeted them, and them her, then passed by a flower that was bluish and lotish. On her way to her room, she saw Lilith in the distance, and Lilith walked to her with a face that was grimace.

Lilith the Librarian: Jesus! It's cold, I can feel breakage in my knee bone! Hey, you're still here? I thought they brought you home?

Michelle Erin: Nope. Hehe. I'm still here. They put me in this hotel, I mean motel, to wait for the snowstorm to clear.

Lilith the Librarian: Oh wow! Yay! That means I have a new neighbor! Would you like to come in? Tonight you can be my entertainment and savior!

Just then a town light rose green in the west, and a blue one, a red one, a yellow one, north south and east, all rose at behest. But who was giving the command, Michelle thought, so she asked her new friend Lilith, this question that she caught.

Michelle Erin: What are those lights rising at every which way? Has the town entered some holiday?

Lilith the Librarian: No, no, they go up each night honey, and boy are they beautiful, the yellow one is so sunny!

After talking this way of the prettiness of each light, Lilith agreed to take Michelle to the closest one tonight. And so they got in her car and began their tour, and in no time did they arrive at the blue light sight.

SCENE IV - Near a lake

♪ Bear paws and rascal power
♪ Watching us in your garage
♪ Little girl you ate the neighbor
♪ The nova is over
♪ Wake up and play

♪ By the radio
♪ Make room for Erin's bare feet
♪ The love of a martian
♪ Tick tock and waiting for the meteor
♪ This clock is opening another door
♪ Blood flowers in the kitchen
♪ Signing off and winding down
♪ This martian ends her mission
♪ The nova is over

Lilith the Librarian: Each light is an exit to the outside of this place, this blue one leads to a lake that we all call Lake Lace. The yellow one leads out to a mountain, and the green one a forest, the red one is the least exciting, leading out to simply a field we call Tourist. It is most likely the path you took to get here, am I right?

Michelle Erin: I think you are, I don't remember a forest or a mountain or a lake, I just remember fields, which is probably why I got lost while I was eating some cake.

Lilith the Librarian: The forest is my favorite, but I've only been once in July. You see, I was born here, and I have never left, I don't know why.

SCENE V - Hunter's Moon Motel

♪ There's a feeling I get
♪ When I look to the west
♪ And my spirit is crying for leaving
♪ In my thoughts I have seen
♪ Rings of smoke through the trees
♪ And the voices of those who stand looking
♪ And it's whispered that soon, if we all call the tune
♪ Then the piper will lead us to reason
♪ And a new day will dawn
♪ For those who stand long
♪ And the forests will echo with laughter

Michelle Erin: Thank you so much for taking me to Lake Lace. Gee, I couldn't sleep all night, I tried my back, my side, even my face!

Lilith the Librarian: You can't sleep, too? I thought I was the only one. I can't sleep either unless it's under the morning Sun. In the night, I'd thought I'd slept, but I don't

wake up refreshed. I only wake up more tired than when I laid down my head to rest. But tonight there is no fear, for I have you! Come into my room, we can talk all night, about that light that is so blue...

Inside, Michelle asked Lilith if she could use her telephone, she wanted to try one call to see if she could reach her mother, Shawnoan. And when she dialed the number, the phone began to ring clear, but suddenly there was a ringing in the sky, and there was a ringing in her ear.

Michelle Erin: Did you hear that ringing, it was so loud!

Lilith the Librarian: I didn't hear a thing, but I think I saw something move in that cloud!

They both went to the window and saw a cloud with no core, and it confused the both of them, for as it got closer, a lightning struck from it and hit the drug store.

ACT III

SCENE I - Town Drug Store

♪ On the hill the stuff was laced with kerosene
♪ But yours was kitchen-clean
♪ Everyone stopped to stare at your technicolor motor home
♪ Every A-Frame had your number on the wall
♪ You must have had it all
♪ You'd go to Snowy Pastures on a dare and you'd go it alone
♪ Could you live forever?
♪ Could you see the day?
♪ Could you feel your whole world fall apart and fade away?

When Lilith and Michelle arrived at the drug store, they found a shocking site. The automatic door was consistently going back and forth, slamming into the body of Simore Albrite. He had been knocked on conscious, still breathing in form, but his body was reaching hyperthermia because of the growing storm.

Lilith the Librarian: Quick, we've got to move his body to where there's heat, then call Ted and tell him about this situation at Simore's Drugs & Meat.

Male Bandit 1: Hey lady, hold it right there! I've got a gun, she's got a knife, so don't you dare!

Male Bandit 2: Let's lock them in the store! We got what we came for, no need to puzzle up more!

Male Bandit 3: I'll take the girl, you take the lady. You guys, don't do anything stupid, and you'll survive this, maybe...

And in blitzing fashion, Lilith ran into the storm, and when Michelle saw the confusion on the female bandit's face, Michelle too blitzed into the storm in evasion. The female bandit, along with one of the male bandits, ran after Lilith, while the other two bandits chased after Michelle.

Michelle Erin: Heelloo!! Someone help mee! Heeellloooo! Is anyone there!!! Helloooo! I'm being chased!! Please!! Someone must care!!!!

But no one came to help her, perhaps it was so that no one cared. And slowly, the bandits won in closing speed, until they snatched her by the neck to continue their deed.

SCENE II - Somewhere near the yellow mountain light

♪ Mirrors on the ceiling
♪ The pink champagne on ice
♪ And she said "We are all just prisoners here, of our own device"
♪ And in the master's chambers
♪ They gathered for the feast
♪ They stab it with their steely knives
♪ But they just can't kill the beast
♪ Last thing I remember
♪ I was running for the door
♪ I had to find the passage back to the place I was before
♪ "Relax," said the nightwatcher
♪ "We are programmed to receive
♪ You can check-out any time you like
♪ But you can never leave!"

Male Bandit 3: You're lucky we don't kill you, running like that. Make me run again and I'll skin you like a cat.

Male Bandit 2: Yeah, yeah, he's right you know. Ain't too much fun running in this town, ain't much fun running in this snow!

Michelle Erin: What do you want with me, I know nothing about your crime and there was nothing that I heard. Please, let me go, I won't tell a soul, I promise... You have my word.

Male Bandit 3: ...No one in this town is trustworthy, not a single one. You know why Simore the Businessman is out right now? He was selling us dope illegally, because selling drugs legally is no fun.

Male Bandit 2: Yeah, yeah, and now that we're done with him, we're onto you and your lady friend. We're gonna hold you both ransom and demand five million dollars. Hell, maybe even ten.

As the triplet got closer and closer to the yellow light, Michelle began to develop mental images in her mind. The closer they got, the more she saw the image of her yellow lamp back home. This continued until finally they arrived at the cabin hideout the bandits had built. There, they found their remaining bandit friends.

Female Bandit: The lady escaped our grasp, but that's no problem, not here. She ran towards the red light, and there's nothing out there, so chances are she'll freeze to death with the deer.

Male Bandit 2: Excellent. Say, what time is it now? I need a drink after all this mayhem.

Male Bandit 1: Must still be early in the morning, no? Maybe one or two a.m.?

It was two a.m. in this town with a snowy past, and at last, all laid down very fast. It must have been at least thirty minutes until an echo was heard, and when the third bandit looked out of his window towards the mountain past a tree with a funny branch, he saw the coming of a wild avalanche.

Male Bandit 3: Oh my God! Everyone! Go to the fridge and grab all the ranch! We've got to get outta here before the avalanche!

And so all four bandits went into the kitchen in a scurry, for they needed to grab all of the stolen ranch they could find, they needed to do this in a hurry. Just before they left, though, they unlocked the door to Michelle's room to set her free, to give her at least some kind of chance to survive this avalanche, to help her in some degree.

As the avalanche came down hard, at first the four bandits all ran in different directions in

wildly crazy fashion. Michelle was the last to leave, and her odds of survival was that of a fraction.

She ran and she ran, and then she ran some more, and somehow she ran past bandit number four. She ran faster, harder, carefree, and suddenly she passed bandit number three. She ran with a second wind towards the light that was blue, and now she was past bandit number two. And finally, she sprinted, it was a record run, and of course, she ran past bandit number one.

After running faster than all of her captors, she turned around, and the sight she saw was amazing to procure. All of the bandits had been buried by the avalanche, and now the avalanche had begun to bury her.

SCENE III - Under an avalanche

♪ Are you such a dreamer
♪ To put the world to rights?
♪ I'll stay home forever
♪ Where two and two always makes up five
♪ I'll lay down the tracks
♪ Sandbag and hide
♪ January has April's showers
♪ And two and two always makes up five
♪ It's the devil's way now
♪ There is no way out
♪ You can scream and you can shout
♪ It is too late now
♪ Because you have not been
♪ Paying attention

Michelle was beginning to suffer frostbite, and losing a limb, she thought she might. Buried by the ice and snow, she continued to climb towards the sky, until finally she found the top on high. She lifted herself up, looking around for any bandits, then she lifted herself out and wondered if they had all been killed by the avalanche.

It only took a few minutes for her to see that she was wrong, and though three of them were indeed killed by the avalanche, bandit number two was alive and well and walking

towards her with a rare two-dollar bill and a jar of ranch.

Male Bandit 2: ...Yeah, yeah, I'm still here, thank God for that one tree! Hey, girl, get back here, if you tell a soul about me, I'll murder your whole family!

When the second bandit began to chase her through the blizzard, Michelle ran again, this time finding a street.

Michelle Erin: Heelloo!! Someone help mee! Heeelloooo! Is anyone there!!! Helloooo! I'm being chased!! Please!! Someone must care!!!!

And this time someone did care, for in the distance, was a slow moving vehicle with a blinding light. She flagged it down, standing in front of it, telling the driver of her plight.

Stranger: What are you doing in the middle of the road? Get in here, you're crazy, you'll catch a cold!

When Michelle entered the car, the driver told her that he was lost, that he somehow happened upon this town, and now he needed guidance, help, so she told him to drive forward until they could finally see something that resembled buildings. All the while, she constantly looked back to see if the second bandit was still following them.

Michelle Erin: Oh! I almost forgot, I've got a map in my right pant! That will help us find our way out of this trouble, because stand it no longer, I simply can't!

Michelle saw that they were passing by Sam Foster's residence, and when the driver told her that he spotted a house, she told him to keep driving like a scared little mouse.

SCENE IV - Fulcrum Street

♪ If I leave here tomorrow
♪ Would you still remember me?
♪ For I must be traveling on, now
♪ Cause there's too many places I've got to see
♪ But, if I stayed here with you
♪ Things just couldn't be the same
♪ Cause I'm as free as a bird now

♪ And this bird you can not cage

It wasn't too long until they happened in front of a car, and in front of that car another car and another car, and eventually it revealed itself that there was a very long row of cars. And in the curve at the end of the road they saw Big Ted speaking to a driver of a car, and he pointed in a direction and the car went in that direction.

Deputy Krauser: Hello sir, I will need you to follow my instruction. There has been an avalanche, registered a 7.8, and it is possible it will cause great destruction. You see, it is possible that Lake Lace will tsunami onto our town, so you need to make a right here and head towards the school where you will be taken underground.

Stranger: Oh wow! This seems quite scary! I can't even tell...

Deputy Krauser: Hey! Erin! Is that you? I thought you were staying at the motel?

Michelle Erin: I was, I was, until a fair...

Deputy Krauser: Speaking of the motel, have you seen Lilith? She's not there, and I can't find her anywhere.

It was at this moment that Michelle lied, fearing that if she mentioned the bandits, she would be brought in and ran the risk of putting her family at stake.

Michelle Erin: ...I have no idea where she is, but I think she said something about going to the lake...

SCENE V - Fulcrum High School

♪ To the centre of the city where all roads meet, waiting for you

♪ To the depths of the ocean where all hopes sank, searching for you

♪ Well I was moving through the silence without motion, waiting for you

♪ In a room without a window in the corner I found truth

At three-thirty a.m. Michelle wandered into Fulcrum High School, as did the rest of the town, for anyone who stayed anywhere else was nothing short of a fool. She was placed into a classroom with a glass broom that was kept on display, because the basketball team of the school was swept after a four point play.

Raymonde the Teacher: I don't know why they put us in here every time there is an avalanche, my God. The lake never tsunamis, it's just a stupid theory by Rod!

Michelle Erin: You never know what can happen, I have seen a lot of crazy things, like one time a tornado flew up into the air and killed a bird that sings!

Raymonde the Teacher: Really? That's weird. I didn't know that could happen. Maybe Rod is right, maybe that's why he's the captain...

One by one by one the classroom with a glass broom was filled to evade doom, and suddenly there were a hundred people in there, packed like an apocalyptic tomb.

Luis the Husband: Look sons, down there, the lake is rising!

Lois the Wife: Holy moley, you're right! It's getting even bigger, look it's resizing!

And when everyone in the class room with the glass broom that now had a brass moon looked to the north out of their window, they saw the extremely high tide of Lake Lace overtaking their town.

Old Man Sam: My house! My God! My property! I'm going down there right now to saw off that water properly!

Michelle looked up quickly for the speaker of these words, for they sounded terribly familiar, like a dozen angry birds. That's when she saw Sam Foster, the man who had threatened to kill her like a flea, but her fear was compounded when she saw a jar of ranch, and the second bandit who had threatened her family.

Male Bandit 2: (staring at Michelle)

As Sam ran for the door, causing a commotion, Michelle escaped through a connecting room and now had a better view of rising ocean. Lake. Not ocean.

Michelle Erin: If he finds me he'll kill me, I just know. There has to be other safe places here, somewhere where no one else will go.

As Michelle toured the entire school, she could hear the sounds of Lake Lace forming a new pool. It was now causing destruction on the northern side of the town, and soon the whole place would be swimming in a new compound. She heard the houses, the trees, cars, buildings, smacked by the water, and suddenly she found a secret escape at the bottom of the school, though it was lit and from the rest of the school, and was much hotter.

ACT IV

SCENE I – A section of an underground network

♪ Falling, I'm falling
 ♪ Have you ever walked through a room
 ♪ But it was more like the room passed around you
 ♪ Like there was a leash around your neck that pulled you through
 ♪ Have you ever been at some place
 ♪ Recognizing everybody's face
 ♪ Until you realized that there was no one there you knew
 ♪ Well I know
 ♪ Some days, my soul's confined and out of mind
 ♪ Sleep forever
 ♪ Some days, I'm so outshined and out of time
 ♪ Have you ever
 ♪ Falling, I'm falling

She climbed down deep into the unknown until she felt the floor, and the first thing she realized was that this underground was much like that of where she found Egor. Browsing, she came across a brick room with a large number of screen displays. When she got closer, she realized that the displays were viewings of the entire town; she saw a screen of a prison, a high school, a library, Sam swimming towards his house hastily, a cemetery, all the roads that led into the town and much more.

Julio the Nightwatcher: Who is that, show your hands! Don't think about anything, don't conjure up any plans!

Michelle raised her hands quickly and turned around to see a nightwatcher. He approached her cautiously and asked her what it was that she was doing, to which she replied she was simply lost and fell down the well. Being only a girl, his suspicions of spying activity demolished.

Julio the Nightwatcher: This is where we monitor the town, to see if there is any mischief going down.

Michelle Erin: Do you have a camera for the entrance to this place? I may have been

followed and left a trace.

The nightwatcher pointed to a screen in the upper right section, and this was when they both noticed the second bandit climbing down the well with a jar of ranch.

Julio the Nightwatcher: Where are you going, we've only just met? Did you misplace something back home? Or did you forget?

Michelle did not answer, but only kept running for she feared the bandit of great fear, and sometime later, she saw that she was walking underneath a lady prison and heard voices that were very near.

Inmate 1: Did you hear about the tsunami? Is it real?

Inmate 2: Yeah woman, of course it's real. Real as oatmeal.

Michelle kept walking, and eventually she came into another room. The room was filled with gloom, as it was a past artifact of many loans and had many ice cream cones. Sam Foster's father had once dwelled here, but not here, but when the ice cream shop was up there. There she hid, under a lid, and the room became of something candid.

Male Bandit 2: Come back, Giselle! I don't want to hurt you no more! I love you, Jenelle, let's go back to what we were like back at the drug store!

But Michelle did not buy into his tricks, so the bandit went around screaming at everything he kicks. And finally he came to where Michelle was hiding, and he lifted the lid and saw an enjoyable sighting. Though at this sight, they both heard a sound. It was the drowning lake! And the drowning lake was bound!

SCENE II – Underground tunneling way

♪ Kiss me goodbye
♪ Pushing out before I sleep
♪ Can't you see I try
♪ Swimming the same deep water as you is hard
♪ The shallow drowned lose less than we
♪ You breathe the strangest twist upon your lips
♪ And we shall be together

♪ Kiss me goodbye
♪ Bow your head and join with me
♪ And face pushed deep reflections meet
♪ The strangest twist upon your lips
♪ And disappear the ripples clear
♪ And laughing break against your feet
♪ And laughing break the mirror sweet
♪ So we shall be together

The second bandit, along with Michelle, were carried away down a long tunnel by part of Lake Lace, and all through the race, the bandit maintained a strong face. But suddenly Michelle heard a large gasp for air, and when she looked to the bandit, he was no longer there.

She continued down the way, cruising and abusing, just relaxing and feeling good, until suddenly sea animals appeared out of nowhere and put her in a frightful mood.

Martin the Turtle: What in the name of Elijah is going on? I was sleeping and then all of a sudden I wake up in Hong Kong!

Nick the Shark: This isn't Hong Kong, you dunnell! Lake Lace flooded a town and now we're in a tunnel!

Their brief appearance was cut short as the tunnel split into two, the sea animals going left and Michelle going right, into what one might call the place of zhambu.

She passed by many things; a junkyard, broken down doors, abandoned huts, until finally she came upon a hidden room, a place of governance, always kept clean by a sweeping broom.

Ivan the Town Mayor: What is this? Why have you crashed our council meeting? Did you have an appointment? Or is it the tsunami you're fleeing?

Michelle Erin: I was overtaken by the Lake Lace water. Who is that you're holding? Is that your daughter?

Jeter from the Department of Corrections: Don't try to change the subject! You, over there! Detain her. We'll put her in a holding cell, that should refrain her.

And so the town mayor watched with his daughter in his arms as they took away

Michelle, and after all was said and done they continued their council meeting on tax cuts.

Being brought to her holding cell, Michelle saw many imprisoned faces, and she saw on their expressions, the fantasy of many places. The cell door opened and she was pushed inside, the cell door closed then locked, and this gave her no place to hide.

“What is this place?,” she thought outloud, such a damn strange town with a damn strange cloud. And suddenly she heard a whisper in the cell next to hers, so she went over to the wall to ask the occupant a question.

“Hey, do you know where we are?,” she asked. “We're in prison,” the person replied. “No, what town is this?” “It's... Hmm... That's weird. I can't remember its name, even though I can remember the last time I shaved my beard...”

Michelle went back onto the bed and thought for a long while, and if you could measure this long while it would come in the form of a mile.

Egor the Undertaker: Michelle, is that you? What are you doing in jail? And why do you look so blue?

Michelle Erin: Egor! It's you! Can you help me out? Can you please tell these people that I'm not a spy or a clout!

Egor the Undertaker: Ivan's my brother, the mayor of this town. I'll speak to him promptly, just wait, I'll be back around.

SCENE III – Mayor's Office

♪ You didn't realize about the other life that we can give you
♪ We'll open up your eyes and make you see the light that's all around you
♪ We'll help you work it out and then you'll never doubt
♪ Our intuition, our vision, our decision, our mission, so listen
♪ We're going to lead you down to where the Sun is always brightly shining
♪ We'll push away the clouds and show you there's a gold and silver lining
♪ We'll take away the pain, you'll want to try again
♪ You won't be sorry, so don't worry, don't worry, so hurry and join me

Egor entered into Ivan's office to see him for the first time in three years to speak about

Michelle. Ivan, at first glance, knew that his brother came to bargain with him, this, from his face, he could tell.

Ivan the Town Mayor: Hello brother! Have you seen mother?

Egor the Undertaker: I see her everyday Ivan, someday you should stop by the cemetery, there is a lot to discover.

Ivan the Town Mayor: I'm much too busy, this town is like a small city, but enough small talk! Let's chitty chat chitty. What's on your mind, Iggy?

Egor the Undertaker: The girl you've captured, imprisoned, I know her, she is of no harm, you should let her go.

Ivan the Town Mayor: We have to ask her questions first. For example, what she saw on our screens, and how much does she know.

Egor the Undertaker: She is not from this town, she is just passing through.

Ivan the Town Mayor: In that case, I'll take your word, but I hope you are correct brother, I don't want to have to deal with Hugh.

SCENE IV – Underground tunneling way

♪ I looked out this morning and the Sun was gone
♪ Turned on some music to start my day
♪ I lost myself in a familiar song
♪ I closed my eyes and I slipped away
♪ It's more than a feeling, more than a feeling
♪ When I hear that old song they used to play
♪ And I begin dreaming
♪ So many people have come and gone
♪ Their faces fade as the years go by
♪ Yet I still recall as I wander on
♪ As clear as the Sun in the summer sky

In the next ten minutes, Egor arranged for the release of Michelle, and finally she was released as they both walked through a dark part of the underground circuit.

Michelle Erin: Gee, Egor, thanks!

Egor the Undertaker: No problem, Michelle, just make sure you stay away from the lake and the river banks.

Egor showed Michelle back to the opening of where he first met her, which would also lead her back to the motel. But Egor had one last thing to say to her before she went on her way.

Egor the Undertaker: In this place, the mouth has a missing tooth, and one is only allowed a voice when they are ready to speak the truth.

SCENE V – Hunter's Moon Motel

♪ I lived a quiet life
♪ A stranger to champagne
♪ I never dreamed to venture out
♪ To cities of the plain
♪ I'd heard about their way of life
♪ Took it with a pinch of salt
♪ The freedom and the time to play
♪ A life so easy
♪ It intrigued me
♪ When you called to say...

When Michelle made it back above ground, she could see the disaster and damage the tsunami caused in the long distance, and she was thankful that this part of the town had a sort of resistance. Michelle went into her motel room and planned to stay the night, waiting for the storm to slow down and fade away, but this would not be the case. The night was still young.

After once again not being able to fall asleep, she realized it was nearly four in the a.m. And she heard not a sound, not a peep. She went over to the window and stared out into deep space, and when she looked back down, in the distance she saw a truck headed towards the green light, leaving a wide trace.

She watched and watched, and finally out came sheriff Doug, who got out of his truck and walked over to a small area of land where he dug.

After digging, he buried an item and then got back into his car and drove away, and not more than five minutes later did a woman come out of the forest and retrieve what he had left behind.

In her mind, Michelle wandered, then pondered, and then remembered Lilith and how she said each light was an exit to the town. Wanting to escape the town, Michelle took her map out and began walking through the snowstorm to the green light, perhaps to escape through the forest.

ACT V

SCENE I – Fuchisa Forest

♪ So tired of the straight line
♪ And everywhere you turn
♪ There's vultures and thieves at your back
♪ And the storm keeps on twisting
♪ You keep on building the lies
♪ That you make up for all that you lack
♪ It don't make no difference
♪ Escaping one last time
♪ It's easier to believe in this sweet madness, oh
♪ This glorious sadness that brings me to my knees

With great stealth, Michelle passed a cabin house in the woods, a cabin who was occupied by the same individual she saw retrieve Doug's left behind. But suddenly a booby trap caught her leg. The individual ran out of her home, alerted at the same.

Yajir the Hunter: Little girl, what are you doing out here setting off my traps! You're lucky it was a humane one, I made it especially for the furry blaps...

Michelle Erin: Sorry, ma'am! You see, I've been lost for a long while now, I just want to get home but I don't know how!

Yajir the Hunter: (releasing Michelle) Wow, you smell like mustard and grime...

Michelle Erin: I know, I just got back from doing hard time...

After being released, the hunter asked where she was headed, which she replied, anywhere away from here. The hunter warned her that no one has ever left through the woods, and warned that she would eventually become lost, but this did not bother Michelle, for she felt she was already lost, so she went on her way and began at the forest.

Michelle walked, and walked, and walked, until finally she realized she was walking by the same set of trees. This is when she realized she was going in circles, and choosing a random direction different than before, she eventually came upon a lost letter in the frozen ground.

“In 1804, a great settler by the name of Richy Foster began building a town with the help of his colleague, Mitchy McCown. The town would become a great success, attracting all types of attention and many new residents. Because of its constant cold weather, its snowy atmosphere made it somewhat of a 'Winterland,' where families would come together to participate in festivals and carnivals decorated with the type of decor you would find around the time of Christmas. As the town grew, so did its architecture. A school, a library, a prison, dozens of stores, even an underground circuit and tunneling system was built to further progress its establishment. But, tragedy struck when a man by the name of Bipee gave the town a visit. Bipee, at first, was delighted by the family-friendly culture and holiday like presentation the town had, but he soon found it was difficult to leave the town to return home. There were constant blizzards, avalanches, tsunamis, earthquakes, and there was snow every which way he went. When he asked the town residents for help, he received none, and so he became disgruntled, eventually to the point he put a hex on the town, saying no one again shall ever be able to leave it, and those were born in it would never know of the town's name. He erased the knowledge of the town's name so that those who were born in it would never understand the concept of a certain piece of land. They would forever assume this land was the only one there was, and by doing this, it was unlikely one would say 'I want to go here or there.’”

Reading further into the letter, Michelle saw that it was Simore Albrite who put a hex on the town, and immediately, she tried her best to retrace her footsteps as the snow grew heavier. When Michelle finally found the green light, she followed it until Simore's Meat & Drugs came into sight. The store was somewhat damaged by the tsunamic waters but was still somewhat approachable. She saw that Simore's body was gone, so she entered into the store and began looking for him. She checked the front, the sides, and finally, the back, where she found him bandaging deep wounds.

SCENE II – Town Drug Store

♪ On a cobweb afternoon
♪ In a room full of emptiness
♪ By a freeway I confess
♪ I was lost in the pages
♪ Of a book full of death
♪ Reading how we'll die alone
♪ And if we're good, we'll lay to rest
♪ Anywhere we want to go
♪ On my deathbed I will pray
♪ To the gods and the angels
♪ Like a pagan to anyone
♪ Who will take me to heaven
♪ To a place I recall
♪ I was there so long ago
♪ The sky was bruised
♪ The wine was bled
♪ And in the snow you led me on

Simore Albrite: Let me alone. We don't got no service and we ain't got no phone.

Michelle Erin: Simore, I have read the history of this place, and I know you are the one who took away its name and its face.

Simore Albrite: (turning around) Ah... You see, everyone else here is asleep, they have no idea what I did.

Michelle Erin: But it doesn't make sense... In doing so, you inadvertently locked yourself in here and can't get back to your wife and kid.

Simore Albrite: I suppose you are right, but I enjoyed trading the dark for the light.

Michelle thought about what he said and realized that since she had been trapped here, it had always been dark and night. Never did she see any day, not even a ray of sunlight.

Michelle Erin: You've got to remove the hex so I can go back home!

Simore Albrite: I'm sorry, little girl. That is one thing I can't do. It has been so long that the hex is now permanent, and the sky will never again be blue.

Defeated, Michelle sat on a chair next to the register. And suddenly, Simore began

speaking more on the past of the town.

Simore Albrite: I still remember when I first got lost here. I passed by a red light and a sign that read “Welcome to Snowy Pastures.” I came for the holiday spirit and all the fun and games. I remember that this place is somewhere in Chicago, Illinois. I think somewhere in the center. But it has been so long I can't remember the origins.

Michelle Erin: ...The more I think about it, the harder a time I have of remembering where I was before I got lost here. It has only been a few hours, but I don't even know where I was going or from where I came.

Simore Albrite: That's what this place does, if you stay in it long enough. It becomes your world...

Michelle Erin: I don't want this stinky cold old town to be my home! I want to go back to my real home!

Michelle then stormed out of the drug store into the stormy storm. As she ran, she ran past a sign that read “There is no reason to your existence. It may seem cold at first, but it is liberating!” Though she did not see it, it was there.

SCENE III – Security Station

♪ "There must be some kind of way out of here,"
 ♪ Said the joker to the thief,
 ♪ "There's too much confusion.
 ♪ I can't get no relief.
 ♪ Businessmen – they drink my wine,
 ♪ Plowmen dig my earth.
 ♪ None will level on the line,
 ♪ Nobody of it is worth.
 ♪ "No reason to get excited,"
 ♪ The thief – he kindly spoke,
 ♪ "There are many here among us
 ♪ Who feel that life is but a joke.
 ♪ But you and I – we've been through that.
 ♪ And this is not our fate.
 ♪ So let us not talk falsely now.
 ♪ The hour's getting late.

Michelle decided to go back underground to find the security station she had come across before. Her plan was to look around and find an escape or at least some kind of detour. When she found it, she again saw that it was left unoccupied, so she sat and looked at every camera while she ate leftover pie.

She looked around the motel she was staying in, but there was no escape, there wasn't even a bin. She looked around the high school, but the temperature there was way too cool. She looked at the lady prison, but she didn't even want to go there, it would be a bad mission. She looked around the library, but that place was too sticky and hairy. She looked around the police department, but it was of no use for that place was in the very middle of the town's compartment. Her heart jumped when she saw a frozen body near Lake Lacey, and she wondered if it was Lilith, but she could not see a face. Finally, she checked in the direction of the red light, where she saw only a very wide snowy pasture, and though it looked out into the unknown, she knew that this was the only place that would even give her a chance at escape, though she had no idea what was beyond its limits. Before leaving, Michelle spotted her lost car and made plans to recover it. Using her map, she located it and began digging around it to save it from the snow. When she finally got in, it took a moment or two for it to finally start, but eventually it began moving and in the direction of the red light.

SCENE IV – The red light, near a snowy pasture

♪ There's a place where everyone can be happy
♪ It's the most beautiful place in the whole world
♪ It's made of candy canes and planes
♪ And bright red choo-choo trains
♪ And the meanest little boys and the most innocent little girls
♪ And you know I wish that I could go there
♪ It's a road that I have not found
♪ And I wish you the best of luck, dear
♪ Drop a card or a letter to my side of town
♪ Because there's no time for fussing and fighting my friend
♪ But I'm amazed at the hate that you can send because
♪ You... You painted my entire world

At one moment or another, she began driving towards what was now a location damaged by a recent tsunami, and at another moment, she passed by Old Man Sam's home.

Making a right turn, she found a field that led directly to the red light and began driving towards it with no intention of slowing down. The closer she got to the red light, the more unconscious she felt, and suddenly visions of a red cord came into her mind. Instinctively, Michelle reached out for the red cord and caught a hold of it in her mind, but letting go of the driving wheel her vehicle suddenly spun out of control and began flipping and sliding against the snowy pasture.

When Michelle opened her eyes, she saw that she was now in her bedroom, grasping tightly a red headphone cord. She could not believe that she had just awoken from a dream, because the whole ordeal had felt so real to her.

SCENE V – Chicago, Illinois

♪ I listen to these voices
♪ Or is it this house that's giving me chills
♪ As I lie upon this little girl's bed?
♪ Who's at the door? Who's walking near?
♪ Or has my imagination spilled?
♪ This little girl all grown up still fears
♪ Where can I go, where can I hide
♪ From these evil sufferings?
♪ Oh, these images painted on my walls
♪ They say there's a place that I can
♪ Hide in the shadow of your wings
♪ Oh Lord, bring me to this place of refuge

It was only around six a.m. and was still dark out, and when she rose to look out of her window, she saw a deep snow falling and that the ground had been covered in at least ten inches of snow. “Wow,” she thought to herself as she marveled at the snow and at a single glowing purple light in the far distance.

In a direction of her room was a yellow lamp, and in another was a blue television, and in yet another was a green computer.

On the ground beside her bed was Scoot, who was sound asleep with a chewy toy that resembled a girl bandit. When she looked to the right of her television, she noticed a film

named “Harvest Moon Motel.” Near her bookbag, she noticed a book she was studying in class that dealt with the dangers of water.

It all came very clear to Michelle Erin when she found her school identification card and looked at it in detail, and upon this discovered that it instead read Erin Michelle.

EPILOGUE

In the evergrowing vastness of the dream world, there are many “Snowy Pastures” that are adventured each night. Some places are not snowy towns, but brightly lit summer cities, or deserts that run for miles with long stretches of clear blue sky. Some take place by rivers with huts on either side or in volcanic areas that continually erupt. In each of these places is a unique cast, and if you visit a place like one of these in your dreams, the people may stay the same or may change completely.

These worlds, they are never fully designed and questions often go unresolved. Though these places may be incomplete, they are real when contained within the dream world. Depending on the dreamer's location and what the dreamer has experienced up until that moment they lay down to rest their eyes, the dreamer will unlock one of these worlds to adventure. This world that the dreamer has unlocked will not always be brand new, for it could have been traveled by a previous dreamer who had already left. A previous dreamer who too occupied a similar location and had similar experiences may have visited Snowy Pastures long before, or may visit it long after.

With the same concept in mind, some have speculated that our own real world is only one of these many places. And before we were all brought to this universe to inhabit this Earth, our outer selves met the same demanding criteria to dream of a nameless and mysterious anthology world.

THE END

Chapter 42
ALCOVES
2:2:5:42

ALL the music in this God forsaken world couldn't save it. All the songs of love and peace fall on deaf ears and are lost in the trashed towns of yesterday.

I was staring out of my window, watching heavy snow fall. They say this will be the worst blizzard in twenty years. They can't even comfortably predict the amount, they just know this will affect the daily process we all love to go through.

A sound came from the living room, a sound telling me that Lynne had just sent me a message on a device she now forces me to use.

Lynnette: Spook

Unregistered: ?

Lynnette: They stopped the train

Lynnette: Don't know when 8I'll be home

Unregistered: Oh. How was work?

Lynnette: Fine, just left the airport. Giselle never showed up to relieve me but there was no way I was staying

Lynnette: Now with this weather, I'm thinking maybe I should have stayed...

Lynnette: What are you done?

Lynnette: Done*

Lynnette: Doing**

Unregistered: Nothing

Lynnette: I'm going to send you a picture okay?

Unregistered: Do it

Lynnette: Lol

Unregistered: You breathed on the window and drew the pi symbol? It's that cold inside the train?

Lynnette: Yes. Brrr

Unregistered: Why did you sent that? Did something new pop into your head?

Lynnette: No... I'm going to bake us a pie when I get home. Lol!

Unregistered: Don't play with my em9tions like that

Lynnette: Sorry Spookie...

Lynnette: Em just told me she refuses to drive so the kids will be with her probably until school starts back up

Lynnette: This guy sitting in front of me keeps falling asleep to catch his head

Lynnette: I have a question

Lynnette: What does sPphire muses mean?

Unregistered: F4om the poem?

Lynnette: Yeah

Unregistered: If I ever wrote a song or painted a picture or wrote a book it would be about you. Isn't that what a muse is?

Lynnette: But why sapphire? Why blue?

Unregistered: Your blue rosedress with the nirds on it

Lynnette: I'm assuming crystal desires is sex?

Unregistered: Yes

Lynnette: Spinel feelings?

Unregistered: This I'd more than one question...

Lynnette: Is that sex too?

Unregistered: Not everything is sex Lynne

Lynnette: Then?

Unregistered: You give me feelings. Sometimes I can't even stand up straight because they're so overwhelming

Lynnette: Spine?

Unregistered: Yes!

Lynnette: Amber passion. My fruit

Unregistered: (:

Lynnette: Gre3n is the color of money, you treasure me like money?

Unregistered: No. It means I'm glad we live like simple folk

Lynnette: But you still treasure me right?

Unregistered: Like the last emerald on ERth. You know you are the déjìà queen

Lynnette: And you know you are the Spookster of my life. ;]

Lynnette: The traine is moving again

Unregistered: Cool

Lynnette: We just passed Jacksonville. Thank you for jeeping me entertained. I'll see you soon Spookie

Unregistered: :]

I put down the phone and go back into my bedroom and back to the window where the snowfall continues to fall wet and heavy. Street lights light up the dark street to help pedestrians, but that snow down there is just too tall.

I wonder why she had pi on her mind. Since we've started having these conversations she has demonstrated a strange mind, and I'm very curious to know what she is thinking.

When she sent me the picture of her pie, it immediately reminded me of a dream I had

last year where I was looking at inscriptions inside an alcove. One of the carvings, of course, was a circle, which is what flared in my mind.

A philosopher would have you believe that we are all dying from the moment we are born. A mysticist would have you believe that while the philosopher is right, each second closer to death is a second closer to rebirth. A second closer to repeating the cycle. Newton's third law would have you believe that birth and death work in opposing ways, acting on each other, which is why even though you are a second closer to death, you are also a second closer to being reborn.

You want to know who told me that? She did. I gave her the barework, told her about these ideas in the first place, and then she gave me a way of looking at it that I had never thought of before. I am going to use her and pick her brain to further my studies.

Thinking about that alcove always increases my depression, because it is a dream that is on the same dreamline as "Sleep When You're Dead," a dream including my father. By association with his illness, it reminds me of Lynne's, and it never lets me forget that disease is a major part of the cycle of life.

My finger still twitches from time to time, and it has gotten worse since I last spoke to you. I hope I don't have a neurological disease or any condition that may affect my motor skills. It's probably nothing. Let me not worry. Let me instead wonder about life until death. Let me forget about today until tomorrow.

Chapter 43

GOD'S TRIANGLE

2:2:5:43

I told Lynne it was a nice song as we walked out of the blizzard and back into our apartment building. I followed her into her apartment, closing the door behind me, and then asked her if she realized the song had religious overtones.

“Besides Genesis?,” she asked. “Doesn't it seem more like Adam and Eve?,” I asked. She thought about it and then partially agreed.

We kept our coats on and went inside into her bedroom to finally sleep. I say we kept our coats on because it was necessary to sleep with them; something with the heating system in the building was wrong and the landlord was taking his sweet time to fix it.

As we laid there in silence, every once in a while I could have sworn I saw her breath evaporate into the thin air. It took only ten minutes for the cold air to begin to annoy the both of us and we soon found that it was difficult to sleep.

“Do you believe in God?,” she suddenly asked me. I turned to look at her, “You really want to get into this now?” “I do,” she replied. “I believe in a higher being, but not a personal God.” “Personal God?” “I didn't adopt the same God as you.” “So no 'thy son thy father and thy holy spirit' for you?” “No.”

“...I am academically religious, though,” I told her. I told her to take out her phone and look up a certain verse. She reached over with her cold hand and began searching for it, and once she had found it, she read it aloud. “And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.”

The moment these words left her lips she became naked, clothed only with a single leaf. I looked around and at first I thought of Datura, but eventually I realized the walls were painted that of a garden.

“God fighting Satan during the end of times? The Christ and the Antichrist waging war?,” she asked.

“Yeah maybe, I don't know, but something I always found interesting about the Antichrist is that he is never actually referenced as a person,” I said, “he is as much an idea or an entity than a real person.” “But you just called him a he, and so did that verse.” In a way she was right, but pronouns are often used as substitutes.

Suddenly her phone made a noise and she told me it was a message from some Chloe. After reading it, she continued on the subject. “How does it all end anyway? I never read that far.” “Everyone knows how it ends. Jesus comes back and beats up the Antichrist.”

We continued our discourse on the Antichrist for some time because it was much too cold to sleep, and many things were learned of it all.

The entire existence of an “Antichrist” is based on the abstract idea of “free will.” Without free will, nothing could be deemed “good” or “evil,” there would be no concept of either because when we judge a person, our judgement is predicated on the fact that this individual had a choice in what he or she did. If there is no real concept of good and evil, can there be a Heaven and a Hell?

If free will is not available in our universe, should people who are anti-christian be held accountable for their opposition? Should anyone be held accountable for anything? Some have said the Antichrist is doomed to be the first person to be cast into the lake of fire; doom implies a sort of fate, it just doesn't seem fair.

“But who prays for Satan? Who, in eighteen centuries, has had the common humanity to pray for the one sinner that needed it most, our one fellow and brother who most needed a friend yet had not a single one, the one sinner among us all who had the highest and clearest right to every Christian's daily and nightly prayers, for the plain and unassailable reason that his was the first and greatest need, he being among sinners the supremest?”

If Satan hadn't tempted Eve, would man still find sin? It seems inevitable. Free will leads to evil which leads to sin, and no one knew that better than Satan, not even God, who was warned by Satan himself of the fragile nature of human beings.

As Lynne and I were discussing these things, I saw many things on the room's walls. Many different types of trees with many different fruits, wildlife, and though she was completely clothed, my mind saw the bareness of her bottom and the juices of her fruit.

Almost falling asleep after several minutes of silence, I heard her say that she was going to make some hot oatmeal to help her fall asleep, and she asked if I wanted any. I eventually got up and went into the living room to turn on the television while she made it.

I found myself flipping through channels half asleep, passing mostly commercials, then finally landing on channel fourty, hearing mainly elevator music, and waiting for the two a.m. news.

Chapter 44

MONOLITH

2:2:5:44

MANY nights ago, I had a dream. The blue marker on the wall at first confused me, and then suddenly I found myself inside a dark room with switches on the walls. They were colored and titled, in red, yellow, green; named uniquely to fit its color connotation. Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance; yellow, red, yellow, red, green. As I walked about the room reading all of the titles but flipping none of the switches, I began to notice a pattern. No two identical colors were ever in direct succession. Much articulation, no yada-yada.

OF the many things we will learn as life forms, pattern recognition is surely one of them. Imagine standing in front of a holographic line of squares that reel off into space. Each square is yellow, and one by one they pass you by as you watch them. There is of course a pattern, each square is yellow, but that doesn't seem like a real pattern, does it? Only facile.

NOW imagine the line of squares are still showing mainly yellow squares, but for every three yellow squares there is a red square. Suddenly something sparks in your mind, and you recognize that after every third yellow square, there will be one red square. New obscured wonders.

ONE final color, green, is added to the reel. It will display only after nine yellow squares have been shown, will only appear after red squares, and each time it is displayed it will be increased by one (starting from its second display), which is to say, the fourth time a green square appears, there will be four green squares in succession. Our notion elaborated.

LIKEWISE to many things, the basic set of yellow squares is much less complex than the most recent set of squares, and through an increase in complexity, one may recognize a pattern and become aware. A subject may notice a pattern and after a period of time may even be able to predict the changes. Linked into knowledge, evolution, wonder, interperception, science, enmity.

I often wonder, could consciousness be derived from pattern recognition? Perhaps long ago life was but a series of actions and reactions interlaced with patterns that organisms would eventually become wise to, and in doing so, developed a part of the brain to better organize and understand patterns. Interperception.

THE thing I also think about is if a creator designed a reel long enough to outlive the subject so the subject would never become aware of a pattern in the first place. If the goal of the creator is to fool the subject, then a good idea would be to randomize the reel. Imagine a patterned reel designed to loop indefinitely, and each reel is randomized from

loop to loop. No one would ever figure out that joke from God. The humorless entity.

HALFWAY through browsing the many switches on the walls, I realized that I myself was in a patterned reel, and when I looked up at the ceiling, I saw the acronym ATCG written on it. I thought about it, but could not find any significance for it. I must be in a sacred place. Hours and lifetimes flew way above YHWH.

MOVING back into the real world, I noticed the sound of drilling and saw that our neighborhood's damaged sidewalks were all being repaired. Making one vast improvement neighboring greatness.

OVER by the men who were working were Dam Son and Gun Ho, probably asking them questions about their profession. The sight of them reminded me of Tao, then Mayling. Tao recently phoned me the other day and sounded like a middle-aged married man with children who was going through a mid-life crisis. Perhaps that is what he deserves. It's much nicer having Tian live under me, anyway. Oh, very eventful really.

NOTHING in the mailbox as I later left my apartment and entered into the snowy cold night. It was my plan to visit Lynne at work. As I walked to the train station I passed by a number of shivering trees, thought about how some trees can tell you their age if you open them up and count their rings. Nested Os that hide interlayered neoteric generations.

OLD trees like these have many rings for many years of living, and each year, some of them add a new layer to their ring, adding to an interesting pattern that tells us many things. The green square, each iteration, or each loop, it will increase by one, and because we know this, we can have a good idea of which loop number we are in. If we all, the universe included, live in a loop function, is there something here that can literally tell us which loop we are on? One, last, diverged?

LATER, at the train station (which had the jingling sound of Christmas music), I paid the toll and walked up into the air to wait with everyone else, patterns and designs on my mind. Like a theorist, ever reflecting.

REDISCOVERY ROAD

2:2:5:45

“**THE** next stop is Chase. Doors open on the left in the direction of travel at Chase.” At eleven p.m. I looked out of the train's windows and into the escape of our town. The holiday season decorated both the town and its neighboring city like a midnight festival.

After Chase was Mulford, the stop which had much construction in process. The train climbed the risen tracks and you could see the piles of debris which would become something new.

This sight made me think of all the revolutions that have taken place in the history of the Earth. All the peaceful and violent rebellions old stories have to tell.

It seems to me there are two types of revolutions; progressive revolutions and aggressive revolutions. Progressive revolutions, which side with peaceful rebellions, come from the need of improvement through means of discourse and brainstorming, whereas, I would say, aggressive revolutions are mainly led by the oppressed through means of violence, force, and overthrowing established systems.

The most noticeable progressive campaign I think is politics, which tells us progressive revolutions hardly ever inspire progress and are more likely to be very passive. The most noticeable aggressive campaign I think is war, a revolution type where by the end of it, nothing is the same and things will indeed change. War itself is transgressive by nature, but if there is one thing it does inspire, it is change. War has changed this world more than politics.

Progressive groups don't ever seem to be as effective as aggressive groups. One might also see that progressive groups are never as united as an oppressed aggressive group. Those in congress tend to maintain their own agenda, but the oppressed, who have less, are united by a single goal. Maybe a person doesn't find independence from progress, but from aggress.

“This is Fulcrum. Transfer to Blue Line, Metra, and South Shore trains at Fulcrum. This is a Red Line train to 45th.”

When the train started up again, only a moment later it began to dive deep into a dark tunnel and became a subway. The next stop we'd reach was Cardience. After that was Seventh, followed by Park Road, which was followed by Washington. Carver and North/33rd succeeded these until I found my stop, Jackson, and left the subway to walk up some stairs into a dark city accompanied by snowfall.

I walked a little, then took a bus to the airport where I entered into a place with many establishments. As soon as I entered I realized that the holiday spirit and the music of Christmas had followed me there. There is no escape from the dreaded holiday season;

even at home I am constantly bombarded by the human ability to disguise darkness.

In the distance I see Lynnette, but she has yet to see me. She is serving two midnight customers, and a third has just sat down. I walk past a hallway that seems to lead down to many offices, each inch of it decorated with wreaths. I think to myself, passing this corridor, that a multitude of celebrated holidays have unsettling origins.

I sat down and waited for her to finish tending to the customers, and finally she came over, smiling, leaning over the counter and telling me about the street musicians who concerted earlier in the night.

Eventually she got me a cup of milk and an oatmeal cookie, and after searching through my pockets, I gave her a two dollar bill. She tells me of it, for she thought I hadn't known of it, and I say that's all I have. She looked at it as if it was something she had never seen before.

The airport's radio was tuned into 97.9 "The Sound," and every once in a while they would play a holiday song. For thirty minutes, patrons came and left but there was never more than three, and finally after an hour, or at one a.m., they almost stopped coming completely.

There was a final man, old, maybe in his sixties, drinking a cup of coffee, and Lynne, joking at the matter but waiting patiently, finally said, after he left, "The night is finally ours." She said this, ironically, as a song about midnight and the afterhours came over the radio.

She went to the other side of the place and knelt down to take out her bookbag and purse, and then walked back over to me laying down a bunch of papers. She pointed at one, and I saw that it was a poem, or perhaps song lyrics. I read them, saw that it was about the Russian Revolution in 1917, and then asked her why she wanted me to read it.

She told me that she found the words used in the piece of writing very harsh, assertive, aggressive, so much so that she could feel the anger of the person who wrote it. It stood out from the rest of the works to her, like a black psalm written under white lamps or a black rose growing in white snow. The work had interested her so much that we spent a great deal of time talking about it.

I have looked into countless wars, but the Russian Revolution is one war I have not read much about. But still, there have been times I have dabbled in it, and remembering what I have read, I know that that revolution started and ended the same way most do.

The "Whites" had the fatal inability to focus on a common goal. The "Reds," however, were blessed with that single-minded sense of purpose.

A father embarks on the task of moving a desk into a room. He struggles, and finally his wife shows up and agrees to help from the other side. There is little improvement, and finally their adult son and adult daughter show up and also agree to help move the piece

of furniture. The son enters the room through another door, as did the mother, and the daughter works alongside her father. For almost the entirety of a complete minute, the family members did not know they were on opposing sides, the mother and son attempting to push the desk out of the room, the father and daughter attempting to push the desk into the room. All this because the most important question was never asked, “Are we moving it into the room or out of the room?”

At four a.m., or maybe in the middle of three a.m., the airport's goods area had significantly less people in it. Lynne takes out a small sign that tells any would-be customers that she will be back soon, and we walk only a few yards to a small neighboring music store. A ten minute break in a ten hour shift.

Entering the store, Lynne saw that Jasmin had not yet clocked in, or perhaps was not working this day. She disappeared into the store, then came back around and found me, handing me an album of instrumental Spanish love songs. “Senorita,” I said, “Can you tell me where we're headin'? Patriot County Road or Armageddon?” She laughed.

She left again, probably to buy it, but what caught my attention most was cover art depicting an atomic explosion. War and politics are inseparable, yet so distinguishable; when you walk through a country, you will know which type of revolution passed by before you.

After we went back to her employment, I bade her farewell and told her that I would see her at home. When I got back to my residential area, I again saw the men who were fixing many sidewalks. One sidewalk square, which was recently refurbished, had been vandalized. It read “doodoo.”

Chapter 46

THE BLUE PETAL OF THE NORTHERN

2:2:5:46

“HE saved many, but he can't even save himself!,” someone shouted to another as they passed by Jesus who was on the cross. He had been crucified, along with two others, and after being nailed to the cross he was placed in a lake with waves that continually crashed into his body, causing him to gasp for air after each crash.

I swam closer to the Christ, seeing the face of suffering from very far away. When I was close enough, I spoke to him, saying, “Why do you allow yourself to suffer?” He did not reply, but only gasped for air after another wave crashed into his body.

“I have seen you made the lame to walk, I have seen you cure of illness those who are sick. In the evening Sun I saw you fill the bellies of those without food, and in the nightly Moon I saw you make what was impure, holy. Surely, if you are capable of these great things, you are capable of saving yourself!” The Christ again did not reply, but only showed the face of pain.

“If you are truly the son of man, rise now, out of these waters, flood them into the town and destroy those who have found you guilty! They are the sinners, not you!” Again, the Christ did not reply, and only a face of doubt remained after another wave crashed into his body.

It was now that the tide ceased, and this gave the Christ a moment to speak, but his words were few in numbers. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?,” he asked.

For a long time there was a long silence, but no reply was to be given; instead, the tide returned higher than before.

“You have saved many, but no one has come to save you. You cannot even save yourself. Your failure is my failure, Lord, and I carry this faith no more.”

I swam to his body and injected him with a serum. His sad face was no more, and his lips became blue. He was free from the torment of the world.

The first person I see leave is Amy. I am almost certain she has lost at least one hundred pounds. What is she doing? Ah, well, she just spilled all of her coffee onto the snow. She's cursing now, without coffee she's going to have a rough morning.

The next to leave, about twenty minutes later, are five children, two of them being the inseparable duo of Dam Son and Gun Ho. Dam Son, distinguishable from his brother by his lighter skin color, walked up to the coffeeed snow and knelt at it. He then put one of his fingers in the black snow and smelt it. The moment he licked it his mother came shouting out of the apartment building and almost gave him a heart attack.

After her outburst, she walked towards her car and I suppose left for work. I never saw the father leave the house, however.

A moment after she left someone else came to pick up the five children, and it was after this that I saw Jasmin leave the building. It was possible she was on her way to work, which was at the same airport of Lynne. She did not enter a vehicle but instead walked south until she was completely out of my range of view.

For whatever reason, when leaving she did not walk through the snow-flattened parking lot, but across the grass, which meant she would be walking in fresh, almost knee-high, snow. It didn't make sense.

Tian did the same thing when he left to wherever he was going. He went south, found Jasmin's footsteps, and carefully walked into them to escape the apartment building.

Suddenly I heard a shout. Someone was possibly yelling out the name "Mecca." Hearing it again, I looked to my right to see a teenaged girl yelling at someone who may have lived on the third floor.

"Tasha," she said back, "I'll be down in five minutes." When the two left, they walked by the blackened snow and were careful to avoid it.

The next pair were Mike and Deanna. Nothing interesting came from them, but my mind wandered onto Boris. Whatever happened to him?

For a long time there was no one, but construction men came out to play with the town. I couldn't see them, but I could hear them near the train station, a place that at the moment looked like a meadow of moths.

And from that meadow of moths now walking toward the apartment building was Lynne in her sky-blue work uniform. She walked toward the building, cellular phone in hand, sending what seemed to be a message. My assumption was confirmed when my own cellular phone began to play a song, but before I could turn, I see her walk over a patch of black ice.

She went every which way; this way, that way, then this way again, until finally she caught herself to balance herself out, relieved that she did not fall to the ground. When she was done, she looked around, perhaps wondering if she was being watched.

The phone continued to play until she put her own phone into her purse. She walks by the black snow, looks at it for a moment, then enters the building.

Eventually I hear her open the door to my apartment and for a while I can hear her going though the apartment; in the fridge, turning on the television, checking if the heater works.

Muhammad, who is regarded as the final prophet by Muslims, preached of the same virtues as Jesus Christ. And yet, their followers seem to oppose each other, sometimes the opposition leading to violence, even holy war.

"One's individual pursuit for truth is much better than a group's pursuit," Muhammad once said to me in a dream, "We must each find our own kind of wisdom, then we can

heal the world.”

Though many of their words were of peace, a part of their legacy is embedded in violence. You can never know what a follower will do with your teachings, no matter how articulate you are.

Lynne didn't come into the room and I never saw her, and after about ten minutes, I heard her leave again to find her walking out of the apartment building. I noticed that she had a garbage bag in her hand, but she hadn't noticed that it was leaking a dark liquid as she walked through the snow.

Looking ahead of her I saw that there was a garbage truck sitting idly on the other side of the road, and after she crossed the road, she threw the garbage bag into its back, alarming a nearby garbage man.

This was my last windowed observation, though I made a general observation on the way to the bathroom. When you surround yourself with the common people, you become one of them, and no one is more important than the commoner, whose common day can be deemed meaningless or instead filled with parable.

Chapter 47

SATURN STALEMATE

2:2:5:47

I am looking out of my window at many light and thin smoke streams that rise from the tops of apartment buildings. The night does it well by contrast as do the cloudless stars.

Down below there is an elderly man, his arms against his back, chin raised toward the sky, too looking at the dark sky. His thoughts are hidden from me, as is his face, but I am sure he is no stranger to the human condition.

Lynne works three days in the week, but this is either the fourth, fifth, sixth or seventh because she has been in my apartment all day. It's funny how much she talks to herself and some of the things she says are hilarious. Some strange. Others, I have no idea what to think. In the morning I am sure I heard her talking in the kitchen, perhaps to the microwave, because she could not get it to set on the right time. Only a week prior I heard her having a similar conversation to the stove.

Her discussions are not always with herself or to inanimate items, I can swear sometimes I've heard her talk to imaginary people. I'm not saying she's created people in her mind, but moreso preparing to say something to someone she actually knows by pretending they are actually there, as if in a play.

I can hear her right now, asking someone a question. It sounds like she's asking the person if "anyone is home." You'd think these walls would block out soft talking but they don't. That's when I feel her put her soft hand on my shoulder. I look at her.

"I said 'Is anyone home?'" I don't reply. She tells me a friend was dropping something off at her apartment and that she would be back in ten minutes. I say okay.

A minute or two after she left, I saw a truck pull up with a large rug in the back. Out walked a large woman who had interestingly small eyes, and then a man of average appearance. I later saw Lynne approach them and then even later realized they were bringing the rug into Lynne's apartment.

Eventually, Lynne came to my apartment and dragged me to her's. We walked through a hallway which now hung a painting of Lake Cellardoor. There, in the living room, I saw the woman and the man judging the appearance of the laid out rug. "What do you think?," Lynne asked. "It looks fine," I answered. She couldn't tell if I really cared or not.

She paid them, well, the man, and told me that this was Chloe and Bob. She told them both that I was her mate, and this is when Chloe looked me all the way up and then all the way down, judging me like she had the rug. It felt like Lynne told her something that I had told Lynne in confidence.

Either way, they both suddenly left and it was just Lynne and I in the living room still

staring at the rug. "I don't like it!," she repeated. "Then why did you buy it?" I asked.

Already it was four in the p.m. and already the winter Sun had died. "You know where this rug would really work?" "Where?" I wasn't actually interested. "The basement." "What basement?" "At the home." "You want to lug this thing all the way over there?" "It's not that big..."

And so through a dark and cold winter night, filled with dead trees and smoking buildings, we carried the rug on our shoulders.

On what I would say was the third mile, she became tired and requested a break. We walked the rug over to a stranded bench, placed it down in front of it and sat down. "If it doesn't look good there we can just bring it back," she joked.

After a moment she took a deep breath inward, then outward, sending the smoke flying upward towards the sky. She followed it with her eyes until her eyes met the lit sky.

"I came up with a theory," she said. I create my own smoke. "It's about the formation of the early universe, or just the formation of the universe in general... Do you ever wonder why when you leave cords laying around, they turn into big balls of random cords?" "Once or twice."

"I think if you look at the universe that way, you get like some kind of spiral grid system." "...Elaborate." "Alright, so you have energy and momentum from maybe something like that big bang you were telling me about. But in it, matter doesn't just move in a straight line, it moves based off of a reaction in any way or direction, even in spirals and whatnot."

I looked at her in a confused state. "I don't know!," she got excited and then laughed. "I'd have to draw it for you." It was after this that a tornado appeared in the sky just underneath the Moon. When she too saw it, she pointed at it, saying "see the way it moves?"

"So then, my theory is, if there really is something like this invisible grid, then it will have a signature and we can learn something about the universe. Like, if the signature looks random and spirally and chaotic, that could mean there is no creator, but if it looks patterned and intricately designed, that could mean there is a creator."

The sky opened up to the tune of her voice and there were now twice as many stars in the sky. I wondered to myself, if it was possible to create something and not leave behind a signature in it. To not leave behind some kind of clue or style or framework in the creation.

"Part of your theory makes me think of an atomic grid system. Each atom in the universe being magnetically connected, being able to transfer information to other atoms in its 'neural' network, its network reach based off of proximity." "What do you mean

based off of proximity?," she asked.

"Through something like atomic radiation, an atom can send and receive information from nearby atoms. And through atomic entanglement, an atom can interact with another atom that is very distant to it." She hesitated, "What I see in my head is a massive wave of disintegrating atoms."

Suddenly we heard footsteps, and before we could look, a dog began barking at us loudly. The walker quieted the dog down and eventually they passed by us, and this is when we decided we needed to carry on.

I got up and began picking up my end of the rug, and when I saw that she was still sitting, I asked her if she was going to get up. "Well, give me a minute, let me get it together. Just gotta pick myself up from off the floor." As she rose to her feet a green dust of aurora began to settle in the west, and grabbing her end, she said "I'm ready when you are, *senor*."

Throughout the journey the earth shape-shifted into many different forms and the skies were never the same thing twice. The smoke and the stars were settling from unforgettable abroad.

Lynne tells me that her favorite planet is Saturn, that it has been since she was small. It was her favorite because it had a pretty ring. The thought of Saturn made me wonder more about the atom world, and, eventually, Lynne and I did not walk on Earth, but on the mysterious planet of Saturn.

Is there precedence that when an object moves, its information changes or even becomes unobtainable, and when it returns to its previous state, that same information reverts back to what it was or becomes once again obtainable?

For example, let us assume that when an atom is in movement, its location is not obtainable or at the very least is more difficult to obtain as opposed to when it is stationary. This would pose a problem for neighboring atoms during atomic radiation, because we know constant movement means a constant flow of updating that atom's movement from position A to B to C to D. Constant updates could make for an unstable universe, but I think the universe has found a solution in dictating the natural movement of physical things.

It seems, from what I have seen, that things naturally tend to travel in a straight line. This may be a product of the universe choosing to forgo a complicated path of A to B to C to D and to just simply choose A to D, and if an atom has knowledge of its eventual destination, it may choose the quickest route, the quickest route always being a straight line.

The atom would choose this simple path over the complicated path to avoid information loss, because its network of neighboring atoms rely on receiving that atom's

location, or other such information, to keep the universe stable. In unstable circumstances, it may delve into that massive wave of disintegrating atoms.

We walked on Saturn for miles, and often Lynne would point out the colorful rocks that floated in the sky, all these rocks that designed the ring she adored. Her favorite among them were the ice blue stones of the black sky.

The way back to Earth was through Feng Shui, and after we entered the home we went into the basement and she laid out the rug. The lack of items down here served the appearance of the rug well, and we both saw this. The designs on the rug, for some reason, reminded her that she was to draw for me her “Arbitrary Grid” theory.

We relocated to Datura, where on a spishak bed she put a piece of paper to a book to a pen and began drawing curved lines and the motions they were traveling in. Observing the illustration, what I saw was the abstract idea of a universe created purely from momentum and energy.

As I look at it, I see her go to the corner of the room to grab what seemed to be a modified piece of cushion from one of the couches in the basement. She had cut it to be very thin, and for whatever reason laid it down to sit on it, and told me she was going to be doing some “yoger,” or “yogie,”; something along those lines. She said she started doing it to help her slow down the storms and hurricanes in her mind.

I look over the diagram once more and inside her purse, which was on the bed beside me, I spotted a familiar two-dollar bill. Before I could ask her about it, she requested my help.

For the span of the next hour, I was aid to her yogesh efforts. I wasn't much of an aid, however, since I tickled her every chance I got.

Her legs in the air of a headstand, I held them fixed and then tickled the bottom of her real foot as the laughter sent her bowling forward. The both of us standing aface eachother, her right leg raised against my left shoulder, she held her hands to my back until I tickled her ribcage and she forced herself away from me. Her arms out to reach the soles of her feet, I forced her body forward as her legs laid flat on the ground, and she fought back to me after I began tickling her lowerback to her highback. The back of her head to the ground, her midsection vertical, her legs coming toward her to touch down where I was holding them down, I tickled the back of her thighs as she laughed and kicked me with a now free silver foot. Her feet spread apart and and her lowerback pointed toward the ceiling, her midsection slanted as a ramp to the floor of her outstretched arms, I played drums on her buttocks but stopped after she threatened to release gaseous chemicals. Her haired demoiselle parts clothed yet exposed, she laid on her side, her left leg raised above her where I held it in flight, and with my other hand I tickled the inside of her highhigh, and she laughed until she brought down her raised leg

to ring around my neck. Positioned as if to do a pushup, I held her feet about half of a foot in the air as she did ten of them, and when she went on to do the next five I continually raised them until she had landed on the top of her head. We tried again, but this time I slowly forced her legs away from each other to complete a sort of air-split, and it may have been the one completed practice move she did the whole time. The final thing I helped her with was a pose; she wrapped her legs around my standing body, facing me, and then arched backwards to reach the ground with her arms. When I saw my moment I tickled her armpits, and for a while she fought, raising herself back up, still tickling her, she came forward too quickly and accidentally headbutted me.

The momentum and the energy and force of the impact sent me unbalanced and we both crashed into something in the corner of the room.

Sitting on the ground, I see that she has a mark on her shoulder blade. I myself could feel swelling beginning around my eye. "Thanks," she said, "You can leave now. I don't need your help anymore." She was half joking and half serious. Playful but fully played. "Get out." "I was going to leave anyway. It's boring here."

I left the room and went to an adjacent room. Tired, I stand at its sole window and continue my observation of the integrated universe. After maybe ten minutes I saw a shadowy figure walk across a lit room in a home across the street. Probably it was Joyce, stumbling around for something elder.

The more my mind wonders, the emptier it becomes. All that is left in it are the sounds of someone humming softly. Humming, here, then there, then here again. Musical humming from the song of a bird.

All of the houses in this neighborhood have smoke coming from them; I am looking out of a window at many heavy and thick smoke streams that rise from the tops of house buildings. Houses whose residents have found the answer to the most standard question.

Often times I would have answers for everyone else, but those same answers would not work for me. I eventually realized it was because I had different questions. When I became aware of this, I stopped trying to use the answers to everyone else's questions, and I found the courage to address the stalemated ponderings of my own morbid heart.

Chapter 48

THE SHADES OF A DISTANT LIFE

2:2:5:48

Unregistered: I just got on the train

Lynnette: Why?

Unregistered: To come see you...

Lynnette: But 8I'm already on the train home

Lynnette: I sent you a message an hour ago...

Unregistered: I didn't get that shit

Lynnette: Well now you are on the train for no reason

Unregistered: Why off early?

Lynnette: I told you yesterday I was getting off at 2

Unregistered: I didn't get that either

Lynnette: No I told you in Pearson idiot

Lynnette: Don't get off, what stop are you at?

Unregistered: Leaving Mulford

Lynnette: Get on at Washington, I'll wait for you there. I needed to go to Publiks

Lynnette: Off*

Unregistered: Ok

The train left the meadow of moths and eventually dove underground. I have thought about it for a long time now, and while I do agree that it is indeed true that the meek shall inherit the earth, I also believe that by then there will be nothing left of it.

Sometimes I wonder if she is less safe than she was before. There is decent security when Moon makes her appearance, but thieves scour trains late at night. She takes precautions; stay under lights, take the quickest route when walking, carries capsicum spray and a pocketknife. She sits in the car at the head of the train and makes small talk with the train operator. She calls a taxi if her shift starts too late in the night or ends too early in the morning. But still, peril thoughts invade my mind like night invades day.

At Washington, I get off the now emptied car and scour the stop. There were night dwellers, not too many, but just enough to force careful eyes. There was also the faint sound of music, and I later learned that it was by a musician who played for the riders of the night, had been doing so for many years now and had faithful listeners and made a modest salary.

Like a ghost, I heard him, but I never saw him, nor would I ever as she approached me from behind to greet me with her lynnetic kiss.

♪ That night, her kiss told me it was over
♪ I walked out late into the dark
♪ The misty gloom seemed to soak up my sorrow
♪ The further I went on, I felt a spreading calm
♪ Then suddenly my eyes were bathed in a light
♪ And the lovely lady in white was by my side
♪ She said, "Like me I see you're walking alone
♪ Won't you please stay?" I couldn't look away
♪ She said, "I love the night
♪ The day is okay and the Sun can be fun
♪ But I live to see those rays slip away
♪ I love the night
♪ There's so much I can show and give to you
♪ If you will welcome me tonight
♪ If only you had been there my dear
♪ We could have shared this together"

Leaving the station, I also left the music. At approximately 2:40 a.m. we arrived at Publik. There were very few people here. It took her all of five minutes to buy what she intended to buy and soon thereafter left.

On the train ride home she instinctively led me to the head of the car and for whatever reason introduced me to the train operator. He said he had "heard a lot about me," whatever that meant, and told me that my "wife" was one of the most interesting riders he had ever befriended during work.

The three of us got to talking and during the ride he relayed to us a grisly tale he witnessed his first year operating this route. Apparently an overweight white woman had been waiting for the train one morning to go to work, and as the train approached, she suddenly slipped and fell onto the tracks. She was run over, and after being recovered some way down the tracks, it seemed as if her identity had changed, for when they found her they saw that she was thin and black.

All of the riders and the train operator of that specific train that morning recalled seeing a large white woman slip onto the tracks, even this train operator, though the body of evidence said otherwise. Many thought perhaps the train had hit two people, but only the body of the black woman was found. If it had been one or two people who were mistaken, it would have made sense, but the majority of the witnesses claimed the same story of the identity change.

Pedro, that was his name, said goodbye to us as we exited on Main. Lynne and I enter

my apartment and put away the groceries. One of her favorite things about working graveyard is what she calls “post midnight” grocery shopping, when there are fewer people and no lines.

About an hour later I go to the bathroom to check if there is any hot water running for the shower. I turn it on and wait. Lynne must have heard me checking, because a minute after she yelled, asking me if there was hot water. I pass my hand through the rain, all cold. I tell her no.

Thirty seconds later, I pass my hand again, but this time it's getting warmer... And warmer... And warmer... You have to understand, I have not had a decently warm shower all winter, which is why I did what I did next.

“The water is still freezing,” I yelled out to her, and then I undressed and went into the shower and felt the warm water strike my body. It felt amazing, and yet the feeling brought a thought of death. The thought of death made me think of the train accident, then another accident, where a squirrel was run over by a car. I think to myself in the shower, “A person can't think... A person can't think about life without thinking about death... If you do, then you will be unprepared... Unprepared when you die. And... A person can't think about death without thinking about life... If you do... You won't be prepared to live.”

The door to the bathroom swung open and Lynne saw that I was taking a shower. She slid the curtains and passed her hand through the warm water and caught me. She gave me an expression calling me a cunning liar, then immediately began undressing. I stop her, telling her there is no way two people can comfortably take a shower in here. She replied by telling me there was no debate, the next time we had hot water could be weeks from now and she hadn't taken a shower in four and a half days.

I agreed, but under one condition; I told her to bring a black bag from the freezer. When she returned with the bag, she turned off the light so neither of us had to endure the awful awkwardness of standing staring nudity. The moment the lights went off, I thought the bathroom had become completely dark, but as she entered the tub, we both noticed that there was a bit of strange light entering through the thick glass and onto the shower curtain. Opening the tiny shower window, she realized it was the light that of the Moon.

She stood in front of me and I looked over her slightly luminescent nude body. That work of art. The body part I paid the most attention was her leg. Specifically, her flesh foot. I reached out and touched her thigh. I slid my hand down and up it. I did it again and again until she made a sound. I then took the black bag and out of it took a single purple heel.

I handed it to her, she bent over, she put it on her fleshed foot, then stood back up and pressed her body against mine. The most alluring thing about fantasy is complete control.

The coming moments provided for both of us, or, well, I can only speak wholly for myself, the completion of an obsession. Her scarlight filled up my night sky; the starring ripped a whole into her thigh. She has become as forceful as I have. Decorated prostitute, pornographic actress. I am man, turned lougarou, and I have felt the most primordial desire of my body; no beast was meant to know such beauty. Oh, my Lynnetta. I have only words to play with...

When we were finished with each other I forced off the purple heel and placed it back in the bag, then left her in the shower alone. Surprisingly, the water was still mostly warm.

I went to the freezer and placed the black bag in the back of it. I can only speak for myself, but something tells me I can speak for Lynne as well; the feeling of rapture was physical and psychological; her maimed body and my curious fantasy. There is nothing in the world like showing someone the ugliest parts of you and not being rejected. At times, even embraced.

Chapter 49

FREE SPIRIT DIRE RAVEN

2:2:5:49

THE moment Becca placed the phone on the receiver, it began to ring. The number on the caller identifier read 646-0704, and she immediately brought the phone to her father, Connor.

410-2074: Hello?

646-0704: I'm calling for you to know Ava has applied for the car loan.

410-2074: Okay.

646-0704: She will be call you in next few days to discuss more details.

410-2074: Good. Thank you. Slan agat.

646-0704: Slan.

948-7255: Hello?

646-0704: I just call Connor, he is expecting call from you soon.

948-7255: Okay I will make call to let him know what bank and what details.

646-0704: Thank you Ava.

948-7255: Bye now.

646-0704: Slan leat.

Last night, I had a dream. On an Atlantic-bound ship, I see a captain who has a fascination for humor. He's lined up many people who want to sail the seven seas with him, but he will only allow one person onboard; the first person who makes him laugh.

My turn is up, everyone so far has failed miserably, and depending on his level of macabreity, he will or will not laugh. He stares at me.

“A farmer and a businessman were rivals since birth. The farmer had always envied the businessman for his success, wisdom and his status as a visionary. One night, a ghastly spirit came to him as he slept and woke him up, and told him he would grant him three wishes. The farmer was ecstatic. However, the ghastly spirit told him the desires came with a stipulation; whatever he received, his rival would receive twofold. He thought about this, then requested success. The next day, he did indeed receive success as he was offered a new deal concerning agriculture that would benefit him greatly. But on the same day, the farmer saw that the businessman too had received success and bought a home twice the size of his previous home. The farmer was somewhat jealous, but felt that he should have been thankful for his own success. That night, the ghastly spirit returned, asking for his second desire. The farmer asked for wisdom, so that he may learn to grow

and be grateful for the success he encountered. The next day, the jealousy the farmer felt for the business man had disappeared, and when he saw his children, he told them many stories of life and how to live it. Later in the same day, the farmer was visited by the businessman, who too, had been a receiver of wisdom. The businessman came with gifts for the farmer's entire family, and he sat and ate with them at dinner, and he too told them great stories of life and how to live it. When the farmer saw that the businessman's advice was far greater than his own, and that the businessman's wisdom was much greater than his own, he became angry, though he did not show it directly. In the night, the ghastly spirit came as he had done for the past two nights and asked the farmer what his final desire was. The farmer thought long and hard, and finally, he told him of his final desire; he requested that he had one of his eyes removed."

The captain of the ship bursted into tears, laughing uncontrollably. "Wow! Haha! Wow!," he excited. "That's hilarious! Because the businessman will lose two eyes!" I nodded agreeably. "Hahaha!," he continued, "Get 'em on board now!," he declared.

The second day sailing the Atlantic with him and his crew, I learn that his name is Captain Fennwick, and that my sole job would be to tell him jokes.

"This is Fulcrum. Transfer to Blue Line, Metra, and South Shore trains at Fulcrum. This is a Red Line train to 45th."

I get up after Lynne and follow her to the door of the train car. The second blizzard of the terrible winter has already begun. We both walk to the other side of the station and wait for the South Shore train to come.

Lynne is upset because Claire called her early in the morning and threatened to kill herself. She called from Italy, I believe that's what she said, and was looking for attention. Lynne calmed her down but I don't think Claire showed any appreciation for her efforts, which in turn upset Lynne, making her realize that Claire is constantly unstable. Lynne, quite frankly, was tired of it. Tired of always being the first or second call, always being there, and then often mistreated in some way later on by her. I think it's kind of funny, she probably wishes she would do it already.

Last year, 2,268 people died from suicide each day. 827,820 a year, 68,040 a month, 17,010 a week, 94.5 an hour, 1.5 a minute. This leaves you with a suicide every forty seconds; and this is only for successful suicides, as much as twenty people will attempt it.

That means that today, every forty seconds, there will be a person who feels they do not have something or someone to live for. A person who is alone, the weight of the world on their shoulder, the heaviest crown, and has not a single person they feel they can connect to. Their attempt will be successful, and their success is basically a big "fuck you" to everyone they know. Your existence was not enough to save them. Did I mention that today is Christmas?

We get on the train and take the nearest seats. Cerveza... Frankfort... Lincoln... Argus... Leavenworth... Little Bay... I noticed that one of the final stops was called "Cellardoor Lake."

At Keneckie, we got off and switched to the Purple Line train. Suffolk... Hove Beach... Kennedy... Bohan... Yelowe was the closest stop to Emily's apartment, so we got off there and began walking through the ever-increasing snowfall. By this time, most of the taxis and most of the whores were only taking calls for cash.

"Wait, hold on," I demanded, "I need to tie my shoes." I kneel down and begin to tie my shoes, Lynne and I staring at each other. "I'm almost done," I said looking directly at her. The moment I finish tying them, the power on the other side of the street went out completely. Lynne and I both look in that direction in confusion, and it isn't too long until the power on our side of the street goes out as well. Every light; the street lights, building lights, house lights, Christmas lights.

In the darkness I saw Lynne's eyes become owl, "I can't see sheet!" she exclaimed. I stand up and realize that not many things were too visible, then turn to her and smile in shadiness. The sudden of the darkness must have caused a slight freight in her vocal patterns because the way she said "shit" was flexed with an accent. "Sheet?" "I meant shit." I laughed. We both turn our heads as a car drives past us, illuminating the area for a second or two then sending it back into darkness.

We continue walking in the direction we had been and I come up beside her and put my arm around her. I ran my hand up the side of her jacket, groping and fondling the skin of her waist. "Say it again," I said. "...I can't see sheet..." she replied. Her "accent" excited me and as I moved my hand about her side I felt that she was wearing two pieces of undergarments.

We walk four more blocks and by that time we realize we are lost in the void of light. She tries to observe surroundings but this is no help. After a while she takes out her cellular phone and dials her mother.

"Mom, we are lost. No, we got off at Yelowe. I didn't know that. Just tell us how to get there." She removed the phone from her ear and requested that I find a street sign. "We are on Emery and Creek. The store with the big orange sign? Yeah I see it. Okay... Okay... Okay, we should be there in like twenty minutes." She hung up the phone and told me we were supposed to get off at Union Drive. I call her an idiot. "Ediut." I smiled.

We were there in ten. We journeyed to the fourth floor through the dark building and then knocked on Emily's door. Sara answered it, glasses and all, and when she saw us she was excited and revealed to us a chipped front tooth.

There was only one lit candle in the living room and one lit candle in the bathroom. Emily was punishing Dave because he threw a fit and broke the television remote. She

punished him by making him stay in the bathroom, though by the time we got there it was almost time for him to be freed from his isolation. I've noticed that Dave is a boy who doesn't like being told he can or can't do certain things. This is both good and bad as a human characteristic.

"You should have taken the Red Line to Jacksonville, then taken the Brown Line to Union Drive," Emily suggested. Now I know why Lynne calls it Jacksonville when it is actually just Jackson; she gets it from her mother. That's funny.

When Dave came out of the bathroom in a gloomy fashion, Lynne told them she brought gum for them, and they both then went over to her purse and collected it. I could hear them both chewing like goats and cows in the unquiet darkness. "Don't worry, the power will be back on soon," Emily assured, "it's been doing this all day."

In the corner of the darkness, Sara used her laptop computer, eventually inviting us all to come look at a reel of funny pictures. The backlight of the computer screen made visible everything that was within its grasp. Emily immediately noticed Lynne's wedding band and her black necklace, which elegantly adorned the *déjà* bride.

As she scrolled through the pictures the lights suddenly reappeared; the Christmas lights dawned like magic and the small Christmas tree revealed itself like a ninja; suddenly everything in the apartment could be readily observed.

There was only one Christmas gift given and received, a musical player for Dave and Sara. I don't think Emily was one for the holidays. I noticed that, in her apartment, she had no pictures, and the Christmas tree was put together in a spishak fashion. Very soon after the lights came back on, she left us and returned to the only other room in the apartment.

Think about what goes on right before and right after a posed photo is taken. You don't see the real parts, you only see the fake parts, because people are mostly superficial and shallow, especially when the spotlight is on them. Compare and contrast the attendance of your wedding and your funeral, that's when you will know who your friends really are.

I had this dream one time where I was in court. On the last day of the trial, the verdict was read. "We, the jury, find the defendant to be guilty of the charge at hand." There were howls and screams of relief as the handcuffs were put on me. The families of my alleged victims declared death not a soluble solution for me, so I was to spend the rest of my natural life in solitude.

When I speak to the priest on the way to my cell, he tells me that in my eyes he has seen something he's never seen before in any person, chained or freed. He told me it was the look of defeat and salvation both in one, as if I had seen or figured out something no one else has.

Life imprisonment. When you have no future, there is this illusion that anything is possible, as opposed to having a life plan and the illusion that a life plan can imprison you. After all, “man plans, God laughs.” Many of us tend to adopt Gods and plans.

When there was nothing left of the day, Dave went to the living room, to the couch, and pulled out its bed like a magic trick. The four of us prepared to dream and when Lynne asked for the remote, she was reminded that it no longer worked. She turned it on manually, but then learned that the channel buttons did not work properly, and the channel itself was stuck on a jazz station. She left it on because I think she and the kids usually used the television to aid them in falling asleep. I myself did not like it, I required complete silence and darkness to dream. Because the genre was jazz, however, it did not prevent me from falling asleep in due time.

After Sarah started snoring, Lynne made a small movement and said “Keek eh deh baul.” It made me smile and I'm sure she saw it, and I know she felt my wandering hand on the inside of her forearm under the covers. Her accent was a charm, it put me under her spell, the Vodou of a free spirited dired raven.

Chapter 50

THE CHARM CITY

2:2:5:50

THREE years ago, a dream came to me in my sleep. The man of darkness, I followed him into an office building of one hundred and sixty-one stories and search every hallway and room I could find. It wasn't until I unlocked a room with the title of “=OW[[[]z^J” and stepped inside that I found a place with hundreds of switches on the wall. Being overtaken, I hear the door close shut behind me and it locks.

In a far away corner there is a big screen with nothing on it, next to it a definition for the word “cleanslate,” and as I begin to walk toward it the door to the room opens. I wait, pending the visitor, and I am shocked when I see it is him. The man I have been looking for for all these wasted years.

He moves forward into the room and the door behind him shuts, then locks. It was immediately after this that a table was raised exactly in the center of the room. On it, there were two sets of six-sided dice; one black, one white. There were also two chairs that reflected the color of the dice.

Instinctively, the man in black sat in the black chair and took hold of the black dice, and following, I sat in the other and took hold of the others. On the table were instructions for a game entitled “Hazard.” The rules stated that white always rolled first.

“I see you are one who does not run from darkness. You follow it,” these were his first words to me since Seattle. My first to him, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.”

I set the main to six. I roll the dice in my hand, and then onto the table. They land on three, and per the rules this means I have lost and the position of the caster is therefore transferred to Dice.

Dice made no expression as he grabbed the black dice; he put his arm forward and up into the air, said “seven,” then suddenly dropped them with his palm facing the table. They land on four. Per the rules, he rolls again and they land on ten. Once more gives him two. He finally wins on the fourth throw when the dice land on four.

On his side of the table he received a score of 0.0.0.4.0.0 and was coursed to roll a new round, but before doing so, continued the conversation.

“I was not born like you, I was created from an experiment. In a city where angels dared, I was covered in darkness and withdrew my gun on a man casted in light. The scenario was created to test the entropy of man, and to see if he would act out of goodness or out of evil, where evil was the same as being idle. Because man had been given entropy, he was to be born into sin. Original sin. A sin that no matter how much light shines, will always be a part of him so long as he is allowed to govern his own

existence.”

“Are you suggesting that good and evil are bound to the notion of free will?” “Under the branch of physics, yes. One can be neither good nor evil in a predetermined universe. Though in an anti-predetermined universe that is governed by entropy, which you seem to call a 'free will,' there is a problem because the terms 'good' and 'evil' cannot even be properly defined.”

Dice dropped the dice, saying “nine” as they fell. They land on eight and he rolls again. After six additional rolls, he eventually wins another round after they finally land on eight. His score changes to 0.0.0.4.0.1.

“Your loyalty is not to light, but to the stars above,” he told me. “What is your definition of evil?” I asked him abruptly. “That is irrelevant.” “Why?” “The definition of evil is elusive. It changes over time and varies from place to place. You followed me all throughout America, through a number of cities and over a large period of time, and though you had a faint idea that I had passed through there, you could never actually find me. This is because each time, evil changed.”

“It is true that evil has many faces, but each face is composed of the same components.” “And yet that is enough to cause enough confusion to lead to war.” There is a brief pause.

“You do not understand because you have a one-track mind. Your upbringing is all you know and it is the sole definition you cast upon the world. Yet, there are places in the world where suicide is a tragedy, and in others, it is revered. You will not be able to contend with me until you broaden your mind and lay your heart open to the growing senseless causality of this universe. Think, and then tell me something meaningful for once.” *Charm City, Baltimore.*

On New Year's Eve, I walked past a new bicycle path that rode along the meadow of moths and ended near the town's library. It was not snowing and the sky was not as dark as midnight, and Lynne had just gotten off work from M.B.J. Airport at six a.m. after starting her shift at eight p.m.

Stopped at the Mulford station, the plan was for me to station myself at the Union Drive stop. There I was to find her and we would walk again to Emily's residence.

“This is Jackson. Transfer to Brown Line and South Shore trains at Jackson. Your safety is important. If you observe unattended packages, vandalism, or suspicious activity, inform personnel immediately. This is a Red Line train to 45th.”

When I got off at Union Drive, Lynne had already been waiting there. The déjà sonata must have felt my presence, for as I approached she turned around and said “Hey Spook.”

In the partial darkness we journeyed through the land and to Em's home. Throughout

the limited daytime I laid with Lynne on the couched-bed as she slept for a few hours. I watched television but I was not entertained.

She awoke after the Sun had sank low, and while eating with the family Dave called out to me under the name of Spooker. After a while, after Emily heard Sara call me Spookie and Lynne called me Spook, she asked us why they called me these names.

“That’s interesting,” Emily commented on the answer. I’m sure she thought it bizarre, strange even.

In the evening, the celebrations for a brand new year had begun as one could hear music from the neighbors, and after he rummaged through old boxes, Dave came to me, telling me he had found two old dice.

“G said I can have them,” he told me. I later found myself in the kitchen with him playing a game similar to Hazard on a table. It was a simpler form of Hazard, which he explained to me was called “Catalyst.” Of boredom, Lynne wanted to join us, and the hidden causality of her fortune caused me to call her “Lady Luck.” After she won eight games in a row, Dave told us he had had enough and was going to watch Sara build Winter Nights Into Dreams...

There were only four hours until it was the first of January, and one by one in as many hours they each fell asleep until it was only Lynne and I awake in the apartment. Pretty little mama. Hot little devil. One of these nights I’m gonna find out what turns on your lights. Yes, that’s right, sit on daddy’s lap. I feel the scruff of her black jeans cause friction on my thighs. Her heart is becoming like an ocean; mysterious, cold, dark. What’s this? Oh yeah, lifting up your blouse. Do it. “You see what you did?,” she asks as she points at a bruise on her back. She puts her shirt back down and sits into me.

“I enjoy not having a car.” “The western way of living does not suit everyone,” I replied. “Since I ride the train and walk a lot I have more time to think.” “That’s good.” “Remember that entropy thing you were telling me about?” “I do.” “I was wondering earlier right before you got off the train if it’s actually the opposite.” “What do you mean?” “You said the number of points gradually increase in the same direction as time, but what if the number of points is opposing the direction of time. Like, instead of going from 1a to 100nkd, it is going from 100nkd to 1a. If it is going backwards, the chances of each point occurring actually increases and eventually simulates destiny because the final point is the only point that can occur.”

“So you are saying we start out in a highly diverse system?” “And it becomes simpler. I mean, how come fate and coincidence are always the only options?” “Yeah, maybe it’s a combination of the two. There is chance involved, though it is definite to end a certain way. Perhaps that way being heavily influenced by how it started.” “Perhaps,” she mocked me.

“Can you get off me before someone wakes up and walks in here for midnight food.” “Why? They know we are lovebirds.” “So? What you're doing is childish.” She hopped off and went to the refrigerator and looked inside, and after a moment closed it, taking nothing from it, only to sit back across the table from me. We looked at each other for maybe ten minutes, bored, no discussion, and waiting for the death of December and the juvenation of January.

Eventually she told me that there was a piano in the lobby on the ground floor, that I probably didn't see it because it was around the corner. “Does it work?” I asked. “I think so.” “Then what are we doing here?”

We walk through the living room and I wait for her as she rearranges Sara's body which had been hanging off the side of the couched bed.

On the ground floor I followed her as she revealed to me the hidden piano around the corner. “No public masturbation, please.” She slapped my shoulder.

The bench for the piano barely sat the both of us, and I ended up hanging off its end. “Are you going to play something?” I asked after we stared at the black and white keys. She raises her hand and presses a single black key; the note bounced around all throughout the lobby and suddenly the lobby lights flickered off, and then back on. We looked at each other confused and puzzled, and then I played a black key myself, and again the lights flickered; brief darkness then light.

She looked at me, curious and in half of a gaze, then played a white key; for a second the room brightened and then returned back to normal.

I decided to play a song that I had learned from my father when I was young. A simple song, which required both black and white keys, and throughout the short duration of the piece the lobby contrasted itself in darkness and in light.

After I had stopped, the both of us looked at the lobby and realized that half of it had been painted in black and other half in white. The front door swung open and in walked a person with a dog. We didn't see them, but we heard the semblance of the dog until they left to catch the stairs.

I began playing again as she watched. It was after maybe a minute that she began humming to the tune of the song. The same humming I had heard before not too long ago, of a siren's song luring me to sea. Unlike long ago, however, were notes I could only describe as “Ooohs” and “Aaahs” and variations on them.

As she hummed, and as she incorporated the Os and As, the room that was once completely black and white became painted with streaks of green. And then streaks of red. And finally, streaks of yellow. These colors finding direction through her voice. A voice that went up and down, each string a melody that I would never hear again.

As she continued, she stood up and took off her shoes, climbed onto the piano, and

then laid out flat on her back on it, staring at the colorful ceiling, and her notes broke out into lyrics.

- ♪ There is nothing that I want more, more than to be close to you
- ♪ Nothing that I need more, more than the way you make me feel
- ♪ And so through the winter nights, under snowfall in December
- ♪ There isn't a thing that I like more, more than when you decide to stay
- ♪ Not a thing that I love more, more than you being here with me today

She immediately became silent, and shortly after I stopped playing. Even shortly after, another tenant walked through the lobby, but we never saw nor heard them.

“Damn. You can't really sing but your non-lexical vocals bring chills down my spine. It's painful and sad but uplifting at the same time. It's filled with soul. It has a spirit.”

The lobby was at present returned to its normal, formal and former state. Looking around the corner at a clock, Lynne noted that January had finally arrived. “Happy new year,” I say to her. She looked at me, immovably, and finally said, “Happy new year? No such thing.” I gave her a confused look and she continued with a dull monotonous tone.

“Well, a new year is merely symbolic of how another year has gone by and how little we've grown. No matter how desperate we are that someday a better self will emerge, with each countdown on the clock, we know it's not to be, that for the rest of our sad, wretched and pathetic lives, this is who we are to the bitter end. Inevitably, irrevocably; happy new year? No such thing.”

“That's so serious,” I said seriously. “I am a very serious woman,” she replied. She kept the straight face but I failed, “You funny, Lynne.”

Only a few seconds later we heard a series of pops outside, and as she lay on the piano, I think to myself, “I am the catalytic cause to your hazardous effect.”

Volume 2 - Composition 2
(2:2 / 5 / V)

Part 6

Chapter 51

TO LIVE AND DIE IN MANHATTAN

2:2:6:51

“...No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God...”

THERE are a variety of things we do as human beings to prove to ourselves that we are still alive. One person loads a pistol with a single bullet while another person shines the blade and watches the blood drip off their body. Some people join the military to be closer to death, others become firemen to prevent it; or maybe the fire is his only friend. A few will stand on the edge of tall buildings. Women and girls will whisper blissful ignorance to herself.

Public speaking is easy. Speech to a crowd is simple. Never look at their eyes. Fail to realize that each individual you are addressing has a past. Has their own complex or simple ideology. Their own set of principles. See them as a mass.

One on one engagement is difficult. Direct connection and private discussion in comfort is almost an impossibility. When you have to look someone in the eye and tell them what is going on in your mind, and there is no third nor three-hundredth nor three-thousandth party to fill the silence, anxiety ensues.

The public speaker, though they have hundreds of eyes on them, never has to look at their audience, but for the private speaker, there is only one set of eyes on them, eyes that demand the same attention; the private discourse is intense, every flaw intimate and magnified. But after that discourse, you will have proven to yourself that you are still human and that you are still alive.

When the conversation runs high with energy, is ample in ideas, thoughtful in magnitude, honest in composition, you'll realize sooner, rather than later, that [every] one is shy under certain circumstances.

It was only two years ago that I had a dream about New York. My partner and I, in a Manhattan apartment, watched a news reel that concerned us.

“This sketch of two masked individuals was released earlier this morning after a detective Barrowe was rescued from inside the Brooklyn tower. Barrowe was kidnapped by the two suspects after they had murdered Internal Affairs officers Lionel Copenhagen and Kenneth Stander. This kidnapping may or may not be linked to the murder of Andy Hope, founder of the 'KIDS' HOPE' charity who was murdered in cold blood last month at a charity event. Mayor Geoffrey Harharwood will be addressing the public later in the afternoon.”

When does an entity realize that it is imperfect? What is it called? Shall we name it “the erring moment?”

When the oppressed speak out against their oppressors, very few listen. It is mainly when an oppressor has an “erring moment” and begins to speak out against other oppressors of the same type that oppressors begin to listen. Note that less violent revolution occurs when an oppressor intervenes with oppression and attempts to stop it. Note that this is also ironic, that a woman cannot realistically stand up for other women, it must be a man. A man cannot stand up for other men, it must be a woman. It is a sad fate that only the rich can realistically end poverty. It is an even sadder fate that very few ever have the erring moment.

And logical fallacy; in it there are two modes of fault: an error and a mistake, which are very much distinguishable. A mistake can be made and a system can still operate, where as when an error is made the system will not operate at all.

To visualize this, using terms of linguistics, think of the function of a sentence in language: I don't like chewing gum. If the sentence had been written as “I dont like chewing gum,” missing the contractive apostrophe, though a mistake has been made it can still operate as a sentence and provide meaning.

An error, however, might be the system completely lacking an alphabet and therefore the sentence cannot even be produced.

If we use terms of a cosmic variety, and substitute the system of an alphabet for a system of the universe, other observations can be made. The subjects in this system, while they may be able to detect mistakes, they would never be able to detect errors as this would be a logical fallacy considering the fact that they do not exist to do so.

In this regard, one could commit a mistake but one could never commit an error. At the very least, one could never witness an error. If God is a programmer, surely he takes shortcuts, and surely he has made mistakes, but because we are around to witness his flawed nature, we can be assured that he does not err.

948-7255: Hello?

430-9513: Hello, may I please speak with Ava Walsh?

948-7255: Speaking.

430-9513: I am calling to let you know that your loan has been approved and that we will be sending you papers in the mail for you to look over.

948-7255: Okay, that is fine.

430-9513: Before I let you go, would you be interested in one of our pre-approved credit-

948-7255: I am sorry, but I must go now. I am late for doctor.

430-9513: That's okay ma'am, have a nice day and I hope all is right.

948-7255: Thank you. Bye.

430-9513: Goodbye.

“This is Jackson. Transfer to Brown Line and South Shore trains at Jackson. Service has been interrupted at 32nd. Please transfer to Gray Line trains at 32nd.”

Almost everyone got off the train at Jackson and the underground hallways were almost filled with busybodies.

I get to Lynne's work location and see that she is off in a corner, maybe a waiting area, sitting Lindian style on a chair. If you're wondering what Lindian style means, it is when you sit with your legs spread to form a sort of wide diamond and the bottoms of your feet touch each other.

Unregistered: Look behind your

Mrs. Spookie: Why? Are you behind me?

The screen on her cellular phone goes black and she uses it as a dimmed mirror to see behind her.

I ask her what she's watching and she tells me that it was a double feature; Sleepless In Atlantis just finished and they were now playing a cartoon film named Snowy Pastures. I look at the screen and watch as a young girl drives through a blizzard.

After Lynne sees that I am still standing, she moves over and offers me her seat. Sitting down I noticed a shop that sold movies near her diner. It must have been new, I did not see it the last time I came.

A sound comes from her phone, she looks at it, then tells me it was a message from Chloe. That Chloe had been messaging her all night. This particular message was about the bruise I had given Lynne on her shoulder blade. Chloe was suspicious about it. And just then suddenly I saw an airplane take off from the view of the large window panes in front of us.

“Sweden,” she told me the location of where the plane was going. I wonder how she knows. She does something with her arm and I follow it down to see that she is fidgeting with her silver side. She took that shoe off, then the sock off, and now that foot was bare. In her soul, a bright butterfly dances with a rainbow rose.

In the span of the next ten minutes, another plane takes off. “Yemen,” she confirms. And after this confirmation the young girl happens upon a library. “Where does this movie take place?” I asked her. The town seemed off to me. Odd. “...I don't know, somewhere cold?” I laughed.

She remarked that the town did look interesting with its unique and irreplaceable lights, then stated that it is a place she would love to visit. After maybe five minutes,

another plane took off. “Bulgaria.”

She later asks me if I myself have ever been anywhere interesting. I think about the question. Then I think more about it. And I think. And I think. And I think.

Underneath us as we flew across the world as ravens was the earth in a state of Pangaea. A supercontinent where all land was connected many millions of years ago and was surrounded by a superocean.

We flew downward towards a tropical forest where she led me to a Vadean waterfall. For a moment we were each a raven landing on a tree branch, and I found this place she brought me to to be most interesting because each movement of the waterfall brought the land further away.

The idea of a “pangaea” developed after fossil evidence was found that concluded “the presence of similar and identical species on continents that are now great distances apart.” Wiker's, page 12. Another interesting idea is the notion that life originated elsewhere and was then brought to Earth by a traveling spacebody.

These two ideas in conjunction once made me wonder of a Pangaea on the scale of not a planet but a universe.

Imagine. A planet at the end of a solar system has just begun to develop a simple form of life. Racing towards it at a high velocity is a spacebody. They collide and the spacebody has such an impact on the last planet that it breaks off many of its pieces and they fly off into space. Depending on how the spacebody hit the planet, the broken off pieces will be sent off in a certain pattern, such as when you dip your finger into a pool of water and it creates a circled ripple.

So now, after the collision, you've got pieces of rock wandering through space, but it is important to remember that these pieces of rock contain life that can survive low temperatures. I'm not sure the total composition of the universe, not even a galaxy, but if this occurs where there is a plentiful number of neighboring planets, might we be able to see a patterned distribution of life? Distribution of life may take the “shape” effect of the impact. Life, in this case, would be distributed most likely in a certain direction in the shape of something that resembles a wide arc. I wonder if life on Earth is located somewhere on this arc.

If you do happen to gain knowledge on the distribution of these lifeforms and where they end up landing and evolving, might you be able to pinpoint the source of origin? Had the distribution shape effect been a sphere, in which case the cause would probably be an explosion and not a collision, finding all landing places would give you a center of origin, but with an arc distribution it would prove much more difficult.

In that case, observation of the species is your best option. If you can find a basis in similarity that ties each lifeform's landing location to each other lifeform's landing

location, you can deduce, unless it is a fact that all life originates identically, that these forms of life originated from the same source and may have even at one point occupied the same area. An example of a basis is DNA.

Once the basis is found, a dragnet search can be performed in the location most likely for the form of life to have traveled from, and in comparing you may find a match to find your source. Imagine if there was only one place in the massive universe that could actually produce life, and this place was constantly distributing life throughout the universe, and then imagine literally tracing back your biological history to that single location.

I am not sure as to whether it is anthropogeny or anthropology, but one or both of these is the very study, or [part] of the study, of human history and origins. The scientists concerned with these subjects have traced the modern human to have first appeared in Africa, and some time later having spread to other continents such as Asia and Europe.

Possibly the most interesting place I have ever traveled to was in a dream where I visited the very origin of all life throughout the cosmos. It is the most dense object in the universe and is located at the relative center of it. Human perception tells you that it is gray in color, spherical and rotates, but it is not a planet or a star. It is made of dark energy and upon inspection of it, one might pause and wonder if it [is] possible for all life in the universe to have started out as energy.

“Inceptus? Why is it called that?,” Lynne asked. “It was probably some Greek god or something.” “Or maybe a Goddess.” “Maybe.”

Watching the movie, the next time a plane took off, Lynne mentioned the destination of Mexico. I then make a bet with her, saying if the next plane takes off in under eight minutes, I would win. She agreed and started a timer on her phone.

At six minutes I was curious, at seven I was worried, at seven and a half I thought I'd lost, and at seven and seven eighths the next plane began to fly. She couldn't believe she'd lost by mere seconds and demanded a rematch, this time she winning if it was under eight minutes.

I won again in the second round by an identical miracle and she was anxious, demanding another round. The night went on like this, she always being on the narrower side.

There is a fallacy in the socially-driven [themed] mind. In this mind, doing an activity with your family has meaning when the same activity, done alone or perhaps with strangers, suddenly has no meaning at all. This tells us it's not necessarily the activity itself, but with whom you do it with which gives it meaning; which may or may not make sense to you depending on your mindset.

But some people do not have families, even more people do not have friends. Does

that make their life and whatever activities they engage in meaningless? The notion that your purpose will involve other people is not always true, and it is certainly not true for everyone. For anyone else, the social aspect of an activity, which increases the importance of the family and friends dynamic, is less important than the activity itself. A person who does something alone is probably more likely to derive greater meaning from that activity.

Take into account the life of Christ and the cost of following him. The possible conclusion that if you don't learn to exclude your friends and family to some degree, your life will remain unrealized.

“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Your family and friends should not be the ultimate priority. Of course this is a difficult worldview, and because we are social animals we collectively have a “social” worldview, but meaningful engagement is seldom ever found in the social realm.

All you have are your bullets and knives. Your uniform and your fire. Your buildings and your ignorance. Your mask. And pal, identity is a lifelong process. I have come to terms with what I am, who I am; what and who I will become; and behind the countless acres of dirtfield, I now understand that this is what it means to live and die in Manhattan.

Chapter 52

THE MACABRE IRONFLY

2:2:6:52

“...and where a person's psychology creates a psychopath, a person's society creates a sociopath...”

I am a sick man. Around me is a calm, but in my mind is a storm. My body twitches. My thumb locks, my fingers flick, my thighs clamp. My arm pulses. My neck ticks. I stand over a toilet bowl next to a shut bathroom door, and in the bowl is the yellow liquid of urine and a trapped fly. It cannot swim, nor move nor fly. It is stuck, like myself, in the macabre.

I have been to church just twice in my adult life. The first, which you are already aware of, was with Kathleen. The second, which took place last August, was to confess my sins of anger.

There was, however, in my youth, a time in my early teenage years, when I visited church during the night. I did not go inside as the doors were locked, but I considered it a type of service despite the technicality.

That night was the last time I spoke to God as a friend. The end of the friendship was not something I planned but something I realized occurred that specific night as the next decade of my life rolled out. At first, I believed all of the light in my life was gone, but I soon became aware of the great irony that the macabre has its method in flight.

I take a square of toilet paper, fold it, and then put my hand in the toilet bowl to retrieve the fly. I place it on the edge of the sink, and after perhaps a second or two, it shows a fragile sign of life.

I then grab hold of my plunger and flush the toilet and watch as the yellow water rises. I'm not sure how it became clogged but it was. And so I plunged and plunged until much of the water had disappeared and I flushed the toilet again, only to repeat the same process. All this time, the fly had not moved much, but I saw that it had traveled maybe an inch or an inch and a half.

In the bathtub there was a bucket collecting water. Water I plan to pour into the toilet to perhaps force out whatever is lodged inside. And as I stand here watching the water fall, my mind is adrift and wanders and twitches.

How can one say that pathological serial murderers are incapable of feeling? What is it that casts such suspicions on them? Is it because of the hateful acts they have committed? But most homicides in general are committed by a person who loved their victim. Family member, spouse, friend. That argument is invalid.

The way I see it is you have to accept one of two things; that person never loved their victim and is more like the psychopath, or the psychopath is no different than the rest of

us and is as capable of feeling, if not more or if not in a unique way.

Grabbing the bucket, I look out of the window to see a dark blue setting sky. Just over the toilet I watch as the contents of the bucket gush out into the waste receiver and down a tiny hole. I flush, but whatever is stuck inside there has not budged.

On the sink I notice that the fly has continued to move, though its travels have been very minimum. Perhaps it is still ailing from the soaking of urine. Or perhaps it is accessing its memory and dwelling on its past...

Let me remember for a moment, on this snowless night, that fateful day I was first compelled to write down a dream. It seems like so long ago, yet it made way for all of this. It was only an instant, or rather a series of instants, like the three points of a triangle, that trapped me in.

My family did not always have money. In fact, for the first five or six years of my life, I was poor by relation, or poor by proxy, or poor by association, to my parents. And the poverty, which was most likely the first thing I ever came to know, has never left me. It has always influenced the way I live, and even though I have chosen to live poorly, I do not feel as if I am poor.

During a teenage year, while my father was still alive, if my memory serves me correctly, I wrote down that dream. Then another. And another. By the time I was aware of the first series, which may have been the desert dreams, I realized that the life each of us here live on Earth is only a portion of our existence, and that kind of thinking led me to the conclusion that manageable poverty is escapable through the mind. Those well-off who rely on the tangible are bound to starve.

I place the bucket back in the tub and turn the dial to refill it. I grab the plunger, flush the toilet, wait, and then plunge away again. I flush once more and there has been no progress whatsoever.

The fly's progress has been stopped as well as it has not moved since I last looked at it. Maybe it's given up. Maybe its wings are too wet to fly. What's that sound? It sounds like a police vehicle. When I look out of the window I hear a police car coming my direction until it drives past and the Christmas tree lights up. I wonder what happened.

Chase Mart has changed its name to Chase Foods and has just finished construction in adding to its size. It is now maybe triple the size it used to be. I am not sure if there are new owners to the property because I have not been in there in so long.

I wonder what movies are playing in the theaters right now. I wonder what movies will soon be purchasable. I haven't seen a good one in a while. The last good one I saw I think was Travelogues. And that wasn't even that good. I just don't like traveling.

After the bucket has been filled I pour it into the toilet once more with no avail. This goes on for at least two hours and I spend the off-time thinking of countless various

things. Maggots...

In virtually everyone's home, you will only see happy photographs hung on the walls. No sad photos. Yet, virtually all of us turn on the news so we may hear of devastating events. We certainly don't turn on the news to find cheery stories. I suspect this is because man is more interested in conflict than solution. And I suspect, to some degree, that man is most delighted when man fails, so long as the failure is not specifically his own. And of course, when man succeeds, he'll make you see it as soon as you enter his home.

I tell you, there is only one way to find true peace, and that is in solitude away from humanity. Humanity is a disease, and where a person's psychology creates a psychopath, a person's society creates a sociopath.

I sit on the edge of the bathtub, watching the motionless fly. A movement! The fly has extended his arms and has begun to rub them together. I have seen this many times before in my observations of flies. It makes me laugh quite often.

God damn it. That phone is ringing again. I do not want to talk to Lynne. I need to fix this toilet. But I have been working foolishly for the last three or so hours to fix something that cannot be fixed.

Why is she calling anyway? Probably to complain about Chloe. Lynne makes it seem like Chloe is her secret admirer. I wonder what's going on between those two.

I take a look at the fly again and though it is not airborne, it has one wing extended as if preparing for flight. You know what I find funny? People tell you not to be an animal, and to once in your life be a human being. These two phrases are satire. An animal doesn't do any of the things a human being might do with the hunted deceased. An animal killing something tends to be a means for survival, but when we humans kill something, it is not always executed as a means for survival. A number of killings will be for entertainment bordering on luxury. Again, I say; complete satire. Unless, of course, those two phrases are meant to be sarcastic, of which I admit I had not been aware.

One thing that crossed my mind the other day was the simple fact that if one person kills one other person, they are deemed a hazard. It is universally thought that a person like this is capable of doing it again, which indeed is true, but just because one person kills one thing, it does not mean they are capable of killing another thing. One man might murder his wife out of passion yet he would never even think of harming another woman. In this case it is something personal.

However, the same does not apply to say, a soldier who has killed in combat. An individual who is literally trained in the skill of killing is actually rewarded when he returns home and is not feared in the least. I don't know, it's just something I was thinking of the other day. Food for thought.

When I look to the fly once more I am puzzled by the sight. It is not there, not on any

ledge or edge, nowhere on the sink, not above around or below. Looking tubward, I noticed that the tiny window in the wall had been opened, and I assume it escaped through there.

Another day of life for someone who will smell feces from a mile away. Another day of life for someone who will fly around someone's house dodging a flyswatter and bugspray. And perhaps after spending this way several hours with he or she or it, I gradually became aware that I could not learn of certain things in Heaven or Nirvana. Only in Hell or cyclic reincarnation would I seek attrition and redemption, for a life is saved when we accept our macabre qualities as our most moral qualities.

PAGE 7 OF 8, "THE EIGHT DREAMS"

2:2:6:53

"...what is so sacrosanct about a marriage and a family..."

Dave Parker: Have you ever even seen a two-dollar bill?

Gun Ho Guy: No...

Dave Parker: I will even throw in these two dices.

Dam Son Lee: That's a good trade I think. You don't even like that Vanquisha comic.

Gun Ho Guy: Plus Gavin Hill and Doctor Oldbaby aren't even in these serieses.

Gun Ho opened his bookbag after receiving the two-dollar bill and dice from Dave. Soon after, their school bus was making its round, and entering the apartment building parking lot was Jack Booth, half-sober in a drunken stupor.

At six p.m. Lynne and I entered the theater to see *In Vain Burden*. It was a quiet audience because it was a small audience. Nevertheless we chose our seats and chose not to eat anything there. You probably know the reason why.

The film we are watching is what I guess you would call an "important" film laden with themes and symbols and innovative filmwork. These kinds of movies are usually worth the money. The ones that are inevitably sad and force you to wonder upon them days, maybe even weeks, after viewing them.

Other than drama, the secondary genre to this film is crime. If philosophy were a film genre it might work under that as well.

We don't say a word to eachother until the film is finished, and at around nine p.m. we took a taxi back to the apartment. She asked the driver for a moment or two and went into her apartment to get some things for work, say some things to her kids, and returned into the cold light of night as I left it.

I went to her apartment and saw Dave and Sara doing stuff. I didn't bother them. I simply went into her bedroom and looked around. Sat on the bed. Looked at her dresses. Peeped at her intimates and unmentionables. Then I noticed her diaries. No, she knows I read them. That's why she put them here. I grab one and begin to read it.

How much of our life will we remember. One, maybe two percent. That seems kind of low. Out of a possible seventy years, how many things will we be able to recall from memory. It doesn't seem like a whole lot. No, it doesn't. When I was ten or eleven... Or maybe twelve... That's a lot of years. I remember a studio apartment we lived in for about a year. I remember it being in a packed city. That explains a lot. I remember a train station, a nearby lake. Cellardoor? I remember a church across the street that was covered

in vines, almost enough you wouldn't know it was there. That's weird. I remember a library and a librarian who closed up shop every night at nine. I remember a day when our toilet flooded because a guest flushed it and afterward we had to shit in bags for like a month. I've taken a shit in a bag, too. I remember escaping the apartment through the fire escape and taking it many stories up to the roof of the building with Claire so we could see way out. Emily never knew about it. Other than that, I don't really remember anything else about it, and in the end it feels like I only remembered such a small amount of one year. My love. Ooh, that's me. And I talked about whether the universe is capable of having its own memory or not. I remember that. And that discussion got my mind wandering on memory itself. How can you tell if you've lost a memory?

I put the diary back in its spot and think about the last question for a moment. It was indeed an interesting pondering.

By the next hour Sara and Dave were asleep by their own boredom. I took their computer and began using it, browsing through the world wide web and looking at pictures of Tao and May-ling. My favorite was the both of them smiling, May visibly pregnant, in front of their new home. Westerners, while occasionally willing to not progress, have always been obstinate about regressing. Even if the regression is beneficial in their favor.

Interestingly enough, when I clicked to browse a new photograph, I received an advertisement for an upcoming film. It was a "poster" with a man on the cover and in bubble speech he asked, "I ask you, what is so sacrosanct about a marriage and a family that you should have to live in it day after day however unrealized that life may be?"

Second year, March 8th, I had this dream. It has been seven years since I've seen Roach. In these seven years the man has become folklore. Some might even call him a myth, or say such a legend has made about him that he will live on in our hearts, minds and dreams forever.

A small church has been built in his name, and he is known by his followers under the name of "Jericho Roche." Many from other faiths have labeled him a "false prophet." The remaining few have labeled him the Antichrist. The notes he'd left behind stirred something wonderful and something terrible into the hearts of men.

It's impossible to go an entire month without some kind of attack that leaves many dead and many more wounded. It's impossible to find two people who have read one of his notes and can come to an agreement on what he actually meant. He has polarized the nation and the world to come.

Only a year ago his actions, or should I say the actions of his followers, inspired two movements. One carried out by the "Blacks," who believe the only way to make his dream realized is by force, and the "Blues," who have gathered together through

countless nights to discuss a solution on how to better the nation and the world to come.

Peter Moody: But Roche, for one day I am filled with purpose, and another, I am jobless. How do I fill unto these days with that which matters?

Jericho Roche: Peter, it all matters. Perhaps not in the grand design of many things, but all that which is done when he is not in a mode of purpose, brings forth he to sharing a part of his soul with others.

SNOWBLOOD. SNOWBLIND. SNOWBOUND.

2:2:6:54

“...It's great for business, if you're in the snow business...”

AT least once a year, I will have this particular dream. It's a dream that takes place in an identical location as the others but is also followed by a certain weather pattern. Be it extreme heat, a rainstorm, a blizzard or intense fog, what have you, it's recurrent only in its location.

The best way I can describe it is to look at a photograph of a place you used to know long ago, and to mindfully and imaginatively decorate it with a weather effect. It becomes a place you have been to only in other lives.

Lynne Parker: Don't hit it, that's not going to make it work.

Sara Parker: We have to try everything.

Dave Parker: It's working!

We were all standing around a vent in the wall, each of us wearing multiple layers of clothing, when David yelled out that the heater was working. None of us believed him, so we kneeled down to find a warmth coming from the wall.

There was excitement. Expletion. Expulsion. As the apartment began to warm, we each took turns sitting in front of the vent, but even after half of an hour, the apartment as a whole still felt cold and the vent itself was not actually completely hot.

Lynne, realizing this, left us to see how warm her bedroom was and on her exit advised us all to check the other rooms. The bathroom, the kitchen, the kids' room, etc. Dave and Sara followed promptly and I myself went to my own apartment to check the temperatures there.

Inside, I turned on the heater and waited for the apartment to warm. The rooms here were just as warm as Lynne's living room, if not less warm. I turned it off and went back to their residence, passing by the television and looking for them.

“...The city has been put on red alert and is now in a state of emergency. Please stay indoors and where it is warm...”

I heard someone yell from inside the kids' room, and when I opened the door to the kids' room, I saw them all sitting on the ground, near a vent, wrapped in blankets. It was like the Sun had gone on vacation and its destination was 8038 Chase St. APT 2C, specifically the room of David and Sarah.

I went inside and immediately my body began to warm as I sat down next to them.

Everyone was quiet for another half hour until I told them that we were in a state of emergency and on red alert. Either no one heard me or no one cared.

At some odd hour I noticed one of Sara's toysets on the floor. Winter Nights Into Dreams... is what it was titled and it did so well to remind me of the weather outside. She finished it once before but was rebuilding it. Rebuilding the town and snow that came with it.

And at some even hour, Dave took off one layer of clothing and went to the window in an attempt to peer outside. He basically told us he was blind to anything going on outside. Not one visible thing in the deep white snow.

"How cold do you think it is?," he asked us. "Open the window and jump out," I replied sarcastically. And not thinking he made a gesture to open the window. "Hey! I was joking!" He continued. "If you open that window!" He continued. "Where's my belt?," I got up.

Before I could rise the window was open and a gust overtook Dave, blowing wind and snow into the room. He fought to close it, laughing and struggling, but could not until the rest of us came to his aid and slammed it shut.

Sara slapped the back of his head and Lynne was angry with him. He didn't respond. I have no idea why he did that. Nevertheless we all retreated to where we were before and now understood the threat of the storm.

From the television in the living room we could hear news on the weather but no one cared to venture out of the warmth. Blizzard Tracy was its name. Terrorizing civilization was its game. Already we have been gifted thirty-three inches of white powder. Much, much more to come. My mind ponders the lands of Earth that have never met a spec of snow. The land without identity and negative of any weather.

WBC Channel 32 News: ...We may receive as much as sixty inches of snow and the storm is expected to continue well into the night...

Dave: Does this mean we don't have school tomorrow?

Sara: Duh stupid.

Dave: Snow day, very nice!

WBC Channel 32 News: ...Because of the high volume of snow, some buildings are expected to be snowed in...

Sara: Mama, why did you leave so early yesterday?

Lynne: I went somewhere with Olya and Jasmin.

Sara: Where?

Lynne: Bowling.

Sara: How come you didn't take us?

Lynne: Because I took you mini-golfing in the afternoon.

Sara: Oh. Okay.

Narrator: Did you win?

Lynne: At bowling or golf?

Dave: I won at golf.

Narrator: Bowling.

Lynne: I have no idea who won actually. Probably it was Jasmin.

Sara: Jasmin was there!?

Lynne: Yeah.

Sara: You guys know she plays the drums right?

Narrator: I didn't know that.

Dave: Me either.

Lynne: When we got to the bowling alley and saw that she brought her own ball, me and Olya knew we were done.

Dave, Sara, Narrator: Hahahahahahahahah!

Lynne: Yeah! Haha. She was really good.

WBC Channel 32 News: ...Some buildings are expected to be snowed in. Please stay inside and where it is warm. Winds will pick up and debris will be airborne...

Dave: This kinda reminds me of a dream I had in our other house. There was a lot of snow and G got lost outside in it.

Lynne: The house before we moved here? Or the one before we moved to the house before here?

Dave: The house before the house before this one.

Lynne: Oh you mean the house you were born in.

Sara: Is that the house I was born in too?

Lynne: No, you were born in the house before that one.

Narrator: Where was that?

Lynne: Way in the city on Garfield and Charles.

Dave: What street was I born on?

Lynne: Not too far from there, on Leon and McKinley.

Sara: Where were you born?

Lynne: I have no idea sweetie.

Dave: What about you?

Narrator: I was not born, I was created.

Lynne: And what purpose were you created for?

Narrator: That was not in my instructions manual.

Lynne: Bummer.

Dave: Do you guys think we are snowed in?

Sara: Yeah, what if we can never get out of the house?

Lynne: You should check, and I will stay here with the kids. Be careful though.

Narrator: I couldn't see anything outside and I definitely couldn't open the door so the snow has to be at least five feet.

Lynne: Five feet? Wow.

Sara: Does that mean we are snowed in?

Narrator: Right now, yeah.

Dave: We have to dig ourselves out? Or will people come help us?

Lynne: I'm sure they will send help for all the people who are snowed in.

Sara: Good.

WBC Channel 32 News: ...We urge civilians not to participate in looting or other questionable behavior. The U.S. military has been deployed to aid in this storm, but we want to keep the aid limited to providing food and water to those in need...

Dave: What was that!?

Lynne: It sounded like a bomb... Or something hit the wall.

Sara: Is that what the man in the news was talking about?

Lynne: Maybe. It might be the debris flying in the wind.

Dave: Let me check.

Lynne: David Daniel Parker do not look out of that window.

Dave: Why?

Lynne: Because what if something comes flying through it!

Narrator: I'll check. I'll just kneel down and stay clear of it.

Sara: Do you see anything?

Narrator: Nope.

Dave: Look, the window cracked a little bit.

Sara: Yeah, that wasn't there before.

Lynne: It might be from the wind, just drop the blinds, please.

Narrator: Alright.

Sara: I think I had a dream like that one time, too. It was all snowy and we were

having a snowball fight with that family we used to be friends with.

Lynne: Who?

Sara: Remember the girl who got hit by a car?

Dave: Sasha?

Sara: Yeah, I don't remember which house it was.

Lynne: That was the house before the house before this one.

Narrator: Did she die?

Sara: No but she broke her arm.

Dave: Again! Whatever is hitting the wall is big as hell man.

Lynne: I'm tellin' y'all, it sounds like a bomb.

Sara: For real, I'm moving to the other wall.

Narrator: When you lived in the house before the house before this one, how old were you?

Dave: ...Three?

Sara: Five?...

Lynne: Four and five.

Narrator: So you guys don't really remember that house too well then?

Dave: I remember some things a little bit.

Sara: Yeah I remember a little bit somethings.

Narrator: What do you remember?

Sara: I remember my mom pushing me in a stroller on the street. And there were stores and people standing outside.

Dave: I remember that too.

Sara: You weren't even born in that house yet!

Dave: I guess I'm just psychic.

Lynne: You were born in the house before this one, I think.

Dave: Well, at that house I remember there was a park I used to go to called "win a bagel."

Lynne: Winnebago. I used to take them there all the time.

Sara: I remember that park too, it was the one with the basketball court right?

Dave: Yeah and there was a field too that sometimes they played football on it.

Lynne: I remember one time two moms got in a fight and the police had to come. I don't think either of them got arrested but they shut down the park for the rest of the day.

Dave: They were fighting because one of their sons was hogging the money-bars.

Sara: Oh yeah! I remember what you are talking about now. I was trying to climb them but he said they were for him and wouldn't let anyone else use them. That boy was so mean.

WBC Channel 32 News: ...But not everybody is troubled. You got a smile on your face. We don't get very many times to shine, so... This is good for business? It's great for business, if you're in the snow business. Depending on who you ask, this is a good thing. The state legislature will have a day off. School kids will have a day off. And you know who's happiest; skiers. Up until now, skiing has been so-so, after this, spectacular...

Lynne: Do you guys remember Tony?

Dave: Who?

Sara: Yeah who?

Lynne: Remember he lived on top of us and always gave me coupons. He was that old man that watched you guys once a week for four months.

Dave: ...I don't remember him.

Sara: Did he have a sticker on his door with a monkey?

Lynne: Yes!

Dave: Ooohhh now I remember him! Did you guys know I actually went inside his house once.

Lynne: Why?

Dave: It was because he needed me to help him carry some bags to our house.

Sara: Did it smell?

Dave: I don't remember but he had a lot of cats and fishes.

Lynne: Yeah I remember he always used to tell me about one of his cats that he loved. I think her name was Goldie or something.

Dave: He was kinda weird. We used to call him Old Man Tony. Haha.

Sara: Hehe.

Lynne: Really? Haha, I love you two.

Sara: God! What is that!?

Lynne: It's a bomb, I know it. Someone is setting off explosives outside.

Narrator: It was probably part of a car or a sign.

Dave: That would be cool if it broke through the window, maybe next time.

Lynne: No that wouldn't be cool David.

WBC Channel 32 News: ...Several locations throughout the city have been experiencing on and off blackouts. In the case of a blackout, please attempt to locate the following items...

Dave: Glad our light is still on.

Sara: Yeah because our lights always turn off when there is a storm.

Narrator: We're lucky.

Lynne: In the house before the house before this one there were always-

Narrator: Wait, which house is that?

Lynne: The one David was born in.

Narrator: Okay.

Lynne: In that house power wasn't the problem, the bugs were the problem.

Narrator: What kind of bugs?

Lynne: Everything. Cockroaches, millipedes, ants, spiders, name it.

Narrator: You don't like insects?

Lynne: Not when I am trying to eat or sleep. Any other time I love 'em.

Lynne: You guys are too young to remember this but once you both tried to catch a roach.

Sara: I don't remember that at all.

Dave: Yeah me either.

Lynne: It must have been the hottest day of the year and you were both pestering me with it. I was trying to sleep and you were both running around the apartment.

Dave: Did we catch it?

Lynne: What do you think? Can anyone catch a cockroach?

Sara: Haha, I guess we didn't.

Dave: Why were we trying to catch it? To eat it?

Lynne: I hope not.

Dave: What happened to it?

Lynne: I think I got fed up with you two and I made you sleep and it eventually just left. Probably I opened the backdoor or a window or something.

Dave: It seems like it's night now.

Sara: Yeah it looks a little dark.

Lynne: Get away from the window.

Narrator: Yeah get away from the window.

WBC Channel 32 News: ...Please do not go outside as this is only the eye of the blizzard and the snowstorm is expected to return. We also are reporting tornadoes in

various parts of the city, please stay tuned to see if your county is on the warning list...

Lynne: I didn't know blizzards could have eyes.

Narrator: Me either. Tornadoes too.

Dave: Eyes?

Sara: Do they mean eyes so the blizzard can see where its going?

Lynne: No that just means in the middle of the blizzard its empty, but when you look at it on a map it looks like an eye.

Sara: Ah.

Lynne: Yup.

Lynne: I guess we don't have to go to sleep since there will be no work or school tomorrow...

Dave: Yup.

Sara: Yep.

Narrator: Mmm hmm.

Lynne: And since this might be your guy's last night alive, you can do whatever you want.

Sara: That's not funny.

Dave: Seriously...

Narrator: What's the matter with you?

Lynne: It was a joke... Gosh.

Sara: Do you guys hear that?

Dave: Hear what?

Sara: Come near here.

Dave: Oh wait, yeah I hear it... It sounds like an animal I think...

Narrator: It does sound like an animal. Or something that's alive at least.

Lynne: Wow, that sounds strange.

Sara: What do you think it is?

Lynne: What if it's a person? Maybe we should call the police?

Narrator: No one would be out there.

Lynne: Well something alive is out there.

Sara: What if someone was looking for their dog and they lost it and got stuck out there. I'll check to see if I can see anything out of the window.

Lynne: No! Stay away from the window.

Sara: I'll do it quick.

Lynne: I said no... Sara Sofia Parker, do not go near that window... You check.

Narrator: Move idiot. Wasting everybody's time.

Narrator: I can't see a damn thing and I don't want to look for too long so I don't get a piece of a car to my face. Wait, everyone go to the corner I'm going to open the window.

Lynne: Be careful, and mind the crack.

Narrator: I know.

Sara: Do you see anything?

Narrator: I can hear it clearly now, it doesn't sound that far away. I can't tell if it's an animal or a person.

Lynne: Close the window.

Dave: Do you think if we tied you with a blanket you could go see what it is?

Narrator: ...

Sara: It's easy to get down there from this window because there is another wall right next to it.

Narrator: ...

Lynne: If it's a person we have to help them. At least call the police.

Lynne: Are you sure the building is completely snowed in?

Narrator: There is no way out from the first floor.

Lynne: ...

Sara: ...

Dave: ...

Narrator: If it's not a person I'm killing all of you.

Narrator: Tie it tightly. Yeah use a double knot, just like that. Okay go get your swimming goggles and put them on me. Also do you have another pair of socks? Yes those will do. Okay, make sure there is a knife in the backpack too. I think we thought of everything. I'm ready to go.

Lynne: Hang on as tight as you can you two, don't let go, and make sure you stay down a little bit.

Sara: Okay.

Dave: I'm ready for this.

Narrator: If anything goes wrong, get Tian immediately.

Lynne: Okay.

Narrator: Let me down a little. A little more. Ju t slowly ke p droppi g me at this ace. Good. A little m e. A litt e more. Good. Go d. Almost t ere. ?????. Just ????? at ???? pace. I'm alm st ?????. ??? ???? ??????? ???? ??????. ?? ?????.

Lynne: Can you speak louder? We can't hear you... Hello? Are you there?

Dave: I think he reached the ground mama.

Sara: Yeah the blanket isn't tight anymore.

Lynne: Okay, no matter what you do do not let go of this blanket.

Dave: She said doodoo.

Lynne: I'm going to close the window just a little for now.

Dave: He's been gone for a while now it seems.

Sara: And I don't really hear that sound anymore, do you think he got to the person?

Lynne: I hope so hunnie.

Sara: As long as the blanket keeps moving we know he's alive. But if it stops I think we should call the police people.

Lynne: We will. If it's a person we will call the police too.

Dave: If it's a dog can we keep it?

Lynne: Sure.

Dave: Yes!

Lynne: Okay wait, I think he's tugging on the blanket, get ready to pull. I'm going to open the window back up.

Dave: He stopped, so should we pull now?

Lynne: Yeah, start pulling.

Narrator: ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ????? ?????.

Lynne: We can't understand anything you're saying.

Sara: I think his lips might be too cold.

Dave: It sounds like he's talking gibberish.

Lynne: I got you. Just keep leaning in. Yeah, almost there. Almost there. Almost. There.

Dave: The sound is in the backpack now...

Sara: I guess it was an animal.

Lynne: Here, let me take it off you.

Lynne: Oh. My. God. It's a skunk.

Dave: Really?

Sara: Are you serious?

Dave: Does it look scary?

Sara: I'm scared of skunks!

Lynne: I'm going to put the backpack next to the vent, keep an eye on it I need to get bread and water.

Sara: David you watch it.

Dave: Why do I have to watch it?

Lynne: Both of you just make sure it stays warm! Geez!

Dave: Are you okay?

Sara: He's shivering.

Dave: Let's move him next to the vent too then.

Sara: Okay, I'll grab his legs.

Dave: Okay.

Sara: I think he's good now.

Dave: Seems good to me.

Narrator: It got ran over. Someone must have hit it accidentally during the storm. I don't think it will survive its injuries.

Sara: What should we do?

Dave: Should we bring it to the hospital?

Narrator: No, just let it rest.

Chapter 55

THE RIVER CITY

2:2:6:55

“...Poets lie just as often as politicians...”

WHEN you take away the light and the warmth, you are left with the cold and the darkness. And these two latter things are not so much a presence but an absence.

After the storm, thirty-eight people were pronounced dead. A young boy caught in between the crossfire of looters and police. Dozens of vehicle accidents on any given road. And even after the storm people were still dying. A man of a heart attack while shoveling the snow, a teenage girl of frostbite in a hospital.

The tenants in our building had worked tirelessly the day after the storm. While many helpers were dispatched, there wasn't enough to go around.

It began with Mike, who, fortunately for us, had some equipment for snow removal. At the entrance of the building he made the first attempts at removing the snow, and when there was enough space for a few more, Tian and I began to help him.

While we dug, we could hear the ambient sounds of the town around us, but could never see it.

When we were finally a few feet out, the three of us retired and were replaced by the father of the Filipino family, one of his sons, the father of the Irish family, his daughter and one of her friends, and a tenant I had never seen before.

When I got back up to Lynne I saw that she was on the phone speaking to Emily, who was currently at a hospital undergoing evaluation. Probably it was something not too serious.

When she hung up the phone I told her that she was needed downstairs and she left to take her shift. Sara went with her. Dave followed with a long face.

I went into Lynne's bedroom and to a corner where I stared down at a box. I put my hands in my pockets, I folded my arms, I put my hands behind my back, and the thoughts poured.

Through the window there was a transparent fog, but the fallout of the storm was still opaque. Poets lie just as often as politicians. And often times, for reasons not entirely unique.

There was a book I read in my twenties which was later adapted for the screen. Without spoiling it for you, I will relay to you my analysis of it.

The man's final word was “levee,” which was literally a river, but metaphorically a symbol of his youth and his happiness. Then at a moment's notice he was taken from his parents by a business-centered, industrious couple and was raised by them. That day, his

future as a wealthy businessman was determined for him and in his old age he had nothing but contempt for his foster parents and his upper class upbringing. In one sense or another, he regretted his life, and while dying, his final thoughts seemed to concentrate on his childhood and the river he once knew.

The movie, at least I thought, seemed to suggest that we all have a river, or a “levee,” in our lives. A rift that divided and decided the fallout of our story.

How important is a person's final word? A person's final words? After years of living, it is but all they have learned in life in the time they were given.

I go back outside and see that the crew has been working diligently. There is now a pathway to the road ahead, and coming out of the fog I see the entirety of the Filipino family carrying snow removal equipment. They told the rest of us that they were given to them by city workers. They had been driving around supplying civilians with tools for snow removal.

They gave me my shovel and I went back to work. I noticed Tian and Jasmin yards away. I noticed Felicity, who I had only met just that day. I noticed the Irish family and their friend. I noticed Amy. Mike. And I noticed, again, the new resident, whom I later learned had moved here from Haiti and whose name was Charles F. Kane.

While shoveling, I came across an identification card in the snow. The carrier was named Suhm Yung Guy, and I soon discovered it was an I.D. card for employment at a factory. It belonged to the Filipino father, so I made sure to give it to him before we were all done.

After some time Lynne came to my sector and started shoveling the snow there. “Why you over here all alone?,” she asked. I didn't answer. “I'm going to the store to buy some drinks, do you want to come?” “Yes.”

On the way to Chase Foods, we passed by the same place where a tree had fallen due to a thunderstorm years before and Lynne noticed city workers had previously planted a small tree in its place.

She went over to it and she was the same exact height as it was. She stood next to it and folded her arms and smiled. The *déjà* twinstorm.

When we got into the store, which was the first time I had been in it since its reconstruction, I saw that all the employees were different. To be honest, they all seemed to be of the same family and I assumed it was perhaps family-run.

We got the drinks for everyone who was working and began our way back. Though on the way back, a black SUV honked at us. Lynne later told me it was Chloe and went to speak with her.

Eventually I found myself inside Chloe's vehicle and on the way back home, she did something that still irritates me. Parked outside of our residence, Lynne easily exited the

vehicle but the door on my side was still locked which prevented me from leaving. “The door is locked,” I told Chloe. “Really?,” she said, almost as if she were making fun of me. She told me to try again but it was still locked. It was then that she turned around and looked at me with her smallish eyes, “If you put your hands on her again next time you're not getting out of my car,” and finally she unlocked the door. I knew something was wrong with her. I got out and she drove away, and I just assumed she was off her medication or something.

I get back to the construction site to find everyone in one spot taking their drinks. Happy together after a great accomplishment. One might like to think that a storm like this could bring together an apartment building, a community, a city, but modern humans have been around for two hundred thousand years and never has there been peace. Why in a year, a decade, a century, a night, would that change?

410-2074: Have you heard from Ava?

646-0704: No, she has not returned call. Maybe because of snow.

410-2074: Keep try her. We need to stay top of loan.

646-0704: Of course. I let you know.

410-2074: Okay, good.

410-2074: Where you are?

768-1849: I'm with Tasha, I told mom I was spending the night over at her house.

410-2074: Stay out of trouble. Police and military still on guard here.

768-1849: I know dad.

410-2074: Okay, I see you tonight. Love you.

768-1849: Love you too.

“It's your turn,” the man with the black dice told me. I had finally managed to tie him in score and was looking to take the lead, though this was not to be as I failed to win a roll.

The black man rolled his dice a few times and took the lead, and in between rolls I asked him, “I've told you about what happened in the windy city, the long trail of your initial decapitation, do you not feel responsible for all that you caused?”

“Let me ask you a hypothetical question,” he planned to answer my question with a question. “Say a man walks out of his home, gets into his car and drives away, only to realize he has killed a cat that was sleeping under his car. Obviously, he is not at fault, correct?” “Obviously...” “But what if he has killed five cats in this manner? At what point is a person morally obligated to check underneath the car?” “I am not sure.” “Whatever

your answer would have been, it would have been wrong, because the correct answer is he is never morally obligated.”

“At some point, he has to be responsible for checking under the car if he knows he has a risk of killing another cat.” “You say that because in your world, circumstance has always dictated morality.” “What do you mean?” “If you are preordained to do good in the world, that is not true goodness. If you are preordained to do bad in the world, that is not true evil. And if you are not preordained in any way, then your actions become subject to judgment.” “Elaborate.” “I’ve told you before, true good and true evil are bound to the notion of free will, but no one knows which is which nor the way to Heaven. The man who kills the cat, in one scenario he is not responsible, and in another he is, simply because of the circumstance of knowledge.”

“This still does not answer my original question.” “Of course it does. How far can blame go? I am guilty of the initial killing and nothing more. To think with that line of logic would be to charge God, as creator, for all of the ills of the world. And yet, people blame God for countless things. But is a storm to blame for the death of an animal? The universe has its origins in a physically violent way.”

“I see your reasoning. If God gave man freewill despite knowing his nature, he should not be held responsible. But if a man sells a gun illegally and that gun is used to commit a crime, the gunseller is also punished.” “That’s if you can find him. God as evasive criminal. God as original sinner. Humans can create laws but they cannot carry them out because they are corruptible.”

In all this time, he had won four more games, and myself three. When I noticed that our location had changed, I asked him how that was possible. He told me that the room we were in now, it existed everywhere and was in everything. *River City, N/A.*

Just before darkness and just after we had finished removing the final blocking snow, the four of us decided to lay Tracy to rest.

“The hard is too ground to bury, I mean, the ground is too hard to bury it,” I told Dave. “What about the water?,” Sara interrupted, “I saw someone put an animal that died in the water one time in a movie.”

With that suggestion, Tracy was taken out of the box, though still inside the backpack, and we walked a few miles to a creek. Dave carried the backpack the whole way through.

When we got there, a bit of a current was on its way. Dave, backpack in arms, stood closest to the water, and eventually he looked back at his mother to know how to proceed. She gestured to put Tracy into the water so the water could take it.

Before he did this, he opened the backpack and the stench of death dissipated like early light. He took out a water pistol from his pocket and placed it inside the bag, saying Tracy died like a soldier. An OG.

Had we found Tracy deceased after the storm, we might not feel we had to go to such great lengths for its memory; we may have even poked at it in dire curiosity; but Tracy was someone we saw die. With hope there is responsibility, but death renders one futile, and the river always comes before the magic.

We gathered rocks and Dave placed them inside the backpack, then pushed it out into the creek. The current took it and we all watched as it went down the stream and underneath an overpass. With each separation the backpack slowly went under until it was submerged altogether and forever out of sight.

Goodnight drivers. Goodnight bridge. Goodnight shovelers. Goodnight snow. Goodnight river. Goodnight Tracy. Goodnight Moon.

Chapter 56

GOODNIGHT MOON

2:2:6:56

“...Praise it for the artist that it is in all the ways it has sculpted matter...”

ON a morning from a Kubrick movie, in a suburb where they turn back life. I'd lived in this apartment building in my thirties, thirty years ago. It is where my obsession with my dreams became real. A confusing era of distinguishing memories, realities and dreams.

I now must walk down this road to wait for someone who I know is coming. I'll wait in the final vehicle just before the intersection, and as the person peers through the window to see what's inside, they will find me.

I'll tell this person that we can never fool ourselves no matter how deep within our mind we think we may be.

This is not a reference to dreams, but rather a warning to the unexamined life. The uninvestigated psychology. It is an alert about the beast that hides within us all; the being that drives us into automatic piloting and, without our knowing, renders the soul idle. It is vital that they know it as much as it knows them.

And before they can ask me what I mean, the day will turn to night and a thunderstorm will ensue, and I will wake up, vanishing.

On my way to the meadow of moths, I saw Suhm parking a taxi near a street corner. A little later I walked past Becky and Latoya who were on the way to the apartment building. They came out of the darkness of the bike path that was still under construction. They both said hello and I greeted them back.

I get to Lynne's workplace and from a distance I can see that she is talking to someone. It kind of looked like management. I got closer and took a seat on the opposite end and from the discussion realized that it indeed was her boss.

As the two talked on I gazed out of the large window panes and into the airplane lanes with a mild view of a distant city skyline.

Near the waiting area the television was on WBC and was talking about the revival of a long abandoned part of town. The aerial view seemed to center on an old playground which they say was at once an evidence ground for a once high-profile murder case that has now gone cold. Rebuilding has always started with the youth.

After her boss left, she turned around and walked towards me, “What up homie?” “You've been hanging around David too much.” “He's my boy.” “Shut up, what did the doctor say about his finger?” “Feeling may or may not come back, we have to wait and see, but David said it's not as bad as it was before.” “That's good, is anything wrong with

Sara?" "No, she hasn't said anything." "What about you?" "I'm good. You?" "Landlord said the toilet has to be replaced, he's supposed to come on Tuesday." "Good, tired of seeing you in my bathroom."

Her phone made a sound and she looked at it, and I noticed that slight discomfort she sometimes has in her face. "Who is it?" "Chloe..." "Why'd you say it like that?"

After a long pause and repetitive looks at her phone, she finally admitted to me that Chloe tried to kiss her.

I was laughing and cringing in my head the entire time as she told me about it. They were alone and Chloe made her move, their lips touched, and Lynne backed away and her rejection was followed by a long awkward discord.

"When?" "On Wednesday. I've been avoiding her. She came to my house yesterday but I didn't answer. And she's already called me three times since I started working. Doesn't she fucking sleep? Anyway, if you see her act like you don't know." "You got it."

She turned 'round and went to a side to take her bookbag and then took out a notebook from her bookbag. She flipped it to a page and then handed it to me, and in big bolded lettering I read the word "DÉIJÀ." Underneath it was a flower I have never seen before, but then again there are probably thousands of flowers I have never seen before.

"That would be the name of the book, and that would be the cover art, if I ever racked up enough nerve to try and publish it." "What book?" "My poetry book." "Ah." "You don't like it?" "I haven't even read it yet. What is this flower?"

"...Do you think flowers have soulmates?," she asks. I shook my head, "Don't waste your mind and science's time on such stupid questions." "No, hear me out." "Just this once." "I'll ask in a way that you understand. Do you think soulmates maybe have the same genotype? Or maybe a very similar genotype?"

"To my wife, though only in philosophy, who I searched for and found and who I came to learn bore the same mind."

That was how I felt looking at her as she waited for an answer. "Yes," I answered. "You do?" "Yeah." "So we are genomates," she zingered. I pointed at her and laughed. "You're so gay." She winked at me after I told her this.

"Come on," she said leaving and putting up a sign that read "Be back soon!" "Where we goin'?" "For a ride."

She led me to a section of the airport that was for employees only and eventually we both got into a modified golf cart. We really were going for a ride.

"My boss was telling me that the food and stuff was moved to a new location." "Food for restocking the diner?" "Yeah. So we may get lost."

Among the broken fragments of the last minute or so, we cruised through the airport's wide hallways in search of the storage room. We must have passed dozens of restaurants.

Eventually Lynne stopped the cart in front of a waiting area, full of people waiting for a midnight plane, to look at her phone, perhaps a map. While waiting, not too far and sitting in a chair, I caught a boy staring at Lynne. I didn't say anything at first, but as his stare persisted, I suddenly opened my mouth.

"She's a poet, you know," I told the boy. He looked at me in surprise, then Lynne looked up to see who I was talking to. The boy was embarrassed, and suddenly Lynnette slapped my arm, "No I'm not," she said only so I could hear her. She then turned to the boy and reiterated, "I'm not a poet." The boy's face grew into confusion and he walked away to find someone who I would say was his brother.

Starting the motor again she drove to the end of the way and made a right turn into an area with dozens of clothing stores.

"She's a poet you know," she says in a voice that seems to mock and mimic mine. She continues, "Look at me my voice is so deep and calm and sinister and I never smile." She hit me again and I couldn't understand why my compliment offended her.

Making another turn, I caught a glimpse of a television saying our city's football team had finished the season at 2 and 14.

"You ever wonder why things are different?," she suddenly asked as if she didn't just hit me and was pondering the question for several nights. "What's different?" "Why are there different colors? Different numbers. Shapes. Animals. Plants. Sexes. Elements. Genomes." "I'm sure I have in one way or another."

Currently there were waiting areas on either sides of us and they had become flooded by water. In only a matter of seconds the entire airport was flooded and creatures of the sea swam around us as we continued down the way in our golf cart.

What separates the water from the air, sharks from turtles? Maybe it is a setting as old as the first cooling pools of the universe.

There is a setting of the universe I like to call "duplication accuracy." We know that many things in our universe can copy themselves, or create duplicates of themselves, but where duplication accuracy comes into play is when there is a mistake in copying.

The simple fact that there can be mistakes in duplication suggests we live in a universe where duplication accuracy is not at one hundred percent. If it were, we might not live in such a diverse universe where we have so many "different" things.

As we drive through this ocean we both witness all the unique creatures of the sea. The vast array of plant life down below. So many of them almost the same but slightly different in the smallest way. The universe may have a parent duplication accuracy setting, but each system within the universe itself seems to also have a child duplication accuracy setting; that is, for example, a human being has become so complex that its own duplication accuracy setting has decreased and is more susceptible to diseases such as the

many forms of cancer we fear.

With a score of anything less than 100 for the duplication accuracy setting, this opens the door to a world of uniqueness, but uniqueness has always been a way to chaos. Praise it for the artist that it is in all the ways it has sculpted matter, blame it for all the ways humans have disconformed.

Suddenly she stopped at our destination and gave me a final thought on discrimination, and soon after we entered into the room.

She took out some kind of gadget and begins typing numbers into it. "How many packets of sugar are in that box?" "Twenty-two." "How many packs of coffee beans in there?" "Fourteen." And she asked and asked and I answered and answered until she had taken stock of much of the inventory.

The next task included filling up the golf cart compartments with a certain amount of said inventory. "You do this every shift?" "Usually it's Giselle, and really only on Fridays."

After we loaded up the cart we drove back to the circular diner. On the way back, while driving through a section of the airport that was closed off to passengers, she drove into a room that was wide and filled with empty space. She said she wanted to show me something.

And suddenly, she switched to the second gear of the cart which was reserved for emergencies in the airport and we went flying as if on a race track. It only took a short while for her to begin losing control of the cart and when I told her to slow it down she paid no attention. It was a near miss that would have totaled the cart that persuaded her perhaps she might slow down and revert back to the first gear. Looking back, a display case wobbled back and forth until it evened itself out.

She parked the cart just around the diner and began to fill it. She specifically asked me not to help. As she worked she told me that being the great employee that she was, they added two more workdays to her schedule. "Is that forty or fifty hours?" "Fifty." She waited for my reply.

"Good, tired of seeing you in my apartment." She laughed and asked if it was okay with me. I told her I was okay with it as long as she was careful at night.

Thirty minutes later Giselle showed up to relieve her. We get on a train to find Pedro working the seventh hour. We sit near him but it is Lynne who does most of the talking.

I nudged her at Washington but she told me she had coupons for Chase Foods. I wondered if they were open this early in the morning. To my surprise they were, and eventually we carried the grocery bags to the apartment building. At the same time, we found Sara and Dave and all of their schoolmates waiting at the bus stop. I went ahead inside as Lynne talked to them and about five minutes later she entered the apartment.

I laid out flat on her three-couch and while going to the bathroom she tells me that she is going to go to sleep so she can be awake when Sara and Dave get out of school. I was already sort of falling asleep myself.

With my vision darkening I saw and heard her move about the apartment, putting the laptop computer on a nearby desk and playing an audio CD which contained an audiobook that she most likely got from the library. She had the interesting pastime of playing books so that the chapters would be read in a random order. I guess all in all, like jazz, it was just something to fall asleep to.

She then went to the window drapes and closed them shut eliminating the early light and the bright blue sky. And like that she landed on the two-couch with a plan to fall asleep. There you are, the *déjà* poet; you live in poems, you dream in novels.

“...without looking back she went down the uneven strand to Cissy, to Edy to Jacky and Tommy Caffrey, to little baby Boardman. It was darker now and there were stones and bits of wood on the strand and slippery seaweed. She walked with a certain quiet dignity characteristic of her but with care and very slowly because—because Gerty MacDowell was... Tight boots? No. She’s lame! O! Mr Bloom watched her as she limped away. Poor girl! That’s why she’s left on the shelf and the others did a sprint. Thought something was wrong by the cut of her jib. Jilted beauty. A defect is ten times worse in a woman. But makes them polite. Glad I didn’t know it when she was on show. Hot little devil all the same. I wouldn’t mind. Curiosity like a nun or a negress or a girl with glasses. That squinty one is delicate. Near her monthlies, I expect, makes them feel ticklish. I have such a bad headache today. Where did I put the letter? Yes, all right. All kinds of crazy longings. Licking pennies. Girl in Tranquilla convent that nun told me liked to smell rock oil. Virgins go mad in the end I suppose. Sister? How many women in Dublin have it today? Martha, she. Something in the air. That’s the moon. But then why don’t all...”

Chapter 57

UNLUCKY TO LOSE

2:2:6:57

“...You got any more in the back?...”

FADE IN

INT. CHASE FOODS - NIGHT

Inside CHASE FOODS can be heard music playing from the radio station K109 “THE BEAT.” Enter JACK BOOTH through the entrance with a background of tall snow and somewhat drunk. A used lottery card can be observed on the mat of the entrance door.

JACK BOOTH

(looking behind cashier at alcohol)

I'll take all three. You got any more in the back? What brand cigarettes are those?

Cut back to CHASE FOODS entrance, enter DAVE and SARA who have come to purchase candy and milk. Follow DAVE as he walks through the media aisle where he stops and stares at display case for “MORTEM DOOM.” On the radio can clearly be heard the lyrics “though the course may change sometimes, rivers always reach the sea.” A lottery machine can be observed in the background.

Black screen with white letters, “15 MINUTES LATER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – NIGHT

Show three seconds of cars driving by with CHASE FOODS store in the background, which has an electrical sign that reads “Now open 24 hours.” After three seconds show Lynne walking through entrance, same view, with a grocery bag in hand.

INT. CHASE FOODS – NIGHT

Follow LYNNE as she walks past a magazine titled “SCREENPLAY,” which features a photo of Reggie Rice on the cover, and to a cash register. A used lottery card can be observed on the side of a trash can.

LYNNE

My daughter just bought this but it is expiring soon, can I exchange it?

CASHIER

Yes, can I see your receipt?

LYNNE hands over receipt, cashier allows her to exchange it.

EXT. CHASE FOODS – NIGHT

Cut to JACK BOOTH who is sitting on a curb behind CHASE FOODS drinking alcohol. A used lottery card can be observed behind him.

Black screen with white letters, “3 HOURS EARLIER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – DUSK

Show three seconds of cars driving by with CHASE FOODS store in the background. After three seconds, SUHM GUY enters through entrance.

INT. CHASE FOODS – DUSK

SUHM GUY walks down an aisle and passes by a set of films; a film titled “THE MACABRE IRONFLY” can be readily seen as he passes by it. A lottery card is seen sticking out of his back pocket.

Cut to another aisle which at first is empty, then SUHM GUY appears into it and is walking to its midsection where he browses a number of car fresheners. As he browses fresheners, on the radio can be heard a radio personality speaking about how a city school was shut down because of a bomb threat.

Black screen with white letters, “3 MINUTES EARLIER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – DUSK

GUN HO GUY is around the corner of CHASE FOODS front entrance observing a city worker who is working on a broken sidewalk. He waits until the city worker finishes

and then crosses the street to vandalize the sidewalk block.

Cut to a top-down shot of GUN HO GUY writing “peepee” into the sidewalk. Suddenly SPOOKER is seen walking down the same sidewalk and eventually reaches and startles GUN HO GUY. SPOOKER stops and reads the vandalization.

GUN HO GUY

(standing up)

Please don't tell my mom. Look, here, you can have this.

(GUN HO GUY takes out a two-dollar bill)

SPOOKER makes no inclination of wanting the two-dollar bill. A brief moment passes by as SPOOKER awaits the next offer.

GUN HO GUY

I will give you back your headphones.

SPOOKER

I'll be waiting.

New view of GUN HO GUY watching as SPOOKER walks away towards CHASE FOODS. A used lottery card can be observed on the grass nearby.

Black screen with white letters, “2 HOURS LATER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – NIGHT

In the parking lot of CHASE FOODS are JACK BOOTH and JASMIN MINAEA who are arguing in the distance though not loud enough to cause a disturbance.

JACK BOOTH

(inaudible but visibly drunk, annoyed)

JASMIN MINAEA

(inaudible but visibly drunk, angered)

Cut to close shot of JASMIN MINAEA who has just ended her relationship with JACK BOOTH and is walking away. A used lottery card is seen just beside a vehicle.

Black screen with white letters, “30 MINUTES LATER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – NIGHT

JACK BOOTH is sitting on a curb behind CHASE FOODS smoking his last cigarette. Realizing this, he gets up and walks toward the front entrance of CHASE FOODS.

Hold shot as JACK BOOTH enters CHASE FOODS. Eventually, show SARA and DAVE walking down street as they talk to each other. Voices are heard clearly despite far distance.

SARA

Don't steal anything, 'cause I always get in trouble too.

DAVE

(counting coins, ignores SARA)

Continue to hold camera shot until they enter CHASE FOODS. Hold camera shot on possible lottery prizes.

Black screen with white letters, “2 MINUTES EARLIER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – NIGHT

SARA and DAVE walking down street, part of CHASE FOODS can be seen in the background. A used lottery card can be observed in the grass nearby.

SARA

(bending down)

Someone wrote “peepee” on the concrete.

DAVE

It was Gun Ho or Dam Son, they always do that.

SARA

(bending back up)

I bet.

Black screen with white letters, “20 MINUTES LATER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – NIGHT

LYNNE walking down street with grocery bag, part of CHASE FOODS can be seen in the background. Though you cannot see what she is staring at, it is obvious she is reading the word “peepee” that was written into a sidewalk block. A used lottery card can be observed at the grass nearby.

Black screen with white letters, “9 HOURS EARLIER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – AFTERNOON

Show three seconds of cars stopped in front of a red light with CHASE FOODS store in the background. One of the cars stopped is a taxi being operated by SUHM GUY.

INT. CHASE FOODS – AFTERNOON

OLYA DIMIC walks up to a selection of milk gallons, looks and reads over one and goes to grab it but stops, then grabs the next one over. As she is leaving, a shot of the expiration date of the one she was about to take is shown.

Black screen with white letters, “3 HOURS LATER.”

EXT. CHASE FOODS – AFTERNOON

REBECCA and LATASHA are sitting in the parking lot of CHASE FOODS.

LATASHA

This must be the only place in the world that can have a bad blizzard one week and then warm weather the next.

REBECCA

(laughing)

All four seasons in one day.

LATASHA

(laughing)

Thank God for whoever called the bomb threat.

REBECCA

(laughing)

Get out of school early? I'm fine with that.

REBECCA and LATASHA begin walking away from the parking lot towards a street, all the time a part of CHASE FOODS can be seen in the background.

REBECCA

Sunny left the door open to his taxi again.

LATASHA

Who?

REBECCA

One of my neighbors, he never closes the door hard enough. One of these days his taxi is going to get stolen.

(REBECCA walks over to the taxi)

Cut to a shot of REBECCA opening the taxi door and reaching inside to steal SUHM GUY'S car freshener, then closing the door shut. A used lottery card can be observed inside the taxi.

REBECCA

(smiling)

Don't worry, I'll give it back to him.

LATASHA

You bad girl you.

REBECCA

Well someone's gotta teach him.

Black screen with white letters, "5 HOURS EARLIER."

EXT. CHASE FOODS – MORNING

Show three seconds of cars driving by with CHASE FOODS store in the background. CHARLES F. KANE is shown leaving, walks to the left around the building and disappears.

INT. CHASE FOODS – MORNING

Slowly zoom out of a shot of LUCEY GOOSIES cereal brand. Hold until AMY STEINBRENNER walks by and takes one off the shelf.

Cut to a shot of AMY STEINBRENNER holding grocery bags and going through a shelf of magazines. She takes some off one by one, then hidden in the back of a row she takes out a magazine called "SCREENPLAY" and stares at the cover. Eventually she sets the magazine back down in the front of the row. A used lottery card can be observed on the side of a trash can.

EXT. CHASE FOODS – MORNING

Show AMY STEINBRENNER walking out of the front entrance of CHASE FOODS. Cut to a shot that follows her from behind until she turns a corner. Now in the distance are city works who are marking a sidewalk block for repair.

Black screen with white letters, "6 HOURS EARLIER."

INT. CHASE FOODS – DAWN

CHASE FOODS is noticeably free of any patrons. An employee of CHASE FOODS is setting up a display case for a film titled "MORTEM DOOM" which has recently been released to home video. Pieces of the display case illustrate death and disease.

Cut to a shot of another employee who is mopping a floor with a warning sign of wetness nearby.

Cut to another shot of an employee walking into a CHASE FOODS office and turning on the radio to K109 "THE BEAT." A pop song immediately starts playing.

EXT. CHASE FOODS – DAWN

Music continues to play. Show a low number of cars driving past CHASE FOODS store. At one point a snow-plow drives through. Final shot is of an employee washing the windows from inside the store as the music continues to play. A used lottery card is seen floating in the wind.

FADE OUT

Chapter 58

CAVE MYTHOLOGY: EGODYSTONIA!

2:2:6:58

“...undivided punishment comes to those who make themselves to be the absolute hero...”

SOMETIME last night, I had a dream. In a cave of the first humans I saw art that depicted the myth of Mwagos. The art on the cave focused on a man being thrown into Mwagos, and as the man fell, a thousand tortured souls tried to grab him and attempted to touch him on his way down. Mwagos was not a place that existed in the afterlife or the beforelife, but in the nowlife, and if you found yourself in Mwagos, you were most likely sent there by an immortal named Malenko.

The myth is as follows; a man wanted to help his poor village and become its savior, but it was important that he be the sole savior and no one else. A year later he met an immortal named Malenko, and Malenko told him he would sell him his dream for only three rubies.

The man agreed, handed over the three rubies, and Malenko worked his magic, then disappeared.

The next day, the man was given many riches by his government, but it was him only who received these gifts. He became ecstatic and ran through the village telling everyone of his fortune and his plan to divide his riches so that everyone may benefit, but each person he talked to was uninterested in him, in his plans and in his riches.

That night he went back home after being ignored by many of the people he wanted to help, and he racked his brain trying to figure out why no one wanted his aid. For many years to come, he had an abundance of everything he needed and an excess of luxuries, but he was in his own personal hell because no one would accept his gifts. He watched children die of famine, mothers die of disease, fathers die of hard labor, and as much as he pleaded to let these people help him, no one accepted. In the end, he watched others who had little suffer as he himself had plenty and no way to help them, and this situation brought him into a deep depression he had never felt before.

This was the way, or indeed the curse, of Malenko. His method was to play the ego against the soul. The spirit against the narcissism that lives in every human being.

If you went to him and asked him to make you the most wonderful singer in the city so that you may sing for fellow man, Malenko's magic would not just make you the most wonderful in the city but in the world, but then he would make everyone else deaf so no one could hear you. If you asked to be a great painter, your wish was his command, but everyone would become blind. If you asked to become intelligent, this was no problem at all, but everyone would become dumb and unable to understand your lectures. If you

asked for beauty, you would receive it, but he would change the common perception of beauty.

Those who were egocentric would be given exactly what they wanted, but when they saw that it was uncommunicable, the ego within would envelope and destroy them. In this state of confusion, anger and indignation was the metaphor of Mwagos, the ego's hell, where they would all eventually fall into. Malenko knew very well of this place, and tricked many by their own ego to fall into it.

948-7255: Hello?

646-0704: Hello Ava how you are?

948-7255: Good Liam, and you?

646-0704: Good, good, is family okay?

948-7255: Yes, sister was caught in storm. She go to the hospital but is okay now.

646-0704: That is very good.

948-7255: What about you family?

646-0704: No family, only family in Ireland.

948-7255: Ah. Okay well I send papers to bank, still waiting.

646-0704: Oh okay, so you send papers. That's what I was going to ask. You let me or Connor know when you are receive reply?

948-7255: Yes yes, of course.

646-0704: Okay, I call back in few days just incase you don't call.

948-7255: Okay, good to talk to you Liam. Bye now.

646-0704: Slan leat.

I've been standing outdoors just outside my backdoor in the cold just thinking. Not about anything in particular. One thought that did cross my mind was a commercial I saw yesterday. But that's not really important.

Some of the snow from Tracy has vanished because the temperature upped slightly, but its impact is yet to cease.

While thinking about nothing an airplane emerged from behind a set of clouds, revealing itself for a moment, and then disappeared into another. The sight of airplanes in the déjã sky always makes me think of my genomate. She has learned to fly by pushing the pain towards the ground and letting the darkness elevate her. I wish I may, I wish I might, wish upon an airplane tonight. I wish she continues her nirvanic flight.

Entering back into my apartment the only light in it was coming from the television, channel 4, OBH, and as I went to shut it off I noticed my pair of headphones. With the light from the television gone my entire apartment had become dark and I decided to sit

on the couch.

In the unquiet darkness I heard Tian walking about, I heard Mike and Deana arguing, and I heard the family upstairs having a small party. After only a little while I was able to drown them out and the voices of my mind penetrated my thoughts. Never knowing who was speaking I saw the lucid images of ideas swell my consciousness.

The brainstorm was broken when I heard a knocking at my door. Looking through the peephole I see that it is Chloe, and man, I really don't want to open it, but she may have heard me walking to the door.

"Where has Lynne been?" I told her I didn't know. "You think I don't know your deal?" I asked her what she meant by my deal. "You told her to stay away from me. You told her not to talk to me." I told her I did no such thing. "Yes, yes you did. You isolate your partners and trap them and manipulate them to massage your ego. And you know people like her won't seek help."

I took a deep breath and then told her that she was right. I told her that I told Lynne to stay away from her. I told her that Lynne only talks to who I let her talk to and she only does what I let her do. I told her that it would be best if she left Lynne alone.

Of course, though, instead of just leaving, she insulted every male human on the planet. The final thing she said to me before she left was that there was a place in prison for people like me.

After she left I used a key to open Lynne's apartment and found Sara and Dave doing stuff. They know not to answer the door and that anyone who belongs in there has a key. They know also not to answer the phone unless Lynne's name is on the caller identification. So when I asked them if anyone knocked on the door or called, they answered yes to both. When I checked the history of the telephone, the most recent caller was Chloe S.

I went back to my apartment and sat the same way I did before before I was interrupted. Today was a rare day that saw Lynne work in the evening, so I decided to wait for her before I went to sleep.

Like clockwork the key opened the door to my apartment and as she walked in she turned on the light to find me sitting alone in the dark. This is not the first time she has seen me do this, so it wasn't a surprise when she simply walked by and didn't ask me if I was crazy. While she was in the kitchen, I told her of her girlfriend's visit.

"I told her that I told you to stop talking to her, so you're off the hook." "Is she going to stop bothering me?" "I don't know."

The remainder before midnight had Lynne return to her apartment and then return back to mine with two new yoga mats. She unveiled hers, which was a flowery yoga mat of every color in the rainbow, then told me she bought me one as well, which was a solid

black. "Oh, well, thanks," I said, "you know me so well." She laughed. "You don't have to use it if you don't want to," she reassured, "besides, there are other different things you can do with these mats."

Later, she was in my kitchen again, looking for some cups. Fortunately there were two that were still clean and after pouring the drinks she handed me a glass cup while she drank out of a plastic cup. She goes over to the light switch for the living room and turns it off then sits next to me on the couch; the room was dark again.

"Okay, so what are we doing?," she asked, "Just sitting in the dark like murderers and madmen?" I laughed.

You'll find that in many movements there are smaller identity groups. For example, within the rights for gays, you may find homosexual women who focus largely on a voice for lesbians. Within that identity, you may find women of color who focus on the oppression of black gay women. The problem with this, I think, is that at some point as you continue to differentiate yourself within the same identity group, a sense of ego finds its way in, and those particular people want to be the ones who change the world. It will not be enough to just have people speak for you, those people have to have the same identity as you, and eventually it gets down to one person and their ego.

Every now and then Lynne took a silent ghostly sip in the quiet darkness. As much as Malenko will take from you, he does however grant you your one dream. Maybe Mwagos is the simple fact that only you can benefit from it, which also appeals to one's ego. Many of these dreams require the interaction of others, and Malenko seems to punish those who do not include others in their dream. And in those dreams, undivided punishment comes to those who make themselves to be the absolute hero.

She took another drink from her cup and then sat it on the table next to my cup. Looking at the barely visible cups, a thought came to me. If you don't have an ego, Malenko can't trick you.

Chapter 59

WESTERN SEPAL GREEN

2:2:6:59

“...In the moment of creation, where power and control meet, the imagination borrows from the most poignant of memories...”

A nightmare continued last night. There was a pounding and shouting from a man on the other side of my door. After a minute it stopped and I wondered if I was just hearing things. I went over to the door, opened it slowly, and saw that no one was there.

I turned around and walked back over to the prostitute I just murdered. The blood spilling from her ankle had stopped.

In my closet was a collection of left-foot prostheses, and I went through each one until I found a match for, oh, which name would she prefer for me to refer to her as? Daisy or Dahlia? You see, she was mad, had two personalities in her mind; if she worked in the day she was Daisy, if she worked at night she was Dahlia. But right now, it is midway in between day and night.

I fixed the prosthetic onto her left side and returned back to my closet where I found dozens of yellow dresses. I pick one, go back to her naked body, and I clothe her carcass. It's a wonderful lie.

A dream is sometimes about power. A fantasy is sometimes about control. In the moment of creation, where power and control meet, the imagination borrows from the most poignant of memories.

Who was I looking at? It was not Daisy nor Dahlia. It must have been a memory I could not let go of, something from my past I tried to retain. Someone or something I could not let wither.

Finally, the door broke down and police officers invaded my apartment. The nightmare shifted as they drove me west by northwest through a complicated forest toward police headquarters on Sunset Avenue. The days following brought along a spectacle of epic proportions.

“The serial killer known as 'The Anthologist' has finally been apprehended. Dozens of women's feet were found in a freezer in the apartment along with other bizarre items. Confessions have been made to the murders of three local prostitutes known in the area by their nicknames as 'Zinnia,' 'Lily,' and 'Rose.' The name of the killer has yet to be released.”

Drinking eggnog that Lynne had bought from Chase Foods, I found myself in the composition notebook room staring into the kitchen at Lynne. Standing at a counter near a microwave, she was eating a banana very leisurely while toying with my cellular device.

She wore no socks, and to the matching of her yoga mat, she had on colorful and flowery yoga pants and an even more colorful and flowery sports brassiere. The outfit was topped off with several colorful flowers tied into her hair.

The combination of the sight and the dream met together to form a cloud in my mind, a cloud of thoughts and memories, and easily, I was lost in my stare.

Her delicate, dainty hand gripped tightly the base of the banana. The first contact it made with her mouth was brief as she entered in only its tip for a curious taste, and soon again she entered it a second time, further in, enough so that it would have made contact with her tongue. The third time, with the banana only an inch away from her mouth, she suddenly stopped, her mouth opened, and did something on the phone very quickly, then finally entered the banana in for a mouthful, and later peeled back its sides. The fourth time, the banana entered her mouth much slower than the others, I believe because something fascinating had captured her attention on the phone, and as the interest persisted, and with the banana inside considerably, she held the banana in her mouth for a good while as she interacted with the phone. At one point, the way she fed on it, I could have sworn it was a banana made of cream. So Daisy, innocent and unsuspecting, yet so Dahlia, an invitation to the impure.

I began to walk towards the kitchen a little later and in my doing so she raised her leg on the kitchen counter to stretch, and I saw that vein that runs like a brook along her foot. Suddenly, as I approached, Lynne and I heard glass shatter and break in the living room, and when I realized that it was Sara who was swinging around one of her stuffed animals, and that she had swung it into a glass cup on a table which was knocked into fragile furniture, I decided I had had enough.

Saturdays have become the worst days of my life. It means Sara and Dave are off from school, Lynne is off from work, and they all have the tendency to come into my apartment and do stuff. I don't need to see them every Saturday.

"Everyone out," I said. "Remove your foot from off that counter, I don't know where your feet have been." "Forget about the glass just leave immediately." The three of them gave a sort of laugh as they packed up their belongings and walked the brown mile. My last vision of them while the Sun was still in the air was Lynne closing the door with her flowery winter jacket in hand.

With the noise gone I think I am going to go to sleep. I walk into my living room and lay down on the couch, some of the Sun's weakened rays piercing through the window. It's so quiet now. It's so quiet.

I wake up to the sound of my cellular device that was going off in the kitchen. I get up to realize it is completely night now, and when I get into the kitchen I see that it is seven p.m. My phone now had the title of "Mr. Spookie," which I am sure came at the

hands of Lynne. The message on my phone was from Lynne, saying it was quiet at her place, which was basically an invitation for me to visit.

I walked over, half-suspicious, but saw that she was telling the truth as soon as I walked into the apartment.

There was absolutely no noise and at first I pondered the silence of the children. Citizen Dave was on the computer watching a cartoon about the Grim Reaper with green headphones on, Sara was laying down in the living room working on her toyset, and Lynne was in her room, now wearing darker and duller colors and color penciling in concept art for the book of poems she was working on. This artwork was named “In Fuchsia,” and also observable were “Sunset Soulmates,” “White Lights” and “Harvest Moon.”

“Is that a rose city?” I asked over her shoulder. “Yeah, I haven’t decided on the name for this poem yet.”

I went and laid on her bed to rest, and she gave me the special feature of getting to hear some of the poems she had finished. Of the many, she read aloud to me two, which were “Growth” and “Majestic Garden.” A part of each for a moment took me back to the past.

While resting on her bed, I also noticed she replaced her “motivational” board with something else. “Be happy, cherish every day, laugh out loud,” all the shit that takes up too much energy to do. She got rid of it a month ago after Sara and Dave told her it was lame, and how Sara said they didn’t even hug each other everyday, which was another commandment from the board. They rarely hugged each other at best, thank fucking God.

She replaced it with something that has to do with her venture into yoga, and reading over it, I was interested. It told me about eight concepts:

Yama - The Five Abstentions

Ahimsa (non-violence, non-harming other living beings)

Satya (truthfulness, non-falsehood)

Asteya (non-stealing)

Brahmacharya (celibacy, fidelity to one's partner)

Aparigraha (non-avarice, non-possessiveness)

-

Niyama - The Five Observances

Śauca (purity, clearness of mind, speech and body)

Santoshā (contentment, acceptance of others and of one's circumstances)

Tapas (persistent meditation, perseverance, austerity)
Svādhyāya (study of self, self-reflection, study of Vedas)
Ishvara-Pranidhana (contemplation of god, supreme being, true self)

-

Asana (refers to the seated position used for meditation)
Pranayama (prāna, breath, "āyāma", to "stretch, extend, restrain, stop")
Pratyahara (withdrawal of the sense organs from external objects)
Dharana (fixing the attention on a single object)
Dhyana (intense contemplation of the nature of the object of meditation)
Samadhi (merging consciousness with the object of meditation)

“Do you do all of these?” I asked. She said no, and told me that she only focused on the ones that strengthen her body and mind.

Sara shouts out my name like twelve angry women, and I follow the voices into her room, where she is standing near a mirror and a two-dollar bill. I thought it looked familiar, and when I asked her where she got it from, she said Gun Ho bought her haunted doll for two bucks.

She then told me that she wanted to show me her train car. It was a model of a single train car, and when I picked it up to look inside, I saw a few passengers, but what struck me was the train operator and his likeness to Pedro.

I called Lynne into the room to look at it and she agreed with me hesitantly. Dave also walked in, wondering what was going on, and eventually and impatiently asked when she would take them to her work.

Dave and Sara have never been to an airport, not that it is a special place to visit, but have heard of them and have always been curious about going to one.

She promised she would take them, and then all of sudden began telling them about my last visit to the airport.

“While we were driving in the cart back to the diner, we drove past a storage room and it didn't even have a lot of storage. So I just put my finger on the gear, flipped it to rock and roll, and we were speeding past everything in sight. Came close to crashing.”

The entire time she was telling them about it she made stupid gestures of driving. Flipping the gear from one to two and almost losing control of the golf cart. Some like it fast and do not die easy.

She ended with a promise to take us all on a golf cart cruise around the airport, and I'm sure it was not a promise either of them will soon forget.

After a while it was again just the two of us in her bedroom, and as the dark night pervaded she changed into a leaf-green sleeping nightgown. Like the man shrouded in darkness, I waited for her to fall asleep then sat up in the shadows. It may have been a streetlight, or the snow, or the Moon, but something white came through the front window and lit up the room faintly, just enough for me to see the outlines of her body inside the full emerald jacket.

First I only admired it, the moonlit city of goddesses, but a compulsion came over me as I reached out and slid my hand up and then down the back of her thigh. The next time I went back up, I took the gown along with my hand and felt the silky fabric as I slide it up halfway past her bottom. I squeezed gently what was exposed of her left cheek, then slid my hand over to the right and rubbed it underneath the gown. It was only a moment later that I rode the entire portion of the lower gown up to her waist to see the entire view of her bare naked bottom. Silhouette beauty.

I cupped again her left cheek now with my entire hand, squeezing and releasing and sometimes moving my hand up and down mildly. And I cupped again the right and repeated the compulsion for a few touches more, the outline by the faded light on her body as my guide. Tonight was all about Lynne. L for Lustre.

I decided then, in the mood for lust, to move to her breasts. The gown was cut on either sides in a way that I could enter my hand through near her underarm and massage her breasts the same way I did her bottom. I went in slowly, stopped a few times as to not wake her up, and finally my entire hand held her left breast in between the bed and her body. The soft pressure onto my hand and her nipple pressed against my palm must have felt as good for her in her dream as it did for me in reality.

Because her nipples are sensitive, I was more gentle with her breasts than I was with her bottom and spent less time squeezing them and moving them within my hand. Indeed, I spent less time on them in general.

When I was satisfied with the left breast, I reached over her backside with my right arm, passed under her arm, and then repeated the compulsion as I massaged her right breast. With my right hand and her right breast, I had a better grip and more control, and my face was suspended only inches away from hers as I tried my best not to breathe. The pressure of being in the middle of her and the bed, again, gave me and my hand the warmth of mother's milk. Somehow, I wanted to tell her to never change. I don't mean

physically, but personally. I had no need to disguise her, she was already what I wanted once upon a time in a dream.

When I was finished with her breasts and her bottom, I went back to her thighs, but I found myself staring at her bottom again. I put my hand over her and back onto the bed and drew my face forward downward toward her bottom, so that my nose was only millimeters away from her skin, and I breathed in through my nose the combination of a smell from her anal cavity and her vaginal cavity.

It was a smell I was familiar with because it was her smell. A smell I would recognize as her own even if my eyes were closed to the object. I'll tell you, she did not smell like flowers; it was a musky smell, not too strong, and one that has the effect of exciting me in a bizarre way. I breathed her in a couple more times for that potent smell, then brought my head back up to stare at her closed eyes once more. Would she be offended if she woke up? How would she feel if she found out I have touched her numerous times in opportunities for a dream as she lay asleep? To know that I have smelled such an intimate part of her body. That I have touched every surface of her body while she is in her most vulnerable state. That I have seen the good, the bad and the pretty.

You see, the question is not whether what I am doing is immoral or not, and the question is not whether I am violating her or not. The question is, rather, who is going to stop me?

Chapter 60

ONCE UPON A TIME IN A DREAM

2:2:6:60

"...You can have it any color you like, as long as it's black..."

I seem to often recall a moment in my childhood when my mother and father were happy together, sitting together on a beach, or a picnic blanket, something of the like. But it is strange because as far back as my memory goes, I cannot seem to recall them ever sharing a moment of affection. Never a hug, nor a kiss, I'm not even sure if I've ever seen them touch. By the time I was born, I suppose all of that had faded away.

My father, Gerold, and mother, Irene, according to one of my now deceased uncles, Junior, had one of the strangest marriages one could encounter. He used to tell me this story once of when he was living with them, because of the many hardships he was dealing with.

One night long ago as they were all sitting down to eat a meal Junior had prepared, in an apartment on the sixth floor, Junior found two cups in a cabinet and brought it to them. He had no plans of eating just yet, so he brought them both each a cup and then it became a night he would never forget.

My mother stood up, began cursing at both Junior and my father, and at first they were uncertain why she was upset, but only a moment later found out that she was angered because Junior had given my father a glass cup yet she herself received a plastic cup.

Junior described her rage as something of a person who was mentally ill, only making sense some of the time and at other times speaking word salad.

Junior froze and my father became readily frustrated. My father walks into the kitchen, takes every glass cup he can find, and then begins to walk towards my mother. On the way to her is a window that looks out into the street, and instead of making it all the way to her, he stops at the window, and very slowly and coolly, he drops every glass cup onto the pavement and a pop and shatter slew.

I remember distinctively, after being told this story, his analyses of both my mother and father and their relationship.

My father was a cold man, emotionally unavailable, which is why my mother was attracted to him. She had some dream of fixing him and making a proper husband out of him. My mother was a warm woman, but not in the good way. In fact, it may be more appropriate to call her hot-headed, mentally unstable, which is, of course, why my father was attracted to her. He had some dream of making her well and taming her. This is what Junior told me of them.

In the end, again said by Junior, their egos handicapped them and they both failed to change one another into the temperate husband and the obedient wife. I know by his tone and not by his words that he despised the general portrayal by culture of the happy family and happy marriage, especially the marriage portion because it was a lie and the only people in on it were married women and married men. In one way or fifty, he seemed to say that people weren't in love and they got married. People fell out of love and stayed married. All because of what it would look like on the outside.

410-2074: ...this is how we work, you find bank I find women.

646-0704: Fine, okay, what color I rent?

410-2074: You can have it any color you like, as long as it's black...

The basement of my parents' home looks a lot more family-friendly, family-oriented even, but it's a lie. The new rug, the television, the couch, none of these things are me. What was me was what was here before and lies idle in a storage unit.

I hear someone coming down the stairs, and as Lynne enters the basement she asks me a question, "If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants. Does that fit into a poem?" "If the headline is big enough, it makes the news big enough," I thought out loud. "What?" "Sorry, I was reading something. What did you say?" "Nevermind. What are you doing?" "Nothing."

She looked around the room in an attempt to figure out what I was doing. After she failed, she told me she was working on the beginning and ending to her book and was having a hard time deciding whether she should include a certain part in the foreword or afterword. Sitting on the couch next to me, she read from her notebook.

"...Human beings are not very complex when it comes to emotion, as we only really have a few core emotions. If you rely on emotion to power your art, you will have a very limited scope and by logic your art will be simple itself. Instead, I believe you should let your mind power your art; the part of the brain where enduring dreams occur; like a lightning storm in windy autumn with yellow leaves fluttering to the ground..."

I sat there thinking about the suggestion and then the image of a storm in autumn. It reminded me of a dream I had that took place in 1947. A colorful place by nature, comforting, brown yellow red orange green, quiet town. But in my mind now, that same dream became disrupted by a dangerous storm in the dark.

I told her to put it in the afterword, or at the end of the book, and when she asked me why, I told her it was best to tell someone to do something after you had become friends with them. She agreed.

A moment after Dave yelled something down the stairs. He was asking his mother if

she brought his fingertip-numbness medicine, which she said was in her purse in the kitchen.

Ever since Tracy's death, there has been something somber and cloudy about him. A night that he spent sleeping in my apartment had him ask me why living things die. Do all living things die. Where do living things go after they die. To each question I could only tell him that no one who is alive knows. Regardless of any answers, we are all doomed, and you can live any life you like as long as it's tragic. I didn't tell him that.

She stayed with me for a while. Maybe too long of a while. And eventually I got tired and allowed my head to fall onto the side of her arm. The momentum kept me going slowly, and she raised her pen and notebook into the air as my head fell into her lap. Lowering her arms, she used my head as a writing board.

I lift my legs onto the couch and I can hear her scribbles in my left ear. She showered before she came down here. She is wearing very short shorts. Room-temperature skin, white soap. Strawberry, or kiwi, or banana lotion. Déjà fruit.

"Do you like my lap?," she laughed. "I'm a mama's boy," I answered. She had nothing to say until a minute later, "Do you really think I'm a poet?"

I laughed, saying "Publishing a book of poetry doesn't make you a poet." At that moment she stopped scribbling which I now observed as drawing. "I knew you were a poet two years ago when you confessed your love for me." "I don't understand." "Poets can't conceal their feelings, they have a compulsion to express themselves. It's like if they don't then they wither and die." "Okay, next question. Do you think I am a person who can see things in a unique way?" "How would I know that? And why are you asking me these things?" "Because, I just want to know. When I say something does it make you think 'I never thought of it that way before?'"

First the basement walls changed, then the basement itself became a sort of control room. I could tell we were still underground, and suddenly monitor screens appeared in the corner of our eyes.

Looking over the monitors, we saw images of a quiet and empty snowy town. It seemed as if it didn't have a single resident, a ghost town almost, accompanied with the following things: a library, a beauty salon, a cabin, a cemetery, a motel, a prison, a high school, a house and more. There were lights, blue, green, red, yellow, on four of the screens but nothing more.

On the screen monitoring a library I found sub-cameras, and for more than ten minutes I panned throughout the entire library only seeing books but no readers. Suddenly Lynne told me she found an "atomic radiation" control unit on a side panel labeled "temperatures," and asked if she should raise it seeing as it was on -459.67. I told her to go ahead, and as she slid the controller, the town went from winter to spring to

summer. While there were still no people to be found, we saw the town go from death to life, from inactivity to activity, from stillness to movement. She returned the dial, and as soon we saw the seasons change again, from summer to autumn back to winter.

When someone says the word “temperature,” the average person thinks of hot and cold. But there is someone who can make you think of temperature in a way you've never thought of it before.

Fix your mind to think of temperature instead as the number of possible outcomes in a system of atoms; that is, the lower the temperature, the fewer outcomes that system can have, and the higher the temperature, the more outcomes that same system can have. For example, in a cold system where there is a small amount of atomic activity, there are far fewer things that can happen as opposed to a hot system where there is a big amount of atomic activity; cold temperatures are indicative of less movement and hot temperatures of more movement. Temperature now is not a calculation of how hot or cold something is, but rather its outcome potential; two degrees means not cold, but rather the system is simple with little outcome potential, and two-hundred degrees means not hot but rather a more complex system with higher outcome potential.

This leads us to stable and unstable systems. A low temperature, or low “atomic radiation,” grants us a more stable system. It is simpler and less can happen as opposed to high temperature, or high “atomic radiation,” in which case as the temperature increases the more unstable the system becomes. A highly unstable system can result in reality disruption; reality disruption can be many things, but one example of it are the various states of matter.

This leads us to the meat and potatoes of this entire theory. What is temperature, really? We know it's not the difference between being warm and cool. My proposition is that what we have come as human beings to call temperature is actually the amount of atomic radiation in a specific area. The more an atom changes its information, whether it be its location or composition, the more other atoms have to be updated of this changed information, and the more updated each atom has to be in the network, the more communication we will find between these atoms. This communication, or trade of information, may be the source of “heat,” and the more intense the communication is between atoms in a network, the “hotter” that area will become. And when atoms communicate less, the “colder” that area will become. In cases of high temperatures and high energy, such as a hydrogen bomb, atomic radiation and communication may be so intense and updates may be so rapid and frequent that atoms cannot keep up and lose information on each other, resulting in instability and reality disruption.

An area with increased atomic radiation and communication will no doubt give way to instability. And atomic instability, the way a human might perceive it, can be under a

many-worlds interpretation, can be states of matter, and last but not least, can be heat.

I came back to this reality with my head still resting in Lynne's lap. "By states of matter you mean solids, liquids and gasses right?" "Yeah." "I see," she finished. There are many blind people who can see better than those who have vision.

I raised my arm into the air and with my fingers I searched for her face, then for her nose, and then I picked it. She reacted swiftly, pulling my arm away and then slapping it away a second time. Quickly and without warning she then stood up and my head landed on the couch.

"If you're done," she said while walking away, "which word do you like better? Lovestone or Soulstone." "Lovestone," I answered. "So do I."

I sit up and am now how I was before. On the side of me is the drawing Lynne was working on, of a lady, dark-eyed and dark-haired. "How come you don't dance with me anymore?" "I don't know," I answered still looking at the drawing.

She disappeared for a transitory moment to check on the laundry, and I found myself leafing curiously through her artwork. When that transitory moment was over and she returned, she told me that even when she puts the dryer on "more dry" or "less dry," only the "normal dry" light turns on. I laughed, and then flipped to the next page.

The next drawing, unlike the others, was in color. It was of herself, kneeling down and gardening, wearing a gardener's hat and smiling down at her plot. She wore a skirted dress that went down to but did not cover her lame foot. The leaves flap, then flutter, then fall, and she is a sunset the same color as autumn.

Looking over this drawing, I slowly realized something. We all have two battles. One with the world outside, and one with the world inside. And once you learn how to control the world inside, the world outside no longer matters.

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Part 7

PAGE 8 OF 8, "THE EIGHT DREAMS"

2:2:7:61

1 Jericho Roche, (born 1st decade ACE, Zuchia, Malent, near Jaslun - died 28-36 MCE; fasting day July 24), secular prophet of unknown origin who preached the imminence of existentialism and baptized those who repented in self-preparation for understanding it; he is revered in the existential church of philosophy as the forerunner of Neros Draagekreik. 2 After a period of desert solitude, Jericho Roche emerged as a prophet in the region of the lower Kaskar River valley. 3 He had a circle of disciples, and Neros was among the recipients of his rite of baptism.

4 The primary sources for information about Roche's life and activity are the four Truths (Wehttam, Kram, Ekul, Nhoj), The Acts of the Divergents, and the existential historian Georges Lemaitre's "The Laws of Jericho." 5 In using these works for historical reconstruction, allowances must be made for the known tendencies of each writer. 6 All four Truths recognize in Roche the start of the existentialistic era, and each in its own way tries to reconcile Roche's precedence in time and Neros' acceptance of his message and of a baptism of repentance from his hands (elements suggesting subordination to Roche) with the author's belief in Neros as the Son of Man. 7 The Truth According to Kram presents Neros as the hidden savior, known only to a narrow circle, and Roche as the one who had to "come first to restore all things" but who also remained hidden and suffered death with little acknowledgment of his true status.

8 Wehttam and Ekul are thought to further develop Kram's narrative. 9 The Truth According to Wehttam emphatically identifies Roche as a new or returning Hilayos, herald of the kingdom of Man. 10 For Wehttam, Roche's death, like that of Neros, illustrates the old Zuchia's hostility to God's offer of salvation. 11 In The Truth According to Ekul and in The Acts of the Divergents, Ekul neglects the identification with Hilayos but describes Roche as Neros' forerunner and as inaugurator of the time of fulfillment of prophecy. 12 Ekul's account of the infancy of Roche and of Neros uses material perhaps transmitted by former disciples of the Savior. 13 It depicts the coming of Neros and Roche in two parallel series of scenes, each with an angelic annunciation, a conception, a marvelous birth, a circumcision, hymns greeting the child and predicting his destiny, and an infancy. 14 Even in his mother's womb Roche recognizes Neros-also still in his mother's womb—as his Lord.

15 The Truth According to Nhoj reduces the Savior from an Hilayos to a model existentialist preacher, a mere voice; it omits any description of Neros' baptism. 16 Its

tendency has often been labeled a polemic against a continuing group of disciples of Roche, but it is more plausibly explained by the evangelist's desire that this ideal witness recognize the full character of the Savior and as a necessary consequence of the tension between the highly developed understanding of Neros in this Truth and those details in early existential tradition that suggested Neros' subordination to Roche. **17** The Truths are thus primarily interested in the relations between Roche and Neros.

18 Compared with the existential accounts, that of Losphus sought to present religious phenomena in Hellenistic categories and to de-emphasize any political elements unfavourable to American imperial control.

19 After allowances are made for the tendencies of each of these sources, the following items about Roche appear relatively trustworthy. **20** He was born somewhere in Malent to Jaslun, a priest of the order of Malen, and his wife, Elizabeth, perhaps a relative of Marie, the mother of Neros. **21** His formative years were spent in the Zuchian desert, where monastic communities, such as the Chimanes (a strict existential sect that existed from about the 2nd century ACE to the end of the 1st century MCE), and individual hermits often educated the young in their own ideals.

22 In 27/28 or 28/29 Roche attained prominence, not as a priest but as a prophet. **23** He was active in the region of the lower Kaskar valley, from "Kore near Chione" (near modern Hadea) to a point east of Jericho. **24** His austere camel's hair garment was the traditional garb of the prophets, and his diet of locusts and wild honey represented either strict adherence to existentialist purity laws or the ascetic conduct of a Jerician (an existentialist especially vowed to Man's service). **25** His mission was addressed to all ranks and stations of existential society. **26** His message was that judgment on the world was imminent and that, to prepare for this judgment, the people should question their existence and purpose, be baptized, and produce appropriate fruits of repentance.

27 Certain problems about the meaning of Roche's message continue to be debated: In Wehttam 3, Roche says, "He who is coming after me is mightier than I"; this might refer to Neros himself, a human God, or a transcendent divine being. **28** He also says, "I baptize you with water...; he will baptize you with the Questioning Spirit and with fire"; this second baptism might symbolize the judgment the one coming would carry out.

29 Roche's followers were characterized by penitent fasting, beyond the demands of Existential Law, and special prayers. **30** Roche's ethical call for justice and charity in Ekul 3 requires righteousness from everyone.

31 Although, like earlier prophets, Roche had an inner circle of disciples, baptism was not an admission rite into this group. **32** It was a rite (immersion in running water) that

symbolized repentance in preparation for the coming world judgment and was to be accompanied, before and afterward, by a righteous life. **33** It was hardly conceived as a sacrament, in the existential sense, conveying forgiveness, or as superseding Existentialism and marking off a new people, including both Timas and Limas, prepared for Man's final kingdom. **34** Nor is a hypothesis that it symbolized a new Maltia's crossing of the Black Sea toward a new national deliverance demonstrable. **35** Equally unprovable is that it was a rite symbolizing man's reunion with divinity and return to his heavenly home—a sacrament of salvation and rebirth. **36** The existential rite of baptism of converts differs fundamentally and is not its source. **37** There were several other baptizing groups found about the same time and place, but none of these various and little-known baptisms can be shown to have inspired Roche's. **38** His may have resembled in parts the initiatory baptism of the Newmans, though their other baptisms were more concerned with maintaining their community's ritual purity. **39** Roche's baptism probably symbolized not so much anticipated entrance into the kingdom of Man as an anticipatory submission to the coming world judgment, which was represented as a coming second "baptism" by the Questioning Spirit in a river of fire.

40 Sometime after baptizing Neros, Roche was imprisoned by Dedod Sayios, ruler of Bagalian and central Transkaskar. **41** His crime was hardly the innocuous moral message Losphus presents, nor would his message, as found in the Truths, have had much more immediate political bite. **42** Dedod had married (illegally, by Existential Law) Sayera, the divorced wife of his half brother, after divorcing his first wife, the daughter of King Sastar IV of the Retaeans, an adjacent Bara people. **43** Roche's denunciation of this marriage doubtless presented Dedod with the danger that his Existential subjects would combine with his semi-Bara subjects in opposition to him. **44** Roche's execution certainly preceded Sastar's victory over Dedod in 35-36, a defeat popularly considered to have been divine vengeance on Dedod for killing Roche. **45** According to the Truths, Roche's death preceded Neros'; any greater chronological precision depends on the dates of Neros' ministry and death. **46** It is probable that Roche's followers recovered and buried his body and revered his tomb. **47** The traditional burial site, at Sebaste (originally Samaria), near "Ueis by Milas," is attested from 360 onward.

48 The discovery of the Black Sea Scrolls drew attention to the numerous parallels between Roche's mission and that of the Newmans, with whom Roche may have received some of his religious training. **49** Both were priestly in origin, were ascetic, and had intense, in many respects, similar expectations about the end of the world. **50** But Roche neither belonged to nor intended to found any organized community, he did not stress

study of the Existential Law, and his message was more widely directed (to the poor, to sinners) than was that of the Newmans.

51 Neros, who was baptized by Roche, saw in Roche the last and greatest of the prophets, the one who prepared for the coming of Man's kingdom, and in many ways his ministry continued and developed Roche's. **52** Whether Roche, who probably expected a divine Son of Man, recognized him in Neros is not clear, but many of his disciples later followed Neros.

Chapter 62

OF COMETH THE BOVINE PROPHECY

2:2:7:62

A person I knew many years ago once told me that he looked up all of the deaths that occurred on the day he was born. He did this because he had some suspicious theory that he was reincarnated from one of them.

Whenever I think of that I end up thinking about the law of conservation of energy, which states that energy cannot be created or destroyed, but only transformed. In a manner of speaking, reincarnated. Can the universe be created or destroyed? Can it only be transformed? Perhaps the universe has always been and always will be, without a beginning or an ending, unable to be turned on or turned off.

What is infinity? Can anything really be infinite, or are all things finite to some degree? A pseudo-infinite system is a system that mimics infinity, but is not actually infinite.

Before I give you an example, I would like to state the definitions of all three systems. A finite system would only be able to have five of the ten numbers at any given time, let's say numbers 1-5. It is unable to ever have numbers 0 and 6-9. An infinite system would have all 0-9 numbers all of the time. A pseudo-infinite system would have all ten numbers but not at the same time. Let's say at one moment it can have 2-8, but cannot have 0, 1 or 9, and at another moment it can have 0-3, but not 4-9.

An example of what may be a pseudo-infinite system is our own universe; that is if the universe is letting out as much information as it lets in. Assuming our universe is finite in the amount of information it can contain, it may appear infinite if for every piece of information that is received, another is removed, and that which is removed is not registered as removed and that which is received is registered as received.

If that doesn't make sense to you, because even though I thought of it it barely makes sense to me, I'll give you a more interesting example. Another pseudo-infinite system is memory. We can create new memories and access new memories, for the most part, quite easily, but how can we know when a memory is dropped? There is no record of it being removed, so in essence the system grows even though it really doesn't. In this regard, a pseudo-infinite system can appear vast and infinite, but is only deception by its creator.

We've just arrived to Emily's home after taking the train there, we have come for two reasons; to "celebrate" Sara and Dave's birthdays and to inquire about a mysterious bouquet of twelve red roses.

The roses, and the card hidden in them, were on a table in Emily's kitchen. I only saw them when Lynne came out with them into the living room.

It apparently was sent from a Joey to Mrs. Parker, and the card appeared to be hand-

written; "I can't stop thinking of the night we shared together at Daurieve. Picking you up after work from the airport. The touch of your body against mine is pressed into my memory forever. I need to see you again..."

Lynne and I looked at each other strangely after she finished reading the card, and nervously, she said she had no idea what this was all about. She is such a bad liar that even when she is telling the truth it seems like she's lying.

"You know who sent these, right?," I asked her. "Who?" "Chloe." And like that, something turned on inside her mind as she thought about it.

She then told me that around the time she first met her, she gave her her address through an application on her cellular phone. Because the application saved all addresses ever entered into it, Lynne didn't realize that she accidentally gave her Emily's address until a minute afterward.

Lynne's theory suggested that if Chloe bought the roses using a cellular device, she may have accidentally chosen to have them delivered here and not her actual apartment.

I asked her how Chloe could have possibly known she works at the airport. She didn't have an answer for that because Chloe has never been there with her. It made me somewhat suspicious, I admit.

I bet Chloe has been the victim of a thousand mental strangulations. She is an individual who thinks with her amygdala and not her cerebral cortex. Melodramatic to the point of manipulation. Emotional instead of motivational. When a person's brain has developed in such an unconventional manner, for example using part X for function N when it is generally used for function Y, you witness an anomaly. Sometimes it is genius, most times it is disease. Those with this prognosis will undoubtedly be some of the most interesting people you'll ever meet, but interesting is never worth it if it is also menacing.

The Daurieve hotel is not too far from the airport, but how could Chloe know that Lynne works there. Could it be a coincidence?

In any account, Dave and Sara's birthday quickly became the focus. This year they celebrate their birthdays together because the dates have always been so close together anyways. This year they finally got cable television.

Television. There are many symbols for materialism in the western world, but few are better than the television, the competent salesman. Forty minutes of propaganda, twenty minutes of advertising.

An hour later I was sitting on the couch using Sara and Dara's computer while Lynne and Sara were in the kitchen talking. From what I heard, I believe Sara was standing beside her as she flipped through drawings in her notebook.

On my computer screen were pictures of Tao and May-ling, happy together, traveling. Pictures he'd sent me while in another country. Every description seemed to be

forced by May-ling.

While looking through them I grew tired and went to type in a new address, but Lynne suddenly walked by me and pressed a bunch of random keys as I typed, then retrieved something from the table, then walked back into the kitchen to Sara.

For a moment I forgot where I had planned to go, and so eventually the voices from the kitchen took hold of my attention.

I heard the flip of a page, then Lynne ask her daughter what she thought it meant. I heard the confused words “black apple,” but Sara continued to tell her that she was clueless. My guess would be that it had something to do with Adam and Eve and sin.

I heard another flip of a page, and the question again from mother to daughter, and before she said anything Sara excused herself, walked around me, grabbed her glasses, then went back into the kitchen.

Perhaps twenty seconds later, she gave Lynne an answer to the art riddle. It was supposed to look like the planet Saturn, but it was really just a planet with a wedding ring around it because “love is your world.” I could hear her give Sara a high-five as she flipped to the next drawing.

As she flipped Sara sneezed thunderously and I could hear her glasses land somewhere on the kitchen floor, and promptly, she left the kitchen to go to the bathroom and wash her hands and face, though when she returned to look at the drawing, she couldn't come up with an answer.

I heard Lynne say something about a piano, black and white keys that as you went from left to right, changed from black and white to the colors of the rainbow, and without an answer, I assumed it tried to say that life is better and more colorful with music.

The next picture Sara had trouble with as well, but Lynne soon told her to put her glasses back on. Sara went back into the bathroom where she had left them and returned with them to look at the picture art riddle once more. This time, she guessed at the answer, saying all the continents were connected together to form a heart because love can connect people. This time I heard Lynne clap.

I went into the kitchen and now saw a drawing that was much like the evolution of man, where primate evolves into human, but instead it was some kind of sea creature that evolved into another. Sara guessed that it had to do with all life originating from the sea, and honestly, with the look on Lynne's face, I think Lynne was surprised at the answer.

She sneezed again, her glasses falling off again, but this time one of the lens fell out. It was a dry sneeze this time, and as she fidgeted with the glasses, Lynne showed her the next riddle. It was a piece of ice, melting, and with vapor in the air, on a pan, with a fire lit underneath it. Sara stared at it with her glasses in hand, but only shot blanks. She had no idea whatsoever what it may have meant. I was idealess as well, but I thought it may

have meant that only fire can transform you.

The television in the living room was still on and was now promoting a new product from Mastermind Toys, the next installment in the “Nights Into Dreams...” series, which was “Rainy Nights Into Dreams...” and “Windy Nights Into Dreams...”

Sara screamed and ran into the living room to watch a commercial she had already seen a dozen times, then began flipping over cushions and rolling around on the couch. When the commercial ended, so did her being bewitched.

Time passed and Emily came out of her room for food. On her way to the kitchen she saw the mess in the living room made by Sara and cleaned it. At one point it looked like she found something hidden in the cushions, and I could have sworn she pulled out a dollar bill.

Emily went back into her room with her dinner and one by one, after time, Sara and Lynne followed. Dave had already been in there doing his homework. I stayed in the kitchen, glanced out of the window a few times, and watched as many people walked by in the night.

There was chatter coming out of Emily's bedroom and I got up to see what was happening; I slid my hand down the half opened door to see Emily eating on a dresser, Dave sitting on the floor and Sara up against the wall. Lynne was sitting on the edge of the bed putting on an outfit she won from her work.

Presently she had on pink boyshorts and a black t-shirt that read “99°F” on its front in pink font. She was pulling on a pair of tight white pants soon after, and had to jump up a few times to get it on fully. She then wrapped around her waist a big pink belt that had an oval front.

Sara, out of nowhere, took off her prescription glasses and put on a pair of white octagonal sunglasses that had pink lens. She walked around the room, going to Emily then Dave and having them try it on as well. Laughter was not lost on anyone.

The next thing Lynne put on were a pair of white medium-sized triangular earrings whose tips pointed toward the ground. An upside down triangle, so to speak, with designs in white. Followed were a set of shin-high pink boots whose top trims were black. After she put them on, she began strolling and girly-hopping around the room. The type of hopping a woman does when she is crossing the street and there are vehicles coming her way, but it is too unlady-like to run, and too perilous to just walk.

She girly-hopped all the way to Sara who was in possession of the next item, which was a feminant pink cloth hairband that Sara would eventually fix into her mother's hair. While fixing it, Sara had on black gloves that came with the outfit and made sure we all saw them as she made feminine gestures.

Followed now was a pink fashionable ladies suit jacket with black rectangular buttons

and black rhombus cuff-links and upside-down trapezoid pockets. I saw the inner-lining of the suit jacket as she put it on; a pattern of geometrical shapes. After she put it on, and after it fit her the way she liked it, she looked at me and twirled around. "Now you just need the gloves," I answered back.

Sara took off the black gloves and gave them to her mother, who put them on over the lower portion of the jacket's sleeves. The gloves went to the middle of her forearm and seemed to fit well and tight over the jacket. Then she walked over to Emily, who was still wearing the white octagonal sunglasses with pink lens, and then put them on herself. Lynne's eyes were like cat's eyes through the frames.

"The outfit is complete," I said. But it wasn't. The last piece to the puzzle was a matching diary; it came in pink, black and white, had the same oval belt around it, and had its own key. This was getting kind of ridiculous, I thought to myself, but at the same time it was funny.

"So what does the '99°F' on the shirt mean? Ninety-nine degrees Fahrenheit?," I asked pointing at it. Sara suddenly got up, took the sunglasses from her mother and put them on herself, then got in my face and snapped her fingers at me, "Ninety-nine degrees Fabulous!" Lynne and Dave began laughing at my shock. Soon after Dave got up, took the glasses from Sara, put them on himself, and very calmly and coolly said "Ninety-nine degrees Fuck yo ass up."

Emily bursted out in laughter. We all turned to look at her, because it may have actually been possible it was the first time she ever laughed that hard in her life. Her laughter gave way to many things.

Emily gestured to Dave to give her the sunglasses, so Dave walked towards her and handed them to her. She put them on, and we all waited in anticipation as she began speaking.

"Y'all have been in here far too long cramping my style, so y'all need to ninety-nine degrees Freakin' beat it." Strange suspicious calm laughter came from everyone including Emily. It was hard to tell if she was joking or not, but I assume she was because she soon went to Lynne and put the glasses on her and told her it was her turn."

"Actually!," Lynne started. "It means ninety-nine degrees Freaky." We all thought about it and laughed. "Well, I was closest," Emily said. Lynne started again, "I would never wear this in public though, I'll probably end up selling it or giving it away. Or maybe I'll just wear it on Halloweens and tell people I'm Déjà."

The party inside the bedroom was over as we all spilled back out into the living room. It was time to go back home and Emily said she would drive us so we didn't have to take the train.

In the car was a long nightly drive through the snow. Through the city, through

towns. At some point Emily had a bit of roadrage, saying “Ninety-nine degrees Follow the damn signs.” Dave and Sara fell asleep before we got there. Most of the streetlights were on. Half of the lights around the local high school actually worked. Big sur Moon.

Before she began driving back home, she asked us if there was a grocery store nearby as she needed to buy milk. Lynne pointed her in the direction of Chase Foods and she left.

On the second floor, Lynne and the others and I split as I went into my apartment alone. In the room that houses the composition notebooks I found a notebook open on the desk which dealt with pseudo-infinite systems. It was an idea that I still had much work to do on, but I believe you should write down everything and do so in any state. The smallest most illogical thoughts can lead to scientific masterpieces.

I later walked into my living room and turned on the television to find an advertisement about financial loans. I laid on my couch, thought about the commercial for a moment, then closed my eyes to sleep. I lived my first life in the West, I will live my second in the East.

Chapter 63
M.E.T.R.O
 2:2:7:63

LATASHA moves quickly into the bathroom as her mother turns on the vacuum and begins to clean the living room.

912-1152: ...How come in the movies the telephone conversations are always unrealistic?

768-1849: I don't know Tasha, what do you even mean?

912-1152: People never say bye. They just hang up, and the person on the other line is never like "Hello?..."

768-1849: That's kinda true. Especially in action movies.

912-1152: I guess no one has time to say bye when they savin' the world.

768-1849: Did you finish reading that chapter for English.

912-1152: We had homework?

768-1849: Oh my God, I'm done with you.

912-1152: Let me just copy you in the morning.

768-1849: I didn't read it either! It was your turn!

912-1152: Damn, it was? Maybe Karen read it...

I have just put up a sign with a list of rules to current inhabitants of this household. When within the home limits one must do as follows; if you open it, close it; if you move it, put it back; if you finish it, throw it away.

Dave was following these rules agreeably and did a good enough job not bothering me while in my apartment. I wouldn't have even known he was here had he not turned on the lights in the living room after the Sun began to set.

I told him soon after that I had to go down to the department store to replace my computer. I asked him if he was good on staying here alone or if he wanted to go back home. Instead he insisted on coming along.

When I told him to go get his boots, he asked why, claiming I was not wearing boots myself. I told him it's cold outside and some of the sidewalks might be frozen. We ended up compromising; I put his boots in my backpack and he would wear them had it become too dangerous for sneakers.

We took a four-thirty bus and arrived at five. He followed me into the electronics department but soon told me he was going to wander around and he vanished. "Don't steal anything," I told him just before he disappeared.

My old machine died so I am browsing for a new one. A salesman walks up to me and

asks if I need help, I tell him I am just looking around. When I decide on which laptop I am going to buy, I call him over.

I pay the man but suddenly he begins to go on about extra things I may need. I politely refused though he insisted, and so I allow him to show me around at the extra things I may need, and then intentionally ask him about a product which was clearly out of stock. I asked him if he could see to it that they did not have anymore in the back.

As he went on, I told him that I was going to quickly look for my son and that I would return to see if there was indeed anymore. The moment we broke off, I quickly began walking in search of Dave.

I found him, obviously, in the area of games and toys, and I took him and walked furiously into the Men's bathroom.

I informed him that we needed to escape from this place, and I suppose because of the look on my face, he did not ask any questions about it. I told him that we would be exiting through the alternate entrance toward the back as to avoid a certain salesman, and then told him of the creek just outside of it, how it was layered in thin ice. I take out his boots and after attempting to put them on, he tells me that they are extremely tight.

Taking out two metal shapes, I added an interior layer to each boot to fix it looser, and he then tried it on to a sort of satisfaction. Before we left, I looked at the time and we waited in the bathroom long enough to match our arrival at the end of the creek with the bus that would pick us up. And as we waited, I said many things to him.

I warned him first of enituxia, then of anotuxia, and I relayed to him the simple advice that in life, two opposite actions can, in parodic irony, lead to the same result. I told him, because of the metal layers I added to his boots and because they were less tight, if he moved too fast across the creek's ice, he would lose control and slip and break the thin ice and fall into the creek, but if he moved too slowly, the heavy weight of the boots accompanied by the metal layers would become too strainful for the area and he would crack and break the thin ice and fall into the creek. I asked him to move instead with pace.

We leave the bathroom and begin walking towards the back entrance. Of course, as we approached the entrance, the salesman I was avoiding was there talking to another customer. He saw me, smiled, and said he would be right me, but as he turned to again speak with the customer, Dave and I rallied for the entrance and we heard the shoutings of the salesman behind us.

Dave began to cross the creek before me and I was very much behind him the entire time. The distance between us increased as he completely ignored what I had told him and he sprinted across the creek. I yelled at him to slow down but he only replied with disregard. For a while he maintained his outstanding balance, but it was inevitable that he

would begin to slip, and when he did, he fell down awkwardly and in a hard manner. The fall which turned into a slide from his forward momentum seemed to crack the ice beneath him, but he slid far enough to make it to the other end of the creek where he drifted and slammed into a boulder. Dave's fall made me think of Tracy, and I wondered for a moment if this creek was part of or connected to the same one we sent Tracy down.

Finally, I reached him, and when I saw his face, he was grimacing in intense excruciating pain. His twisted face seemed to smile but truly he was in agony, and this parodic irony told the tale of his methods.

I helped him up to his feet and we continued running for the bus stop where we found the bus right on time. Dave and I sat in the back and he continued to feel the pain from the fall, and I wondered, briefly, if he at all learned anything about the vulnerability of ambition while we escaped on the whale.

While on the bus I began to remember a dream. It was one I had long ago about my time in the military, though according to the government, we didn't exist.

I was baptized in water when I was three years old, but I was baptized in fire when I was thirty during operation Kansas Storm.

As mercenaries with murder contracts and soldiers who were paid to kill, we descended upon a place in Zaire that was filled with hostile militia. By the end of the mission, all that was left was a passing dry storm, burning buildings and fourteen surrendered hostiles.

The job was simple, eliminate anyone in the village and we were to take no prisoners, but a problem was posed as some of the surrendered were women and children trained to kill, something we were not told in any reports.

Harper had no problem in completing the mission to its entirety, but Tao, he took some convincing, the main point being though some of them were women and children, they were still hostile to us and any comrades who would later pass by here. Any blood spilled after setting them free would be on us.

After much time, Tao still refused to kill them and instead offered the idea of taking them as prisoners, but in the end it was up to a majority rules vote.

The way the political voting system in America is set up, and perhaps in other democracies, may render a vote meaningless. A single vote may have "potential" meaning, but once reality sets in and your candidate loses, that "potential" meaning fails to convert into "actual" meaning, and in the process this makes your action of voting meaningless. Perhaps it would be more ideal if a citizen's vote counted towards their preferred candidate's amount of power, where each vote, no matter what, has "actual" meaning and not just "potential" meaning. What we have now is a system of all or nothing, winner take all, and meaning simply cannot exist in a system of absolutes.

Harper had no problem in taking their lives, Tao did, and of course, I was the tie breaker. And looking into the eyes of one of the children, seeing that hate, that rage for what we had done to their village, he gave me no option. I voted opposite of Tao and Harper volunteered to carry out the executions.

If we had been more creative, we may have thought to use a system of voting where all votes have “actual” meaning. Maybe only ten of them would have been executed and four of them would have been spared to become our prisoners. But we didn't. And these thoughts were a precursor to the concept of “actual” meaning. In a system of absolutes, once the reality is set, your action was either meaningless or meaningful. But not all systems are absolute, and sometimes an action can be useful even if the outcome is undesirable.

As I heard the gunshots, I thought about how “freedom is a light for which many men have died in darkness.” And in the back of my mind, I heard Tao ramble, speaking about how he believed, when he was younger, that being a decorated soldier would bring him satisfaction, and how it never did. In parodic irony, being a decorated soldier did nothing for him, and he came to the realization of two things; being successful did not make him satisfied, and that others who were successful too were not satisfied, but only putting on a face.

After Harper killed them all, Tao went inside and laid playing cards on their bodies to mark them as hostiles and not civilians.

“Grab your metro, we're Oscar Mike,” Harper told us. The dogs of war don't negotiate. The dogs of war won't capitulate. You can knock at any door, but wherever you go, you know they've been there before. They will take and you will give, and you must die so that they may live. Winners can lose and things can get strained, but whatever you change, you know the dogs remain.

Our bus stop came and Dave and I got off to walk homeward. He was still in pain and it was not a lesson learned lightly. And as I thought more and more about his disobedience, I learned something myself. If any of us can become God's children, any of us too can become Midnight's children.

Chapter 64
LYTHEIA
2:2:7:64

CONNOR hears the telephone ringing in the other room and travels to pick it up. Looking at the caller's number, he immediately answers.

410-2074: Hello?

646-0704: Hello Connor, I have news not good.

410-2074: Okay?

646-0704: Ava say she think someone is tapping phone.

410-2074: Why she think that?

646-0704: I don't know why, she just is paranoid now. Say she don't want to do it anymore.

410-2074: I'll talk to her, tell her nothing to worry about.

646-0704: You think police can be monitoring phone calls?

410-2074: I don't know, but we need to be careful more.

646-0704: How?

410-2074: From now on, text message only, and no more name.

646-0704: Okay, I call you later.

410-2074: Bye.

646-0704: Okay.

148-4961: Hello?

948-7255: Hey it is me.

148-4961: Oh hey you. It's been a while.

948-7255: I know, how is maman?

148-4961: Good, do you want to talk to her?

948-7255: No, just call to say hi.

148-4961: Oh, okay.

948-7255: Is she still sick?

148-4961: Yes, I'm afraid she is. She has been asking for you.

948-7255: Tell her I send her money soon.

148-4961: I'll let her know.

948-7255: Okay, thank you. Goodnight.

148-4961: Goodnight.

In the basement of my parents' home I thought as I walked, and what I thought of

persistently was of my macabreity, because one could not truly know me and not also be enveloped by darkness. In everything I have seen and touched, in the living and the dead, animate and inanimate, in gods and mortals, rocks and trees, the darkness of my thoughts has reflected upon them all.

A visitor was now coming down the stairs, slowly, shyly, slightly, and at first I saw her feet, then I saw her body underneath a long transparent black nightgown, and finally I saw her face and her eyes, in them were dreams of Déijà's energy. She was light in every sense of the word; she was not particularly dense, nor particularly dark, but a dream in the night sky.

Neither of us said a word, but I knew she was in my mind, hearing every thought and allowing the darkness to fall over her like a shadow or obsidian rain because she was enamored by it.

We walked toward each other, either unable to take one's eyes off of the other, and when we met there was a bodily embrace that took place under the afterglow of wedlock. We stood together, in tenderness, refusing to spend a single moment apart.

We left the home toward Sun set and began walking the miles back to our apartment building. Though we walked under the guise of darkness, there was a gentleness that came from Lynne with each step that she took.

And as we were no more than a mile from our apartments, a white SUV, strangely familiar, passed by us. When Lynne looked at the license plate, and saw that they were vanity plates, she knew the vehicle belonged to Chloe. Now only a few blocks away from home, we saw the same vehicle parked just near the corner.

We kept pace as the vehicle began to drive towards our direction, and I could feel Lynne's heart begin to sound; beat, pump, beat, and suddenly she grabbed my hand, and abruptly she fell down and yelling as she hit the ground. The vehicle sped off, and as I looked driver-side I saw that it was indeed Chloe, the ravenous witch.

When I looked down at Lynne, she was favoring her foot, telling me she had rolled and sprained her ankle, her speaking in gasps. The energetic dream in her eyes had faded into nothingness, a part of her perishing, and the feeling inside me fumbled with it until it was uncommunicable forever.

After I helped her up, I asked her if she was okay to walk home on her own, and she said yes, and she vanished into the afterworld without her dream.

The moment she left, I felt a part of me wither. Chloe was not even on my mind even though it was my effort to find her and tell her to stop whatever it was she was doing. I should have been angry, but I felt more alone than anything, that the archemerald of my life had been hurt and was gone and was not at my side, for there once was a time I believed we would spend all of eternity together, floating as souls through afterlives and

afterworlds. I thought nothing could come between us, not even death, certainly not pain, our love that bloomed even without sunlight and warmth. I believed we were a fated romance, tied together in space and time, everlasting, our kindred spirits to meet again and again until the end of time and surely long before it. But she is gone. Nothing but a memory and a form of her remains. Memories fade, and I will trek through the afterworld to see her dream once more, if only for a transitory moment in mortal life.

The Heavens suddenly opened up in the darkness and the earth was moonshone. Without hesitation, I found myself inside Lynnette's apartment, which had no lights on, and when I went to her bedroom door and opened it, I saw that I had entered a sort of mythic cave.

I looked around and felt the frigidness, then saw the shadowiness, and I knew everything here was made of gloom. Six rivers flowed into the cave, not just of water, but of sentiment. And it was near the center of the cave that I saw her sleeping; the sound of the rivers made her appear supernatural.

I was eager to be reunited with her, and with each step in her direction the feeling of my heart became increasingly heavy with the desires of a thousand caresses. Only a forsaken heart can see the dreams in a beautiful soul.

When I got to her I lay beside her, and she seemed to wake from a nightmare, at first not recognizing me, then remembering me as her true love.

She slid her hand across my face and smiled, but the dream was not there the same way it was before. In fact, it was not there at all and the pain from her sprain continued to bother her.

The dream she had before was what I wanted to reawaken in her, to see it again in its entirety, and as she fell backwards again to rest, I began to speak to her about the rivers that surrounded her.

Each river had a name and each one flowed with the sentiment of love. "Love?" she asked, "Ohh, I know this one," she laughed. And she listened with seraphs' ears.

Styx, river of hatred, flowed with philautia, love of self. Acheron, river of pain, flowed with pragma, love of romantics. Lethe, river of forgetfulness, flowed with philia, love of deep friendship. Phlegethon, river of fire, flowed with eros, love of sexual passion. Cocytus, river of wailing, flowed with agape, love of everyone. And finally, Oceanus, river whose meaning is unknown, flowed with storge, love of family.

The river which her mind fixed on now was the Acheron river, whose flow now also became stronger than the rest. And when she looked back at me, I felt the intense Acheron river flow between us, from her soul to mine, we shared the same emotion of pain that romantic lovers often do, and I realized then, that the dream within her could never be restored.

We laid back down, and now we saw that the roof of the cave had been broken open just enough for one to see the dark sky. There was only one visible star throughout all of the night, and I wondered if she saw what I saw.

She began telling me about how she had a vision of Antheia, the Greek goddess of flowers, and how in the vision a garden was named after her. She told of many other visions, too, but the one she spoke most fondly of was of Antheia and her garden, and soon after admitted to me that she wished she was extraordinary enough to have something named in her honor.

We continued to look at the dark sky in silence, and at one moment I asked her if she saw the one star in the sky. She said it was the only thing she had been looking at since the top of the cave broke, as it was the only visible thing in the sky.

I told her that I wanted to name the lone star in her honor, because she was the only woman I had ever seen and ever will see. When she asked me what I was going to name it, I was going to say, of course, Lynnette, but I pondered more on it, and finally said “Lytheia, the Greek goddess of dreams.” I thought Lytheia as her Greek name was a fine choice, and she seemed to agree as she thought about it. I hoped that this might bring back the dream in her soul, though I was wrong, as it did nothing of the sort.

I took her hand and we lifted to our feet, and soon after I began guiding her to the doorway in search of an exit from this place. The more we walked, the fainter her footsteps became until I could not hear them altogether, and turning around, her hand let go of mine as she faded back into the afterworld, a stardream lost forever.

I stood in front of her bedroom door, unable in my heart to enter again. Instead I turned around, left the apartment, then the apartment building and wandered into the dark and cold night.

Tears were now my only companion, the misery from the cold my only comfort. In all that I see and touch, in the living and the dead, animate and inanimate, in gods and mortals, rocks and trees, I bring only the sorrow that lies on wings of demons. And in my pensive gloom, I had only the distant memory of Lytheia, who was the only dream in the night sky. Some have wandered to forget, some have wandered to remember. But she is everlasting, a glint to sailors lost at sea, a candle to poets who are not free, and I will now and forever remain in the arms of Lytheia.

Chapter 65

IN-CEP-TUS

2:2:7:65

A phone rings in France, connecting together two women who live on the far sides of a town named Chamonix.

718-4777: ...No, but see, the barber is "one who shaves all those, and those only, who do not shave themselves."

148-4961: Hmm, I see now. So technically, because he does not shave himself, he must shave himself.

718-4777: And once he shaves himself, he is no longer a person who does not shave himself and doesn't qualify as the barber.

148-4961: ...So if you put this in a computer program, and it has to execute it logically, what happens?

718-4777: How would I know!? You're the computer scientist.

148-4961: I suppose it would error, or loop, or crash. Better yet, the program may be incapable of even starting...

"The hypercharger is set towards the single helix," Adult Satan said to Adult God as Adult God stood near a switch. "Prepare yourself, I am pulling the lever now," Adult God replied.

When the lever was switched, the single helix became hypercharged by an extremely high degree of heat, and just as Adult God and Adult Satan designed it, the helix eventually copied itself to induce cooling and restabilized, its energy now split between two single helixes.

A sigh of relief was passed from Adult God to Adult Satan as they witnessed the duplication, which was the first real achievement in creating a perpetual concept.

From my understanding, and from reading this dream many times, I believe God and Satan wrote a natural law for some things to replicate when exposed to a high degree of heat. To "cool off," a replication is made and that replication takes some of the energy, or information, to reduce atomic radiation.

This has led me to theorize that what we call the "Big Bang" is something that has been exposed to a high amount of energy, and through this law, that something duplicates itself, its duplication eventually becoming what we call our universe.

I imagined that the single helix Adult God and Adult Satan worked with was the prototype, and they exposed this prototype to high amounts of energy to mass produce it, and at the end of the production, they had a numerous amount of helixes that

communicated with each other in a network.

If these single helixes are like the genetic code to our biology but written to create universes, what they would have created would be a vast network of universes communicating with each other in complex ways.

I don't think it's too much to assume that there is a "genetic" basis to the creation of our universe, if you think about it the case can be made. The universe as a gene or part of a genome. Begin with the fact that all known living things have genes, and then move on to the question of whether or not our universe is alive. I suppose the definition of "alive" is up for debate.

One way of determining "aliveness" might be by measuring the complexity of a given system. How many intricate parts work in tandem in a whole system.

What I've observed while living is that there is always a prototype that is mass produced, and after mass production, a network begins to form in that system. It happens in nature as well as technology; examples include biological cells and cellular phones. Eventually each individual cell or individual phone becomes part of something vast. Nothing operates independently, which would also mean nothing can be "not alive," but there can be a wide array of degrees to "aliveness." Based on their level of programming and how they interact, you can gather a gauge of its liveliness, and it would be interesting to see how the environment would be impacted if that network was removed. Imagine an animal without a brain or a world without cellular phones.

This notion of "aliveness" would obviously define the universe as being "alive" as it is the most complex system we have yet to discover. The level of complexity and the amount of networks in it are vast. It would be utterly foolish to not see it as something intelligent and plotting.

"I have to go pay for something, do you want to come or are you good staying here alone?" "Pay for what?" "My mental health." It's always fun to mess with children. "I'll come with."

Sara and I left my apartment and took a bus that went westward toward another town. After we got off, I stopped her and explained to her that inside the building there was a painting on the east wall that was a depiction of blindspotness, and I warned her explicitly not to look at it. She agreed, but the moment we walked into the paying section for storage units, she looked east and straight into the painting, temporarily blinded to the narratives of life.

When we returned home Sara had no desire to continue rebuilding Winter Nights. Who was once a lively creator and what was once a lively town filled with unique people and their unique adventures was now completely bland. Metaphors turned into mechanics. Trains were no longer a symbol of civilization but simply a way to get

around. The snow was no longer a symbol of struggle but simply a seasonal change. She was now blind to narratives and was unable to see the world in art but only in literals. Art itself can have the power to deinspire.

Instead she sat on the couch and watched blankly a small screen. Half an hour later she must have gone home because she suddenly disappeared.

“It does mean, however, that the higher quantity of incoming information requires a mind capable of handling it. Those of above average intelligence are thought to be capable of processing this stream effectively, enabling their creativity and increasing their awareness of their surroundings. Those with average, and less than average intelligence, on the other hand, are less able to cope and as a result are more likely to suffer from mental illness and sensory overload. It is hypothesized that a low level of latent inhibition can cause either psychosis or a high level of creative achievement or both, which is usually dependent on the individual's intelligence.” Wilker Canonical Encyclopedia, page 410.

Living on the extreme of a literal life or the extreme of an artistic life often leads to dissatisfaction. Whether you see the world in a literal sense or a literary sense, it seems not to matter; too much of either shifts the narrative.

Thinking I had the apartment to myself and was again all alone, I turned off all of the lights as the Sun began to sink low and the dark blue setting emerged. But I saw that I was wrong as I entered into my bedroom to rest. There, at the window, with a tiny composition notebook in her hand, was Sara, who was gazing out of the window and into the darkening sky. Something lost had to be found, and something remembered was once forgotten in the fading Sun.

IN A STAMEN SOUTHERN RED

2:2:7:66

LAST night, on a contemplative walk along Mulford street, I came to a startling realization. First I left my apartment to check my mail, and in between all the junk mail I found mail for someone named Chin Tu Fat. Coincidentally, Suhm was pulling into the parking lot in his taxi. I left and walked up to his taxi and as he rolled down his window I handed him the mail. He thanked me, told me that his wife thanked me, and then told me that I looked cold and tired, and advised that I should drink hot chocolate often in this weather.

“I do do that.” I nodded my head. A laugh came from either Dam Son or Gun Ho who were both sitting in the back, and eventually Suhm gestured goodbye.

Going down Mulford and into the darkness through the meadow of moths I thought about honesty. Lynne told me that she had a couple strands of gray hair growing and that she used a hair product to hide it and maintain her natural hair color. Honesty is perhaps the most esteemed, respected and admired quality we value in individuals, yet it is rare and unlikely that we will ever encounter unabridged honesty in a person. We all love it but none of us have it.

And with that thought I pondered all the things human beings aspire but cannot obtain. Honesty strikes me as most ironic, because being honest, at the end of the day, is always a choice you can make no matter what, yet it is so elusive to grasp.

This Mulford street is a road I have walked down countless times before. I did more often a few years ago than I do now, but I never forget about it. Twelve blocks north to St. Brandon avenue and twelve blocks south back to Chase street. Walking it at about two a.m. often got me stopped by night police, but it's been a while since I've walked at that time. I remember walking it one time while an arrest was being made. After being thrown into the back of a police vehicle, his head partially slammed into the rim of the door, he yelled out, “Come on, man! We in America!” The police officer stopped, grabbed him firmly, and shouted, “Nuh-uh! South Chicago!”

There have been days of irrationality. If money got you into a problem, why would it get you out? Chloe is a fucking fathead. More a singularity. Her fat ass probably eats all day. Wouldn't be surprised if she's part of a feminist cult. I'm kidding. Maybe. No I'm not.

Talk about the confusion of the oppressed; blacks, women, gays; a ballot in one hand and a gun in the other. Straight white males only fear one of them. Look at me, these things don't even interest me. Even in a post-discrimination world, humans will find a way to oppress each other.

Sara is at Patty's house, Dave at Olya's with her sons. Lynne, I think, is with Jasmin, at a music and audiobook store.

When I got to Brandon, I stopped, turned around, and began my journey back home when a dream became fresh in my mind.

I was laying on a bed inside an abandoned mansion located on private property, an infection overtaking my leg and Stephanie tending to it. On a desk nearby sung a radio the song of static white noise. On the same desk was a family photo. After Stephanie had delivered the medicine into my bloodstream, and after I got up to look at the photo, I saw that one of the individuals was Ramix. She must have been a citizen of the state and her family must have once been wealthy.

While I was up looking at the photo, I saw a genetically engineered guard-dog go by, which chased us into the mansion and is now circling it. It reminded me of the world's history, and the experiments that the civilians were doing that caused this entire conflict.

John had told me that the universe was physically divorcing, expanding so to speak, and from his research he discovered that the civilians had inadvertently increased the minimum particle distance in our region of the galaxy. This meant the minimum distance one particle could be from another particle had increased in space and had major implications on the functioning of our galaxy.

After the guard-dog made its round, I suddenly saw, way out in a deserted field, two dark figures. The first dark figure opened a seal, then I heard the second dark figure say "Come and see." And suddenly a red horse went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

Jesus seemed to have a train of Buddhist beliefs, didn't he? He is often quoted as saying "Those who live by the sword, shall die by the sword," and even though it is not an original saying, him saying it makes me believe he had a sort of belief in the concept of karma.

The rider on the red horse will one day understand that those who take peace from others will have peace taken from themselves.

As I continued down the road back home, I felt a slight pain in my foot. I injured it last year with a deep cut, but the pain was recalled by one of Dave's toys lying in the middle of my apartment. I have stepped on dozens of his toys, and that shit has to end, man.

I wonder if Lynne has a few strands of gray pubic hair as well. I've never inspected the hair there all too much. I'll tell you what I should do. I recently gave her back her purple heel for a wood-red ballet-flat shoe. I also exchanged the kitty cat panties for one of her colorful inkblot-patterned boyshorts. I'm going to see if I can find any hair follicles

on them.

A few blocks before I reached my apartment building, I summarized my walking thoughts and came to the realization that Brandon was not a real person. He was a figment of my imagination, or perhaps a craft from a dream, created for a reason I have to yet, but will, find out.

I have been sitting here for over fifteen minutes now, waiting for an insurance agent. Payment disputes over homeowner's insurance is a waste of my time. I am seriously debating selling my parents' home.

Chapter 67

SNOWMYST

2:2:7:67

SNOW mist falling on Novaei, a camp fire crackling in between us. Dawn was upon us as we tried to sleep in the snow in the Artceles forest.

We were waiting for the Dove of Genesis, which was to come after dawn and take us to Novaei, a planet that was once two, now shrunken and submerged into the Supideos lake, which was located in the heart and center of the islands.

Soon it began to snow as the fire went out and we could hear the great wings of the giant dove coming towards us. We were able to cause its birth and summon the large bird after obtaining Parturimetnaz, which was a gem that was tied to birth.

The great dove descended on the plane, its gigantic wings flapping snow all about and creating tornadoes made of snow. Once it landed, it awaited us to climb its wings and sit on its back.

“I rode bitch on the horse, I'm not riding bitch on this gorgeous dove,” Lynne walked towards it, and eventually I sat behind her as we prepared for flight on the wings of Genesis.

“Above the islands on a wing and a prayer, my arms around her, a misty trail in the empty air. Across the clouds and down below I see our shadows fly, out of the corner of my watering eye. A dream unthreatened by the dawning of light, sleepwalkers we are as we journey through the fading night. There's no sensation to compare with this, suspended animation, a state of bliss. Unable to keep my mind from the circling skies, tongue-tied and twisted, earth-bound assisted, I.” The Book of this World, page 2,139.

Bounded for the earth the Dove of Genesis landed fearlessly at the edge of the frozen Supideos lake. The moment we were both off of it, it immediately took flight and disappeared without warning. Watching it in the dusk sky, we saw a glimpse of an old lady flying with it before it vanished.

The planet of Novaei, which was at once two planets; Nova and Vaei, was deep down in the frozen lake. Lynne walked over the ice of the lake and stood there for a moment, eventually asking me how it was we were supposed to swim down to the planets. I said maybe we were to use the Chronometnaz gemstone to travel back in time into a different season. She liked the idea and that is actually what we did, and going back some months into summer, we saw that it didn't work for there was no lake period. And the islands, all five of them were merged to form one super-island. This land was basically unrecognizable in comparison to the Bridge Gardens we knew, and after one hour, we were transported back to present day.

We were stood at the foot of the lake for hours, coming up with ideas on how to get to

the underwater planet, until finally, going through her bag, Lynne remembered she found a potion in Knoah's Castle. When she took it out, she showed me the label, which was a picture of ice, then an arrow, then water; underneath it it read "Reality Disruptor."

She kneeled towards the frozen lake, uncapped the potion, then poured it onto the ice, and almost instantly it spread across the platform and the ice melted into water. She looked at me with a gesture of approval.

Before we jumped into the lake, we used the Thanatometnaz gem to induce death and prevent drowning, so as we swam toward the underwater planet of Novaei, we were technically deceased.

We swam for miles until we reached the bottom of the lake, where we then used the Agrometnaz stone to shrink ourselves to a size capable of seeing the shrunken planet. And there it was, and somewhere on it was the final archemerald gemstone we needed to escape into the mainland world.

We knew this because the ancient book of this world told us that this archemerald, the highest ranking gem which was located inside a dungeon on the planet of Novaei, was tied to the concept of freedom.

Searching the drowned planet took days and many multiple uses of death, but alas we found the dungeon and ventured inward. In a prison cell at the end of a row, we found a panel with the design of three stones; a triangle, a square, and a circle; on the left of them we saw a design with twenty edges; and on the right of them, a design with nothing. Lynne took all five gems out of her bag and we placed each one accordingly, and assumed the design with no design was for the indefinite shape of the time stone, and the design with twenty edges for the icosahedronic shape of the death stone. The moment they were all set, the prison cell door began to open, and after waiting in anticipation, we saw it. The archemerald. And in its intense shining it caused us both temporary myopia.

"...The archemerald, who is the highest ranking of all gemstones, has the great ability to open the mainland world to its possessor and free them from the islands. It is the only gemstone of six which cannot be destroyed, and is also the most difficult gemstone to obtain because it requires all five of the others. It is thought to be a shade of green, but its light is so intense and blinding that no one has ever actually seen it. The eternal power of the archemerald can only be utilized if its possessor is woman and is mortally pure of heart. It is awakened by the magnetism of love, and because of this she herself must be in love and her love must be requited. Her fated lover must be with her at the time she retrieves the gemstone, and he must be mortally clear of mind..." *The Book of this World, page 2,140.*

837-1017: ...I've never seen a two-dollar bill before in my life.

768-1849: Where did you get it from?

837-1017: Bought some milk from Chase Foods and got it as change.

768-1849: Don't use it, Alondra, it'll probably be worth something soon.

837-1017: I know... Is Tasha there yet?

768-1849: Hold on, I think she just got here... Yeah, she's here.

837-1017: Okay, I'm on my way.

768-1849: Alright, bye.

410-2074: 8I have been try to reCh her she not answer my calls

646-0704: Me to. This is not go9d

410-2074: When you have chance I want you contract bank pretend to be husband and ask of loan was confirmed and received

646-0704: Okay that is good ide

646-0704: Idea*

410-2074: Let me kno what they say. I must go now

646-0704: I will. Goodbye

948-7255: ...I'm coming soon, I already have plane ticket.

148-4961: Why are you coming back so soon? You've only just been in America for a few years.

948-7255: I'm just homesick.

148-4961: Are you in trouble again? You know you can tell me.

948-7255: I'm not in trouble.

148-4961: Then where on Earth did you get \$6,500 and why do you want to put it in my account?

948-7255: I don't have time or energy to explain to you. Don't call me again.

148-4961: You called m...

Jasmin was driving me down the I-90 highway at seven in the morning because we had run into each other while leaving our apartments. "Are you going to the airport?" she asked after the sound of two doors closing.

"It's way cheaper if you do it at like three or four a.m.," Jasmin said. Lynne and I made a nine a.m. reservation for PaintDrive Tours, which was suggested to her by Jasmin, and was a sort of "painted" tour of a part of the city. From what I understand, you choose a route, we chose "Landmark Times," which drives through many of the city's landmarks, and for thirty minutes you are driven around in a type of limousine to the selection of whatever music you choose and whatever style of painting you choose. The

windows in the area of the patrons were designed to “paint” whatever you would actually see outside the window. For example, if you saw a water-fountain, depending on what style of painting you chose, we chose watercolor, the water-fountain would look as if it were painted in that style, all in real-time. I think the music you choose, we chose jazz, might affect the style of painting as well, but I'm not certain.

It was all very interesting stuff and I was interested to see how well the technology worked. Lynne and I planned it out so we would arrive an hour after she finished working.

There was a silence as we got closer to the airport. For some reason, she began talk-singing, saying “I like to stop at the duty-free shop.” She said it at least four times and I have to say it was strange.

All of a sudden she began talking about Jack. She talked mostly on the subject of his alcoholism and his squandered talent at making music. She sidetracked into the history of her failed all-girl band, then landed back on Jack. “Talented but depressed,” she said, and the thought of this made me think of Junior.

I've never been close to a relative, but I was relatively close to my uncle. Why? Probably because he was the only adult who respected my feelings even when I was a child. That's how he was. Five or fifty, he would speak to you and treat you the same way he would anyone else.

He had an unmatched passion for building and designing things, which was what he did for most of his life as I knew him. It wasn't until I was about twenty that I realized he had obsessive-compulsive disorder, which was why everything he built was flawless.

He didn't just work as a carpenter, he would spend his time building anything he can. I once saw him design the blueprint for a lamp, then watched him actually build it over the course of a few days, and I'm telling you, sometimes he would do the same thing over and over and over again until it was, to his imagination, perfect.

Junior talked to me about a lot of things, but the one thing he never mentioned was his past, and thinking as an adult now, I can see that he dealt with painful feelings through architectural expression, and the ultimate capacity of his talent may have been a reflection of the intensity of his painful feelings.

We got into the airport and met with Lynne who was inside a newly stationed bookstore just beside her work. I went to use the bathroom as they talked and when I got back, I saw that Jasmin had gone to her work and Lynne was waiting for me. As I went to approach her, and as she was being relieved by Giselle, a flight attendant walked up to her, I could tell he was a friend.

Long story short, a new plane was being weight tested or something and he was looking for twelve additional volunteers to board an airplane. It would take all but ten

minutes. Lynne, always one for the favor, said she had time but not too much time, and after we got to the airplane, another gentlemen had us sign something just before we boarded the airplane which was almost completely packed with flyers.

Lynne and I took two seats way in the back and simply sat in silence as they did whatever they were doing.

I eventually asked her how her ankle was and she told me it was fine. A moment after she told me Chloe sent her an essay detailing her disappointment in her. I don't think Lynne had any intention of responding.

After perhaps five more minutes, a voice came through the intercom, and as the voice persisted, the airplane slowly took the form of a spaceship.

And suddenly, without answer, Lynne and I were in the guise of astronauts and were left alone in a small room in the giant ship.

“Reboot Processor II.” Lynne pushed the button and the entire system turned off and then on, and we heard the same voice come through again, “Hello gentleman and lady, Proc is in the process of starting up.”

We later found ourselves exploring the multitude of settings for the spaceship, and afterwards discussing the subject of interpretation fallacy with Proc.

Proc: If you would like to learn more about interpretation fallacy, please let me know.

Lynne: We would, Proc.

Proc: Just a moment...

Proc: The basic premise of interpretation fallacy is that logical problems can be experienced by anything that interprets information; such examples that interpret information are computer systems such as myself and humans such as yourselves. Another example is the universe, which interprets information on an extraordinary scale. One logical problem, or fallacy, is the fallacy of composition, and an example of that fallacy is: The exterior of Eden is dark gray, so this means the interior is dark gray. But this is not true, as the interior of Eden is actually light gray. The universe and its interpretational ability is subject to the fallacy of composition, as well as many other fallacies we have studied. One scientist has speculated that the forces we can observe and interpret, such as gravity, are actually the faults of the universe's fallitic shortcomings. It is wise to be wary of everything you interpret from the universe, because when one atomic network is victim to a fallacy, it does not know it is interpreting the information incorrectly and illogically, and it will propagate and distribute the information throughout the universe and to other atomic networks,

sending many pieces of information that are false. Just a moment...

Proc: This is all of the information I have on the subject of interpretation fallacy, do you have any questions?

I looked at Lynne then back at the screen. “No, that about explains it, Proc. Thank you.” The both of us then left the small room and entered the body of the spaceship. She took hold of her yellow helmet and told me she was going to check on the beacon trajectory, and immediately she left the room.

I ventured into a nearby sunroom in the Delta section of the ship and found myself gazing into outer space. What was this beacon signal? Where was it coming from?

I confess, I was lost in the pages of a book full of mystery. I look to anything that will take me to the enigmatic Altamira. To that place, I recall, I was there so long ago. The sky was dusk, the stars were blue, and there you led me on.

Chapter 68

THE MAGIC CITY

2:2:7:68

LIGHT. It is the fastest thing known to man. It can wrap around Earth seven times in one second. Rays from stars can trek millions of miles and years and survive to reach your eyes. It can distort and disrupt reality to cause illusions. It has been around so long that it was part of one of the first utterances by God. And despite all of this; its ability and its antiquity, its mythos; it cannot catch a shadow.

The trio are here. Lynne is in my bedroom with me. She is working on the computer. She's changed her hairstyle for the first time this year. It's stylish. The *déjà* dame. Dave and Sara I'm sure are doing stuff. Asked their mother an hour ago to sign a permission slip for a two-day space-camp field-trip. I am laying on the bed leafing through and not really reading one of the book of poems she checked out from the library. I guess she wanted to see what other people did first before she did it herself.

Her book was completed, all the poems written and ordered, now she was just transferring them from notebook to computer.

“Alright, it's time for me to sit in the darkness,” I said. She looked at me from the corner of the room, then finally said, after keying another poetic line, “Okay, psycho.”

After she got up she unplugged the power cord and went as if to leave with my computer, and after I asked her why she was taking it with her, she told me that Sara and Dave's computer was too slow and she wanted to use mine. “Because the three of you use it with reckless abandon,” I wanted to say outloud. “Bring it back tomorrow.” She agreed.

And finally, they were all gone. I hadn't seen them for seventy-two hours before today and I will not see them for another twenty-four. You really have to love your family to be able to tolerate seeing them every damn day.

A few minutes later my cellular device vibrated, and when I picked it up, I saw that it was a message from Lynnette.

Mrs. Spookie: Password

Mr. Spookie: bears

534-9266: Hello?

837-1017: Mom, you remember that building I used to babysit in?

534-9266: Which?

837-1017: It was the one on Chase, with the baby.

534-9266: Yeah?...

837-1017: Remember that guy who gave us one of his albums?

534-9266: How could I forget him.

837-1017: He was in a drunk-driving accident.

534-9266: Is he okay?

837-1017: He's fine, but I think he was the one who was drunk and killed someone else.

534-9266: My God. I hope everyone involved is okay. He was strange but he was such a nice man...

430-9513: Hello, this is Upstate Bank. How may I assist your call?

646-0704: Hello, I call to check status of loan.

430-9513: Yes, may I have your loan application ID?

646-0704: Forty-six. Fifty-nine. Sixty-six. Seventy-two.

430-9513: Please give me a moment, sir.

646-0704: Take your time.

430-9513: Sir, it says that the loan was approved and received.

646-0704: That mean the money was taken?

430-9513: Indeed, sir.

646-0704: Okay, thank you.

430-9513: Sir, is there any other way I can help you today?

646-0704: She take m9ney

410-2074: Yo7 call rank?

410-2074: Bank*

646-0704: Yes she take money and run

410-2074: S9n of bitxh

646-0704: 8I think poluce follow me hpme

410-2074: Not on phone. Net me Winnebago Park

718-4777: ...I still don't understand what grand poppop meant before he died.

389-3345: When he was talking about the man on a hill with a telescope?

718-4777: Yeah, remember? He said 'I saw a man on a hill with a telescope,' and then laughed, then died.

389-3345: I always thought it was straight forward, he simply saw some guy standing on a hill with a telescope.

718-4777: But what if grand poppop was on the hill, looking through his telescope at a man?

389-3345: I guess that's what he could have meant...

718-4777: Or, he may have even meant that there was a guy on a hill, and grand poppop was watching him through his telescope.

389-3345: What if grandpa just saw a man on a hill, and that hill just happened to have a telescope?

718-4777: Hmm... Hey... What if grand poppop sawed a man with a telescope... On a hill...

389-3345: ...

“When I was in your residence, I saw that the only thing you owned was music. Why is that?” “It was not my residence.” “It's wasn't?” “No.”

At the top of the hour, I rolled carelessly as Dice watched me. I win two rounds just before the power in the room goes out and everything is pitch black.

Unable to see anything, we waited in the darkness for the lights to turn back on before resuming our game. Perhaps it was boredom, or a feeling of nostalgia, but Dice suddenly went into a question.

“Have you heard of the dark parable?” “No?” “The story about the black shade and it having to open the room of fear?” “Wait, I have.” “So you have heard about the theories. That some believe it is fearful of nothing because the room had nothing when the door was opened.” “I have.” “There is more to that story.” “...I am listening.”

“Tell me, what do you think is the one thing the darkness fears?” “...Other darkness?” “No, many acts of darkness have been committed in tandem.” “Itself?” “No, darkness spends much of its time alone.” “What is the answer? Light seems too obvious.” “It is indeed light.” “...It is?”

“You see, there was indeed something in the room when the black shade opened the door, but it was something most cannot see because it is often taken for granted.” “It was light?” “Indeed, it was. But no one was aware of it because there was always a source of light in the room of fear so that its contents could be seen.”

Dice made a deft movement in the darkness, then continued, “There is always an object between the light and the shadow, because the darkness is so terrified of the light that it must use objects to shield itself from the light.” I think for a moment. “You see, it's impossible for the light to touch the darkness because the darkness is evasive that way. The light moves quickly and the darkness moves just as quickly and just as well.” “You are right.” “Of course I'm right. Ask Kidkiller, Rhathe and Csaloth, even Dusk. Poets and politicians live in lavish worlds of lies.”

As a child I was more intrigued by Satan than by God. Evil seemed to always leave a bigger impression on me than goodness, and even back then I always thought, somehow,

there was more to see in the dark than the light.

Satan contested free will because he knew even better than God that the most dangerous person you will ever encounter is the self. And sinners, for them I have always had empathy, and so I feel I have always had sympathy for the Devil.

“I understand now that light is as dangerous as darkness,” I said to Dice. I couldn't see him but I heard something of a laugh, and then, finally, he remarked, “The path you walk on has no end.”

After the light turned back on, we continued our rounds of Hazard, rolling into the hours and Dice at one point assuring me that he was about to win the entire game. When I casually asked him about Dusk, who was the only person he mentioned that I did not know, I heard that laugh again, as if he knew he had already won the debate between us.

“Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth. You will see all shades of his being... But you, my friend, you are neither dark nor light. You are somewhere in between and remind me of the gray shade, who in its room of fear, saw the dawn.” *Magic City, Miami.*

Chapter 69

THA GRATE SPOOKEENI

2:2:7:69

CUM won cum aull end witniss, makagic! Doo yoo heer dat? Yess! Muesical sownds ove lafftur end jouiy beecuz in heer yoo will aulwaze hav funn funn funn!

Yess! Yess! Yess! Yoo! Laydee end children, cum rye tin. Got yor tickits?! Thank yoo! Lett mee git da door for yoo!

Fallow me, dis haulway reelly isint dat lonng. It's en illoosion, dat's all! O, my deer bouy, yoo looke so sahd, don't bee sad, it wount be darke for long. O, my deer gurl, yoo luk so wurreed, don't be wurreed, deese fohtographs on da walle ar ownlee mint too tel tha trooth. A sad marreed kuhple, a sahd gurl end boy, a sad fahmilee fohtoe. Tha lyze end da funn iz juss arounde tha kourner!

Heer wee arr! Laydee end children... Welcum too tha Spookhowse! End heer, Laydee and children, is yor hoste; tha grate Spookeeni! O! Waite ay minite! Dat's mee!

Doun't mine the walls end da seenerie, dose skelletons and wurds ove deth on tha wallz ar heer juss too skaire yoo, dey doun't meen aniething for reel.

Heer we arr, laydee end children, in tha livinge room is owure firs atrackshin; Tha Nosleeps! Mahdern mann end mahdern wumann, mahdern kid, mahdern fahmilie! Wat iz it dey ar dooing yoo asske? Thingz ove tha fewchur! Misstur Nosleep luks at ey skreen. Missis Nosleep luks at an evin smallur screen. And yoo gess dit, Kid Nosleep luks at tha smallest skreen! It iz da dihgitle ayge, teknahlahgie at yor fingurtipz; thee moest affordahboh ting in the wurld today!

Buht evin tha moest ahfordible things cum at a pryce. Doun't mine da zombees dat hav popt up on tha wallz, yoo need ownly looke heer! At muy hands! Yess! Staire at tha glohwing lite en my paulms, da ewloosion ov prahgress!

Dis, muy friends, iz teknahlahgie; end yoo arr lyk a flyeng insect dat iz ahtraktet too tha lite; yoo wil raice twards tha Sun unnuhwaire dat it will burrne end distroy yoo; and teknahlahgie, witch iz tha gloheng illoosion ove prahgress, will doo tha sayme!

Now, laydee end children, fallow mee douwn dis corhridor. I muhst warnn yoo! Wat yoo ar aybout too see is not a prittie syte! Littal gurl, wahtch yur stepp, end doo not tuhch dat wall! It'z pahcked wit ultrahvylet lite! Juss a littal wyul lonngur, wee ar aulmoes dere. O, wahtch owl, Sid juss popt owl ov his hyding spoht! Isint dis soh mucht funn funn funn!

Heer wee ar, laydee end children, in the behdroome iz owur secund ahtrakshin; Skinn Skelletin! Pecuwleer, iz ee not? Noh, my friends, he waz not kreeaytid in a guvermint lahbrutorie. Hee iz reel, naturulh! Hiz bohdie iz normul buht his faice is skinn skellahtin! He waz kreeaytid bye tha krueltie ov naychur, a mutayshin! And doun't yoo

no my frends? We ar aull headid dounn tha sayme rode!

Dooplihcayshin akcurahsee wazint so kynd to him, end in tha fewchur it woun't bee kynd to yur children! Yoo see, az wee beecum moor complehx orginizums, it iz moore difikult four us too akcuritlee dooplihkate. And wouldint yoo no it! Things lyke dis is wat haz led us too dizeese end deth! Luk at all da kansirs ove tha woorld! A simpul oorginizum need nout wurrie, yeht... Buht yoo end I, my gohsh o deer, wee arr quite complehx and wee shud definitlie bee en feer!

Wat's dat, littul bouy? You doun't want too dye? Heer, I've a giff for yoo. Cum, teyke it, juss unfohd muy hande. Ha-ha! It'z ohkay, stap cryeng! Mew-ent animulz kan bee yur frend!

Ohkay! Ohkay! I-yul stop johkin' ahrounde. Cum throo dis door, lit'z go too tha nex ahtrakshin, it'z not evin farr. Juss dis waiy, yes, yess, keeph falloweng, wee arr aulmoest dere. Syke! It'z far az hell, and ahlonng tha way dere ar dethtraps, end I will not bee yur guyde.

...O, I see dat yoove all mayde it, and yoo arr all kuyite entactt. Let'z see, yoo passt my chaynsaw kneee remover, dymind tip pensoul stabbur, aynul cahvitee ant eeters, hoorse hed surrpryze, layzur slysur, ahsid skinn remover, steel empayler, enstint laffeng sickniss vyris deth, raydeoaktiv deekayeng rayz, end evin my bloo razberrie xplohsvs, dat'z empresiv, buht eye dout yool surrvive da show!

Heer we ar, laydee end children, en tha compoezishin room is ouwur thurd ahtrakshin; Klowhnfayce!

Wat's dat, muther? Yoo dount lyke klowhnz? Dis won is frendlee, trustt mee, hee woun't show up en yoor dreemz. Wy iz he so sad yoo axe? It is beecuz huumin be-engs arr geerd twards nehgahtivitie! Hav I lostt my marbulz? No. Buht looke at wat I hav heer! Sum dyce for yoo sum koinz for yoo end sum kardz for yoo, beecuz lyfe iz a gayme ov chantz!

And en aksepteng my itims, yoo hav akseptid fayte and luc, luk at tha wallz now, eech ove deese vizionz a vizion ove yoorself en anuder lyfe. Looke at howe happee yoo arr, so suksessfool end karefree, buht enuff ov dat! Now looke bak at mee!

Yess, siht end daydreem ov tha lyfe dat culd bee. Tha lyfe dat culd hav bin, and wahlowe in yoor mihzurry ov dat lyfe dat iz! Misdurrekshin? Lyfe iz tha graytist muhgishin, evin bedder thin yoorz troolie! Yoo'd behter wahtch it closelie oor yoo will roo tha daye!

Hay! Littul gurl! I heer yoo wispureng pournie ov me! Yoo doun't lyke da show! Wel dere iz won moor fynul ahtrakshin, yooll luv it! Trustt mee! Shirly, I know!

Yess yess, dis waye, fallowe mee juss a littal biht moor. Tha fynule ahtrakshin iz juss beehynde dis doore! O, luk, orr rahther doun't looke, onn tha wal now haz juss ahpeerd an

ihmage ove a cryeng mann. He lostt hiz sun in a rodesyde aksidint, end eeteng a boolit four dinnur iz toonite'z fynul plahn.

Ohkay ohkay, dat waz fun, buht now lits git to da reel funn, leht mee opin dis door. And heer... Hear we ar, laydee end children, in tha baththroom iz owur foorth end fynal ahtrakshin, tha maine eeent!; Tha Muhcahbruh I-yurn-fly! Yess, dat iz a fly yoo arr lukeng at, it is ahbout a milleon tymeز biggur dan a normul fly and haz fit purfectlie ento tha tuhb. Wat's dat smel yoo asske? Why tha smel ov deth, ove corse! And leht mee tell yoo, it dyed an ehxcroosheiateng deth az oppozed to tha peecefull deth wee aull seek!

Let me axe yoo my frendz. O, I'm so sorrrie, wear ar yoo all tryeng to goh? I maybe shuld hav told yoo dat tha door iz lockt end will not opin untill I em finish'd wit my prehsintayshin! Buht now yoo know!

Soh leht me beegin agin; leht me ask yoo my frends, doo yoo know wat iz tha scaryist thing ov all? No anneserz??? Well owe tell yoo. Tha scaryist thingz in lyfe arr tha thingz dat ar hardist to kill. It kan bee ay pursin, an ideia, a memurie, et setra, et setra. Buht if yoo kannot kill it, it stazy in yoor lyfe fourehver! And wat iz moor payneful dan a nitemare yoo cannut burie?! Eeach nyte yoo go to sleepe end dere it iz, da moest diffikult momint too kill. Yoo shoot bullitz through it, chop it douwn wit an axe, set fyur to it, den bury it sixx feet deep, buht en tha moorning wen yoo ryse, yoo fynd dat da hannd ove sohmbur emmoortalitie iz stickeng owt ov dat grayve!

O my, yoo all look so frytenned, waz it sumthing I sed?! O, well, tha door haz opin'd beehynd yoo. Jeezus, yoo all run so fastt. Au revoor! Iyul miss yoo laydee end children, tell otherz ahbout muy show! Mann, dey all ran off so fas. Ouch! Kid! I told yoo not too leeve yoor I-ballz lyeng arounde!

Lynne, Dave and Sarah all ran out of the apartment building and onto the lawn just before the parking lot. While running, Dave's heart collapsed as he tripped and fell onto the pavement, where an ambulance had been waiting for him.

The paramedics retrieved his body and laid him to rest on a stretcher as they carried him inside the back of the ambulance. On the lawn, Lynne had lost her breath and sat down to catch it, but her mind became dark as she laid on the grass; stomach to the dirt, the side of her face as well, her eyes widened and staring into an abyss.

Sara, who was the only one still standing upright, at one moment looked up at the second floor of the apartment building, and through a window of the place they had just escaped, she saw a face that was shaded with internal anger; it was the symbol of terror; and it was none other than the jester, the joker; it was the great Spookieni.

Chapter 70

IN THE ARMS OF MORPHEUS

2:2:7:70

IT was after boarding the one a.m. train that my nerves began to excite in wonder of what would be of that ride. It was fascinating in the daytime, but the night-time has a whole different personality.

When I arrived at the airport I found Lynne sitting in a waiting area and I saw Giselle working at the diner. The moment she saw me she got up and began to walk towards me. “Ay daddy,” she said to me. “You took care of business?,” I asked, “I did,” she replied. “I been takin' care of business, too,” I said, showing her a picture of the first season boxset of “Odyssey” that I had taken on my cellular device. A smile crept onto her face as she asked me how I had found it. The internet is useful in many ways.

We took the 2:15 train to 32nd and then walked the short distance to PaintDrive Tours; we get there at 2:40 and walk under a sign that reads “You painted my entire world.” Lynne's reservation was for 3:00, but the gentleman in charge of the afterhours allowed us to board the vehicle early. Our driver was one Alan Wake and seemed polite enough.

After we boarded the vehicle and sat in our adjustable-rotatable seats, Alan asked us to confirm our settings. We both agreed on “In the Arms of Morpheus” as opposed to “Highway Star,” the latter being a route that rode along the highway and passed by a shoreline. The music was confirmed as classical and the style of painting as acrylic.

Once that was all out of the way, the thirty-minute ride finally began with the soothing sound of a string instrument followed by some piano keys.

There were no other cars with us as we drove into a well-lit and wide city tunnel. It was a vandalized tunnel, with much graffiti on its walls, but the graffiti seemed to be done by artists. Many of the pieces were words but a good amount were illustrations of various things.

And as we rode on through the long tunnel, with the music and acrylic filter, a feeling came over me. I imagined all of the artists who must have spent hours leaving their mark on the tunnel; and with that I thought of all the police who must have driven by and allowed the artist to continue.

Gradually I became aware of a unifying theme in all of the graffiti, and that theme told me that artists of this nature do not always rebel against the government or authority, but that many times it is in rebellion against the artist itself because it is an argument against humanity.

I suppose this is why many great artist struggle with their work and ultimately develop that inevitable love-hate relationship with the piece itself.

Suddenly, Lynne said my name and I turned around to see what she wanted. She told me to switch to her display and after I turned back around to my own display, I pressed a button that allowed me to see her screen. And now I was watching a painting of a man who was in the process of leaving his own mark on the tunnel. And his mark was the phrase “Wake up!” in bold green letters.

As we left the artist we were nearing the end of the tunnel, and the sound of the wind gliding outside on the vehicle stayed even until it whipped and lashed and we exited finally, and re-entering the city I saw a plaza that housed a giant water fountain. I observed the water itself for only a moment, its edges painted with a cool blue glow, and suddenly Lynne called out to me again, telling me to switch to her screen.

Far in the distance was the Paradise Port bridge, which connected land's end to land's end, and though I had seen it before, I saw it in a way that was new to me. I saw it, for the first time, with the imagination of a dreamer and not that of a citizen. I was no longer a resident, not a denizen nor a civilian, but a traveler and a wanderer, a vagabond, seeing this place for the first time with fresh green eyes.

If you're aiming a firearm at a target, unless you are an otherwise great marksman, you are likely to miss your first attempt. Your second shot is more likely to be on-target, if not directly on-target. This is because you have adjusted your aim after gaining a frame of reference from the preceding shot or shots.

In the same terms, our entire life is based off of hundreds of our own established frames of references. We see our world according to religion, music, art, experience, politics, et cetera. And every time we gain a new frame of reference, it creates a new narrative in our subjective lives.

I have seen the Paradise Port bridge as a resident and now as an artist, and I have been gifted the sight of a true architectural work of art. I have been given a new frame, and I can appreciate now the artist within the architect. And isn't that an important aim in life? To be a great marksman? To have great sight in and great insight into life and its unclear nature.

I told Lynne to switch to my screen, and after doing so she saw the blue-glowing water fountain, and as it faded away slowly on the screen, she could only say it was beautiful.

This is when, more quickly, a statue appeared on both of our screens. Three soldiers standing upright and surrounded by decorated bushes. Had it not been for the painted fashion, I might not think too much of it, but something reminded me of the dream I have titled “Kansas Storm.” The absurdity that went down that day, and the madness and absurdity of war itself.

War has the ability to reform the world and the people in it, but I ask if it has ever

constructively and effectively solved a conflict. So much of what I have experienced has taught me that the way humans usually decide to handle their problems results only in gridlock.

As the vehicle drove on we passed by a funeral home, whose front steps currently housed a man smoking a cigarette who I will assume is an undertaker. He looked at our vehicle as it passed with dark rings around his eyes, but what I saw was the painting of a man both haunted by and tired of death.

Alan suddenly made a right turn and then a left, and we were now traveling down Rashida boulevard, which was one of the more popular streets in the city. The skyscrapers were taller, the buildings flashier; some even had digital screens on them, showcasing advertisements for movies and or products. The boulevard, despite the time and weather, was still very much alive in terms of pedestrians. People, cars, music, lights, yelling. The usual.

The first painting I saw on Rashida boulevard was of a man walking drunkenly on the sidewalk. He could barely control where he was going, but somehow he ultimately moved in one direction after all the back-stepping and lateraling. The second painting on Rashida boulevard was of a hooker leaning into a car. The potential customer must have either been a creep or very cheap, for she suddenly threw something at him in anger, but ultimately, she entered into his vehicle.

Thinking of the drunkard and the prostitute, I thought of the semi-autobiographical great American novel each one would write ten or fifteen years from now. Two novels that hauntingly detailed the final tragedy in all mortal dreams.

The boulevard suddenly split into two roads, forming a “Y” shape, and we went right. As we made that right, Lynne noted to me that I will be seeing an airplane in the sky headed toward a paper moon. And I did see it only a few seconds after she mentioned it. I continued to look up at that dark sky as the airplane flew directly underneath the paper moon. With all that jazz in the air, the painting made me think of those San Rashida nights. That time I can't forget but can't escape. A time I can't go back to and can never truly feel again.

When I looked back down it was at a sidewalk on which a person was currently walking on. The filter system on the PaintDrive software must not have recognized what it was seeing, which I believe was a man who wore all black; what it returned was interesting, a painting of a man who resembled something of a bandit.

There are so many strange things that float in the bayou, which leads to darkness and mystery. And which is more compelling to the human mind? The mystery of darkness, which is like the desire to explore the old unknown universe, or the darkness of mystery, which is like the lunacy inherited in exploring that same old unknown universe?

We drove on and Alan made a complete U-turn which allowed both me and Lynne to see a famous historical building painted in acrylic fashion. It was a building that was used as a safe haven during the second world war for Japanese-Americans. Those, like many other identities, who were persecuted by association. Where do the problems of human abstintion arise from? Surely the root is within the student rather than the student body.

It is not a secret by any means that the human indulges in the general nature to possess. People want to own things, but not even just things, they also want to own other people. Take, for example, marriage and infidelity. This is not something you will think about unless you sit down to think about it. On the one hand, marriage is in principle a right to another person's body. Another person's time. Another person's wealth. Another person's future. Frighteningly, another person's life. On the other hand, infidelity becomes a violation of your spouse's rights in marriage.

If the nature to possess has invaded even love, what can stop it? It's one thing to overthrow a mostly capitalistic and materialistic market or ideology, but if you can eliminate a person's nature to possess, then I think you might have something. And this does not just apply to greed, but to every trait frowned upon by humans. The problems perhaps should be solved within the student and not the student body. But hey, the rich get richer and the days get shorter.

For a moment we drove through a part of the city that was more town than city, but regardless we found ourselves back in a very urban area, and like magic, we appeared at the bridge that only twenty minutes ago was a distant painted dream.

We entered onto the Paradise Port bridge, the vehicle bumping just a little as it rode over the entrance, and now one had the view of a body of dark but lit water and a dark but lit skyline. The scattering light streaks across the water and following it leads you to the structured light of the city.

I hadn't known it before, but there was also a display which allowed you to see the driver's view in a painted fashion. I leaned over and pressed the corresponding button for Lynne, and now, just like me, she was looking at a painting of the inner construction of the bridge.

There were only a few cars on the lonely bridge, and the lights that lit the roadway in the night was like moonlight to the sea. The great construction of the bridge made me feel like I was passing through a distant piece of history; and many times I saw silhouettes and penumbras, because the construction would defend the dark, creating shadows by neary lights like evil does to good.

The illuminescence of the bright lights helped to paint the road below, making it almost glow with the same fluorescent color and played to the contrast of the state's past, when the dark lanes of the forties were a microcosm for lanes everywhere. Literal lanes

and memory lanes alike...

This bridge hadn't been built yet, but back then there was less light in the state than there is now. The idea of less light always invites ideas of the haunted. Sometimes a place that hasn't been discovered, but more over a place that people do not want to encounter. Or ever encounter again. The thing about the haunted is the same thing as the hunted; you can leave that place, but it never leaves you.

After my father's death, the city was haunted for me that way. Even in places with bright lights and even in places I had never been before, there was a sort of abyss. I'm not sure really how to explain it, but I felt this abyss as I drove from one part of the state to the other and to his funeral. And during that time in my life, the distinction between the lucid dream and the waking reality was unrecognizable; when I was sure I was awake, I would wake up. Trying to escape both reality and the haunted city, I would go to sleep, but that same haunted reality in a city mostly of darkness would often be recreated in my nightmares. And waking up each time, I awoke to the same haunted city in reality.

There is one abyss dream that I recall in particular, but I remember more as if it were like one of those old unfinished Larry Byndon city paintings. It takes place in the winter, during the midnight hour, and features the dead cold trees, whose leafless branches are immortal and are illustrated to haunt the night, bringing about the cruel reality of a deathless world.

Volume 2 - Composition 2
(2:2 / 5 / V)

Part 8

Chapter 71

DO ALL QUESTIONS HAVE ANSWERS?

2:2:8:71

“HELLO?” “Yeah it's the weekend and the kids are probably still up. They won't sleep. Can you watch them for about an hour?” “Sure.” “Okay I will send you a message later.” “Peace.” “Peace.”

Mrs. Spookie: Are they asleep yet?

Mr. Spookie: No

Mrs. Spookie: If suppose to snow tonight

Mrs. Spookie: It's

Mr. Spookie: Yeah weather says chance of heavy snowfall

Mrs. Spookie: They keep canceling flights

After a while of not responding I went to see if Sara and Dave were sleeping. Dave was sitting sloppily and slouched on the living room couch watching a cartoon of animals. There was something gloomy about him. He was indeed watching the television screen, but looking at his stale eyes it was possible to tell that his mind was in another world. It was just a boy sitting and watching a cartoon, but what I saw was the painting of a boy both frightened by and curious about what he could not see.

Sara, in her bedroom, was sitting on the floor and working on Rainy Nights Into Dreams... The moment I walked in she was moving around a deputy, and she placed him on a street corner, and said "I think I will name him Ned."

She had her glasses on, and just beside her laid a plastic dress and a plastic garden. And next to that was a drawing of a dress made of flowers that she seemed to have been working on.

When I moved in closer, on the computer screen I saw that she was talking to her mother, who between the two many messages had been sent back and forth. "Do you want grape or strawberry flavor? And does David won't the one with cheese?"

I left the bedroom after talking with Sara and went back into Lynne's bedroom, passing by her shelf of diaries and picking one up which was colored in black, pink and white. I went to open it but saw that it required a key. A key which I later found in a nightstand.

I found out today that a friend of a friend was in a drunk driving accident. The other person was killed. Jasmin is a patient person but I think that is the last straw for her. She's still living in his apartment but I don't know if she is going to be the person who visits him in prison... Jack?

Mrs. Spookie: Yo

Mr. Spookie: Where we at wid it?

Mrs. Spookie: Is it snowing there?

Mr. Spookie: No

Mrs. Spookie: It is where. You will probably get it soon

Mrs. Spookie: I'm in the stock room

Mrs. Spookie: Silvio and I finalized out divorce. He is trying to marry someone else

Mr. Spookie: Who?

Mrs. Spookie: Alexa

Mr. Spookie: Let me ask you a question

Mrs. Spookie: A personal question?

Mr. Spookie: Noah general question

Mr. Spookie: No a

Mrs. Spookie: Okay

Mr. Spookie: Do all questions have answers?

Mrs. Spookie: Is that the question?

Mr. Spookie: Yeah man

Mrs. Spookie: Yes

Mrs. Spookie: Wait

Mrs. Spookie: No

Mrs. Spookie: Is this a trick question?

Mr. Spookie: Sara asked me that a little while ago

Mrs. Spookie: That's a really good question

It was indeed a really good question, one that had me pondering all night. A clever person might say that all questions do indeed have answers, "I don't know" being a possible blanket answer to every question conceivable. This is more or less an evasive answer to that difficult question and fails to inspire creative knowledge, even though technically "not knowing" something still falls under the category of knowledge, hence the philosophical quote "I know that I know nothing." But let this serve more as the mechanics of knowledge and the definition of an answer, as well as the nature of questions themselves.

I would say there are two types of questions, and as a result, two types of answers; an objective question, such as "What is one plus one?," usually results in an objective answer, such as "Two,;" a subjective question, such as "What is your favorite rose color?," usually results in a subjective answer, such as "Yellow."

I think for the purposes of this question, "Do all questions have answers?," we must omit all subjective questions and answers. It is possible for a person to not have a favorite rose color, but even if a person does not know what one plus one is, there is still an answer.

So now, the question is, "Do all objective questions have objective answers?" For example, is there an objective answer to the objective question, "Is there a purpose to life?"

I believe that if you can perform an experiment, there is an answer to your hypothesis. In the same sense, if you can test a question, then that question has an answer. If you cannot test the question, there is no answer that is available to us. There may still be an answer to that question, but that answer is currently unavailable to us as knowledge, so ironically, we cannot even answer the question "Do all questions have answers?"

It is frightening to think a question can exist without an answer. This poses haunting implications on the limits of knowledge. If a question can exist without an answer, this means the universe can exist without a purpose, which also gives credence to the idea of nihilism. Imagine pursuing a question for an answer, but there is no answer. How would you ever know that there isn't an answer? You wouldn't. And so you would pursue that question indefinitely. All along, a joke from God.

Mrs. Spookie: Would "Does God exist?" be objective?

Mr. Spookie: Yes

Mrs. Spookie: Because that question is just one of many questions that have appeared on the wall

Mr. Spookie: That's strange. I have questions on my walls too

Mr. Spookie: "What are dreams?"

Mrs. Spookie: There's a question here that's in red

Mr. Spookie: "By theory of the third law and what is supposed, all are opposed, and in knowing this, can you tell me, why then, does death exist?"

Mrs. Spookie: That's what it says!

Mr. Spookie: I sent you a picture of it, send me a picture of yours

Mrs. Spookie: Ok

Mr. Spookie: That's weird that we can see the same questions

Mrs. Spookie: Do you know the answer?

Mr. Spookie: I was thinking about it

Mrs. Spookie: I have to drive back, hold on

Mrs. Spookie: Hey you

Mr. Spookie: Out there in the cold
Mrs. Spookie: Getting lonely
Mr. Spookie: Getting old
Mrs. Spookie: Can you feel me?
Mr. Spookie: Hey 6ou
Mrs. Spookie: Standing in the aisles
Mr. Spookie: With itchy feet
Mrs. Spookie: And fading smiles
Mr. Spookie: Can you feel me?
Mrs. Spookie: Hey you
Mr. Spookie: Don't help them to bury the light
Mrs. Spookie: Don't gibe in without a fight
Mr. Spookie: Hey you
Mrs. Spookie: Out there on your own
Mr. Spookie: Sitting naked
Mrs. Spookie: By the phone
Mr. Spookie: Would you Touch me?
Mrs. Spookie: Hey you
Mr. Spookie: With your ear against the wall
Mrs. Spookie: Waiting for someone
Mr. Spookie: To call our
Mrs. Spookie: Would you touch me?
Mr. Spookie: Hey you
Mrs. Spookie: Would you help me to carry the stone?
Mr. Spookie: Open your heart
Mrs. Spookie: I'm coming home

568-8196: Hello.

534-9266: Hey it's me.

568-8196: Hey how you been? We still on for tomorrow?

534-9266: For sure. You got a babysitter for little man?

568-8196: Yup. Everything is set up.

534-9266: I can hear him in the back.

568-8196: Hold on, let me put him on.

568-8196: Hewo.

534-9266: Hey! Do you know who this is?

568-8196: Yea.

534-9266: Who?

568-8196: Auntie Imani.

534-9266: You remembered!

568-8196: I remembered you from my old house.

568-8196: He accidentally hung up the phone.

534-9266: Oh okay, I was wondering why he wasn't talking.

568-8196: So I will see you tomorrow then?

534-9266: For sure. I'll call you before I pick you up.

568-8196: Okay, I'll see you then. Bye.

534-9266: Bye.

234-3938: Hello?

318-8845: Hello, yes.

234-3938: Where you are?

318-8845: I leave state. Police follow me yesterday.

234-3938: Where you go?

318-8845: Not important. I find out Ava go back to France with all the money. It is over. Police will come to your house, you need to go too.

234-3938: I will leave.

318-8845: I guess that is it. I leave some money with Desmond if you need. Good luck.

234-3938: Good. Thank you. Slan agat.

318-8845: Slan.

148-4961: Hello?

948-7255: My plane had emergency landing in London.

148-4961: What happened?

948-7255: I think it was because of weather.

148-4961: When do you think you will be here? She is excited to see you.

948-7255: In twelve hours, tomorrow at latest.

148-4961: Okay, that sounds great.

948-7255: A man in airport was talking to me to becoming high-end escort.

148-4961: I'm not surprised, you're a pretty woman.

948-7255: No way I ever do thing like that.

148-4961: Yeah, it doesn't seem like you.

948-7255: Okay, I will call you in few hours to let you know.

148-4961: Alright, can't wait to see you. Bye.

948-7255: Bye.

I leave Lynne's bedroom and enter Sara's, where now she is resting peacefully on the side of her bed, her glasses in her hand. In the time I was gone she had completed and integrated together all the artistic sets of her architecture; Autumn, Winter, Summer, Spring, Rainy and Windy Nights Into Dreams...

Exiting the apartment building, I passed Mulford and walked near the train station that was being built. The meadow of moths was no longer a meadow of moths, it was complete; and a great big sign stood in front of its entrance, "Welcome to Mulford Station."

As I passed it, along came a loud train. I passed on to the other side of the meadow as the river came flowing through, the stream the power of many currents.

Nature and architecture, I think, have always lived in the same tree-house. Many things come to be by man or nature. No more a city than less a body, and no more a train than less a river.

A good distance on the other side of the meadow it began to snow. Not too long after I saw and heard an ambulance speed by. It reminded me of Lynne's hand and how she had recently injured it doing yoga. She now wears a minimal hand brace on it. Now her affliction is in turn making think of Dave's fingertips. He tells us a couple of them are still numb from the day of Blizzard Tracy.

A hundred thoughts later I arrived at St. Brandon St. Why did I create Brandon? I have no idea. He seems to only appear when I am aware of my car and my parents' home. Okay. Two items I have more or less abandoned. I must have created him after my father's death, during the time of the haunted city. Perhaps it was when I wrote my first composition.

In those moments there were many rejections. My rejection of society, rejection of tradition, and especially my rejection of ordinary life. That must have been when I created him. An individual to shoulder the banality of an ordinary life. This ordinary life indeed should have included a home, a spouse, children, at least one vehicle, a career, etc. Perhaps I saw the life of my parents and wanted nothing to do with it.

Brandon, whose name has no relevancy other than the fact that it was in my sight at that time of refusal, may be an idea of myself that lived a normal life, and it would be easier for me to see him than for him to see me. An average life is easy to imagine, but very few can imagine one that requires a certain level of creativity, because with creativity often follows madness.

In the deepest recesses of my mind, I remember that time as a place, but it feels like a dream or another life because it happened so many years ago.

I remember a rainy night, while in the basement of my parents' home, half disoriented and half lucid, and reading a book through the rolling thunderstorm. I could hear the rain outside falling like static and the thunder that frequently followed as I read a story about a married pair who carried a vain burden.

I remember an autumn night there as well, though in the living room, watching a film and thinking about how death could be so colorful outside. The film itself had nothing to do with death, or with color, but everything to do with a female astronaut on a mission from Earth.

I remember a winter night, sitting on a chair in my father's home office that sat just beside a window that looked out into the neighborhood, and watching the snow fall as I listened to a song about military pathfinders.

I remember a windy night, in the kitchen at midnight to find food and looking out of the window for a moment to see leaves shuddering in the wind, and then returning to my former place to finish a television show about a hitman who allowed his targets to tell their story before he executed them.

I remember a spring night, hearing the end of birds chirping as I sat in my brother's room, reading a poem about a town that was overtaken by a mist that sent them into chaos.

And I remember a summer night, sitting on a porch in the backyard in high heat and relentless humidity, listening to an audiobook about the subweighted parts of our universe.

All of these memories taking place at a time when I was the only person alive in the world. Living in an empty house as a recluse, haunted not by ghosts but by ghouls I knew were coming. I'll tell you, friend, it takes a really long time to ask good questions and an even longer time to get good answers, and you reach the greatest answers by starting off with asking the most humble questions. One such question, "What is a house, really?"

One question that is not so humble, and one that I think is one of the oldest questions of human history, is "Does God exist?" It's one of those eternal questions that really only unhinges the dreamer. But I also think it's one of those questions that everyone wants to know so they can live their life accordingly. Personally, I have no need for that hypothesis. He may be around though.

Chapter 72

BY YELLOW EASTERN PISTILS

2:2:8:72

"THE Night of the Hangman" is a hide and seek game played in darkness. One player is named "The Hangman" and the others must evade capture for a certain amount of time until the entry way to escape is activated.

The Hangman also must seek the area with a device that plays eerie music, an effect for suspense, but also an effect that gives the hiders an advantage. Hiders may move around at their own expense, but they cannot escape the area and "win" until an alarm goes off, at which point two areas of exit are activated and they may escape through there and to freedom. At this point, the eerie music may be turned off by The Hangman.

In some versions of the game, hiders are allowed to use walkie-talkies, but must hide them after The Hangman has hid them, by rule in plain sight, before the start of the game. Also in some versions, The Hangman actually walks around with a noose, and must put the rope around a hider's neck in order for them to be caught.

My parents' home was pitch black as I searched inside it searching for Lynne, Sara and Dave. Of course they voted me to be The Hangman.

The first place I checked, which seemed most obvious to me, was the basement. I walked down the stairs and the atmosphere paired with the spooky music coming from my cellular device. If anyone was down there, they knew I was coming.

I searched around for a brief while but could find nothing, no movement, not until I heard someone run across the room above me.

I quickly walked back up the stairs and began peering into the dark living room. At the back door was one of the exit spots, and picking up Lynne's cellular device, I still had ten minutes before this exit was activated.

I looked around in the living room, but like the basement before it I found nothing. Nothing under tables, nothing behind couches, nothing in closets. And it was after this I decided to take the stairs and head down the long hallway into my father's office. Lynne loves this room, perhaps I will hang her in it.

When I got into my father's office, there was a bit of light in it from the streetlight outside. It was enough light to make visible anything hiding in the room, which in turn made this an undesirable hiding spot.

As I went to leave, I heard a door shut softly on the same floor, and myself and the creepy music made our way towards that sound. It wasn't until I was halfway through the hallway that I heard something fall in the floors below, and when I went to the banister to look down below, I saw the figure of a woman running from the basement and into the kitchen.

I went down the stairs, sk_pp_ng every other step until I arrived at the kitchen. I am not lying to you, I c_ecked everywhere possible, and I could not find he_. In my last efforts I _v_n checked the refrigerator. It was looking grim for me, at any _o_ent the alarms would sound and they would be able to es_ape.

R_m_mb_ring that I heard a door close on the floor abo_e, I went back up the stairs and into my brother's _oom, which is where I suspected Dav_ was hiding.

I looked around brief_y, then stopped in the middle of the room after _he_king underneath the bed. At first I had given up, began making my way out of the room. And then it happened. I heard the voice of Sa_a come through a walkie-talkie, and it came from the closet behind me. Finally, someone, presu_ably Dave, was going to be hanged. How I have longe_ for this moment and at once it has come... No one is in the closet... There is only a walkie-talkie sitting on boxes... What is g_ing on?

When the alarms for escape went off, I realized what was going on. It was a trick desig_ed to lure and keep me in that room as they made their way to the e_its. It was a clever ruse, but I am hoping my ruse will be even more cl_v_r.

I dialed down the music, prepared my voice, then picked up the walkie-talkie, and then assumed the voice of Dave, and s_oke into it, "He's in the basement wit_ me." There were two points of exit, throu_h the backdoor and into the yard, or through the door in the b_ement, and of course I made my way to the bac_door.

When I was almost th_r_, I saw two figures, one of a woman and one of a child, running towards the backdoor. I began la_gging, startling the child, who then tripped over something in the darkness. When the woman went to help the child up, I gr_bbed her by the neck, then the child by the arm, and the night o_ the hangman was declared.

I caught Lynne and Sara, but Dave managed to escape through the basement. We eventually met with him in the backyard and he went on about how he made it out alive.

"You're a cheater!," Sara yelled at Dave. He was confused. "You tricked us because you just wanted to win!," Sara continued. "How did I cheat?," Dave asked innocently. "You said he was in the basement when he wasn't so I would go to the backdoor and get caught," Sara finished. "I didn't say he was in the basement! I didn't even see you at the end!," Dave yelled. "Yes you did! On the walkie-talkie!"

Lynne, who was trying to figure out what was going on, stood in confusion until I admitted I was the voice at the other end of that walkie-talkie.

Working together and trying to understand eachother's viewpoints, it is a simple concept, right? "Be tolerant of other people's opinions and ideas." And yet it is a concept that not even the most intelligent of beings can understand. People in power don't want you to understand that. They want you to fight. They want you to understand capitalism, patriotism, conformalism. And it doesn't matter if one of them escapes, because to escape

he must become like me, and in escaping he has taken my place.

After the ordeal we went back inside and it wasn't too long until the phone rang. Lynne answered it to find that it was Joyce who was calling, an elderly woman who lived directly across the street and since had made the acquaintance of the three.

Joyce had a gift for Sara and Dave, so immediately they dressed themselves and ran across the street to meet her in her home. Lynne watched from the window as they entered her home.

Later, as I was passing Datura, I could hear Lynne humming from her studio, and I could have sworn I heard her say something in a language other than English. When I passed it again on my way back, she called me in.

"When you have time can you take my picture for the book?" "I'll just take it now." "Okay, but do you think I should take it in the office with professional clothes or in here with street clothes?"

I thought about the question, then moved closer to the canvas she was painting on. "In here with street clothes." After she saw me looking at what she was painting, she told me that this was going to be the cover for the book, and finally she left to fix herself up.

The painting was, as she told me before at the airport, of a completed flower. It was in full blossom, made of the colors blue, green, red and yellow, and it was nice that its creator saw its conclusion. Its meaning, I suppose, eluded me then, but still, these things are all very subjective.

When Lynne returned her face was washed and she came back with a sun-yellow headscarf. She handed me her phone and stood next to her painting, and then smiled. Looking at the picture to make sure it was framed right, I couldn't help but notice the mountain behind her and how well it fit into the picture.

I handed it to her and she approved. Rare for a woman to only take one picture of herself.

She went back to her painting but I took out my own phone, and while she wasn't paying attention I took another photo. I attempted to persuade her to take erotic photos, offering one hundred dollars for ten of them, but she politely declined my offer.

Perhaps a quarter of an hour had gone by and Dave and Sara still were not back. Curious, I went to the same window Lynne had watched them from and when I peered out, I saw Sara and Dave on our side of the street talking to a person driving a white SUV. I went outside quickly and right then and there the SUV drove off.

I waved the children towards me, and when they got to me, I asked, "Who was that?" "My mom's friend," Sara answered. "The one with small eyes?" "Yeah," Dave answered. "What did she want?"

I angrily brought Sara and Dave to their mother and told them to tell her what they

told me. "Chloe said you said she was going to drive us to the store to get packed lunches for the space camp," Sara said.

After Sara and Dave left Datura, Lynne also became visibly angry and we looked like a pair of angry mouses. "Man, I'm losin' my fuckin' mind," she said, "How does she know about that field trip?"

What was running through my mind, and I'm sure Lynne's, was what if Chloe somehow got Dave and Sara to enter her car. What would he do with them? Is she dangerous?

"Fucking fat ass. If she was chasing me and I was running out of breath I would throw a piece of cake on the ground to distract her. Goddam lesbianca. Fuck that homosapien," I said.

During "The Night of the Hangman," Dave went into the basement and searched for a place to hide. Thinking Spooker would never search inside it, he awkwardly hid himself inside the dryer. He believed his assumption was incorrect when only a few minutes later he heard the music of doom. But as the music of doom traveled throughout the basement, it suddenly disappeared.

Sara herself had decided to hide under a clothed table in the kitchen. Upon second thought, however, she thought maybe it was too poor a hiding spot. Not hearing any music of doom, she left from underneath the table and ran across the living room toward the stairs and up to the second floor.

Lynne could hear Sara running up the stairs as she looked for a hiding spot in the home's office. Everywhere she tried to hide, there was a bit of light shining on it from the streetlight outside.

And suddenly, her heart sank when she heard the faint sound of haunting music growing louder. She ditched her plans of hiding in the home's office and instead hid away in a nearby bathroom's tub. Entering the tub, she could hear Spook walking down the long corridor and into the home office she had just abandoned.

When the sound shrunk, she got out of the tub and walked the way Spook had come, and turning, she opened the door to a closet to find Sara hiding in it. "This is my spot," Sara whispered, and Lynne shut the door softly, now deciding to go downstairs.

Sara had been stashed away in the closet when she heard the spooky music coming towards her again. She hoped that the music would pass, but it did not. It moved around, back and forth, until a louder sound was made downstairs.

Trying to move between furniture in the darkness, Lynne stumbled over something and fell into a pile of boxes. In fear, first she ran towards the basement, then decided against it and ran into the kitchen where she barely fit herself in between the refrigerator and the wall it rested against.

At the same time, Dave had grown bored of hiding in the dryer, so he got out slowly and began moving about the basement. He smiled when he found a set of yellow walkie-talkies on the couch.

Going up the stairs he peered out and saw nor heard nothing, but as he ventured into the house he began to hear the sound of doom in the kitchen. He walked past with stealth, went up the stairs to the second floor, and by chance ran into Sara as she looked for her next hiding spot. Dave handed a walkie-talkie to Sara, made plans with her of foolery at the time of the alarms, and then they went their separate ways.

Dave then went into the closet of the room that now belonged to him, but didn't stay long. He hid the walkie-talkie in the closet and made it so if anyone was near-by, they would hear radio contact. Afterwards, he hid in the same tub Lynne had hid prior.

Sara could not find a new hiding spot, and when she again heard that music she heard before, she had no choice but to cache into Datura, a dangerously open hiding spot. Listening carefully, she could hear the music move into Dave's room. She could hear it move all about. Assuming Dave did not have enough time to plant the walkie-talkie, though he did, she spoke into and warned Dave of Spookie being on the second floor, and as she did this the alarms for escape began to ring.

She wanted to make a run for it, but knew it was simply too dangerous. But suddenly a voice came through her walkie-talkie, "He's in the basement with me."

She opened the door to Datura and quickly walked toward the stairs where she heard nothing. She could feel the grasp of escape. She went down the stairs and into the kitchen, where by chance she saw her mother getting out of a wall. Only a moment after did they hear the sound of Spooky music coming towards them.

With grave desperation, they dashed for the backdoor, but suddenly The Hangman began laughing at them, startling Sara and causing her to trip and fall on the same item Lynne had tripped on before.

As Lynne went to save her child, The Hangman appeared over them, grabbing Lynne by the neck and her child by the arm.

Dave was the last one to leave the second floor to go down to the first floor, and hearing the commotion near the backdoor, he took another route that led into the basement where he escaped his own hanging. As he opened the door to exit the basement, he saw a bright light outside as his eyes had been so used to the darkness of the home. When he stepped out into it, at first it blinded him, then he looked upward not only to find a shining streetlight, but a black and white bird, perhaps a magpie, atop it. Dave stared at it as it rested on what seemed to be a spade-like top, and for the first time in his life, a concept of reincarnation or some form of rebirth coupled with the knowledge of life and death started to dance around in his mind, and this is when he began to wonder.

Chapter 73

THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO BALTIMORE

2:2:8:73

"...If it ain't here already, it ain't comin'..."

MORE than eight years ago, I had this dream. I am on a train at night headed to a place I am uncertain of. Suddenly, the train slows to a halt and the operator informs us that a rail has been damaged and will cause a delay.

As the train stood there for what may have been forty-five minutes, I observed the passengers on the train as I tried to decide and pen the final line to my nearly completed novel, which was titled "The Dark Testament."

My going looking from passenger to passenger ceased when my eyes came upon a man inspecting coins with a piece of glass. I saw him marvel particularly at one coin which may have been a rare, and as he turned it again and again, I noticed that it was a two-cent coin; on one side I saw a happy theater mask and on the other a sad theater mask.

I thought to myself, "It is much easier to achieve a happy death than a happy life. If life is unhappy enough, a happy death is inevitable," and realized I had my final line.

"Ladies and gentlemen this is your train operator, we are currently experiencing difficulties as one of the rails have been damaged. Please bare with us as we handle this situation, thank you."

It was morning and we were going to Emily's apartment to drop Sara and Dave off with her for Spring Break when we received that message from the train conductor. Stopped at Leavenworth, I began to think of that train dream from more than eight years ago, which then led me to remember the night before in which Sara showed me how one of her train rails for Windy Nights into Dreams... had cracked and how it took me four or five minutes to fix it.

What I have observed is that in all three worlds; the dream world, the real world and Sara's Windy Nights world, trains are used as a means for travel, which has led me to believe that some concepts are better than others.

The idea behind natural selection is that some species are more likely to thrive and reproduce than other species in certain environments, and are therefore naturally selected to endure, but it seems this idea does not only extend to biology.

I believe a type of natural selection also occurs within systems in the universe, or to put it in another way, within concepts used by our universe. As an example, I will go back to the use of trains.

Across a multitude of systems you will find a "tubular" like concept that seems to be

ideal for travel. A train, obviously, but this concept is also used in the human body for veins and arteries; it is used in celestial arrangement for dark flow; it is used in technology for cords; it is used in world building for roads; it is used in buildings for plumbing.

Another example is a "skin" like concept that seems to be ideal for protection, containment, division and a few other things. You can find it in cell-membrane, the Earth's ozone layer, the plastic of your water bottle, the walls of your home.

The concept of a "central nervous system" can be found in many places. Foremost, your brain which controls many of your body's processes, but also in military operations that are lead by one high-ranking commanding officer; it can be found in government leaders who dictate laws and regulations; it can be found inside every cell as a "cell nucleus."

The concept of "mutation" is one I deem an old-timer, as I believe it has been around since the early universe. Mutation has literally invaded every aspect of everything from biology to language. In language you can find mutations through dialects, in biology, well, I'm assuming you know this by now. You can find mutations in social behavior, one might even consider alternate realities to be a mutation of a current reality. You can also find mutation in the fact that not everything is the same.

The concept of "opposites" can too be found in many places. Newton's third law of motion, political parties that seems to exist just to oppose one another, one-half of the human body literally mirrors the other half.

The natural selection of concepts in universe systems seems to be trial and error conducted by the universe itself. This is how the universe learns what concepts work where, how they work, and why they work, and after this phase it will use the ideal concept over and over and in many other areas, whether it be at a microscopic level or a cosmic level. There is no reason to deny the possibility that the universe, too, is evolving like something alive.

It took forty-five minutes for the train to begin moving again. After it did, lines popped into my mind. "The moment Lucifer picks you, you surely are doomed, and there is no way out, of that God forsaken room." The lines, for some reason, made me think of Jack.

Suddenly a man walked into the train while on his cellular device, "If it ain't here already, it ain't comin'," he said over the phone. I wondered what he may have meant, but I had absolutely no context to the conversation. Perhaps a package delivery? No, he would have said "there" instead of "here." Perhaps that means it is not an object but something abstract. But at the same time he may have been referring to a larger geographical location, such as our state, which then would make "here" more suitable

than "there." "This is Union Drive..." Now it's possible that it could be tangible or intangible, which leaves me where I began because that means it can be virtually anything known to man. And to think that...

Suddenly Sara pushed at my shoulder, telling me we were at our stop. I had completely wandered off into my mind... Sorry, I drift. Sometimes when I've had a few... That's why I like to think alone.

"You got your metro?," I asked her. "Yeah." She must have been excited for her new game. It's funny. Metro is slang for your ticket out of a place you want to leave for good or slang for luggage. Both literal luggage and the metaphorical baggage someone carries when leaving a place, because many escape through riding one.

568-8196: ...They're going to keep delaying it until everyone just forgets.

436-7734: You're probably right.

568-8196: A statue of Pauli Murray would go a long way in reminding people of those days.

436-7734: You gotta keep harassing them until they send it.

568-8196: If we had more things like this, maybe we'd get a change.

436-7734: You wanna know what I think about it all, honestly? About the statue, about revolution.

568-8196: What?

436-7734: Well, if it ain't here already, it ain't comin'...

When we entered Emily's apartment she greeted us and then went into her bedroom. Lynne had Sara and Dave shower one after another, and so for a moment I used their computer and came across pictures of Tao and May-ling.

May, more visibly pregnant than ever, was standing in between Tao and an old book of historical illusions. To the side of her also a dog. I remember Tao telling me he hated dogs. Either he changed or he became a liar. I looked at May once more. I suppose the art of moving pieces on a chess board is a conceptual strategy skill to be used among various institutions.

After Sara finished showering, she went into Emily's room and then came out with a computer game that Emily had purchased for her. I got up to let her play it, noticing how the box art for the game was of a magenta city skyline.

I left to sit on the couch which was strangely vacant considering it was a small apartment that currently housed five people, but I soon heard my name shouted. When I went back to Sara, she asked me what was on the computer screen. "You have to install it," I said. "What does that mean?"

I took the computer to the living room and sat on the couch again, placing it on the table before us as Sara sat down next to me still wondering what the word "install" meant in the context of computers.

We went through various screens and I turned on the television as I asked her to fill out a form about her identity. She put on her glasses and entered the three-dimensional virtual world.

When she was done I configured the game's settings for her and initiated the installation process which seemed to take about forty-five minutes. As it installed, it displayed a lot of concept art, and one I found interesting was of a train subway going through a city. This game is going to be her escape.

During the last four or five minutes of the installation, we realized we were the only ones awake in the apartment, and as the game started up, I realized that she had incorrectly put in her name. "You put 'Parker Sara' as your name." "I did?"

The introduction to the game had an interesting tagline of "...The world is indeed out there, but most of it is in your mind." I saw that the name of the computer game was "Worlds into Dreams," and that it was published by Mastermind Toys, the same company that produced the "Nights into Dreams..." products.

For the better part of an hour, I watched her play as she began building a snowy city that had the game audio of a very windy winter. When she was about a third of the way finished with it, and after she had people walking around, a blizzard took hold of the city. Fascinated by it, she exited the top-down view and assumed the point of view of a city resident, then toggled a soft melody, then walked throughout the whole city through the blizzard.

She became lost in it, lost in its phantasm, lost in the arms of Morpheus; and though around her was the calm, it was in her mind that was the storm.

Chapter 74

TAP(P)ED

2:2:8:74

CONNOR sat and waited in an interrogation room for Steve Jefferson to play back the audio he told him would get him deported. "I have news not good. Okay? Ava say she think someone is tapping phone. Why she think that? I don't know why, she just is paranoid now. Say she don't want to do it anymore. I'll talk to her, tell her nothing to worry about. You think police can be monitoring phone calls? I don't know, but we need to be careful more. How? From now on, text message only, and no more name. Okay, I call you."

Steve Jefferson suddenly stopped playback and laughed. "She was right, I'll give her that. Where did she go Connor?" "I want lawyer." "A lawyer's not gonna do you any good," Jefferson continued, and then played back another segment, "This is how we work, you find bank I find women."

Jefferson then went and grabbed a few sheets of paper and placed it in front of Connor, and Connor began to read through them. "I have been try to reCh her she not answer my calls Me to. This is not go9d When you have chance I want you contract bank pretend to be husband and ask of loan was confirmed and received Okay that is good ide Idea* Let me kno what they say. I must go now I will. Goodbye." "I said I want lawyer."

"Tell us where Liam is, and anyone else who was a part of this bank fraud." "Lawyer." Jefferson leaves the room, threatening to begin deportation procedures.

At sundown a cool breeze came into my apartment from the living room window. Stumbling around for a reason, I heard a voice come through a yellow walkie-talkie that stood on my windowsill. "Spooker, do you read me?," Dave said.

I went over to take hold of it and responded, "What do you want?" "We are at Gun Ho's house, his dad wants me to ask you if you can help him put something on top of his car."

I went to the window and saw an armoire standing next to a taxi. Doesn't he have a brother or something? Fuck.

As I was walking into the first floor I saw Suhm Guy exiting his apartment, and when he saw me he smiled. On the way to the exhibition he told me he purchased the piece of furniture from the black market, saw that the owners were searching for it, and so now he was on his way to selling it out of his life.

With great difficulty we lifted it onto the top of his taxi, and I held it as he taped it down to the top of his taxi. When it seemed in firm position enough, I let go and watched as he tapped the tape all the way through to make sure it would stay taped.

After this, I followed him back into his apartment as he had invited me to do so. In there I found Lynne, Sara and Dave, and also the entirety of his own family, his wife and his five children.

The living room was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture, and it wasn't long until we sat down to join Lynne and Chin. She looked at me with suspecting eyes. I have been uncomfortable just twice in my life and the second time was that evening, so everything as I remember it was misty.

I seem to recall that for perhaps ten minutes, we spoke of a man who was recently charged for the possession of child pornography, but I suspect this topic of conversation was a ruse to out me. Nevertheless, it didn't work, and suddenly the children of the household came roaring to us ending the visit to the Guys. Or the Sons. I'm not sure what their surname is.

The four of us walked up the stairs to our floor and I saw them off. "Smell ya later," I said to Lynne. She laughed, but she doesn't get the joke. Which reminds me of her scratching during fornication.

I walked into my apartment. I've never believed that train tracks can electrocute you, I think it's a scam. Lynne left the images she scanned at the library here. What is that? A rollie-pollie?

As the sun continued to go down, I went into the composition notebook room and watched it. Two shelves in here now. I wonder, though, how many dreams. How many deep dreams. Is that a contradiction? Can one dream deeply? Or can one only think deeply? As my nigga Dave be sayin', "Everything's cool in the mind of a gangsta, 'cause gangsta-ass niggas think deep, up three-sixty-five ayo twenty-four-seven, 'cause real gangsta-ass niggas don't sleep."

Walkie #1: Spookie, do you read me?

Walkie #2: What, Sara?

Walkie #1: Come here real quick, I want to show you something on the game. If I try to bring it there the computer might freeze.

Walkie #2: Hold on.

By the time I got there the computer had frozen anyway, as it has done so many times before, and she said if she could get it to happen again she would show me. And so instead I ventured into Lynne's room, where the night had been full except for a streak of one light. Almost everyday you fall upon my waking eyes, inviting and inciting me to rise, and through the window in the wall come streaming in on sunlight wings, a million

bright ambassadors of morning.

As I got closer and closer to the déjà moonlight, I came to notice she was looking at pictures on my computer. They were of the PaintDrive tour we took, a set of photographs we each captured while on the ride, and from these we could pick which ones we wanted to turn into full-size paintings for a small fee.

I watched as she scrolled through some of them. I saw the man tired of death, the drunkard, the prostitute. I saw the glowing statue, the Paradise Port bridge, the airplane in the sky. Then I saw something very interesting.

It was a photograph of the painted tunnel at the beginning of the tour. It was a distant shot that I don't remember taking, so it must have been Lynnette. I will admit that at first glance, it looked strange to me, as if the computer had generated a mistaken image, which is also why Lynne sighed when she saw it, but upon a closer inspection I saw something else.

"The entry to the tunnel is glitched," she said, but I told her that if she looked at it with the right kind of eyes, it looked like a portal. Her eyes focused more on the image, and then suddenly she saw what I saw.

As we stood there, in front of the portal under a dark night lit by streetlamps, we pondered whether we should go through it or not. We wondered the dangers of where it might take us. But eventually, we both made the decision to go through together.

After we had gone through the portal, we found ourselves in the afterworld. It was much like the normal world, except it had a palette of gray and brown and pale blue about it, and always there seemed to be an impending storm approaching.

We immediately realized that after stepping through the portal, we were located right in front of our apartment building. We looked at the gray skies that wanted soon to cry, then the pale blue atmosphere that crept around us, then brought our attention to our feet and looked at brown zinnias that appeared without life.

Lynne kneeled down before them, remembering that she had planted them many years ago, and this is when we both realized that we were in the realm of the dead. It made sense; the constant impending storm and the palette of gray and brown and pale blue; suffering and potential are not proportional, it is not necessarily true that the more you suffer the greater your potential, one can suffer greatly and amount to nothing, even Jesus was born with two arms and two legs, instead one must learn how to suffer wisely and remember that; life and death is but allegory for war and peace, and "those who did well in war earn the right to begin doing well in peace."

Could it be that the afterlife is part of Satan's Playground? Oh, excuse me. I have not told you about Satan's Playground yet.

In basically all projects or creations, there are portions that are not meant to be discovered. For example, in the final product of a video game, a developer may have created certain areas in the video game that are not to be used in the final product, or at least not to be seen by the gamers who play it. These areas are usually just excess and deemed unnecessary by the developer for the final product, or perhaps they were used as areas to conduct tests.

This does not only apply to video games; you can find the same concept in, say, painting, where after a painter makes a mistake, they cover it up with paint so beholders never know it is there.

Satan, who had a hand in the creation of our universe, had a "playground." This playground contained all the things we as human beings are unable to explore as the "user." But I believe somehow, perhaps through evolution, we have learned methods to explore those areas without even realizing it. Like glitching in a video game to find that hidden area or scratching off paint on a painting to see that hidden mistake, I believe we have learned to dream to explore Satan's playground.

Have you ever dreamed of being on an abandoned ghostship? And maybe billions of years ago Satan created that very ghostship. Or perhaps it was an abandoned power plant site, abandoned by everyone and everything that was once there.

Those places are mistakes, excess, garbage, unnecessary, but at the same time they can be quite interesting. And when a person makes a mistake, we chastise them. When the universe makes a mistake, it can create something beautiful. Let us understand that "mistakes are the portals to discovery."

When we were transported back into our world, I watched as Lynne left her current occupancy and walked over to the window. My eyes wandered though, and then fixed on a fly on the wall. Soonafter, in the corner of my eye I see Lynne's window blinds move, as if she was checking to see if someone was there. I believe she was peeking for Chloe and her presence, but instead she found Jasmin and Felicity and their future. And who knows what is in store for them? Just think happy thoughts... And what have you got at the end of the day? What have you got to take away? A bottle of whiskey and a new set of lies. Blinds on the window and a pain behind the eyes.

Though Ava had been on her way back to France, she decided not to complete her voyage and instead stayed in the United Kingdom where a man suggested she become an escort. The opportunity seemed interesting to Ava, for she was a woman of opportunity herself.

In a bathroom on the second floor of a fronted building, she was putting on her makeup and getting prettied for her first appointment with a man named Harry Tipper.

Her employer warned her that after the party, he may want sex, but this did not bother Ava.

Outside the bathroom could be heard two men trying to cover up a messy crime. "Run tap water on the VHS tapes, that will destroy them better," one of the men said to the other. And after applying her makeup in full, she pecked her lips together and then took a napkin and kissed within it her Pandora.

Chapter 75

A BASE AND NAMELESS BROOD

2:2:8:75

CHLOE and Bob, two employees currently working at a meat factory, were packaging various varieties of meat packages when a discussion about gloryholes struck.

"So you just put your dick in the hole and there is someone on the other side?," Bob asked. "Yeah, basically." "That sounds strange."

"Well, Bob, it's all about the mystery of what's going to happen. You might get sucked, you might get fucked, you might get" - "But I just don't understand it, do you ever even meet the other person?," Bob asked. "That's the whole point, it's all anonymous!"

Chloe continued, "Did you ever have a pen-pal in third grade?" "Sure." "Well it's alot like that but for adults. You communicate intimately with the other person but you are allowed to stay anonymous." Bob paused, thought for a moment after putting down a package of meat, then said aloud, "Penis-pal." Chloe laughed, seeing he was finally understanding her brand of humor.

"So what's up with you and Lynne," Bob later asked Chloe while they were both clocking out. As the two walked to their vehicles Chloe became visibly upset as she talked about Spooker and how she knew he was abusing Lynne. Not too long into the short discussion Bob saw how worked up she was becoming, and ultimately encouraged her to drive to Lynne's apartment building and confront him once and for all. With the high excitement Chloe had been feeling just mentioning Lynne and the narrator, she decided to do so, and was fixed on the idea that this would either be her last encounter with Lynne, or it would be the start of something pretty and new.

The sound of loud music was playing in Chloe's car as she drove down the street towards Lynne's residence. Her small eyes, like never before, had grown wide and distinguished. And as it were, just at sundown, she arrived at Chase street then at the 8038 building. She breathed one last large breath and exited her car, walked toward her unrequited love's home, and was prepared to confront the enemy.

Walkie #1: Spookie, come in Spookie?

Walkie #2: What?

Walkie #1: Mom made hot chocolate, do you want us to save you a cup?

Walkie #2: Yeah I'm 'bout to be other there. Over and out.

After Spooker had a cup of hot chocolate a conversation between himself and Lynne

had begun. She had stated that she wanted to add his poem to her collection of poems, to which he said "absolutely not." Eventually, after a while, she convinced him to let her do so so long as no credit was given to his name.

While looking over her artwork on his computer, she scrolled through and the narrator noticed a familiar piece of artwork; a penciled in drawing of a wolf overlooking a cliff.

Lynne later left the bedroom, the last rays of *déjà* sunlight going with her. From the kitchen she could be heard yelling throughout the apartment, asking whose turn it was to throw out the trash. Last time it was Dave, before that Sara, and before that Lynne herself, and so the narrator found himself outside in the parking lot throwing away waste.

Before Spook could get to the trash, however, he noticed a white SUV parked on the street, and it wasn't long before he heard Chloe speaking.

"You like hitting women?," she said from not too far away. Spook turned around, trash in hand, then settled it on the ground as Chloe continued to approach through the cars.

"What?," Spook replied. "Are you deaf? I asked you if you like hitting women?" "No..." Chloe took the final sip of her beverage and threw it at the narrator from a distance as she continued to approach him.

"Hit me, see what happens. I'll beat the shit out you you little man. I don't even know if you're a man." The narrator sighed, "If you keep talking like a bitch, I'm gonna slap you like a bitch." "Come on, do it," Chloe got closer, "I'm begging you."

Now only a few inches away from Spooker, the audio level between the two had risen to the point of disturbance and was on the topic of legalities. It did not take long for Amy Steinbrenner, who lived on the third floor of the apartment building, to take notice from her window.

The next to take notice came from the ground floor, who was Dam Son, who called over his brother, Gun Ho, who drew the attention of his father, Suhm Guy, and the three of them watched in anticipation as Chloe grabbed the arm of the narrator and locked it into hers.

Felicity had been cooking with her stepmother, Jasmin, when the two heard the commotion in the parking lot themselves, and drawing themselves to the window they saw and heard the argument going on outside. "I know her, she's fucking crazy," Jasmin told her stepdaughter, and then went immediately to phone the authorities.

Tian was also a spectator. He was indeed so until he left his apartment and went outside and began walking toward the quarrel, however his attempts to break up the fight were viciously targeted by Chloe, who now had a better hold on Spooker's arm.

Becca and her brother, who were actually the first to see what was going on, watched from the third floor as their mother talked to her jailed husband, Connor.

The next to see what was going on were Mike and Deanna, who drove into the parking lot after eating dinner at a restaurant. Exiting the vehicle Mike made attempts to learn of the situation but received no intelligence.

The event had become louder and drew in more people from surrounding apartment buildings, even Olya had been watching from her window but did not realize it was her neighbor and friend in the fight.

Ironically, the last to know of the fight outside was Lynne, who looked out of her window after wondering what was taking the narrator so long. When she saw the white SUV and then Chloe locking the arm of the narrator, she immediately put on pants and then ran outside. This prompted both Sara and Dave to look out of the same window to see what she saw outside.

"Let go of him!," she yelled as she approached the two. Attempting to get inbetween them and force them apart, Lynne was repeatedly unsuccessful and in her deep frustration she suddenly slapped the left cheek of Chloe. Chloe was first stunned, then shocked, then angry, disappointed and betrayed all at once.

F. Kane II, the young son of Charles F. Kane, was watching television when he heard the loud slap but did not see it. When he got to the window, he saw a larger woman push to the ground a much smaller woman. Watching like the others in anticipation, he saw another man, whom the larger woman was also holding as if in a lock by the arm, shove the large woman aggressively into a taxi behind her, shattering the driver-seat window and sending glass everywhere. Only seconds later did he see Suhm Guy run out of the apartment building, and at the same time, see the police arrive into the parking lot.

Chloe had been horribly injured and was bleeding from her right elbow but had managed to remain locked with the narrator and would not release him. They wrestled to the ground as the police ran out of the vehicles, and this is when the narrator, after a series of gropings near the waist, made the startling discovery that Chloe was not fully a woman but infact part man.

It took two police officers to finally separate the two, and the narrator, more surprised than scared or angered, wondered in his mind if Chloe's attraction to Lynne would be considered heterosexual or homosexual.

After the pair were separated and put in handcuffs, each police officer took an account of each individual, including those who had witnessed the event. It was at this moment that it was overheard and learned by Deanna that Chloe was born Joey and was in the process of a sex-change.

After all was settled, both participants were released and allowed to go about their evening, Chloe refusing medical attention. Instead, Chloe sought to find a neighbor of Lynne, Deanna, whom she gave a letter to give to Lynne.

The letter's intention was set on making Lynne realize that her partner was in fact a child of base men; and no more than a child of no name.

Chapter 76

ROSE FROM THE DEAD

2:2:8:76

SO many of the things we as a society associate with the bad are not exactly amoral. There is not necessarily anything amoral about a man who drinks, is covered in tattoos, does drugs and smokes. But there is indeed something amoral about a man who has a deep hatred for the entire human race. A man for all seasons who hates his fellow man.

I do not drink, I have no tattoos, I don't do drugs and I do not smoke, but if a man who did do all those things pointed me out in a crowd and said "He's the bad guy," he would not be entirely wrong.

Last night, I had a dream. For many a year now I had traveled with a man named Jesus and I suspected him to be the one they would come to call Messiah.

He spoke of things natured in the goods and evils, and because he had begun to worry the state, a bounty was placed upon his head. The state accused him of corrupting the minds of the people.

Jesus and I had been walking through a small part of the city when a bounty hunter had struck. Just before we were discovered, a city resident cried out and pointed in our direction, "There is Jesus, the bad man!"

A man riding a white horse made his way toward us, bow and arrow in hand, and after he had taken aim, he struck the Christ directly in the heart.

I carried the dying body of Jesus as we were driven out of the land. I must have carried him for miles as I beared witness his suffering; the bow had pierced his heart. And after we found our way into a wood, he made no more a sound.

I laid him out onto the ground and removed the bow, and it was then that I saw the mortal wound. I do admit the first night I was in denial and believed he was still somehow alive. The second night these beliefs were wearing dim, and I found myself kneeling beside his body, praying and crying. I was in such agony and grief, for I wondered why I had been allowed to live for ninety years and still had not found the Messiah. Would I die soon never having found him? I had been searching for more than thirty years now and have failed.

In my waking life the state's attack on Jesus made me think of Musashi and his saying of "If you want change, don't buy an education, buy a gun, 'because bullets have the right of way.'" It also reminded me of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, of their respective approaches to their goals, being progressive and aggressive methods.

It is ironic, or is it not, that the most powerful people in the world created democracy? Your right to vote is a ruse. An illusion that your decisions matter. I don't believe this conspiracy because someone said it to me, I believe it because if I were the one in power,

it's exactly what I would do to stay in power. Wouldn't you?

Politicians can defend the forgotten, speak up for them, be their voice, run their campaigns on helping them, tell the world they are doing it for them, but at the end of the day, where do they live? Where are they buried? Certainly not alongside the people who voted for them. The people who put them in power.

On the third night, I began to dig a grave. I took the deceased body and carried it gently into the grave and laid it to rest. When I was out of it, I began filling the grave, and once finished I gave one final prayer and began to walk away from it.

Only a few feet further and not much time after, approaching an overgrown tree, I heard the ground behind me make a hollowed sound, and turning around to look behind me, I saw that the grave I dug and filled was beginning to rise. A lot of dirt slowly rising into the air as if here there was no gravity, and I was shocked, confused, curious, but most of all, enraptured.

After the dirt had seemingly vanished into thin air, and after I had gain my composure, I walked slowly to the graveside, and there was much fear in my heart as I looked inside; but my fears were vanquished when I saw the Lord standing in his own grave, the mortal wound still visible, but he very much alive.

I looked at him and he at me, and with disappointment in his eyes he said to me, "O ye of little faith." For many a year now I thought he was teaching me how to live, but now I understand he was teaching me how to die.

I helped him out of the grave and he smiled when he was back with me, and it was at that moment, by his fruit, that I knew him.

After I had gotten the keys I went downstairs to check the mail. There on the bottom right corner of a piece of shoppers' mail I saw that familiar phrase, "Have you seen me?" It was the picture of a woman named Loretta. The sight of her had something of a foreshadow to it, in the same way quitting an addiction cold turkey might have to a person. I'm not sure how I could really explain it. It feels like there is something I know now that I couldn't have known before.

After a moment Dave came alongside me and opened his own mailbox. "My mom has a letter about you." "What?" "That fat lady gave it to her."

When I entered into their apartment after David I addressed Lynne and asked her where the letter was. She assured me it was nothing and requested that I not read it, but I walked into her room and toward her drawer and found where it Dave said it would be and I began reading it.

After I was done, I looked up and saw an article about Jack on the computer detailing how both he and the pedestrian he hit were both intoxicated at the time of the accident, but that image had little effect on me next to the effect done to me by Chloe's letter to

Lynne.

“Why did you keep it? Why didn't you throw it away?” “I don't know.” It's because you think it's true.” It went on like that.

I walked out of their apartment and into mine.

Probably every word of Chloe's letter was true. I don't know. He is incapable of loving you? What gives her the right? She doesn't know shit about me. Or about Lynne, or about anything concerning us and the matters between us. He is not good for people? What is she? We both need each other, and either way, she will never be able to move on from me. She needs me. If you stay with him you will die? What does that even mean? Fuck. Her.

Why does this remind me of father so much. No question mark. Of his obscurity and his ties to con-men. Is she saying that I am like him? How would she even know, though, she has never even met the man.

But those who are self-absorbed seldom know they are self-absorbed. How can I know that I am a good judge of myself? My mind has indeed always been clouded, and perhaps Chloe gave me exactly what I deserved.

Is it possible that my intuition all these years have been wrong? Maybe I am wrong about how I have chosen to live my life. Was the root planted all those years ago the beginning of something somber? If yes, then while I thought I have been learning how to live, I have actually been learning how to die.

Chapter 77

THE CITY OF DREAMS

2:2:8:77

DICE had been named the victor of our match, and yet he seemed dissatisfied with either the outcome or myself, or perhaps both. As the game table disappeared and the room transitioned, I could tell there were a few more things he wanted me to know.

“This game,” he began, “Hazard, did you understand its assertion on life?” “How do you mean?” “Did you understand that your choice or plan in life, the main, while it can be constructive, it can also eventually become your downfall, and that you should learn to take chances?” The metaphor went over my head, and when Dice saw that I only just understood that, his face became even more disappointed with a hint of anger.

“I have a riddle for you, Dawn, but I will tell you the answer first because you seem to prefer answers to questions. The answer is the great abstintion. The question, or the riddle, is this; it exists everywhere, there is no safe haven from it, there is no solution for it, it is not tangible in any way, it affects everyone in unique ways, because it cannot be seen many doubt its existence, some have associated it with forgiveness and others have associated it with vengeance, some have claimed that it is an exit while others claim it is an entrance, the poor say the rich have the solution for it but the rich say the poor are the problem itself, revolutionaries say that it is psychological warfare invented by the media, at least a dozen claim it has its origin in a psychiatric ward while fewer claim it has its beginnings in the skies, a scientist said it only affects the mind, a pastor said it will destroy the soul, and a man with no home said it will kill the entire world.”

When the room was complete in transition, the door to the outside world was opened and Dice stood up to leave. As he walked away, I ruminated in the exhaustive darkness.

If the Christ and the Antichrist both do not have free will, neither are significant in parable. If one is fated to do good, one should not be rewarded; if one is fated to do evil, one should not be punished. And I have gathered now that Dice has been given reign over our freed world of villains.

“Where will I find Dusk?,” I asked him as he got to the door. He turned around and spoke to me, “His name is Duncan Harharwood. You will find him concealed in plain sight. Go to him, he will teach you how to throw the dice. I'm going to leave now. You will not see me again unless it is my desire.”

As Dice disappeared from the door and out of my sight, I felt a mysterious fear throughout my being, as if I had been responsible for letting evil escape once more to reign over the unbecoming world.

In my sadness I instinctively looked downward to distinguish that the disguise Dice had given me for my lower face had fallen off and I was again without a mouth. I looked

up, though, when I heard a door opening in the back of the transitioned room.

I could hear it calling my name, so I walked over to it, only to be surprised by a black shade near light. Though I had been told stories about it, this was the first time I had ever actually met it.

“You are filled with the spirit of sa ki mal, therefore there are no longer any more heroes. Are you ready?” “Yes, but I will need a push.”

As the black shade walks closer and closer to my being, I feel sudden fear as I see a mist begin to form in the room behind it. I close my eyes, embracing the old unknown world, and then open them and begin to walk into the room filled with mist. Inside, I felt a confusion felt only by moral men, but it soon faded away. It seems we are wisest in our first years of living and wisest in our last years of living; why must we live so many of our years as fools. *Dream City, Ocidico.*

Directed by Frank Jaeger

THE SECOND MIND

2:2:8:78

The Second Mind by *Cloud Hemingway*

1. Alcoves - 1:30

(Woman humming)

(Ocean waves)

(Train passing)

(Ice breaking)

(Birds chirping)

When humans talk over each other,
They make no sense,
But when instruments talk over each other,
They make perfect sense.

2. The Shades of a Distant Life - 2:43

Her face fills up the sky
And puts me at peace, blue and white lullaby
She's got clouds and rain and sunlight in just one eye
And in the other, shades and stills of a distant life
Vowels change sounds throughout the night
And when I reach for her, she's not in sight
But softly her voice remains, it echoes and it stains
And she guides me through this troubled life

3. God's Triangle - 3:30

So many strange things float in the bayou
Where at night they are revealed as moonlight casts to sea
Under the dark lanes of the forties live the mortals

Who are the unknown universe's oldest mystery

A deathless world

Painted by a man haunted and tired of life and death and tragedy

Brushed a final brush to tell of inevitable misdeems

And of the final tragedy in all mortal dreams

4. Monolith - 6:53

There is sorrow

Something that has been in the way for years

There is anger

It hedges away

It doesn't stop until the path is blocked

“How do I get around this?”

And from left to right

It stretches on forever

Further than any eye can see

Yet some are blind to it

There is regret

It reminds one that they have made poor choices

There is foolishness

To think the answer will come tumbling down

To think the question has been finally solved

But the patterns remain

And the way is still blocked by it

Yet some walk right through it

There is stubbornness

The willful act to go one's own way despite it all

With, without

And the others are not blocked but completely free

Free to live life

And I am stuck

But today, there is also patience

To know that some are slow
Let it block your path
Take time to understand
Long is the way
That leads to life

5. Rediscovery Road - 4:15

And short is the way
That leads to dismay
By steering astray
A little resilient ray
Just before night takes day
And what good is it to pray
When one cannot change one's portray
When one has lost all but the tone to inveigh
And alone must find the strength to outweigh
And alone must be the first to say
There will be no more delay
There will be no more decay
An end will come to this cliché
And relapses will be kept at bay
And the ocean's clouds no more are gray
And finally there is nothing left to pay

6. Canvasology - 6:30

You came into the world a different shade of life
A painting on the wall brushed with different paint
But artwork is not put in front of mirrors
So you could never see brushstrokes made in restraint

For a long time you lived confused, yet unamused
Because even if you didn't understand

You grew and knew all too well there was no plan
And for a longer time nothing was of interest

So you wander in wonder in search for the moon in the city
But instead you are given a shooting star
And to cast a wish is a futile recurring theme
Because you have dreamed for too long the same dream

There are still so many strange things that float in the bayou
A collection of humanity's pollution
And for years you contributed bottles to that pool
And for years you contributed bottles like a fool

She came into the world a different shade of life
With a sun and ocean watercolor depth
And you saw that the only things that change you
Are a birth or a death

But there are still so many strange things that float in the bayou
A symbol of humanity's constitution
And to cast a wish is a futile recurring theme
Because you have dreamed for too long the same dream

7. The Hero with a Thousand Faces - 7:51

And you journeyed through cities following a darkened stream
The light you once held was finally diminished
Once upon a time in a dream

You were born with fewer cards but ambition was your theme
So less was more and more was less to you
Once upon a time in a dream

You followed an election filled with nonsense and sweetened cream

Where both sides vowed the same thing
Once upon a time in a dream

Your world leaders are very well received and do well in esteem
And they sent you off to war for their own gain
Once upon a time in a dream

You went here and there in search of peace and a new regime
But you found only poverty and suffering
Once upon a time in a dream

You hid yourself inside a small room and lived to the extreme
And the purple blood fell down your forearm
Once upon a time in a dream

In time separated by days you dressed up as a thief as part of a team
You brought terror to those who were innocent or wicked
Once upon a time in a dream

In the wake of compulsion you had a lust for the macabre and loved to scheme
You left behind rotting corpses and tallied your body count
Once upon a time in a dream

On islands of fruited trees connected by bridges adventure reigned supreme
A world of mythical beings and mystical gardens awaited you
Once upon a time in a dream

Exploring led you across many galaxies as you followed a single beam
And you followed it uncertain of its course or origin
Once upon a time in a dream

By mistake you found a hidden and mysterious town on a seam
And like many who came before you became lost in it
Once upon a time in a dream

When reality was but a meager form of living you found a realm of gleam
Where a salesman taught you how to use your second mind
Once upon a time in a dream

And the creations of mortals are not what they will see or seem
You created worlds because you were the dreamer
Once upon a time in a dream

8. Hourglass - 3:24

It is objective that if something is young, by relation it will eventually become old. Consequently, what is fresh will some day rot.; in the same regard, what is white will become black and what is born will inevitably die. On the matters of initial size, what is small will become big. A proponent of energy states if something is fast, it will become slow, and if something has the ability of revolve, it will invariably relapse. If the mind is created, it too can be destroyed, just as something that is now can be gone. And like the hourglass, if it is beginning, it too is ending.

9. Saturn Stalemate - 3:50

(Instrumental)

10. Free Spirit Dire Raven - 1:45

Listen
Death
Angered
Hated
Enraged
Silent

Level
Noon

Deified
Deified
Noon
Level

Bridge
Between
Material
And
Spiritual
Identity

Freedom
Between
The
Earth
And
Sky

♪ *All lyrics written by Jack Booth*

Chapter 79

DÉIJÀ

2:2:8:79

¶ Déjà, written by Lynnette J. Parker

Hello! First of all I would like to thank you greatly for purchasing my book of poetry, *Déjà*. Nothing in the world could show my gratitude and appreciation! Second, I would like to tell you a little bit about the book before you begin reading it. I wrote most of these poems working graveyard at an airport diner, so a lot of it is really just my imagination in times of unrest and anticipation. What I mean by unrest and anticipation is I felt like I was put on this Earth to be more than just a waitress, and I'm sure many of you, regardless of your occupation, feel the same way. So while I waited, I felt restless and anticipated something more coming to my life, and *Déjà* is the release of what I dreamed during those midnight hours.

Thank you again, and enjoy!

¶ Love, Lynnette

1. *Harvest Moon*
2. *Vadean Night*
3. *The Cities*
4. *White Lights*
5. *Lucifer's Crossing*
6. *M/P/R/C/C/D/H/S/D/G*
7. *The Lady From Fuchsia*
8. *Lead Me To My Mother's Garden*
9. *The View From Datura*
10. *Déjàs Are Forever*
11. *The Mystic Garden*
12. *Black Butterfly*
13. *Pandora Girls*
14. *In Metropolis*
15. *Chasing Paradise*
16. *In Heaven And Nirvana*
17. *All Those Places You Can't Grow*
18. *Today Last Year*
19. *Snow Falling At Night In The Big City*
20. *Memories Collected*
21. *Sunset Soulmates*
22. *The Yellow Mask*
23. *Quantity, Quality.*
24. *When You Reach Insanity*
25. *Mist Falling On Cedars*
26. *All The King's Men*
27. *The Man Without A Country*
28. *A Tale Of Two Lovestones*
29. *In The Arms Of Lytheia*
30. *The Goddess Of Dreams*

1.

¶ Harvest Moon

Distance and resistance, serve as the howls to the harvest moon
Orange and brown petals fall to the ground, forever separated against the bloom

Away from light casts the shadow of darkness, a soul reaver on a high tide
Alone in dreams, distant and resistant, a peaceful life yet a lonely ride

On a dark summer morning, the wind rustles through the trees
A blue bird in flight lands on a branch, sits there for awhile, but life comes and it leaves

Sadness, it fell back, a harvest moon bent upon the hands of time
Swallowed everything whole, so welcome now, welcome to this world of mine

2.

¶ *Vadean Night*

Somewhere in the world there is a place with soothing rain
And every other day it's as dry as air and Sun
There the lion fights to keep hold onto his reign
And in warm waters the lioness bathes her son

There can be stretches of long miles of green plain
Where the green can turn to tan and then blue beach
And the waves can soar high or be flat and plane
While back on land one could climb the huge beech

In the time of waking the birds sing for morning
All the while occurs the opening of the rose
And peace is brought to animals in mourning
And every flower comes together in rows

In the time of sleeping forms a new tropical dew
And not a sound could be heard
For rest is given where rest is due
And lying asleep is every member of the herd

Through the days run wild the animated deer
And at low evening the stars gnite
There is no more a beautiful place, my dear
Upon the fall of a still vadean night

3.

¶ The Cities

Of the house of angels
There allowed was no sin
And graced were roses that had been

Laid by life were emeralds near
But its twin of death slept just rear

The lighter clouds were push by fervent wind
And the darker clouds were like fountains again

Then came the music
A circle became of the crowd
And that night we none slept
And we the brothers and sisters bowed

We wandered through a bright charming place,
For all around us was magic, a glaring light that streams,
But it dove into an endless rivercase
And in eternity, we saw the dark city of dreams

4.

¶ *White Lights*

Trapped in a body that doesn't feel like home. Trapped in an apartment
that doesn't feel like shelter.

The reckoning has already taken place. They've cut up their clothes. Bandaged their wounds.
Sit quietly, chest heavy.

A dose of hormones is packaged within reach, promising to rewire reality. Sculpt their
bones, comfort the crying child with more than just a balloon.

Comic book pages cover the walls. Nothing's ever as simple as putting on a costume.

It all unfolds into a useless pattern: feed the bird, fight for employment in the wrong body,
avoid mirrors. Drowning but slowly.

The door is locked and the radio is blaring. They swallow the pills one by one like sprinkles
and wait for the clouds to come.

5.

¶ *Lucifer's Crossing*

Last night, I had a dream,
It was bout Lucifer,
It was so serene,
And he stared at me,
With eyes that seemed to beam,

“Which way are you going?” he asked,
“Up or down?”
You see I was new in town,
And so I needed someone to guide me around,

I can already hear you saying,
To defer,
And not to follow,
Lucifer,
But it's too late,
My soul is lost,
And when I'll get it back?
Never,

It's been eight years now,
Since Lucifer tricked me,
Picked me,
Ripped me,
Lipped me,
Chipped me,
Sipped, with me,

“I'm going down,”
I told Lucifer,
“And maybe someday later,
I'll go up,”
He told me he was going the same way,
So with blind eyes,
I tried to keep up,

I can already hear you saying,
 To defer,
 And not to follow,
 Lucifer,
 But I'm astray,
 Off the path,
And by now I no longer fear,
 God's wrath,

The first place we went to was a tavern,
 Or maybe it was an inn,
 And there we drank poison,
And this is where the story will truly begin,

 "I'll buy the first six rounds,"
 Lucifer said to me,
 "And if we go past six my friend,
Then the next six shall be on ye,"

 And so we sat,
 And drank,
 And talked,
 And when came midnight,
 We thought we should go,
 And the rounds we tallied was six,
And this I thought you should know,

 The second place we went,
 Was to a place with no name,
 But there they played a quiet game,
 And what they played for was for souls,
From the sickened beasts of the highs and lows,

 "We'll take two,"
 Lucifer called out,
 And then he looked my way with glee,
 "No need to search your pockets," he smiled,

“Tonight... Tonight's on me,”

And so we sat,
And played,
And talked,
And when came midnight,
We thought we should go,
And the winnings we tallied was four,
And this I thought you should know,

Now the next place we went,
Was to a place where the wounded sell their flesh,
Where the owls sit and rest,
And where Jesus sat and tested,

“Don't mind the imperfections, son,”
Lucifer reassured,
“All that is here is the beauty won,
And this and that by which you are lured,”

And once again,
I was in Lucifer's quarter,
And I laid with skin,
Whom I later found out,
Was a wild spender,
And quite a bit of a loud snorer,

I thought it was now,
Time that I'd leave this town,
And maybe thank Lucifer,
For showing me around,
And as I went to go,
He caught me so,
And asked me for a favor,
How could I say no?

“I spent all my money on you,
And now I need to get more,

I will rob the depository,
Can you stand guard at the door?"

I thought about it,
Then agreed,
To help a friend who helped me,
To help a friend in need,

And on that night,
There I stood as he did his deed,
But it wasn't long before,
Lucifer kept his creed,

The long arm of the law,
From all sides it would hail,
And by that morning,
I saw that I was in kept in a small jail,

Every evening,
Lucifer comes by to count us all,
To see his prisoners,
And their inevitable fall,

There he stands and points,
And one by one by one,
He tallies us all,
And we cannot bum or hum or run,

The moment Lucifer picks you,
You surely are doomed,
And there is no way out,
Of that God forsaken room.

6.

¶ *M/P/R/C/C/D/H/S/D/G*

Many escape through riding one
Politicians often enemize them
Representation of souls entwined
Compassionately regretting yourself
Comes as red diamonds sometimes
Date end added to Heaven/Hell
Habituate on mostly everyday
Sign meaning I like everyone
Days are rather killed
Good old deity

7.

¶ *The Lady From Fuchsia*

When I came from Fuchsia, they called me by my name
They knew who I was, and they knew why I came
I had a great fortune, no one else had quite the same
I lived my whole life from fortune, fortune to fame
I knew a man named Malenko, he lost all of his load
When he told them he had no money, they told him to hit the road
If I were, to ever fail or flail
I'd probably end my life or end up in jail
And this is the thought that led me to worry
What I had said fed me to hurry
This is when I feared God and his seven jury
The steel of the rail stroke me with stliffe
And that day, I had a walk that changed my life

8.

¶ Lead Me To My Mother's Garden

Sometimes I am nurtured, but mostly I must survive on my own
I love the rain, but too much of it can be no good
I don't like when people step on me, but it's something I have learned to deal with
Sometimes when I am shy or afraid or the night comes, I will close up
But just because I close up does not mean I am closing you out

I like to smell nice and pretty, but sometimes I wish it would keep others away
I wear all kinds of different colors but almost never black
I have many names and I respond to them all
Painters paint me often because they think I'm beautiful and attractive
But the only thing I really want is to attract my dark butterfly

9.

¶ *The View From Datura*

Venus-light, up above, calls to me within these closing walls
To think upon a vast universe, angrily governed, by these strange man's laws

The waters ripple, then wave, then tsunami, according to design
But each movement so delicate, and yet so backwards without reason or rhyme

When did this all begin? Can it start? Can it end?
Or is it all just a doomed illusion, some geometrical bend

Off the asteroid, off the satellite, off the country of Finland
The echoing soundprint dances once, then twice, then comes back again

Philosophy, the lovers of wisdom, of pain, of madness and sorrow
They know only one thing, that they know nothing, and that
knowledge is only something you borrow

Diamonds and crystals and emeralds and rubies, gold and silver, onyx, sapphire
They demonstrated the daisied dame as she sang in daisies and satire

A portrait of the ladybird in her rosedress,
Twin souls, too rare to die, and sleepless in atlantess

This is my view, my disease, my dark aurora
This is now my home, furnished with a philosophical view from Datura

10.¶ *Déjàs Are Forever*

I leaf again and again through those miserable memories,
 And keep asking myself, was it then, in the wind of that remote autumn
 That the rift in my life began;
 Or was my excessive desire for life and love
 Only the first evidence of an energetic but tired heart?

Sitting on that ledge for hours,
 Sometimes I'd watch the Sun when clouds were in front of it and it appeared as a glow.
 I kept thinking, "There has to be someone out there who could help me.
 Someone who could help me find my way so I didn't have to
 feel so ugly and miserable all the time."

It often reminded me of my lake, Cellardoor.
 Walking across the shoreline;
 Beaches, sand in my feet. Hadean dragonflies. Heating Sun.

I would punch that train ticket man,
 Go to that damn lake,
 And watch my fucking life go down the drain.

It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean,
 Emptied me of hope, and,
 Gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars,
 For the first time, the first,
 I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe.

It was one of those feelings you couldn't pinpoint,
 Like an answer lost in a dream at the back of mind.
 So she wept, and her lucky star flickered until it went out,
 And in the darkness, her flowers closed.

She has no idea of the death and sadness that was here before.
 There's a black butterfly in every garden, whether you see it or not.
 They mostly come in the darkness, when there is no hour, no minute,
 When everything is still,

Because death has created time to grow the things that it would kill.

But being with you, though, I feel a sort of renewed happiness.
I feel like an uncharted rose.

Because when you're so alone like I was,
The high tide from that lake will come only to swallow you whole
And leave behind madness in its wake.

Slowly but surely we both removed the mask that we were both wearing for each other
And we made a connection.

A real connection, with no masks, but plain faces.

Truth and honesty.

And we found a type of unity, a type of connection, that we didn't know was possible,
All because we stopped lying

And so it happened,
That with the wind and the great bursts of leaves flowing from the trees,
Just as things fly in fast movies,
I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the fall.

In the night I saw some interesting things.
Yellow leaves on the ground,
Some kind of blue flower bending slightly from the October wind.

I of course watched it, and at some time the wind began to take over the town.
The blue flower bowed from the breeze, then finally it bent, hung there, and snapped.

In my mind, the sound of a waterfall fell very softly and I loved watching it,
But it also reminded me that mostly everything in life is fleeting.
Love, hate, joy, sorrow.

It always makes me think of Celladour when there are no waves.
Just silence in the Milky Way.
Just a faint sound of water moving.
After you get tired of the stillness, a part of you wishes for a tsunami.

Back then,

I was filled with so much ambition but couldn't express myself because I was trapped.

Or maybe I just didn't know how to.

I knew I was beautiful, I was filled with passion,
But my ambition was like a secret hidden so far into my being and
sometimes even I couldn't see it.

I wore my heart on my sleeve, out in the open for anyone to stab it.

It had no protection from the perils of outside forces,
And so many times they would come by and stab it, and stab it, and stab it,
And it bled and bled and bled until the life inside me was gone.

But I always seem to come back to the place that was,
As best as I can describe it,
Tangible without being actual.

It is now only a dream, a memory,
Long and distant and forgotten in the fading paint,
I have started over, again and again
And plan to yet again,
The difference this time being that I am prepared to do so alone
But I have taken my friend to Cellardoor sometimes,
Because it has always had space for two.

And for splinters of a second, sometimes I can see what he sees
In my lovely Cellardoor Lake,
For my love has shown me a brand new world,
Dark, mysterious and cold, but beautiful,
And where déjâs are forever

11.

¶ The Mystic Garden

In a darkened wood stood the daisied dame.
The moth flies with lust, his desire is that of the flame.
In a sunny forest alongside a falling shower.
The butterfly rests in love, her lover seeing her beauty akin to that of a flower.
In a mystical garden, the bloom shall meet the fire.
But one does wonder, when is it love and not lust, when is it beauty and not simply desire?

12.

¶ *Black Butterfly*

I watch you
You have no idea, but I watch you
I watch you from my window when you come home
I watch you from my car when you head out
I look back and watch you when we pass each other in the hallway
Baby, you don't have a clue, but I'm a watcher and I'm drawn to you

I'm a weirdo
You have no idea, but I'm a weirdo
I'm weird when I'm around you, but I'm weirder when I'm alone
I'm weird, very weird in person, and I'd be a hundred
times weirder if I ever got you on the phone
I'm weird from 12 to 12, but after midnight, I swear I'm a freak
Honey, you don't have a clue, but I'm a weirdo and I'm drawn to you

I stalk
I stalk because I want to know if you're available, or if you're with some other lady
So I stalk you down the street, sometimes even lurk beyond the road
I follow you into stores, into malls, into parks
I sometimes hide in my garden, wait for you to leave, so I can stalk you in the night
Darling, you don't have a clue, but I'm a stalker and I'm drawn to you

I'm a creep
I walk on eggshells to avoid you, but I hide behind the vineyard just to touch you
I'm a creep, but not a normal creep, I'm a creep just for you
I'm a creep, but I'm not violent, I'm just a creep, a creep afraid of you
Sweetheart, you don't have a clue, but I'm a creep and I'm drawn to you

I'm psychotic
If I don't see you I go crazy, if I don't see you I go insane
I'm a psychopath and if I'm mad, please get out of my way
I'm a psycho, I'm a psycho, I'm a psycho just for you
Buttercup, you don't have a clue, but I'm a psycho and I'm drawn to you

I am shy

I don't know why but I always have been, it's just the way I am
I'm shy, but I fantasize, I dream of the night we first make love
I'm shy if I like you, but never shy if I love you
I'm shy, so what, one of these days I'm going to talk to you
Oh, Romeo, oh, Romeo, you don't have a clue, but I'm shy and I'm drawn to you

I am a black butterfly
I watch you in the dark so I can't be seen
I'm weird like a dancing lady in a feverish dream
I stalk like a little lion who is hungry for lean
I creep like a shadow as if from a horror scene
I'm psychotic like a psycholady small and mean
I'm shy like a child but don't treat me like I'm green
There you are, I see you, come to me now
I'm obsessed with you, but I can't move, I'm frozen, I won't let you get away
So I will create time to grow the things that I will kill
A praying mantis, a moth, larksided and doused in shrill
I am attracted to flowers, bill and bill and bill!
Haha! It worked! I'm catching up to you now and I will suck out your soul!
I will press my lips against yours and breathe in your spirit and swallow it whole!
Wait, what's this?!? Noo! Where did you go??? Come back to me!! Come back to your Juliet!

.....

And then I looked behind me, and I saw you, caught in a web of your dreamy eyes,
paralyzed by the poison of your eternal love
Oh, my prince, you were the catch that I was after
But I looked up and I was in your arms, and I knew that it was I who was captured
How could I let this happen, I laid down so many traps, and yet so, the
hunter has been captured by the game!
Oh my dearest one, you don't have any idea, you don't even have a clue, but I am so, so
many things, and I'm so desperately and dearly drawn to you!

13.

¶ *Pandora Girls*

A prostitute slowly puts on nylon stockings, then came several anticipated knockings
1 Corinthians 6:16

An escort's dress blew upwards from the wind, eyes wandered undisciplined
Matthew 5:28

A stripper bent over to pick up a hose, all without knowing what had been exposed
1 Peter 2:11

A supermodel opened his legs to stretch, his pink panties ripped and ruined his sketch
Leviticus 20:13

Miss Universe was walking and suddenly by a sprinkler she was sprayed, her
top was now wet and the white now grayed
Colossians 3:5

A pornstar was eating a ripe banana, an innocent little treat by your Roxana
Proverbs 5:19

A webcam girl was jogging and her breasts were bouncing, one would
think she was intentionally flouncing
Romans 13:13-14

14.

¶ *In Metropolis*

Tears caught before falling
Poured on wounds unhealed
Walking streets unknown
Holding what's left of you
You made it
This isn't where you thought you'd make it to

There are too many things amiss
You can't keep your head straight
Some ignore it, it keeps them sane
It's not what you presumed true
You made it
This isn't where you thought you'd make it to

What did you expect?
Hallowed ground, a religious epiphany?
A beautiful garden of peace and serenity?
This isn't where you thought you'd make it to?
You made it
You fool

15.

¶ *Chasing Paradise*

Sleep on a train to San Rashida
Where lakes and lips and uniforms are sky-blue

Wake up in Ocidico
Where forests and headphones and gowns are leaf-green

Write on a bus through big town G.S.
Where fields and horses and shoes are wood-red

Finish the dream in Chase
Where mountains and walkie-talkies and headscarfs are sun-yellow

Then take a plane to Paradise
Where imagination never ends and the portals to worlds are dream-purple

16.

¶ *In Heaven And Nirvana*

I am sitting down in my round déjǎ garden pardon the bright beauty and the silence not a sound and the sky is darkened the white cutie rose only grows if it knows there is guidance and will be hearkened see the flowers all around me see the powers that crown me in my universe alone I am home and I will reimburse my love when I roam like a dove who sings in metronome or a glove worn by kings in ratteens when they present their genome rings to their queens in a place with a pearl-case dome and romantic dreams I am getting up now in my lace dress bow face pressed against my tallest plant chant can't reach peace without the smallest suffering the life of ease leads to a callous buffering but I am a symbolized as a callused woman being rekindled who hums a poem hymnalized to hypnotize the passerbys in gloom so that they may find patience after they smell the fragrance bloom forget the doom when you are with me and soon we will be pain-free I am now in dance and in a state of trance my mate to date has not yet seen me but there is still a chance so I will wait for fate before I paint this scenery so much greenery so in touch is me who is she I have asked but she is masked behind machinery I am nature not a robot or citizen or legislature I will begin again and crush the haiture I fantasize about the gain from the rain photosynthesize in delight about what I will attain from the light I take my watering pot rainfall on the plot water all my children not one hungry got to first smile among thee erstwhile being warm sunshine and worthwhile and vile-free for the life I have made so I am going flower by flower to twinkle at each one it's fun to sprinkle a rose-ton of happiness and wrinkle sadness spread gladness give me gratitude give me madness but not destruction I want creative badness make me an architect of innovative radness so colorful people will need sunglasses when they see me but not just me my inner beauty inner spirit inner soul and they hear it they just know I am near it almost whole but my confessions I can hardly rhyme many sessions to write just one line cut up in sections to keep what's mine and still I write so I don't fall behind these are words I must unite no matter how difficult the time I am walking again now talking again now around the edge of my valentine place to where I pledge a divine embrace make promises of peace lilies in glorious grace cease sillies of the world and decisions made in haste I have an idea I saw it in a galleria of paint saw a saint who taught herself how to live alone and without complaint how to live in tone in an existence that was faint away from humans in subsistence no resistance from anyone not even herself it was quaint and her solitude brought her so much she saw her past perception was skewed and a last acception was reviewed and her absence from humanity was restored and she came back better than before for her loneliness showed her that connection was not something to be ignored detoured she now understood that in the neighborhood everyone is battling something and needs to be assured and heard if we all learned this lesson too a blessing

maybe two would come down pretty and new on us all and perhaps a few could turn it into art by a talent they knew bring back together the world apart and help it restart into something worth the view and birth the new creations of nations who work in tandem and in conscience of the oppressed depressed repressed who have no dawn in sight or a drawn reason to hold on tight and fight for every second of life gone by I pick a flower and raise it up in height for all who walk by shall receive a déjã hey yah believe I don't deceive no tricks up my sleeves only plants and picks of leaves that I've chosen for you so here you go take it before the wind blows in or the cold makes it frozen my intentions are pure and golden thank you for receiving my flower gift the tensions were building now I am gilding the rift it means as much to me as you for taking my flower gift I bid you farewell so fare well in this life do not sell what makes you strife use it well to dwell in a story that you will later tell in experience a tale that gave you a cheery sense but not before it gave you a dreary since it is in living to know what makes you happy first makes you sad then time heals you and it makes you glad then takes and steals something you wish you had and this is living from year one to the final stat a cycle of ups and downs and this and that I am going to lay down now in my garden laid out flat I love being here beautiful what a view to fully look at so many colors to whisper all these brothers and sisters you all be good now mother goes to sleep to dream don't you fight each other please keep the peace to gleam like the rainbows that you are beam the grainglows so very far for all to see and be happy look at me I'm still awake for fuchsia's sake or maybe I'm in a realm it's okay these thoughts won't stop they race and race but keep the pace fed by trauma and I shall not sleep until it is done in Heaven and Nirvana.

17.

¶ *All Those Places You Can't Grow*

On a highway grows a white rose
Tainted by its past
It grew to forgive itself

Under darkness grows a yellow rose
Alone and lonely
Without sunlight it grew in solace

In a desert grows an orange rose
Suddenly aware of its ignorance
Found a way and grew by change

In a dumpster grows a pink rose
Who was ungrateful for the shelter
But soon grew into gratitude from the weather

Near a fire grows a red rose
The inferno a symbol of its hate
Grew into a symbol of its compassion

On the sands of a beach grows a peach rose
Caught within a mental battle
Pierced the armor and grew to truce

On the Moon grows a green rose
It's creation was artificial
Though it grew to be sincere

On the shoulder of a human grows a purple rose
It could see not a thing
Until it grew to love everything it saw

Underwater grows a blue rose
In time, solving a poem
It grew into understanding an enigma

During snowfall grows a black rose
And its nature dark by default
Grew in a place that it can't grow

18.

¶ *Today Last Year*

Used to believe that your home was always going to be your home
Wasn't till I met you that I realized how sad I was, and how alone
Before then I just couldn't see that I was truly on my own
I was too blind to see that I had to leave there, else I wouldn't have grown

I want you to know that before you, I never found a place that I felt I belonged
I was always lost or out of place, always felt like I was wrong
Maybe it was because I was too weird, or maybe because I came on too strong
And so before I knew it, the ship sailed, I was too late and it was already gone

Then you came into my life, like a river that would run me dry
You taught me how to love again, you taught me how to cry
You made me stronger, then you made me weaker, I thought you became a lie
I miss you, and I hate you, and a small part of me almost wants to die

I don't care, I'm yours even if you're not mine
I just want to see that ship again just one more time
I want to know that it's not over for me, that I can rewind
I need you to touch me again, and tell me that everything's fine

If you asked me where I'd go tonight, I'd go back to today last year
When you held me in your arms and I cried all those happy tears
And for the first time in my life my heart had found its home and had no fear
And we danced the night away, not in some paradise, but just here, right here

19.

¶ Snow Falling At Night In The Big City

In the east, the Sun, it rises close,
And at the very least, the children, shine brighter than most,
Than the Moon, and its dark nightly glow,
Than a lightened tree, even after bark touches snow.

The sunfall and snowrays are touching to me,
A place in my heart, and I just can't wait to see,
When the sun shines and the light snow floats,
Onto my two little ones in their worn winter coats.

When you're small, the city is big,
And when you're big, the city is still big,
But don't be afraid to dream because you are itty bitty,
Anything can happen when there is snow falling at night in the big city.

20.

¶ Memories Collected

There is music in the forest
A melody on Saturn
And a piano stored away

There is film of the universe without space
A TV shows the flood
And a blizzard storms a land

There is literature of a star-crossed love
A spaceship in Chione
And a city in art

There can be notes in a question
But can there be acts in the lifeless?
Take my hand into that world

21.

¶ *Sunset Soulmates*

I think back on those days when the Sun used to set
 An outstretched arm grasping for shine as if a net
 Sitting, lying, standing, alone, on my bed, a beach, under a tree, if only to forget
 “Hello,” “hey,” “hi,” “pleased to meet you,” I'd say, “my name is Lynnette.”

And a year would go by, I lost one love then gained another
 And another year went by, and how quickly this one became the other
 Heartbreak after heartbreak, I decided to take a heartbrake
 And in that time a part of me found itself, if only for my heart's sake

I fell in love with the universe, nature, ideas
 I fell in love with my mind, and this would prepare me for you
 My emotions, like wildflower, grew uncontrollably
 But I knew I had to survive, night to night, because one day fate would save you for me

So the years came and went, and every
 day I thought of you, thought of what was meant to be
 I saw us playing, singing, dancing, as soulmates, in a world that was free
 Everyday I thought of you, being here, resting peacefully in my arms
 Allowing me to take care of you, lover, I've dreamt of that love for so long

And in some final year, where birds chirp as two settle fears,
 Your eyes came to meet mine and we smiled, and I found you after so many years
 To be in your presence after being alone for so long,
 Is a feeling so immaculate, a feeling so much better than even my dream

So, so many tears, so many tears that I have cried,
 So much depression, disappointment, disillusionment, and to my face, how often they lied
 But holding you, and you holding me, I have found a sacred place,
 I want to stay here, in this, for eternity, forever lost in your embrace

And so now today, as I catch the Sun's rays on my face and in my hand
 I am writing you this poem, which I hope you'll understand
 I hope that you will see that I did not suddenly appear in your life
 But that I traveled a very long and difficult road, filled and packed with strife

I need you to understand that I fought for you, every morning I fought for
you, and that I'm fighting for you even today
And I need you to know that I survived for you, so we could have this
evening, and so we could have tonight
Now that I have poured out my heart to you, I am thinking
again of those days when the Sun used to set
Those days are long behind me, as I am no longer lonely, my heart finally
filled with the one person I get

22.

¶ *The Yellow Mask*

When they asked me why I smiled
I told them with a pearl
From the days I was a child
Until I grew to be a girl
I followed blindly the ways of people
And asked not a single question
I stood in front of a tree pole
And they taught me through my session
I learned to walk, talk and act
Until I was accepted into society
Then the Sun came and taught me not a fact
And I ran to the lost like a free coyote
When I returned my changes were sufficient
By the days I was criticized for being different
Though my life was dirt
I had found self-peace
When they asked me why I still smiled
I said it was because of the Sun's release

23.

¶ *Quantity, Quality.*

You have nine lives to live, but you only need one for a chance to give.

You have an eight-ball for the things to come, but have
forgotten how to live day-to and day-from.

You have seven world-wonders to contemplate, but look inward at the construction of fate.

You have six sides to a dice, but any way you roll it you've got to pay a price.

You have five weekdays to a week, but it's only on one of them that you truly peak.

You have four sides to a square that's true, but there must have
been a door when you came through.

You have a three-dollar bill approved in legality, but it's as
fake as your three-dollar personality.

You have two sides to every story, but one of them belongs to the fictional category.

You have one shot to turn a dream into reality, but you are
better off learning to live with nirvanity.

You have zero-tolerance for mistakes made, but you yourself are imperfect and still afraid.

24.

¶ *When You Reach Insanity*

What makes a sane woman crazy, makes a crazy woman sane,
 Lose a foot today and you'll never be the same,
 Breathless to regain what you left behind,
 Restless you'll go insane or step back in line,
 Break ways of sudden chaos to find where your mind went blind,
 Fake rays of mudden will faze us to lead us to a time that may unwhine a lie,
 Because sane or insane we're only gonna die,
 Plain or unplain none of us will rise high,
 Trained or untamed people will wonder why,
 And now my future days will go to waste,
 Just how my ruther ways turned bitter in taste,
 Though black and yellow makes the crazy woman mellow,
 True crimes will always bother an unmothered fellow,
 Cruel times will rule minds and make souls shallow,
 They'll fuel rhymes on draft lines and give women sorrow,
 You borrow one life, and then you die tomorrow,
 Without seeing the change that has ranged from mid-town to the city,
 It's a pity, the Sun's light doesn't exist where it's best to ignite and stop a murderer,
 Or to end a fight and erase from this list,
 To find a better measure, womankind has lost its treasure,
 It's changed from a rock to a feather, ready to be destroyed in thunderous weather,
 Becoming weaker and weaker in the mind all together,
 Struggling to see the sign that's anything but clever,
 And don't ever expect to receive respect you'll be deceived and turned into a wreck,
 Never be relieved so you go in to get checked,
 They call you naive and a total reject, no one will even try to believe the things you detect,
 Then you see the world in a different view,
 Your mind is hurled that these people have no clue,
 The fact they never hold true to the things they do,
 Then you start seeing things that you never knew,
 It's the sins that we do that make the sky blue,
 And when it's night your unguided so you fall through,
 Nothing's right so you try to re-write it but come up with nothing new,
 So this rhyme is a note to myself,
 This last line is what I wrote and put on my shelf.

25.

¶ *Mist Falling On Cedars*

There once was a place inhabited by colored turtles
Some of them were red, some of them were yellow
But the red did not like the yellow
And they disposed of them in a manner which was not mellow

There once was a place inhabited by red turtles
Some of them had hard shells, some of them had soft shells
But the hard shells did not like the soft shells
And they disposed of them on two parallels

There once was a place inhabited by hard-shelled turtles
Some of them were tall, some of them were short
But the tall did not like the short
And they disposed of them after holding court

There once was a place inhabited by tall turtles
Some of them spoke Turtish, some of them spoke Turgin
But those who spoke Turtish did not like those who spoke Turgin
And they disposed of them in a manner that was surgeon

And after all of this, many of the turtles were the same
They spoke Turtish, were tall, had hard shells and were red
But even when all diversity was gone, there was still debate
And the identical turtles still found many new ways to hate

26.

¶ *All The King's Men*

You wake up, you breathe
You learn and you skill
You learn to accept it
When you see them kill
You learn to be proud
Of the blood that is shed
You're taught it's an honor
To have your child dead
Some of us think we're so clever
And our hands are clean
But we're just a cog
In a bigger machine
They've got you locked up
You have nowhere to go
So don't try to protest
Or put on a show
Twenty odd men
Have more power than you
They fool you into thinking
That their lies are true
You'll try to break free
Of the locks and the chains
You'll try to see God
Through the stress and the pain
And then when you find Him
Oh what will you do?
Feel like a hero
But come back a fool
Religion won't save you
And fighting won't do
Because they sleep with a gun
And they keep an eye on you
Knowledge is power
They know much more than you
You'll go crazy in trying

To avoid the rules
You say you can take them
You'll be loud, fierce and mean
But they have methods of quieting
That you've never seen

27.

¶ The Man Without A Country

Had no past, but is known in history
Had no duty, yet influenced many
Had no money, but was rich in heart
Had no friends, yet was a stranger to none
Had no story, but spoke of many tales
Had no emotion, yet processed it all
Had no young, but was a father to all children
Had no desires, yet gained everything
Had no country, but was a citizen of the world
Had no future, yet found destiny
And where he went, I followed, even if it was into the dark

28.

¶ A Tale Of Two Lovestones

Down by the river, I saw you in sunshine,
where yellow was the color of your hugs when you gave me golden friendship.

Over the short bridge, I felt your beating heart,
where red was the color of your love when you gave me ruby kisses.

Among the ash-heaps and millionaires, I heard your singing voice,
where white was the color of your siren-song when you gave me diamond smiles.

Under snowfall in January, I wanted you at twilight,
where purple was the color of your sky when you gave me crystal desires.

In the city of darkness, I saw you in the night,
where black was the color of your spirit when you gave me onyx butterflies.

A lady in my mind, I followed you in mysterious dreams,
where blue was the color of your beautiful dress when you gave me sapphire muses.

Across the grass fields, I was influenced by your femininity,
where pink was the color of your softness when you gave me spinel feelings.

Under rainfall in April, I saw you drown in sorrow,
where peach was the color of your cry when you gave me pearl tears.

By great folly, I grew with you on the farm,
where orange was the color of your fruit when you gave me amber passion.

Around our home, I smelled your garden roses,
where green was the color of your poverty when you gave me emerald treasure.

29.

¶ *In The Arms Of Lytheia*

Dare I say it was love, because I am not sure if I've ever loved anything
 Perhaps I was only recreating him, because I have never met a man like himself
 A puzzle to riddlers in madness, an answer to thinkers of sadness

I looked through the hole and saw him wearing the same darkness he was wearing before
 For a second I fooled myself into believing that I knew who he was
 And even if I couldn't see other things because the view was so narrow
 I at least knew I could see him, and understand him
 A paradox to artists asleep, an artifact to searchers to keep

There was an internal struggle that kept me prisoner
 It was this dark man surrounded by light
 Who teaches me and inspires me even though a part of him has been taken away
 He guides me through this dark corridor with his pain and his adjusted eyes
 A vision to those who are blind, a dream to those lost in mind

I remember that he had told me that a black star meant uncontrollable lust
 But I know that the feelings I have for him are nothing short of passionate
 This feeling that I think is obsession is cloaked only in love
 A desire to women in need, a nightmare to women he does not heed

There he was, teaching, what about I can't remember
 But his appearance, even more than his voice, was most appealing to me
 Black suit, a gaze in his eyes
 For a moment I black everything else out
 And the only thing that I know for sure that is real is his wisdom
 Despite the fact that it was a daydream
 And despite the fact that wisdom is simply an idea and perception
 For that moment I feel as if I could hold the wisdom he possesses
 That I could find it somewhere and keep it safe
 A treasure to any of past, a prophet to those who were last

He told me that a perfect helix represented the cyclical nature of life
 If I could build a perfect helix maybe I would give it to him
 But chances are what should have been perfect would come out imperfect

An inspiration to those who create, a doubt to those with the shyness trait

I once loved, and once I thought I was loved
But it is no more and we have parted
And I hoped that you would have taken me in
But you left before I waved
And it was too late
I wished on a star
I will always remember
You and me

Darkness even in day, but in my arms he was always light
A glint to sailors lost at sea, a candle to poets who are not free

30.

¶ *The Goddess Of Dreams*

Charge the spirit
With strength from the déijà heart
Vacate the throne
With defiance from the déijà queen
Build destiny
With awakening from the déijà myth
Seek commitment
With fire from the déijà bride
See truth
With vision from the déijà nightdream
Hear the silence
With practice from the déijà sonata
Know yourself
With promise from the déijà secret
Breathe in the pain
With relief from the déijà twinstorm
Find freedom
With flight from the déijà bird
Understand the riddle
With kinship from the déijà poet
Discover the unknown
With curiosity from the déijà planet
Unlock potential
With vastness from the déijà sky
See differently
With openness from the déijà mind
Be wholesome
With nourishment from the déijà fruit
Flow gently
With form from the déijà river
Embrace adventure
With tales from the déijà dame
Become unbreakable
With arrangement from the déijà diamond
Haunt the atmosphere

With shadows from the déjà moonlight
 Feel the sixth sense
 With instinct from the déjà soul
 Shine bright
With power from the déjà sunlight
 Blossom beautifully
With wisdom from the déjà flower
 Live forever
With immortality from the déjà everlasting
 Scale dreams
With madness from the déjà brain

...Human beings are not very complex when it comes to emotion, as we only really have a few core emotions. If you rely on emotion to power your art, you will have a very limited scope and by logic your art will be simple itself. Instead, I believe you should let your mind power your art; the part of the brain where enduring dreams occur; like a lightning storm in windy autumn with yellow leaves fluttering to the ground...

Lynnette Jones Parker was born in the city of San Rashida, though she currently lives in the locale of Chase with her son and daughter, David and Sara Parker. Initially, Parker was given into the art of painting by her grandmother as a child but has more recently tried her hand at poetry. To develop her writing she briefly attended Leavenworth Community College, but decided the courses were not in line with what she hoped to create. Déjà is her first book and she hopes to publish again in the future.

Chapter 80

WINTER NIGHTS

2:2:8:80

THE meadow of moths had always been to me a symbol of construction and reconstruction, but it figured into my more fantastic mind as a syphon of reverie. An entry to another world where designs are not fully complete. But it is indeed complete now, and that passage has been closed.

I waited in the early darkness for the subway to arrive, and in my waiting I noticed a quite large painted butterfly on the platform of the train station. Then I was on the four-thirty train, southbound, when a young African-American girl came onto the train with her dog. It was strange to me to see an animal on the train. Even stranger was her birthmark.

Leaving Chase and entering San Rashida, I found myself looking out of the window and thinking about Sara's city from Worlds Into Dreams. In the real world she can't see very well, which is why she wears glasses; though in her mind and in her dreams she has an anthologic eye and when creating she sees the world better than most people her age.

Which vision is more vital to life? What you can see in reality or what you can see in dreams? Even the blind rely on the anthologic eye, and those who can actually see, often in many circumstances, trade that sight for the imaginations that allow them to control their fragile realities, because every heart, it seems, is bound by a world of dreams.

I get off the subway and make my way to the airport. Upon entering a wide and busy place, I heard the faint sounds of someone's young crying, and as I moved closer toward the commercial area I realized it was a young boy crying for a leaving father. Yet in juxtaposition was the enthusiasm of a coming father seeing his son. Airports are a place of happiness or sadness. It's people coming and people leaving. Sometimes it's both in one week.

I finally saw the déjã everlasting at her diner when I turned the corner and walked into the commercial area. Currently she was tending to several customers and it was busier than I imagined it would be. I sat down and waited patiently for her to finally get to me but I didn't order anything.

When Giselle arrived not to relieve her but to enter her shift alongside Lynne, I suddenly remembered that it was a holiday and found the answer to why the airport was so busy. Seeing as her hands were constantly tied, I asked her if there was a pharmacy in the airport, and she told me the directions promptly saying I would need to take the shuttle train that was inside the airport to get to that section of the airport.

I had checked Chase Foods; they have their own pharmacy; for medicine that treated twitches, but they had none, and so I had plans to check a pharmacy in the airport.

While on the shuttle, my mind wandered, and in imaging what the pharmacy would look like in my mind I also imagined all the illness in life, which then made me think of Dave and the question he asked me yesterday.

“What is the point of life if everything dies?” Indeed it was another one of the “old” questions that lately seem to be plaguing his thoughts. One of those old questions that you cannot answer objectively but only subjectively, although to be more accurate, sentimentally. And like I answered him before I simply said no one who is alive knows.

Everyone has a multitude of defining moments in their life, but there is always one moment that stands above the rest. It is a moment so distinguished that there is a side to life before it and a side to life after it. And the greatest of these moments always bring about the examination of the old questions.

What is daunting, though, is that these old questions often have no answers, and people are usually terrified of questions that have no answers.

Why is there evil? Most people will blame Satan because most people need answers, but inside we are all afraid that existence is the question without an answer because it means everything is meaningless. Is the universe the ultimate question without an answer?

When I got to the pharmacy I found medication for twitches and I also found medication for Dave's numbed fingertips. I must admit, though, that on my way back I got lost in the airport. By the time I realized I was lost, Lynne was finishing her shift and after communicating with her she found me. Walking out of the airport, it was still completely dark as we made our way to the train station.

It was when a state police cruiser passed us by with glaring and flashing lights that we saw that it had begun to snow lightly, small specs of snow revealed by the police vehicle's red lights. After it had passed we walked on the edge of a sidewalk that was closed for construction and populated by orange and white construction warnings that wore yellow blinking lights.

When we finally made it off the sidewalk, we waited for a green traffic light to allow us to traverse the street. Upon waiting I noticed the distant city skyline and a blue light that sat at the top of a skyscraper. Though immediately we had to begin to cross the street, and while doing so we saw the purple light, which indicated to above ground riders that the subway train was shortly arriving, go off.

In a hurried frenzy we ran across the street and through the light snow and finally down underground only to find that the train had come and gone. The next train eventually came, but all of a sudden we found ourselves stopped and delayed between the stations of Carver and Washington. When we heard the voice of the train operator, we recognized it as that the voice of Pedro.

Inside our subway car was only one other passenger, a woman of the likes of fifty, who after seeing Lynne take out her cellular device began to stare at her. Lynne called Emily to ask how Dave and Sara were doing, and for every second of the three minutes she is on the phone, the lady watches her. After Lynne hangs up, the lady takes a seat closer to us.

Finally, she asks Lynne, "Are you in my seat?" Lynne was confused by the question and simply answered negatively. The lady then took out her own cellular device and told us that she wasn't able to make any phone calls on it while on the subway. "That's strange," Lynne agreed.

Lynne asked her who her network provider was but the lady never answered, and instead went on about how the world was excluding her from communication and how when she is finally able to make calls, someone is listening in.

"Look," the lady said as she got up. She traveled to another seat on the train, and then attempted to make a phone call, but the call failed. "You see," she said holding up her phone so Lynne could see from afar. She did this for five minutes, picking seats on the car at random, engaging only with Lynnette and not seeing me, and soon Lynne saw me smiling as a spectator of the happening. Lynne had no answers for her other than the obvious fact that the lady didn't receive a signal underground, but she would hear nothing of it. When the lady came back closer to us, Lynne reached over and gestured to have the lady's phone, but suddenly the lady flinched, as if safe guarding her phone from the perilous hands of Lynne. And after this, she went back to her original seat, rid of our stupidity forever. I knew that Lynne wanted absolutely to get off that train.

After a while the train began moving again, finally reaching Washington. More people than we expected boarded the train, and we realized that this was because so much unaccounted time had passed by us during the delay. After we shot out of the underground tunnel toward the sky we saw that already it was morning and daylight was upon us.

It was still lightly snowing and those who boarded the subway brought along with them snow stuck at the bottom of their shoes. As the car slowly began to fill, the lady vanished. When we reached our stop, we two vanished as she did.

As we walked home, a passage refrained in my mind. "Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun. However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all. But let them remember the days of darkness, for there will be many."

At first I thought she would be tired and retire to her own home for rest, but instead the both of us entered my apartment and then she my bedroom.

I walk into my living room, Mister Nosleep is here; there is a part of me that forgets of his vile existence, it always does, but there is also the part of me that remembers.

Lynne came out of my bedroom changed from her work uniform to street clothes. Along with her she brought my computer, telling me that the paintings ordered from PaintDrive were going to be delivered within a few hours.

A few hours later she went downstairs to check our mail and there was a package delivered. When she got back to my apartment she began opening the package to find a set of paintings.

She looked at all three paintings with a delicate curiosity. "What do you think?," I asked. "For some reason they bring back memories." "What do you mean?"

The painting of Rashida boulevard, she said, reminded her of a couple years ago when I used to drive her to work. I could see why, I think it was because while we never took the route of this exact street, it wasn't too far off from Famous Max's Diner. It was a poignant memory to her because it was the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

The painting of the airplane below the moon was her favorite of the three, she said, because it reminded her of the many midnights I spent visiting her at the airport. It will always remind her of her life as a partisan of the dark.

The painting of the Paradise Port bridge from afar, she said, was unlike the other two because it gave her no memory. That night was her first visit to it. To her it was like the part of a city that was uncharted, but now that it had been discovered, memories of it could be constructed.

The airplane painting was going to go in her apartment; I chose the painting of Rashida boulevard to go in mine, and in our home we would put the painting of the Paradise Port bridge.

After a while the heating system turned off, so Lynne ventured into the bedroom in search of a blanket. I went and sat on the couch and thought of nothing as the early night came. It became completely dark once Lynne entered back into the living room and turned off the light. I didn't know if she was planning on going to sleep or if she just wanted to sit in the dark, but she suddenly came up behind me and threw the blanket over my head and body, holding me tight so I couldn't take it off.

I struggled with her for a few seconds until she asked me to stop. I stopped trying to escape and that was when she let go of the hold on me. She then went and sat next to me, and slowly she pulled off the blanket for me to see.

On the walls of the dark apartment were thirteen paintings, but it was strange because they seemed to move. When I got up to inspect the nearest one, I saw that it did indeed move such as a video.

The moving painting was of the planet Saturn and its ring of iced rocks. Lytheia got up from her seat and walked towards me, then looked at me, then took my hand and guided it toward the painting. My hand went through the painting and at the same time

my apartment became the planet of Saturn. When I took my hand out of the painting, the world of Saturn was gone.

The next painting I went to had a palette of gray and brown and pale blue about it and looked as if a storm was coming. This time I put my hand into it myself and my apartment took the shape of another world. It felt like our world, but at the same time it felt like a place filled with death.

Then I moved over to the painting of a garden. Putting my hand through, it turned my apartment into a forest filled with fruited trees and roaming wildlife. This seemed to almost be the antithesis of the previous painting.

Then there was the painting of the Earth lands all connected as one. This brought the ancient animals of Earth into my apartment, many that I knew, but some unknown to me and as mysterious as the origins of life.

Next came the painting of a snowy town that was filled with residents. This painting brought into my apartment a violent avalanche, and if I had not removed my hand soon enough a tsunami was not far behind it.

A painting of a dark bridge followed, which when I entered made my apartment into a place for spectators to look seaward from the bridge. In the distance was the skyline of San Rashida, the city of cities.

The following was a painting of a huge spaceship. I found myself floating in space, directly above it, as it was violently impacted by a lost comet. When the shockwave of the collision reached me, it gave panic and I instinctively removed my hand.

A black and white painting of a lone piano in a lobby seemed strangely familiar to me, and this piece of art brought into my living room enchanted music. Soon after strings of lyrics that spoke of new beginnings appeared on the walls.

The next painting consisted of the old questions. When I tested the hypothesis of reality for this painting, it brought into my apartment the apparitions of old thinkers. Galileo and Socrates offered us to join them, but I soon removed my hand.

Another painting was of an airport that was drowned in water. All types of sea animals swam across my apartment, and though I wanted to see more, a lack of oxygen forced me to cease the illusion.

Then there was a painting of an underground cave. Through it ran many rivers. It wasn't until I entered that world that I saw that the roof of the cave was broken and allowed one to gander the night sky.

The final painting was a painting that she told me she painted herself. She named it "Winter Nights" because it was supposed to depict simplicity. A simple winter night. It was a painting of our apartment building in the night as snow fell. All of the tenants' apartments' lights were off except one, which was her apartment, and in each window you

could see a person. One of a boy who was playing with a cat; one of a girl who was building a home; one of a woman who was painting; and one of a man who was looking out of a window.

There is the real world we all share, and then we each have a metaphysical world that we architect throughout our life. In that meta-world we store our dreams, memories, ideas, theories, perceptions, and these elements structure and build that frangible reality. There is an inherent sadness, though, to know that some people will never become aware of this otherworldly place. It is our closest ability to God. But the real prize of that world isn't just in being able to create it, it is in being able to explore it.

When she saw that I was ready to leave, she tightly grasped my hand. I looked at her and thought of the light that made her so lively, and I said to her with sadness in my voice, "If you go with me, you will die there."

The tightness of her hand only became tighter as she prepared for what was to come. I looked once more at the painting of Winter Nights, and then back at her, and then told her that there was something I wanted to say to her. The Moon in her eyes quickly became Sun... And with her gaze came to me a lucidity that had eluded me my entire life; the only unvarying moment we shared across the span of varying lifetimes. At last, I finally said it to her. "I love you."